

**Block****4****MARY SHELLEY: FRANKENSTEIN**

---

**Unit 1****Mary Shelley: Life and Works****189**

---

**Unit 2*****Frankenstein: A Gothic Novel*****203**

---

**Unit 3*****Frankenstein: Summary and Analysis*****213**

---

**Unit 4*****Frankenstein: Major Themes*****229**

---

---

## **BLOCK INTRODUCTION**

---

This Block will introduce you to one of the important

After the completion of this block, you will be introduced to Mary Shelley (1797-1851), also known as Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, a British novelist. You will

- get introduced to the gothic tradition.
- be familiarised with the major influential factors on the Gothic with special reference to Mary Shelley.
- comprehend her effects worldwide.
- trace her impacts on the later generations.

---

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

---

The material (pictures and passages) we have used is purely for educational purposes. Every effort has been made to trace the copyright holders of material reproduced in this book. Should any infringement have occurred, the publishers and editors apologize and will be pleased to make the necessary corrections in future editions of this book.

---

# UNIT 1 MARY SHELLEY: LIFE AND WORKS

---

## Structure

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Infancy And Early Years
- 1.3 Challenge Preadolescence
- 1.4 Teenage
- 1.5 Mary's Relocation
- 1.6 Love Life
- 1.7 Mary's Journey To London
- 1.8 Mary and Her Personal Calamities
- 1.9 Mary's First Novel Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus
- 1.10 Story of "Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus
- 1.11 Other Works of Mary Shelley
- 1.12 Last Stage of Mary Shelley's Life
- 1.13 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.14 Questions and Answer Keys
- 1.15 Suggested Readings

---

## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

---

It is evident that the life account of a famous novelist is a storehouse of facts and events which are essential to grasp the background of the author and the literary works. In this regard, biography of Mary Shelley carries enormous amount of significance in comprehending the writer in a multifaceted way. This chapter will enable the students to:

- Read and internalize the life of Mary Shelly which is full of trials and tribulations.
- Facilitate them to comprehend this life narrative and grasp all the noteworthy events easily.
- Establish a connection between the life-sketch of the novelist and her literary masterpiece Frankenstein.

---

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

---

Mary Shelley(1797-1851), also known as Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, a British novelist was born in London. She was one of the authors of the romantic era whose first novel, Frankenstein is still considered as a yardstick of English literature. She suffered many hardships at an early age. She lost her mother just ten days after her birth. After that, it was her father who raised her. She had a stepmother with whom she had an unwilling relationship. Her stepmother was hardhearted and focused her attention only on her own children but not on Mary. She had a romantic love life and an intimate relationship with the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. Unfortunately, Mary lost Percy after eight years of their love life. She suffered from ostracization and went through mental depression frequently as

she couldn't digest the death of people from her family circle in their young age. She was famously known for her Gothic novel Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus. Her contributions are many including novels, short stories, travel narratives, poems etc. She always believed in her ability and remained highly determined on her future writings despite much opposition.

---

## 1.2 INFANCY AND EARLY YEARS

---

Lucy Madox Rossetti, a famous biographer of Mrs. Shelley begins Mary's life narrative with the following lines:

"The daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and Godwin, the wife of Shelley: here, surely, is eminence by position, for those who care for the progress of humanity and the intellectual development of the race. Whether this combination conferred eminence on the daughter and wife as an individual is what we have to enquire."

Mary Shelley was born on August 30th, 1797 in London, England and was christened as Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin by her parents. She was the first child of the novelist William Godwin and the second child of the famous philosopher Mary Wollstonecraft who was a staunch and a pioneering feminist. She was best known for her work "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" which was published in the year 1792 in which she strictly expressed that women are not naturally lesser to men and argued about women's empowerment. Unfortunately, she was not blessed enough to teach and educate Mary Shelley because she died just a couple of weeks after Mary Shelley was born. Her death occurred due to one of the postpartum infections, medically known as 'Puerperal fever'. After the death of Mary Wollstonecraft, Godwin raised Mary Shelley along with Mary's half-sister Fanny. Fanny was the first daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft from her early marriage with a soldier before wedding Godwin. It is a well-known fact that childhood is the happiest season for all. As expected, Mary Shelley lived her infancy gleefully without knowing the misery of her mother's death. At the same time, Godwin suffered from severe debts and he couldn't raise the children single-handedly. So he married Jane Clairmont when Mary was four years old. Jane Clairmont was a well-educated woman and stepped into Godwin's house with her two children Charles and Claire. Most of Godwin's friends disliked his second wife as she was short-tempered. However, Godwin loved her and they had their child William in 1803. They all lived at Somers town and Mary Shelley grew up there until the middle of her teenage years.

Mary Shelley was schooled by her father at an early age. Occasionally, he taught her English letters by tracing the words written in the grave of Wollstonecraft. She never went to school at a young age and hadn't received any formal education until her pre-teens. Her stepmother felt that education was important only for her children but not for Mary. So, she always wanted Mary Shelley to look after the work in the house by not devoting herself to learning. However, Godwin taught Mary Shelley with a noble ambition i.e. to shape her as a famous novelist. Mary read those novels written by her mother and she was inspired by her work and philosophy. Since Mary's father was a writer of a famous work on political justice, she read his novels too. All these inspired Mary Shelley to become a great novelist or a writer like her mother. She used her father's library extensively to learn and study all the time. Despite her longing to go to school, she was challenged to learn on her own. Meanwhile, Godwin started a publishing firm M.J. Godwin and co., a juvenile library which sold children's books including stationery items, Maps

and games. But his business didn't give him a good hand as it did not earn him profit. Mary's early childhood was bit joyful but later she was subjected to great deal of sufferings by her stepmother.

---

### 1.3 CHALLENGING PREADOLESCENCE

---

As her early years went on with the absence of formal education she faced the challenges of learning from home because of her stepmother. On the other hand, her pre adolescence was even more challenging and compelled her to learn more and more inspite of all the hurdles. Her family dynamics soon turned even worse at the beginning of her pre adolescence. As mentioned above, Godwin's business was not improving and did not see a sufficient amount of profit. Due to these critical circumstances, he was forced to borrow substantial sums to run the family as well as his business from new lenders to pay off the earlier loans. Later, when his business was close to failure and he was pushed to the edge of despair, Godwin was saved from debtor's prison by his philosophical devotee who helped him with more money. Mary Shelley was used to this kind of family dynamics during her teens. She learned to deal with all these sorts of disturbances by taking her refuge in writing and often spent her time dwelling in imagination. She grew up as a bibliophile. As we know, her father tutored her in a range of subjects and she started using her father's library. She felt that the library was the only place of escape from the hustle and bustle of her life. Godwin often took the children on educational outings through which Mary learned many things. She used every opportunity to the fullest that was offered to her and felt that even if it is a small set of circumstances it may help her with a big basket.

Godwin's household had many distinguished guests during Mary's teenage, including intellectuals like Samuel Taylor Coleridge a famous romantic poet, and Aaron Burr, the former vice president of the United States(1801-1805) and the great poet William Wordsworth. She was fortunate enough to be with such literary stalwarts and used those opportunities to learn from them. As we know, Godwin opened a publishing firm M.J. Godwin and Co. where Jane Clairmont used to maintain the ledgers and carry over some work. Later, at 1807, the Godwin and family moved to the headquarters of their firm at Holborn from Somers town. As a result of learning and diligence in the thought of writing poems and stories, Mary wrote her first poem in 1808, when she was just eleven years old. Mounseer Nongtongpaw, a poem by Mary, was said to be an expansion of Charles Dibdin's song with the same name. The poem is thought to have been written as a version of the original song which describes a series of comic stanzas on French and English stereotypes. This poem by Mary Shelley was published by her father in his firm M.J. Godwin and Co. in 1808 as part of its Juvenile library series. This was the first poem at the beginning of her collaborative writing career.

