

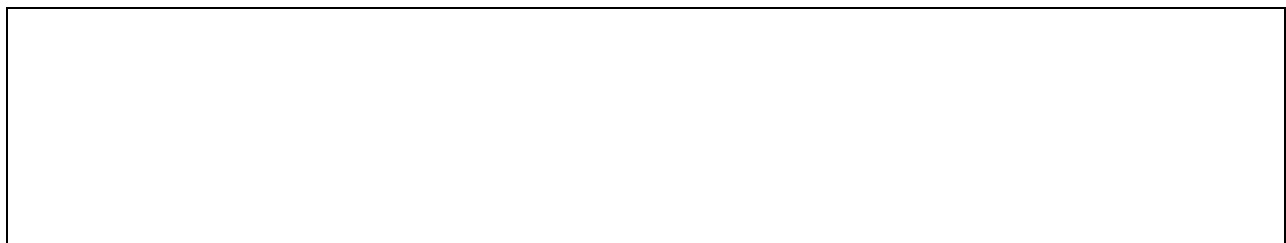
Study questions for Mary Shelley's FRANKENSTEIN

-- **Bracketed numbers** are for the 1818 text as reprinted in the Longman anthology

-- **Numbers in parentheses** are for the Penguin *Three Gothic Novels* edition

1. Who was Prometheus? Why is the novel subtitled "the Modern Prometheus"?
2. Why is the novel initially set aboard a ship? Can you think of any other famous works which are set aboard ships? Why did Mary Shelley choose to use that particular setting here? Does it mean anything beyond the immediately apparent *physical* setting?
3. Note the various narrative "frames" Mary Shelley employs in her novel. What is the purpose of these various frames? What, specifically, does she wish to accomplish by employing these multiple frames?
4. What sort of man is Walton? Does he serve any *thematic* function in the novel, or is he included largely as a "storyteller"--that is, is he included simply as a mechanical narrative device?
5. In what ways do Walton's letters prepare us for the tale he tells? What difference (if any) do these letters make in the way we react to the rest of the novel? Note that in the 1818 edition the letters (pp. 269-87) [pp. 815-23] appear before the headline announcing "Chapter 1" (p. 289) [p. 823]. What is the effect of thus "bracketing" the letters?
6. Work out a character sketch of Victor Frankenstein, concentrating on his values and psychological makeup. What does he value? What motivates him? What appear to be his "moral standards"?
7. The first three chapters tell us about Victor Frankenstein's childhood and youth; the fourth, about his "discovery" of the principle of life. For movie fans these chapters may seem irrelevant: after all, we want to see the Creature being created and--amid bursts of smoke and flashes of lightning--"born." Why, then, does Mary Shelley devote so much space to Victor's childhood environment and his education? See (pp.295) [pp. 824ff.], for instance. Why do we need this stuff, anyway?
8. Volume I, Chapter iv (Chapter 5): the Creature is created. Where is the focus in this section? On the process of creation? On the Creature? Somewhere else?
9. Why does Victor work so diligently to bring the Creature to life and then become so abhorrent when he succeeds? Is Mary Shelley working with any "prototype" or "pattern" here? Has this sort of experience or behavior occurred anywhere else that you can think of, in literature, art, or elsewhere?
10. Chapters II, ii through II, ix (chapters 10-17): the Creature tells his story. Notice the place Victor Frankenstein meets his Creature. Why is this setting particularly appropriate? The novel now begins to zero in on its major themes {see (pp. 363-66) [pp. 857-60], for instance}. Of what does the Creature accuse Victor?
11. What do pages (367-402) [860-79] (Chapters II, iii - II, vii; Chapters 11-15) reveal about the Creature's "natural instincts"? What gives him pleasure? What does he value? (Consider, for instance, how he describes the DeLaceys and their cottage.) Of what does the Creature's education consist?

12. Volume II, Chapter viii (Chapter 16): What does the Creature finally decide he must do, and why?
13. Volume II, Chapter ix: (Chapter 17): (pp. 412-15) [pp. 883-85]: What argument does the Creature offer in support of his demand? Why? Is it a reasonable argument?
14. Volume III, Chapter iii (Chapter 20) (pp. 435 ff.) [pp. 895 ff.]: Why does Victor Frankenstein decide to discontinue his efforts to create a "bride" for the Creature?
15. On (p. 439) [p. 897] we begin to see most clearly in Frankenstein's *isolation* from his fellow creatures a parallel to the Creature's own situation {see also (pp. 448, 456) [pp. 901-02, 905]}. In what other ways are Victor and the Creature strikingly similar? Have you encountered this sort of "parallelism" anywhere else in literature or the arts, and, if so, where? Does the device have a formal name?
16. Book III, Chapter vii (Chapter 24): Note the surrealistic environment of the "chase" scenes. Are we getting into a different sort of novel than we were originally led to expect? If so, what is the nature of the difference?
17. (Pp. 484-85, 490-91) [pp. 920, 923-24]: Victor Frankenstein's final words--any significance? What about the Creature's final words (pp. 492-97) [pp. 925-27]?
18. Who are the novel's protagonist and antagonist? Are they typical? Why or why not?
19. In an influential essay, the Romantic scholar and critic Harold Bloom wrote that the reader's sympathy lies with the Creature, but in his book *The Romantic Conflict* (1963), Allan Rodway says the reader's sympathy lies with Victor Frankenstein. Which critic is correct?
20. Most modern editions change Mary Shelley's spelling of an important word. Near the top of page 493 of the Penguin (*Three Gothic Novels*) edition and p. 925 of the Longman anthology edition are these words: "'And do you dream?' said the **daemon**." In many other editions (especially editions aimed at the "mass market" audience), the end of the line reads: "said the **demon**." What is the difference between **daemon** and **demon**, and can you see any reason why Mary Shelley used the former word in her own text, rather than the latter?
21. What is a "monster"?
22. Is someone born a monster, or are monsters cultivated? Use fictional monsters and real-life "monsters" as evidence to support your thesis.
23. Draw a picture of a monster here:



CREDITS:

Most, but not all, of these questions are from the following University site:
<http://www.unl.edu/sbehrend/html/sbsite/StudyQuestions/Frankenstein.htm>