**The *Frankenstein* Resource Page**

**Web Links:**

[Mary Shelley Home Page](http://www.netaxs.com/~kwbridge/maryshel.html)

[Literary Sources of *Frankenstein*](http://www.netaxs.com/~kwbridge/franken.html)

[Resources for the Study of *Frankenstein*](http://www.georgetown.edu/irvinemj/english016/franken/franken.html) (this is a **good** one! - lots of links to other resources.)

**Reading Guide**

As you read Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, consider each of the following issues/elements of the novel:

**1. Purpose:**

One of Mary Shelley's purposes is to challenge the growing power of science and technology. There is a connection here to the legend of Faust, the man of science who is bored with the natural world and sells his soul to the devil to gain knowledge of the supernatural. He is destroyed in the end. Victor Frankenstein is not the only Faustian character in the story. Look for ways in which Robert Walton is a direct parallel to Victor Frankenstein. Also, notice the subtitle of the novel. What happens to human sympathies and relationships when men seek to satisfy their Promethean longing to conquer the unknown?

**2. Prometheus Connection:**

The story of Prometheus is obviously important or Mary Shelley wouldn't have included it in the title. Make sure you understand the Greek myth of Prometheus. Then consider that in this novel the Prometheus story is connected to the power of the human imagination to conceive and then create. Shelley is a major writer of the Romantic Period, and the Romantics highly valued the human imagination. So why does Mary Shelley apparently describe the dangers of the human imagination?

**3. Romanticism:**

A good resource for understanding this novel is to compare it with one of the most important poems of the Romantic Period: Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Like the mariner, Frankenstein, like all humans, disturbs and destroys nature at his peril. There is a dark side to the imagination. Is it true that "What one can conceive, one can create?" And should we? (Yes, there is a connection to *Jurassic Park*!)

**4. Overcoming a desire that was thwarted by a father.**

Examine closely the connection between Victor Frankenstein and his parents. Then, look closely at the relationship between Victor and his Creature (father/son). What implications do these relationships have to the theme of the story?

**5. The Doppelganger.**

The Romantics were fascinated by the idea of a double-identity, a doppelganger. To what extent do Victor and his Creature, together, constitute one being?

**6. Religious Question.**

When Victor creates his creature, he is playing god. What are the consequences? If you are familiar with John Milton's *Paradise Lost* you'll find lots of parallels...an omnipotent God warring against his creatures. Who is Satan in *Frankenstein*?

**7. The Creature.**

There is no doubt that the most interesting and intriguing character in the novel is the Creature. Why would Mary Shelley do this? Was she writing a horror story? (If so, why is the novel so different than those supposedly "scary" film versions of the 1930s and 1940s?) What is the nature of the Creature's requests of Victor Frankenstein?  Are they reasonable requests? How do we react to the Creature?

**Novel Analysis**

In A. P. English an effective way to read a novel is to examine the various elements of the novel as you read. The following list is a good place to start when evaluating a novel. Not every novel will address all of these issues. But as you read, consider which ones are important. (If you would like to download a copy of this list, click [here](http://academy.d20.co.edu/kadets/english/apenglish/Novanaly.rtf) )

Novel Analysis

The Author

* 1. Literary group, school, or period to which he belonged
* 2. Year and place of birth
* 3. Details of life that have bearing on the novel
* 4. Types of literature produced and their style

Style

1. Is there anything strikingly different about his style?

2. What about the length of his sentences and paragraphs?

3. Is there variation in his sentence structure? paragraph structure?

4. Does he often use figures of speech? Unusual and vivid, or trite?

5. Is there much description?

6. Is there anything unusual about his methods of description?

7. What is the proportion of narration to description? to dialogue? to exposition?

8. Is there much dialogue? Is it natural? What is its purpose?

9. From what point of view is the story told?

Tone

1. What is the tone?

2. Does the author often employ satire? irony?

3. Is there much wit and humor? pathos? Is it effective?

4. Does he make philosophic comments either through a persona or through his characters?

5. Does he moralize or seem didactic?

6. Does he seem to be romantic? realistic? optimistic?

Type of Novel

1. What kind of novel is it? problem? manners? historical? psychological? ???

Theme

1. Is there a theme, or is this just an interesting story?

2. Is there more than one theme?

3. Is there a close relationship between theme and plot? theme and characters? theme and setting?

4. By what methods does the author get his theme across?

Setting

1. Where and when did the story take place?

2. How long a period does the story cover?

3. How real is the setting?

4. Is there close attention to the details of the setting?

5. Is the setting essential to the story? Do conditions in the country have a real bearing on the plot development and outcome, or could the story have been laid in some other country or locality?

6. Is nature ever used to increase the effect of a scene?

7. Does the setting ever become symbolic?

8. Is there a definite influence of setting on plot? on characters? on theme?

9. Does the setting seem to be more important than plot and characters so that the novel is actually a study of environment?

Plot

1. What is the basic conflict?

2. How is the exposition presented?

3. What are the major complications in the rising action?

4. What is the climax?

5. Is there a strong resolution?

6. Is the basic conflict completely and logically resolved?

7. Are there any subplots?

8. Is the plot stereotyped? Are there stock situations?

9. What is the method of narration: chronological? flashback? through a diary? Through the exchange of letters? through parallel events?

10. Is there foreshadowing?

11. Do any scenes provide comic relief.?

12. Do characters, setting, or theme bear undue influence on the plot?

13. Is dialogue used largely to reveal character or to keep the plot moving?

14. How is suspense created and maintained?

15. Is each chapter a unit? How does it begin? end? What keeps it going?

16. Is there logic of plot? Are the actions possible and probable? Are the problems presented naturally or artificially? Do the characters act and speak in keeping with their natures? Are problems solved naturally, or is there the use of deus ex machina?

17. Is the hand of the author apparent in the plot, or is what happened the natural outgrowth of the circumstances, the characters, and their interaction?

Characterization

1. What are his chief motives? Does he act and speak in keeping with his motives?

2. Does he show the influence of heredity? or environment? of his past?

3. How does his social or economic status affect him?

4. Does he influence the action? How?

5. Does he conflict with others? How and why?

6. What is his sense of morals and his moral values?

7. What is his philosophy of life?

8. Is he entirely responsible for what happens to him, or is his fate largely determined by the outside forces beyond his control?

9. Is he true to life? symbolic? a caricature? stereotyped?

10. What are the methods of characterization used to develop his character?

Symbolism /Allegory

1. What are the major symbols used? What does each represent?

2. Is there an allegorical level of meaning? If so, discuss it in relation to the story.

Motifs

1. What are the major motifs used?

2. How is each related to theme, tone, setting, characterization?

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