---

### 1.4 TEENAGE

---

After penning her first poem Mounseer Nongtongpaw, she was motivated by her thoughts to write more and more stories. As it is generally expected, everyone would find their first love during their teenage. Accordingly, Mary also found her passion for writing at the beginning of her teenage. Her father used to tell her that "your desire of knowledge is appreciable and your perseverance on things whatever you are doing will make you invincible". Mary was inspired by her mother and not even a single day passed without thinking about her and her work and contribution to English literature and gender studies. Mary was often found writing stories near the graveyard of her mother. She used to write her stories

sitting near the coffin of her mother, according to the thoughts occurring to her at that moment, by relating the instances that might have happened at her home. She had undergone psychological trauma many times due to her stepmother's ill-treatment who was always unfair to her. So, her teenage was no different from her preadolescent life. To relieve herself from the trauma that she had and from her abusive stepmother, she started to daydream by investing her brain in her imaginative world. She found that it could help her escape her stepmother's evilness and also create some new sort of ideas for writing. Nevertheless, her home life circumstances were always highly challenging to her imaginative life. Meanwhile, Godwin published the memoirs of the original version of his wife's book.

Mary Shelley's mother in her book "A Vindication of the Rights of Women" emphasizes upon the needs of women's education. But, Godwin's children never had good education since childhood. He himself admitted that he can't educate his children according to what was outlined by his late wife Wollstonecraft in her book. However, Mary Shelley had a governess who taught her and educated the children like a daily tutor in a private household.

She also read her father's manuscripts on Greek history and some other children's books on Rome in late 1811. Mary went to a boarding school for about six months at Ramsgate, a seaside town at Thanet in East Kent, England. As usual, her stepmother hated seeing Mary go to school and often thought about doing something to stop her by assigning some work to her purposely. Apparently, there would be a quarrel between them but Mary was very much aware that her stepmother wanted to refrain her from going to school. These circumstances forced her to argue with her step-mother many times and resulted in Mary's frequent mental stress and trauma. When these traumatic experiences aggravated her mental health, she had nightmares multiple times. She saw some kind of a strange devil-like creature approaching her in her dreams. That vision encouraged and inspired Mary Shelley to write one of the greatest horror novels ever written.

---

## 1.5 MARY'S RELOCATION

---

Since Mary often dwelled in the thought of writing a horror story, she was writing some strange horror lines for her story that day sitting near the grave of her mother. It was about to rain that morning and she decided to leave hastily from there. She often stepped into her house through the windows rather than doors because of her fear of her stepmother. Mary found her tenderness to write horror stories but that was not Godwin's wish on her and she didn't know how he disliked that though people liked his Gothic novels. After she returned to the house from cemetery, her father too arrived from the bookshop. She was suddenly hiding a Gothic novel which was on the table and placed some of the political justice novels on top of them. By seeing those political novels, Godwin praised her that he was glad to see her devotion to such great works. He further said "To love reading is to have everything within your reach". Mary found her company with Claire Clairmont, her step-sister who often supported her. Claire often saved Mary from her mother because she was aware about her mother's attitude towards Mary. Once when Mary was writing her story in the library when her stepmother came there and abused her by saying that she was scribbling something unnecessarily. She tried pulling the story from Mary. Mary requested her to leave that book. Such an awkward situation resulted in a small tug of war between them. Eventually, her stepmother fell down during this petty quarrel. Immediately after this incident, William Godwin rushed into the library and helped his wife to get up. She instantly

rained a range of complaints regarding Mary and informed her husband that she won't live there with Mary and left.

After this, Godwin decided to relocate Mary to his friend's place in Scotland for a good cause. He was Mr. Baxter, an old friend of Godwin, and also a believer of liberal education. So Godwin told Mary that she would find that place comfortable for her to write and educate herself. For Mary that was untenable, as she had no heart to leave home to go to Scotland. Yet she took that as her fate and went to Scotland. Before leaving, Godwin advised her to rid herself from the thoughts and words of others and to find her voice in writing. Claire couldn't bear Mary's separation from her and she was thinking about the days they had spent together.

Mary reached Scotland in 1812. When she reached Baxter's home, Baxter and his daughter Isabel welcomed Mary gleefully and Isabel said that she would do everything to keep Mary Shelly happy. Mary was overwhelmed by their hospitality and spent that day at "peace. During dusk, she found that place very quiet and was surprised to know people there could sleep in that silence. So Isabel took her to the graveyard of her mother as she was also longing for her late mother. Then, by the rustling wind that night, they both shared their sympathy and got back home. Few weeks later, Mary, gradually developed a liking towards Scotland as she experienced a new sort of domestic tranquility which she had never felt before. It was like witnessing a small beam of light from a very dark tunnel. She said to Isabel that she had never gotten a chance to picnic by the riverside in London. In Scotland, Mary and Isabel had visited many riversides and mountains experiencing fresh air. On the other hand, Mary was educated by Baxter during their free time. She found her company with Isabel all the time.

---

## 1.6 LOVE LIFE

---

Mary Shelley was known as Mary Godwin until she got married to the romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley. She had a memorable time with Percy in Scotland. Percy Shelley was born in 1792, at Horsham, England. In 1810 he had matriculated from Oxford University and it was said that Percy attended only one lecture at Oxford but he used to read sixteen hours a day. He was best known for his romantic poems and hence was called as one of the pillars of great romantic poetry. In 1811, he anonymously published a pamphlet "The Necessity of Atheism" for which he was rusticated from the university. He was also an admirer of Godwin's stories and works so he continued to follow Godwin's ideology after reading his novels on political justice. Percy's idealism and his influence made him grow in contemporary literary circles. His first marriage took place with Harriet Brooke when he was in the middle of his teenage and they had a girl child, Ianthe. It is believed that Percy led a Bohemian lifestyle and is also said to be a follower of radicalism as he was a radical poet.

It was a very beautiful evening when Mary met Percy for the first time. There was a get-together where many poets had joined including Coleridge. This poetry reading session was arranged by Mr. Baxter where they all recited poems as a part of that evening's entertainment. As the party was going on, Percy joined them all later. As soon as Percy entered the party, Mary got her first sight at Percy and she couldn't take her gaze off him. She asked Isabel about Percy. Isabel said that it was Percy Bysshe Shelley and he was a radical poet who thought poetry should reform the society and so he was often in trouble. Mr. Baxter welcomed Percy with a smile and introduced Mary to him. Percy also fell for Mary as soon as he laid his eyes on her and they both gazed at each other having a romantic poem as their background which was recited by Coleridge. He started the conversation by

introducing himself and said that he was an admirer of both her parent's writings. They had a good conversation about their earlier life for a while. In the middle of their pep talk, Percy was lovingly invited to recite a poem. When he reached the stage, someone asked Percy about his paper notes and requested him to see and recite. Percy felt that he didn't need that and replied "I shall believe in the joy of newfound inspiration" and read one romantic poem by simultaneously pouring his gaze at Mary. After the poetry reading, she melted into him for his lines indeed. That night after the party, Mary found herself completely engrossed in the memory of Percy. After a couple of days, those people from the party had a picnic by a riverside, so Percy got to meet Mary once again. Moving along the riverside, they had their little talks and at last Percy indirectly asked her age. Mary understood his hidden intention and replied that she is sixteen and in turn, she bounced the same question at him. Percy said that he is Twenty-one, but he did not disclose about his first marriage at that time to Mary.

---

## 1.7 MARY'S JOURNEY TO LONDON

---

One night, while Mary was reading Percy's poem, Isabel rushed towards her with a letter, written by Mary's father. The letter was carrying a message that her step-sister had been unwell for a week so she was asked to visit home. Hence Mary had to leave Scotland and before leaving, she asked for a favour to Isabel requesting her to bid farewell to Percy on her behalf if she could. Isabel agreed to do so. At one time, she had to leave London unwillingly and now she was forced to leave Scotland with the same unwillingness. Mary reached her native land again and she was received by her father and he took her to Claire by informing her that she is unwell for a week and left the room. Claire revealed to her that she pretended to be unwell because she wanted Mary's company. At that moment, Mary realized that that she was back to her old life once more.

