

As part of your preparation for class, you are asked to read the novel *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley. This canon of literature has become a widely recognized social symbol of horror and awe. As we read through this, we will discuss the structure of the novel, the character development, the literary and social climate as well as the purpose of the novel as a whole.

As you read through the beginning letters, be sure you have a clear head and quiet environment so that you can absorb the purpose and content. It is important to read closely and respond to questions thoughtfully.

Read “**Letters I- IV**” **pages 1-16** and respond the following questions. You should type your responses. Use complete sentences and fully articulate your ideas.

Questions:

1. What are three benefits of Walton’s planned voyage that he expresses to his sister?
2. What are four reasons that Walton desires a friend?
3. Describe the being that Walton and his companions saw on July 31st (Letter IV). What was it doing?
4. What was discovered the next morning?

Analysis:

1. The novel *Frankenstein* consists of letters from Robert Walton to his sister, Mrs. Saville. At the end of his fourth letter, Walton says that he will attempt to write down the tale that the stranger begins telling: a story within a story. The stranger’s tale is set within the tale of Walton’s voyage. This literary device is called *framing*. Why do you think Shelley chose to frame the story rather than tell it as a straight narrative?
2. The *setting* is the time and place of the novel. What is the setting for the first four letters from Robert Walton? How much time passes from the first letter to the fourth?
3. The *mood* of a novel is the feeling or atmosphere an author creates for her readers. Mood is created by sensory language, images, and connotative words. In the first three letters, what mood is associated with the arctic setting? Give examples of words, phrases, or images the author uses to communicate this mood.

4. What mood is associated with the arctic setting in the fourth letter? Give examples of words, phrases, or images the author uses to communicate this mood. How does the change of mood in the fourth change the expectations for the story that the stranger is about to tell?
5. An *allusion* in literature is a reference to an historical or literary person, place, or event in which the reader is assumed to be familiar. An allusion adds meaning to a story through the connections the reader draws with the original work. In Letter II, Walton writes:

I am going to unexplored regions to “the land of mist and snow;” but I shall kill no albatross, therefore do not be alarmed for my safety, or if I should come back to you as worn and woeful as the “Ancient Mariner”?

Explain the meaning of this allusion made by Walton.

6. In literature, a *parallel character* is a character who has many similarities to the main character and whose purpose is to give further insights into the main character’s strength and/or weakness. What evidence is given that Walton and the stranger he brings on board his ship might be parallel characters?
7. *Foreshadowing* is a hint or suggestion about what might happen in the future. When Walton shares his desire to conquer the arctic, the stranger sputters, “Unhappy man! Do you share my madness?” Later he says to Walton,

You seek for knowledge and wisdom, as I once did; and I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you, as mine has been.

What might these passages foreshadow?

8. What concern should Walton (and the reader) have about a story that is told by a man who claims he is mad?

Chapters 1-3 pages 17-35

Questions:

1. How did Frankenstein’s family come to care for Elizabeth Lavenza?
2. Why didn’t young Victor give up his fascination with the works of Cornelius Agrippa after his father told him to not waste his time on it? What does this reveal about Victor’s character?
3. What ideas and activities did Victor’s study of the alchemists lead him to pursue?
4. What event at age 15 turns Victor from studying the works of alchemists to the study of pure science?

5. Reflecting on this incident from his childhood, how does Frankenstein view this “change of inclination”?
6. How does Frankenstein’s mother die? What is her final request of Victor and Elizabeth?
7. What effect does Professor Waldman’s lecture on modern chemistry have on Frankenstein?
8. In the last sentence of Chapter 3, Frankenstein says that a certain day “decided my future destiny.” What was that day? Why was it so influential?

Analysis:

1. *Frankenstein* is an example of a *gothic novel*. A gothic novel is characterized by emphasis on mysterious and supernatural. Readers of a gothic novel may encounter images such as mysterious rooms, darkness, storms, secret passages, ghost, etc. Letters I-IV presented gothic images such as the desolation of the barren arctic and the brief glimpse of the mysterious being on the dog sled. What gothic images are found in Chapters 1-3?
2. *Frankenstein* may also be classified as a *romantic novel*. A romantic novel generally relies on lofty and elevated language and emphasizes adventure, emotion, imagination, and individualism. Exotic locations, passionate love, heroic events, and a concentration on the past are typical of the romantic novel. Letters I-IV contain romantic elements such as the exotic location, the adventure of exploration, the lofty language of Walton’s imaginative descriptions of the arctic regions, and especially his desire for a true friend. What romantic elements are found in Chapter 1-3?
3. Beginning with Chapter 1, a new narrator takes over the telling of the story. Who is the new narrator of the novel? Why does the author switch the point of view?

Chapters 4-6 pages 36-57

Questions:

1. After two years of study at Ingolstadt, Frankenstein considers returning to Geneva. What distracts and delays his return?
2. After Frankenstein learns the secret of creating life, why does he hesitate before putting his power to work? What might Frankenstein’s lack of concern for the morality of his actions tell us about his views on morality?
3. As Frankenstein works on his creation, what are his expectations for how his creation will relate to him, its creator?
4. How does Frankenstein work on his creation affect him physically? How does it affect him mentally or spiritually?

5. Why does Frankenstein despise his creation? What does this reveal about Frankenstein's character?
6. What immediate effect does Clerval's appearance in Ingolstadt have on Frankenstein?
7. How does Clerval's continued presence in Ingolstadt affect Frankenstein?

Analysis:

1. While working on his creation, was Frankenstein going mad? Support your opinion with a few examples from the text.
2. Describe the weather on the night that Frankenstein brings his creation to life. Why might the author have set the creature's awakening during this kind of weather?
3. *Irony* is a difference between appearance and reality, or between what is expected and what actually occurs. How does Frankenstein's successful creation of life demonstrate irony?
4. *Verisimilitude* is the appearance of truth and actuality in a work of fiction, suggesting that the incidents in a work of fiction really happened. In Chapter 4 Frankenstein suddenly breaks from his story to address Walton. Read the paragraph that begins "I see by your eagerness, and the wonder and hope which your eyes express..." How is this paragraph an example of the author's use of verisimilitude?
5. Soon after the monster comes to life, Frankenstein dreams about Elizabeth. Describe the dream. What does the dream possibly foreshadow?
6. After the monster comes to life, Frankenstein refers to it as "a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived." Explain this allusion.