



## The Catholic High School of Baltimore Summer Reading Assignment

**Teacher's Name:** Mr. Derosier

**School Year:** 2018-2019

**Grade Level:** 11

**Course Number:** 131

**Course Name:** British Literature

**Academic Level (Honors/AP/CP1/CP2/CPA):** Honors

### Reading

*Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley

ISBN Number: 978-0141439471

Please purchase the paperback through Amazon.com.

Mary Shelley was a key figure in the Romantic movement in English literature. *Frankenstein* reflects many aspects of British Romanticism, including the view of the restorative power of nature in its wild form, an emphasis on emotion, a tendency to glorify the simple life of the ordinary person, and a fascination with mystery and the supernatural.

### Assignment

See the ISBN number above. Please purchase this edition of the novel. The summer reading assignment is divided into four parts. Read my instructions for each part carefully. **This entire assignment is to be typed and submitted to me by email at [sderosier@thecatholichighschool.org](mailto:sderosier@thecatholichighschool.org) by the first day of class.** I have no preference pertaining to the spacing, but I do expect you to use a font and text size that will be easy to read. This is not a research paper, so you do not need to format this assignment according to MLA guidelines. Handwritten work and paper copies will not be accepted. Your work must be your own. You are not to collaborate with your classmates on any part of this assignment.



## Part One: The Introduction and Preface

The preface is dated 1817, shortly after Mary Shelley first wrote the novel; the introduction was written in 1831 for its republication. Read both carefully, and answer the following questions:

- What circumstances led Mary Shelley to write the novel? Check the Internet to discover global weather conditions during the summer of 1816. Why is 1816 referred to as the year without a summer?
- What writers and literary works does she mention? What do these citations reveal about her?
- Where was she when she wrote *Frankenstein*? How does this location connect with the novel?
- Who were her companions?
- Who suggested writing ghost stories to pass the time? How did Mary Shelley react?
- Where did she get the basic idea for her novel?
- What central theme does she herself articulate?

## Part Two: Robert Walton's Letters I

A frame story is a literary device that sometimes serves as a companion piece to a story within a story, whereby an introductory or main narrative is presented, at least in part, for the purpose of setting the stage either for a more emphasized second narrative or for a set of shorter stories. *Frankenstein* is framed by letters from an explorer, Robert Walton, to his sister Mrs. Margaret Saville, in England. After reading the four letters at the beginning of the novel, answer the following questions:

- What is Robert Walton's ambition? Why has he chosen this goal?
- What does he sorely miss?
- Locate his journey on a map. Where exactly is he?
- What two strange figures does he mention in the fourth letter?
- How does Walton respond to the stranger?
- What does the stranger mean by the comment: "Unhappy man! Do you share my madness?"



### Part Three: Chapter Questions

#### Chapters 1-3

- How does Victor characterize his early years?
- What factors in his childhood predispose him for the kind of solitary effort he makes in his studies?
- Who is Elizabeth? How does she come to be part of Victor's family?
- Who is Henry Clerval?
- How do Elizabeth and Henry affect Victor's life and his studies?
- What ideals stir in Victor's mind from his early reading?
- Near the end of Chapter 2, Victor comments, "When I look back, it seems to me as if this almost miraculous change of inclination and will was the immediate suggestion of the guardian angel of my life—the last effort made by the spirit of preservation to avert the storm that was even then hanging in the stars and ready to envelop me." What does he mean?
- What event delays Victor's departure for the university? How does this affect him?
- What is the impact of the last sentence in Chapter 3?

#### Chapters 4-10

- What field of study does Victor Frankenstein pursue at the university in Ingolstadt? For what aim?
- What is wrong with Victor's lifestyle at the university?
- What is the material out of which Victor makes his creature? How graphic are Mary Shelley's descriptions?
- What is Victor's emotional and physical reaction to the sight of his creature? What specific aspect of the monster's appearance horrifies Victor?
- What first death does Victor feel responsible for, and why?
- Who is Justine? Why does she also die?
- How does Henry Clerval help after Victor's ordeal begins?
- When the Frankenstein family move to the country, what effect does the move have on Victor? How does this reflect a Romantic perspective?
- In Chapter 5, Victor quotes lines from "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner." Why?
- At the end of Chapter 10, whom does Victor meet? Where? What is the result?



## Chapters 11-17

- At the end of Chapter 10, what factors motivate Victor Frankenstein to agree to listen to his creature's story?
- The first several pages of Chapter 11 narrate specifically the creature's growth in consciousness, much as an infant (in a longer chronological period) would awaken gradually to life. What are some details of the creature's innocent awakening? Do any seem moving to you? Why?
- The creature's successive mistreatment by every human being he meets gradually changes his response to people. Does this personality change seem normal to you under the circumstances? Can you give any modern example of such a change as presented in film, writing, or real life?
- What are some human lessons the creature learns from observing De Lacey's surreptitiously?
- Do you see the advent of Safie as an event that may cause the creature pain? What is your reaction as you read Shelley's description of her effect on Felix?
- How do you think the story would change if Felix, Safie, and Agatha did not interrupt the monster's conversation with the blind old man at the end of Chapter 15?
- At the end of Chapter 13, the monster comments on his "additional love and reverence for my protectors (for so I loved, in an innocent, half-painful self-deceit, to call them)." In the light of that comment, how does Felix's blow affect him?
- In addition to hearing from the conversations of the De Lacey's and Safie, the past history of his "beloved cottagers," the creature is influenced by the discovery of some books. What are they? How does he respond to them?
- How does the monster learn details of his own creation? How do those details differ from the description of the creation of Adam?
- The monster confirms Frankenstein's suspicions about the murder of his little brother. What happened?

## Chapters 18-24

- What thoughts do you suppose are in Elizabeth's mind between Victor's visit home at the beginning of Chapter 18 and her letter offering to free him from any obligation to her?
- How and why does Victor delay completing his second creation?
- Why are we not surprised later to find that Henry has been murdered?
- What does Victor do with his second creation? Why does he make these choices?
- How does Victor end up in Ireland? What does he find there?
- How does Victor manage to clear his name in the crime?
- What ironies are involved in Victor's marriage to Elizabeth?
- Does Victor ever tell anyone the secret of his creation?
- To what does Victor dedicate his life?



- What does Walton want Victor to do?

#### **Part Four: Robert Walton's Letters II**

At the conclusion of the novel, Robert Walton resumes his communication with his sister. Review his comments, and answer the following questions:

- What does Walton see as Frankenstein's sole desire?
- Why has Walton decided to abandon his journey and return to England?
- What happens to Frankenstein?
- Whom does Walton find standing over Frankenstein's body?
- What does the creature say?

#### **Assessment:**

In addition to the summer reading assignment, you will take a test on *Frankenstein* when you return to school in September. The test will consist of multiple-choice questions and short answer questions that each require at least a one paragraph response.