As days went by, while maintaining the household, Claire informed Mary that a new person was about to come to their home for dinner, and he is going to be a Student of their father for a few days. During that evening, Jane Clairemont along with the family members, were all set for the dinner and waiting for that special guest. Godwin came home along with that person, who was none other than the poet Percy Shelley. He introduced Percy to his family and Mary was shocked by meeting Percy again in her life. During the dinner, Jane Clairemont requested Percy to visit their bookshop. Godwin endorsed that suggestion and asked Mary to help Percy in inspecting their books. After completing their dinner, Percy and Mary went to the bookshop. Unable to resist her temptation to know about his visit, Mary asked him the reason for his sudden presence. Percy told that he was not only there to work under her father but he came to see her indeed. Even at that time, Percy never let her know about his first marriage. Eventually, Percy Shelley fixed a meeting with Mary for the next morning. She agreed with a smile and asked him to come to her mother's graveyard thinking that he won't come there. She also said that it was her only favorite place. The very next day, they met at the graveyard. During their conversation, Mary said that this is the place which inspired her to write stories and poems and also prompted her to visit there whenever she wanted to feel her mother's embrace. Since then, after every meeting their affinity got stronger. Percy gave a piece of paper with a poem written on it to her and said that it was written only for her and left her alone. Mary was much delighted reading that poem. While reading the last line, a woman, interrupted Mary's contemplation. She was Harriet. She introduced herself to Mary as Percy's wife. This statement of Harriet was intentionally used to nail two things in Mary's



mind. Primarily, it shows that she was aware about their growing infatuation and Harriet was warning Mary to keep away from Percy.

Mary was shocked to hear that as she didn't know the fact earlier and she told her that Percy was just a student of her father and nothing more than that. That same day after dusk, Mary turned off all the candles in the house and stepped into the library and she found Percy there. She got highly infuriated on seeing him and asked him the reason for hiding his marriage. Percy replied that it happened due to mere infatuation and he further explained that the relationship was almost over a year ago he is only paying for his little child Ianthe. Even after hearing these explanations, Mary was not convinced. Finally, Percy asked Mary to follow her heart but not her mind in that issue, but Mary left the place with a lot of confusion in her mind. That night, Claire and Mary were conversing about the same issue. Mary felt that she was highly disturbed by Percy. She couldn't bear the pain and hence she was not able to confront him. Claire gave her sympathy to her and Mary promised Claire that soon she would take her to some new place as she didn't want Claire suffocating like her in that home. The next day morning Mary's stepmother got to know what was going on between Mary and Percy through Claire. In the evening while Mary was at her work she purposely started the quarrel with Mary. Later, she dragged her dead mother into the quarrel by speaking ill of her. Mary requested her stepmother not to insult her mother in this way but she did not listen to Mary. This made Mary to emotionally burst and she shouted at her stepmother and left the place. She rushed to her bedroom and started weeping without knowing a way to face that emotional breakdown.

During her moments of outburst, she saw that same poem which was given by Shelley beneath the books. She read those lines again and again and felt better. Mary ran towards her mother's grave believing that Percy would be there and as she expected, Percy was there, she declared her love to him. They both decided to live together and subsequently Mary conveyed their decision to Mr. Godwin. Godwin had wanted Mary to become a successful novelist. After hearing this, he got angry and tried to explain about the consequences of their momentary decision born out of infatuation. Despite the repeated advice and warnings of Godwin, they never got rid of their attachment and they remained steadfast in their decision to get married. Godwin lost his patience and scolded Percy and warned him never to step into his house. He warned Mary too and told her that if she continued to love Percy, she will have to forget her father forever. After this family altercation, Mary decided to step out of the house on that same night. She got down from the stairs during the middle of the night and suddenly, Claire came there and reminded about the promise that Mary gave to her. This unexpected situation forced Mary to take a prompt decision. Hence she decided to take Claire with her. Guided by her passion and fate, Mary and Percy along with Claire eloped to France. Mrs. Shelley's early love life was going well and they spent some time gleefully in France.

---

## 1.8 MARY AND HER PERSONAL CALAMITIES

---

Mary, Percy, and Claire took a six-week tour throughout France, Switzerland, Germany, Holland, Paris and returned to London. Later, Mrs. Shelley published a novel based on this six-week tour. As days went by, they visited many locations throughout England. Later, Mary got pregnant and when she told Percy that she was pregnant, he was much delighted and exclaimed that it would be their prodigy.

Meanwhile, Thomas Hogg who was Percy's dear friend, came to visit Percy after a long time. Shelley arranged a dinner party that night especially for him. By the

end of the dinner, Mary went to sleep. At that time, Hogg approached Percy and disclosed his love for Mary. The next day, Hogg, with Percy's encouragement proposed his love to Mary. After listening to this proposal, Mary got shocked and told that love is free but to be with only one person. Mary told Percy about Hogg's proposal and she asked him to warn his friend. Percy replied that what she is claiming as love is a poor logic. She shouted at Percy and criticized him on his concept of love. Percy replied indistinctly that she was a hypocrite like her father. Mary wept and felt that Percy was not close to the man that she thought he would be. Once again she felt that she was deceived which made her to go through mental stress. As usual, she found refuge in writing stories to save herself from torment and mental turbulence. However, Mary lived with Percy as she was devoted only to him.

---

## 1.9 MARY'S FIRST NOVEL FRANKENSTEIN OR THE MODERN PROMETHEUS

---

One evening, they went out for a gathering accompanied by Claire. Lord Byron, who was then great poet and also a politician, joined that gathering. Mr. Brycison, a galvanizer, presented the final demonstration on that evening and he displayed the process of muscular stimulation via electrical means. He used a galvanizing machine to generate electricity and made it flow through a dead frog. All the while Mary was surprised to see the muscular stimulation which was performed on that dead frog. She was witnessing the process of resurrecting the dead and there Mary got a small spark regarding writing a horror story based on this idea. On that same evening, Lord Byron and Claire met and developed a relationship due to which they met twice or thrice later.

Coming back to our story, Mary gave birth to a girl child two months prematurely and named Clara. As it was a premature child the baby died after ten days. Mary couldn't digest the death of her daughter who just lived with her for a very short time. After a year, during 1816, she gave birth to a baby boy and named him William Shelley. At that same time Claire had an affair with Lord Byron and got pregnant. So, Percy's family with the new born infant William along with Claire moved to Geneva and stayed next door to Lord Byron. After a few days, they all went to Byron's house as guests where they met Dr. Polidori, a physician, who was accommodated at Byron's house for some time. He was very kind to Mary Shelley and gave his sympathy to her for losing her first child. He also discussed with her on the process of galvanism which is applied on human corpses. Those pieces of information helped Mary to sow the seeds for the novel "Frankenstein". She started her writing process by preparing the initial notes exactly in the June of 1816.

The real zeal of producing a mind boggling story within her was awakened through the following series of events. It was raining from dawn till dusk on that particular day. All had gathered together in the hall that evening. Byron said he wanted every one of them to have a pastime. So, he challenged all of them including Mary to write a ghost story and he also declared that it was an open competition. Those words of Byron's stimulated Mary to start the novel Frankenstein loaded with more elements of horror. In the month of October, 1816, Fanny, half-sister of Mary committed suicide by overdosing on laudanum which is a medical solution containing the extract of opium plant.

A month later, Harriet Brook, first and legal wife of Percy committed suicide by drowning due to her inability to bear with the pain of her husband's relationship

with another woman. On hearing that news, both Percy and Mary were shocked and got deeply disturbed. At the end of 1816, Percy and Mary got married and moved to Marlow. Meanwhile, Claire gave birth to a girl child and named that child Allegra. Few days later, Byron detached himself from Claire and accepted to pay for Allegra alone. Later, Mary understood about such men those who behaved much patriarchal around her family circle and she truly realized her mother's work on women empowerment as she felt that was the high time to acknowledge and revere her mother's words of wisdom towards women's liberation. The following couple of years were a very tough time for her. It is during this time that she gave birth to another girl child in September which died of fever after having lived just for one month. She also lost William Shelley, her son, due to malaria. Despite her emotional anguish and stress, she continued to write that horror novel. It is believed that the above mentioned chain of misfortunes instead of jeopardizing her enthusiasm within her, provided her with more ideas and tenacity to speed up the writing process. Finally, Mary completed this arduous task and named that novel as Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus.

She tried releasing Frankenstein through various publishers but failed in her attempt to deliver her intellectual child successfully as all those publishers ignored and insulted her as she was just a woman and not capable of writing such a great story. They also felt that this novel might be a work of her husband. Mary got infuriated and determined to keep away from those who shamed her. Finally, she went to "The Lackington Group", which was a publishing firm and submitted her story. Left with no other option, Mary told them that the introduction part was written by Percy and published that novel anonymously. She came back home and discussed the issue with Percy expecting him to understand her predicament and also to empathize with her. Shelley on the other, without showing any immediate concern, monotonously replied that he was delighted about the publication. Above all, he did not show least interest in finding the reasons behind the anonymous publication of the novel. At this juncture Mary felt that he had no care and concern either for her or for her work. This family crisis later took shape as a minor quarrel among the great thinkers due to which Percy left home and moved somewhere for few days leaving Mary alone.

---

## 1.10 STORY OF "FRANKENSTEIN OR THE MODERN PROMETHEUS"

---

Frankenstein got published and its fame reached everywhere. Most of the reading public strongly believed that this novel must have been written by Percy. Yet all of them wondered about the anonymous publication. The novel was about a monster or creature created by Victor Frankenstein, who himself was the protagonist of the story. Victor created that creature with the idea of bringing dead people back to life. Unfortunately, that creature turned out to be a loathsome monster of destruction. The monster, out of helpless and intolerable loneliness killed the entire family of Victor to quench his thirst for revenge. At last, Victor died with the pain of losing his family. Later, the monster destroyed itself with the final realization that his creator himself is no longer alive. The reason for the fame of Frankenstein was the narrative style of Mary and her extensive application of Gothic and horror elements interspersed with qualities of Romanticism that made Frankenstein the most dreadful novel ever written.

In addition to these qualities, the monster which we find here personifies many things such as man's destructive tendency and the decadence of human values and human resources due to industrial revolution. At times, whenever there is a dire

need, nature will take shape as the giant monster in the form of natural calamities and will bring order as a part of its balancing strategies. It seems Mary observed all the above mentioned aspects during her multiple trips within England and Europe and the creature gobbled all those human vices and took shape as the monster in the novel Frankenstein. Bill Phillips concludes his essay Frankenstein and Mary Shelley's *Wet Ungenial Summerby* highlighting the influence of this monster in the avenues of economics and culture studies by personifying the power of nature as Frankenstein's monster and man's inability to confront its wrath through the following lines:

"We cannot afford to leave environmental questions out of our analysis of cultural and literary texts, just as we cannot afford to neglect the environment in our day to day life, in the management of the economy, in politics, or in anything regarding our society and our lives. If we do, nature has a habit of reminding us it is there, just as the monster, a force of nature perverted by human ingenuity, is constantly reminding Victor Frankenstein of his existence, just as the tsunami of December 26th 2004, and the Pakistan earthquake of October 10th 2005, remind us that we inhabit a world we do not control." (p – 68)

As a social reformer and anthropologist, Godwin read the novel and understood the gravity of this work through its multi-disciplinary approach and its complex structure. He arranged for a gathering to celebrate the success of Frankenstein. Percy joined the gathering and somehow Mary knew about the gathering and went there but she was hiding behind the closet. Godwin praised Percy and introduced him as the writer of the story to all those who attended the gathering. Percy stepped on to the stage and revealed the truth that he was not ready to take any credit for that novel and said that Mary was the author of Frankenstein. After hearing this news, Godwin was astonished about his daughter's accomplishment and felt very proud at that moment of revelation. Soon after this, Mary joined Percy from her secluded hiding place and she felt good about being with him at this jubilant moment. This particular event is considered as very significant in the life of Mary Shelley for a range of reasons. If Percy had failed to acknowledge Mary at the right time, the male centric reading public and the publishing industries would not have recognized Mary as a writer. Since the theme of the novel is more radical and questions patriarchy, it is evident that some of the publishers might have deliberately neglected its publication. The above described events vividly shows that the novel reached the public with due recognition only after Percy Shelley revealed the true author of the novel. This publishing episode of Mary vividly portrays the male-chauvinistic tendency of both the reading and the critical thinking literary circles which saturated the entire social system of those days. A plethora of socio-cultural and literary perspectives are offered to locate the novel Frankenstein within various domains. At the same time, it is very evident that these attempts are never ending and they will be unsuccessful in restricting the novel within certain chosen frameworks. While discussing the complex framework of this text, Marshall Brown in his essay *Frankenstein: A Child's Tale*, offers his thoughts in this regard through the following lines.

"Mary Shelley must have been very lucky at cards. It's not as if she was unhappy at love: she was full of passions, and they were often stormily requited. But she was certainly unlucky, from the moment of her birth. There is something irremediably capricious about her fate, as there is about the composition and destiny of her most famous novel and about its wildly excited contents. Young as she was, its author, after all, had led a profoundly disrupted life. Perhaps that is why Frankenstein will not settle into any composed pattern of either individual or group

meanings. It is written with head and heart inseparably, and its turbulent energies overwhelm any ideology we may discern in it. Critics have found it a more or less direct representation of Shelley's biography, a reckoning with the ideas of her parents, a fable of the role of women, or of the unconscious, or of family or social structures, or of political turmoil, of scientific discovery, of colonialism, economic theory, capitalist enterprise, or literary production. Their accounts succeed, for Frankenstein's monster spells trouble, in almost any imaginable sphere of life. But they do not satisfy." (p – 145).

The above given quote emphasizes that Mary Shelley became famous through this novel by adoring it as a precious ornament of her life. At the same time, this novel would not have been possible without the influence of her turbulent life which served as the fuel and fountain head of her creativity.

---

## 1.11 OTHER WORKS OF MARY SHELLEY

---

The couple reunited and moved to Rome for a while. While writing the novel Frankenstein, she also wrote History of Six-weeks Tour. It described their six-week tour that they took during 1814. Only after that tour did she complete Frankenstein and got the name and fame.

- Mary Shelley wrote Matilda, which was her second substantial work. This novel was written between August 1819 and February 1820. Mary sent that to Godwin but he didn't take any effort to publish that novel. Later, it was posthumously published in 1859. At the end of 1819, Mary gave birth to her son Percy Florence, who was the only child of Mary to live up to his adulthood.
- She also wrote the mythological drama called Proserpine, which is a play or drama written mainly for children. Percy contributed poems for that drama. Despite all the efforts, that play was neglected and ignored by some commentators and critics.
- In 1821, Jules Saladin, who was a French translator, translated Frankenstein and published the same in France. That was the first translation which was available on Frankenstein.
- In the middle of 1820, Mary started writing a novel and she named it as Castruccio, Prince of Lucca. She already had the idea of writing that story at the time of her marriage. Godwin later changed that title and kept that as Valperga, which was a historical novel defining the life and adventures of Castruccio, who was the prince of Lucca. She finished that novel after a year but the work wasn't published at that time.
- Mary was never happy in her life because misery was united with her life. She got the terrible news that Percy had died in a boat crash. Percy along with his friend was sailing to Leghorn in his boat. Somewhere during their voyage there occurred a sudden storm in the Gulf of Spezia. This storm violently shook the boat and toppled it. Both Shelley and his friend drowned in that accident and their mortal remains were found after ten days.
- Mary lost Percy when she was only 24 due to which she was thrown in to the depths of anguish and loneliness and this loss gave her intolerable grief. Now, she had only her son Percy Florence with her and it is with him she had to fight the battle of life as a lonely soldier. Percy was cremated and Mary preserved the mortal remains of Percy's heart considering it as a true symbol of love.

- Later, in February 1823, Valperga got published in three volumes in London. In the same year, Mary composed her poem *The Choice*, a poem on Percy Bysshe Shelley's death.
- After few days, Mary went for a walk with her son, passing her father's publishing firm. She saw a book through the window which was none other than her novel the 2nd edition of *Frankenstein* published by her father. Godwin had mentioned Mary Shelley as the author of that book and she was quite happy about seeing her name on the front page below the title *Frankenstein*.
- In 1824, Mary published all the unpublished works of Percy, mainly his poems. She edited the volume and wrote the preface for all those poems and published them in Percy's name. She never remarried because she had always loved Percy, even after his death. Mary refused a marriage proposal from an American actor too.
- In 1825, Mary completed the first draft of the novel *The Last Man* which was a science fiction. In 1826, she completed that novel and it was published in three volumes in London. In 1828, two of her stories got published anonymously, later they appeared with her name as the author of *Frankenstein*.
- In 1833, she completed a novel *Lodore* and it was published in 1835. That was her penultimate novel which focused on the fortune of the wife and daughter of *Lodore*. Mary completed her last novel *Falkner* in 1836, which got published later in 1837.
- In 1836, Mary's father Godwin died. According to his wish, he was interred near his wife Wollstonecraft's graveyard.

---

## 1.12 LAST STAGE OF MARY SHELLEY'S LIFE

---

In 1837, her novel *Falkner* got published in three volumes in London. Mary edited and published most of the works of Percy. She published *The Poetical Words of Percy* in London by dedicating them to her son Percy Florence.

She underwent severe illness due to the strain which she took to edit and publish Shelley's works and was frequently falling sick during the last decade of her life. In 1842, Percy Shelley's father Timothy died. As a result of this, Percy Florence inherited the estate and the lands. Mary suffered from sleep paralysis which prevented her from writing novels. In 1848, Percy Florence married Jane St. John. Percy Florence with his wife and Mary Shelley moved to field place where they took an apartment and lived there. Percy Florence's marriage was a happy one as Mary and her daughter-in-law were fond of each other.

Mary was extremely ill for a few days. During the December of 1850, she suffered from an intolerable headache which warned her family members to go for an immediate examination. Finally, on February 11th 1851, she put an end to the long-lasting battle which she waged with her destiny throughout her life. She died of brain cancer at the age of 53. Lucy Madox Rossetti ends her biographical sketch of Mary Shelley with the following words:

"but the pressure could not much longer remain. The strong brain, and tender, if once too impassioned heart, failed on February 21, 1851, and nothing remained but a cherished memory of the devoted daughter and mother, and the faithful wife of Shelley."

As per her wish, she was incinerated beside her father and mother by her son. Percy Florence and his wife Jane exhumed the cremated remains of Wollstonecraft and Godwin from the grave and had them re-interred beside Mary Shelley, at their family's tomb in Bournemouth. After a year, Percy Florence and Jane found a box inside the work desk of Mary. They found something strange inside the box where Mary kept a bunch of hair of her dead children and mortal remains of her husband's heart. Percy Florence wept and felt sad for losing his legendary mother.

---

### 1.13 LET US SUM UP

---

"You are soon borne away by the waves and lost in darkness and distance", said Mary Shelley in her novel. Some of the miserable scenes and quotes featured in the novel "Frankenstein" can be said to be a little reflection of her life's miseries. There was never a famine for the shortcomings and tribulations in Mary Shelley's life. Despite her emotional anguish, she focused on her goals toward success. Mary lost her partner at a very young age and never remarried. She lost three of her children just after a few days of their birth. As we are very much aware, she lost her mother just after 10 days of her birth. She never felt the warmth of her mother. But she continued to face everything in her life which made her find her refuge in writing novels and stories. Mary never let those miseries wound her goals. She inherited that fire from her mother and found her voice through her writings.

Money is everything in life and for those of us who think so, even a minute's love is like a bar of gold. Mary had that love for Percy and her mother and father throughout her entire life. So she thought of herself as a millionaire. Despite her illness and sadness, she never gave up and she defined that as the nature of life, in one of her novel. Life always demands pain. Pain makes us stronger like the roots of the plant's that hold the soil. Everyone teaches us to be tough but no one teaches us to accept our vulnerabilities. If each of us started doing that, we would be the person par excellence. "There is something at work in my soul, which I do not understand" told Mary Shelley in Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus.

---

### 1.14 QUESTIONS AND ANSWER KEYS

---

1. Critically comment on the role of William Godwin in chiselling Mary Shelley's life and carrier at different stages.
  - Tutoring Mary Shelley amidst great personal and economic turbulence
  - Teaching Mary through his literary creations and his socio political ideology
  - Relocated his daughter to his friend's place to learn,
  - Detached from Mary for few years because of her love on Percy Shelley
  - Published the second edition of Frankenstein with his daughter's name in the title card of the novel.
2. What major aspects can be attributed for Mary Shelley to become a great writer?
  - Received consistent motivation and moral support from the works and radical intellect of her mother
  - Imbibing certain values from her father/writer during her early years
  - Reading and brooding upon works of her contemporary poets and scientists

- Relentless courageous effort along with devotion to write a scientific and a Gothic novel at an early teenage
  - Quest to achieve despite many impediments.
3. How did Mary conceive and create a world-famous novel Frankenstein?
    - Lord Byron's story writing competition and his challenge on writing a horror story
    - Mary's nightmares on an unseen monster and her restless thought process on bringing dead to life
    - Her zeal and resolution towards creating a frightening Gothic novel with the web of romantic ideology.
  4. How was the relationship between Mary and her stepmother?
    - Never got along with each other, Mary's step-mother prevented Mary from going to school
    - Always assigning household work to Mary
    - Speaking ill of Mary's own mother
    - Picking up quarrels each and every time.
  5. How did Mary spend the rest of her life after the death of her husband?
    - Finding refuge on writing many novels and poems to taking care of her son Percy Florence.
    - Compiled and published those unpublished works of her husband
    - Suffered from frequent illness for the last ten years of her life.

---

### 1.15 SUGGESTED READINGS

---

1. A Chronology of the Life of Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley ,<https://romantic-circles.org/reference/chronologies/mschronology/chrono.html>
2. BBC Documentary  
<https://www.dropbox.com/s/ogilam7k0c6tps0/Frankenstein%26%2339%3Bs%20Monster%20-%20The%20Real%20Story%20BBC%20Documentary%202014.mp4?dl=0>
3. Shelley Mrs. Rossetti Lucy Madox 1890.
4. Brown Marshall, "Frankenstein": A Child's Tale, NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction, Vol. 36, No. 2 (Spring, 2003), pp. 145-175, Duke University Press.
5. Phillips Bill, Frankenstein and Mary Shelley's "Wet Ungenial Summer", Atlantis, Diciembre 2006, Vol. 28, No. 2 (Diciembre 2006), pp. 59-68, AEDEAN: Asociacionspanola de estudiosanglo-americanos.



---

## UNIT 2 *FRANKENSTEIN: A GOTHIC NOVEL*

---

### Structure

#### 2.0 Objectives

#### 2.1 Introduction

##### 2.1.1 The Writer's Bio-brief

#### 2.2 Gothic Literature

##### 2.2.1 Definition

##### 2.2.2 Development of genre

##### 2.2.3 Major writers

##### 2.2.4 Gothic elements in Mary Shelly's Frankenstein or Modern Prometheus

#### 2.3 Frankenstein or Modern Prometheus on screen

#### 2.4 Frankenstein on Screen

#### 2.5 Let Us Sum Up

#### 2.6 Questions and Answer Keys

#### 2.7 Suggested Readings

---

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

---

After reading this unit, the students will be able to:

- Know in detail about Gothic ideology
- Grasp the basic structure of gothic and horror literature.
- Establish a fundamental connection between the novel, the novelist and the gothic ideology.
- Read the novel and associate it with other gothic writers and their writings along with various film adaptations which were made on Frankenstein.
- Throw light upon some of the unexplored frontiers of fantasy and imagination function as a bedrock of the novel's creation.

---

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

---

### 2.1.1 Writer's Bio-Brief

Mary Shelley was the daughter of two literary and political luminaries. Her mother was Mary Wollstonecraft, a feminist thinker and activist and the author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792). Her father, William Godwin, was an influential, radical political thinker and writer. Her father described her as

“... singularly bold, somewhat imperious, and active of mind. Her desire of knowledge is great and her perseverance in everything she undertakes, almost invincible.” William Godwin in 1811 (Abinger MSS).

Mary Shelley's childhood was not a happy one. Her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, died soon after giving birth to Mary Shelley in 1797. Her father, William Godwin, married their neighbour, Mary Jane Clairmont, soon after his first wife's death. He hoped to provide a mother's care to the infant Mary and her half-sister, Fanny Imlay, who was Mary Wollstonecraft's daughter from a previous relationship. But the stepmother did not give the young girls the warmth

and affection they craved. [As we shall see, this lack of maternal affection was to shape Mary Shelley's views about parenting].

Although Mary Shelley received formal schooling, yet the primary mode of her education was largely unconventional. Her father supervised her education and she was tutored rigorously in various subjects including French and Latin. Her rich and eclectic education further evolved through an interaction with her father's contemporaries. She was exposed to liberal political thought and the varied ideas and discussions of the times in addition to possessing the formidable feminist legacy of her mother. She was a voracious reader. With her father's encouragement, she often wrote stories as a child. She herself acknowledged the contribution of the literary legacy of both her parents to her writing and declares it in the Introduction to the revised edition of *Frankenstein* in 1831 in the following lines:

"It is not singular that as the daughter of two persons of distinguished literary celebrity, I should very early in life have thought of writing. As a child I scribbled; and my favourite pastime, during the hours given me for recreation, was to 'write stories.'"

This intellectual heritage and rich education shaped her literary career as we shall see later. Her romantic relationship with the famous romantic poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley, can also be understood in this context. Her interaction with great poets and thinkers only increased as a result of her relationship with Shelley by being a part of 'The Shelley Circle'. Remarkably, however, she moved far beyond the ideas and the ideology of both her parents and her husband. [In fact, *Frankenstein* has been read as Mary Shelley's challenge to her husband and their circle at Villa Diodati where *Frankenstein* had its genesis about the dangers of the unchecked egotism of the artist.]

Percy Bysshe Shelley was one of William Godwin's political followers and Mary and Shelley met in 1812 and fell in love with each other even though Shelley was a married man. Mary saw Percy Bysshe Shelley as an embodiment of her parents' liberal and reformist ideas of the 1790s. On 26 June 1814, Mary declared her love for Percy at Mary Wollstonecraft's graveside in the cemetery of St. Pancras Old Church where she often went. In 1814, along with her stepsister, Claire Clairmont, Mary eloped to France with Shelley and they travelled throughout Europe. Mary was pregnant when they returned to England. Over the next two years, she and Percy Bysshe faced ostracism, constant debt, and the death of their prematurely-born daughter. This only reinforced in her mind the close connection with birth and death, harking back to her own feelings of loss at her mother's death.

A son, William Shelley, was born to the couple in January 1816. After the suicide of Shelley's wife, Harriet, Mary and Shelley married in late 1816. (Mary's half-sister, Fanny Imlay, too, had committed suicide.) A daughter, Clara Everina Shelley, was born in 1817 but died in Venice soon after the couple left for Italy. In 1819, their son, William Shelley died in Rome. Such profound personal tragedies: the death of her mother, the suicide of her half-sister, and then the deaths of three children were to leave a lasting impression on Mary's personality and her writing. For some time, Mary was in a state of deep depression that isolated her from Percy Bysshe Shelley, who wrote in his notebook:

My dearest Mary, wherefore hast thou gone,  
And left me in this dreary world alone?  
Thy form is here indeed—a lovely one—

But thou art fled, gone down a dreary road  
 That leads to Sorrow's most obscure abode.  
 For thine own sake I cannot follow thee  
 Do thou return for mine. (Seymour, 233)

Her fourth and only surviving child, Percy Florence Shelley was born in November 1819. 1822 was a difficult year when Mary almost died in a miscarriage. Later in the same year, Percy Bysshe Shelley drowned in the Gulf of Spezia. Mary returned to England after burying Shelley in Rome. In 1836, her father, William Godwin passed away. Mary Shelley's health began to deteriorate, though she made two continental tours in 1840 and 1842 with Percy Florence and his friends. She died in London in 1851 at the age of 53. In accordance with Mary Shelley's wishes, Percy Florence and his wife, Jane, had the coffins of Mary Shelley's parents exhumed and buried with her in Bournemouth.

---

## 2.2 GOTHIC LITERATURE

---

### 2.2.1 Definition

In the most general terms, Gothic literature can be defined as writing that employs dark picturesque scenery, startling melodramatic narrative devices, and finally an overall atmosphere of exoticism, mystery, fear, and dread. A Gothic novel or story often revolves around a large ancient house that conceals a terrible secret or that serves as the refuge of an especially frightening and threatening character. Despite the fairly common use of this bleak motif, Gothic writers have also used supernatural elements, elements of romance, well-known historical characters and travel and adventure narratives to entertain their readers.

### 2.2.2 Development of the Genre

Gothic literature developed during the Romantic period in Britain. The first mention of "Gothic," as pertaining to literature was in the subtitle of Horace Walpole's 1765 story *The Castle of Otranto: A Gothic Story* which, the British Library says, was meant by the author as a subtle joke: "When he used the word it meant something like 'barbarous,' as well as 'deriving from the Middle Ages.'" In the book, it's purported that the story was an ancient one, then recently discovered. But that's just part of the tale.

The supernatural elements in the story launched a whole new genre which took off in Europe. Then, America's Edgar Allen Poe got a hold of it in the mid-1800s and succeeded like no one else. In Gothic literature, he found a place to explore psychological trauma, the evils of man, and mental illness. Any modern-day zombie story, detective story, or Stephen King's novels; all of them are indebted to Poe. There may have been successful Gothic writers before and after him, but no one perfected the genre quite like Poe.

### 2.2.3 Major Gothic Writers

A few of the most influential and popular 18th-century Gothic writers were Horace Walpole (*The Castle of Otranto*, 1765), Ann Radcliffe (*Mysteries of Udolpho*, 1794), Matthew Lewis (*The Monk*, 1796), and Charles Brockden Brown (*Wieland*, 1798). The genre continued to command a large readership well into the 19th century. Initially, Romantic authors such as Sir Walter Scott (*The Tapestried Chamber*, 1829) adopted Gothic conventions. Later Victorian writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson (*The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr.*

Hyde, 1886) and Bram Stoker (Dracula, 1897) incorporated Gothic motifs in their stories of horror and suspense.

Elements of Gothic fiction are prevalent in several of the acknowledged classics of 19th-century literature including Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (1818), Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847), Victor Hugo's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (1831 in French), and many of the tales written by Edgar Allan Poe (*The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, 1841; *The Tell-Tale Heart*, 1843).

---

### 2.3 GOTHIC ELEMENTS IN MARY SHELLEY'S "FRANKENSTEIN"

---

A strategy that Mary Shelley employed to disown authorial responsibility was the use of the Gothic style. The Gothic may be defined as a style of fiction characterized by the use of desolate or remote settings and macabre, mysterious or violent incidents, or at a deeper level, by exploration of social values and proscriptions, concern with good and evil and questions regarding the boundaries between what is human, monstrous, natural, unnatural, supernatural and divine. The Gothic genre is an extreme form of Romanticism where the supernatural comes together with the sublime to generate not just awe but horror as well. The Gothic genre can be considered as another response to the strict empiricism of 18th century Britain. The term "Gothic" is derived from Germanic architecture that was prevalent across Europe. The Gothic genre has been a part of popular culture since its inception.

Horace Walpole's "Castle of Otranto" (1765) is regarded as the first Gothic novel. The events usually happened in distant time and setting and fear and terror were the emotions evoked. The novel set a precedent of how Gothic novels were to be written as the word "Gothic" was a part of the subtitle of the novel. The initial reception was good but critics soured when they realized that it was an original text rather than the translation of an old Italian text, according to its initial claims. The Gothic thus became a part of low-brow fiction for these eminent critics. However, the genre did not fall out of grace for authors and it was further developed by writers like Clara Reeve, Anne Radcliffe and William Thomas Beckford. The form was quite successful in the 19th century.

Frankenstein written by Mary W. Shelley is perhaps the most well-known Gothic work of all times. Mary Shelley's monster continues to frighten readers throughout the globe even today. The success of Frankenstein can be understood in the various forms the Monster has appeared in popular culture. The reason for the success of the novel is quite simple: Mary Shelley craftily and meticulously brings together the realms of mind and matter. The novel is not just science fiction nor is it just a Gothic horror. The novel is the story of mankind, the Faustian desire to know the forbidden is central to the story. The novel is the story of the human who falls, trying to outreach, trying to become a God-like figure. In her introduction to the 1831 edition to Frankenstein, Mary Shelley declared her desire to "curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart." However, the conventional Gothic elements are missing in this 'ghost story'.

According to Hannah North, although Gothic novels were written mainly to evoke terror in their readers, they also served to show the dark side of human nature. Novels such as Frankenstein draw the reader's attention to science instead of superstition on what is frighteningly possible and familiar rather than entirely

absurd and alien. They make a link between the world of text and the world of the reader.

Gothic writers like Shelley were interested in the breakdown of boundaries in the exploration of what is forbidden, in desires that should neither be spoken of nor be acted upon. If we read *Frankenstein* as a Gothic novel, we can suggest that what Victor does and what he creates is unnatural. He goes too far, breaks the laws of nature, crosses forbidden boundaries, and what he unleashes within himself and in society is disruption and destruction. Victor Frankenstein's psychological dilemmas, however, are magnanimous. Victor is divided between science and family, between playing God and caring for his loved ones, between creating the monster and taking responsibility for the act. Victor Frankenstein's psychological troubles take a physical shape in the monster. The monster is Victor's ego personified. The innocence of the monster and later his malfeasance are the two sides of Victor Frankenstein. Misery makes the monster a fiend and misery is what makes Victor a fiend. The choices made by Victor throughout the novel amaze the reader and horrify at the same time.

Another case worth considering is the case of the monster. The monster of *Frankenstein* is not so frightening when compared to the demonic horrors present in today's horror genre. This monster comes from outside the civilized world, he is an unnatural progeny, more outcast than the outcast. Denied love, affection, and other pleasures of life, rejected by his creator the monster is but another human-desperate. He wants to be noticed by his creator. He is tired of residing in alpine, caves and glaciers hence he is in need of comfort. This comfort demanded Victor to provide him with a mate to kill his loneliness. If this genuine request is not fulfilled, he will kill not by accident but deliberately to take revenge. This monster is not your common monster, he is educated and there is something elegant about him. His methods of revenge are not bloodied, he is the coldest winter personified, made from those cold in the grave. His revenge is methodical and almost painless. It is as if the monster pities his victims. This is a quintessential monster, no blood rage, no gore, just "justified revenge". This is the Gothic monster.

The suggestions of incest in Victor's love for Elizabeth, along with the focus on a creative act that goes beyond both the functions of God and women and a creation that blurs the boundaries between life and death, not to mention the possibility of the Creature being Victor's dark side which act out his forbidden desires signifying that *Frankenstein* fitted in with more modern conceptions of the Gothic.

The main protagonist of a Gothic novel is usually a solitary character who has an egocentric nature. This is seen many times in *Frankenstein*, often represented by the landscape: the bleak, glacial fields of the Alps and the mists of the Arctic serve to indicate the isolation of the two protagonists. The solitary character represents both Victor and his Creature as they both lived their lives in social isolation. There are several common elements in Gothic fiction. The setting is usually an old castle. The plot moves in different paces: at times slow and sometimes rapid. There are multiple frames of narration. The story contains elements of mystery and horror. There are Jungian archetypal characters and along with that, the text has various gloomy scenes with low lighting. The most important element is the element of psychological dilemma.

*Frankenstein* is a good example of a Gothic novel because it contains almost all of the above characteristics. The setting of the novel is not a castle but Church

backyards and cemeteries exclusively designed to cater to the theme of the story. There are multiple frames of narration in the novel. Robert Walton is narrating the tale to his sister. The tale has been told to Walton by Victor Frankenstein who, in turn, knew parts of the tale told by the monster. The plot moves slowly at first but it soon catches up with the reader and quickly overtakes the reader startling her. The novel contains elements of mystery in the way Victor creates the monster. The reader is at loss at times even unable to locate the whole action. There are three archetypes in Gothic fiction: the wanderer, the vampire and the seeker of forbidden knowledge. Frankenstein employs the third archetype through Victor who is trying to play God, trying to know what is supposed to be unknown. The novel contains elements of gloom, low lighting, melancholy and personal loss and they combine to create a dense gloomy environment. Though the events of the novel are not gory like modern Gothic fiction, they are horrific nonetheless. The monster keeps on killing Victor's loved ones.

Frankenstein does not fit in the norm where Gothic novels are concerned; it certainly gives us an insight into the dark side of human psyche and exposes the society of that time and Shelley's reaction to it. Anne Mellor notes that Mary Shelley uses the Gothic to "censor her own speech in Frankenstein". The Gothic lens becomes a tool to imagine the unimaginable or invoke the unconscious; it distorts the pictures but projects a reality that cannot be apprehended in any other way. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the Gothic was seen as a limited but genuine substitute for the sciences of history and of psychology, a way of gaining access and understanding areas where knowledge had not quite penetrated (Punter, 1980)

The Gothic mode has been seen as a reaction against the humanistic, rationalist literature of "The Age of Reason". With an appreciation of the power of the unconscious, Mary Shelley counters a mechanistic view of the world and human nature. The Gothic suggests the power of the human will to dream what it desires and the power of the human intellect to realize these dreams. The novel Frankenstein began as a dream, a window to the unconscious. As for the Romantics, dreams in Frankenstein are important ways to gain self-knowledge but Shelley also shows that egotism ought to be tempered and the imaginative life must be lived with responsibility towards others. The Creature is a living example of what a mindlessly mechanistic world augurs. He is a result of Frankenstein's overweening egotism. However, Frankenstein's tale does bring Walton to a realization of his hubris. Mary Shelley's use of dreams is, therefore, ambivalent; she leaves the reader to judge.

In Frankenstein, serious philosophical issues are placed against an incomprehensible, subterranean and grotesque world. It has been suggested that this tension between Gothic and Romantic literary modes echoes the philosophical tension that existed between herself and her husband, the Romantic poet, Percy Bysshe Shelley. Moreover, placing Frankenstein's scientific experiments within the literary conventions of the Gothic mode serves to emphasize the dangers of Frankenstein's desire to alter irrevocably the cycles of life and death. It invokes the images of darkness and repression and uses the grammar of the occult. Initially, Frankenstein's father ensures that there is no supernatural element in his education. But that changes as he describes his activities using familiar Gothic tropes--secrecy, darkness, subterranean spaces and forbidden activities.

Since the Gothic is a form of Romanticism, it employs the sublime to remind the reader how insignificant they are in the larger frame and how tiny they are in

a magnanimous universe. Frankenstein uses the sublime again and again, in the glaciers of Switzerland, the Alps mountains and the meadows of Scotland. The sublime culminates in the Arctic, the most desolate place on earth. The sublime amazes the reader but it also keeps reminding them that it is but one figment of the huge universe. The monster of Frankenstein is a part of that sublime, partaking in the magnanimity of the natural and the supernatural.

In conclusion, Frankenstein is the most popular Gothic novel. It employs different devices common to the genre. Mary Shelley manages to create one beautiful horror story where the monster is yet another Adam fallen from grace. The monster is in fact no monster but it is judged only by its physical appearance. Mary Shelley's work is an expression of her life experiences which represents her tormented mind. Gloom is an important part of Frankenstein. The Gothic is never a pure horror story and Frankenstein is a Gothic tale in all ways possible.

---

## **2.4 FRANKENSTEIN ON SCREEN**

---

Not many works of fiction have been reproduced, adapted and adopted as many times as Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. The novel has been made into many movies, screen-plays, dramas, TV series, radio adaptations, short-stories and comics. Mary Shelley's "hideous progeny" has prospered in a way where her popularity matches that of Percy Shelley, the world famous Romantic poet.

The first adaptation was made soon enough after the novel was published. *Presumptions or the Fate of Frankenstein* was produced in 1823 five years after the publication of the novel. The play was more of a parody but it played an important role in not only increasing Mary Shelley's popularity but also determining the course future adaptations were to take. Moral concerns have always overtaken philosophical and intellectual concerns. Didactic tales are the only "useful" tales, the only tales to be told. There is of course the assumption of those who create popular cinema that the masses are incapable of understanding art. The plays continue to be produced along with at least twenty well-known plays made by critically acclaimed productions.

The first cinematic adaptation was made in 1910 by Edison studios. The movie was loosely based on the novel and concerned more with "true love" than Promethean agony. This was a silent-era film. Two other silent era movies were made but they are now considered lost. The first Sound-production was made by Universal studios Frankenstein, directed by James Whale and starring Boris Karloff as the monster in 1931. Two sequels were also made starring Karloff as the Monster: *The Bride of Frankenstein* and *The Son of Frankenstein*. The movies focus more on the demonic monstrous side of the monster than the fallen angel attitude shown by the monster in the novel.

The Hammer Films productions are another well-known adaptation of the novel. There are around seven productions created by Hammer. These movies focus more on the character of Victor Frankenstein than the character of the monster. Peter Cushing is praised for his lead role in the movies. Other Frankenstein movies were made by several production houses: some of these include *Frankenstein 1970*, *Abbott and Costello Meet Frankenstein*, *The Monster Squad*, *Frankenstein Unbound*, *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* etc. Other than these, the monster has appeared in various horror movies and in several cartoon productions. The most memorable are the 2004 movie *Van Helsing*, the cartoon movies *Hotel Transylvania* and various Frankenstein's monster-like characters in children's cartoon series *Ben 10*. The monster has played the hero in several films, some

of those originating in Japan. This is the testimony of the global nature of the Frankenstein tale. The extent of its reach can be seen in the fact that there are at least a hundred adaptations in the market.

While doing the dissection of the adaptations, one finds that none of the adaptations are truly faithful to Mary Shelley's novel. These adaptations have their origin in either the Comic or the Horrific but never the Gothic background. The adaptations are more concerned with either cautionary or didactic purposes. The true nature of the novel is lost in the adaptations. The adaptations also make several mistakes such as calling the monster as Frankenstein and calling Victor as Doctor Frankenstein. The number of characters introduced over the years has changed the form of the tale, it has now become a myth. The monster portrayed in the movies is either demonic or lusty or ridiculously horrific. Never is the monster what it is supposed to be, a fallen angel, a Lucifer, a literate person and an articulate one.

The attempts of moderation are not all that new. In fact Percy Shelley made the novel a part of the larger Romantic frame rather than letting it to be a Gothic text. The novel is either too high-art or too low-art depending upon the times. Moderating the message has always been a concern of those in power. Never does one find one proper faithful adaptation, everything is moderated, either for political or commercial concerns.

Mary Shelley's novel is loosely a collection of experiences. Her troubled childhood which made her believe that she caused her mother's death, the children she lost, the philosophical discussions at her father William Godwin's home, her troubled relationship with Percy Shelley and her early adulthood: all of these combine to create her troubled mind. The novel is but her torment expressed through writing. Such a complex work which on one side carries the sentimentalism of Romanticism and on the other side carries the rationalism of science is difficult to adapt. Humans are more concerned with blacks and whites than focusing on the greys. The only thing absolutely clear in Frankenstein is that there are no evil sides. The novel is a comment on the meaninglessness of it all. Come whatever may, do whatever they want to, human beings are a doomed species. And this idea cannot be sold to the public. The public wants entertainment, so entertainment is what it gets.

There are other adaptations which need to be mentioned while talking of the reach of the Frankenstein myth. Comic adaptations of Frankenstein are important to mention here. Comics have incorporated the character of the monster quite easily; Marvel has its independent series and mentions the monster every now and then. Other less known comics have also been made, not a handful of them are faithful to the source text. Comics have been made which revolve around film productions. Some other adaptations include Jean-Claude Carrière's novel series, BBC Radio 4's adaptations, the novel Frankenstein Unbound by Brian Aldiss.

The monster of Frankenstein is now a part of Halloween rituals. The monster that children know is a different monster altogether. The monster which children know is a powerful demonic being, usually mute and often ridiculously awkward. The monster has taken a life of its own and now has been morphed to an extent where the original is unknown. But these adaptations are another work of art altogether and they should be appreciated all the same. Mary Shelley may not be all that well known outside academia but her tale is one of the most famous ones. Frankenstein is a part of everyday life now and this is an appreciable fact in itself.



---

## 2.5 LET US SUM UP

---

After reading this chapter, you should have the clarity to relate the novel with gothic ideology along with its literary and historical background. This chapter should have helped you travel through the life of the novelist and the novel simultaneously by comprehending the thematic and the author's background. It threw light upon locating the novel Frankenstein among various theatrical and film representations in order to understand its socio-cultural and psychological perspectives. Finally, it should make you identify and address some of the seminal literary and feministic aspects of the novel.

---

## 2.6 QUESTIONS AND ANSWER KEYS:

---

1. Trace the origin of gothic literature.

In this question, you must recollect and write on the contribution of various gothic writers and their masterpieces.

2. Discuss on the life of Mary Shelly.

You should elaborate on birth and parentage of Mary Shelly along with noteworthy events which triggered her literary career.

3. Discuss on the film adaptations and their influence upon your understanding of the novel.

In this question, you should compare and contrast your understanding with the events of the original novel along with the related film adaptations. You should attempt to critically examine these film adaptations as visual texts and must evaluate their credibility both in reality and in the world of scientific fantasy.

---

## 2.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

---

Crimmins, Jonathan. "Mediation's Sleight of Hand: The Two Vectors of the Gothic in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein". *Studies in Romanticism*. Place of Publication: The Johns Hopkins University Press, Vol. 52, No. 4 (Winter 2013), pp. 561-583.

Denson, Shane. "Marvel Comics' Frankenstein: A Case Study in the Media of Serial Figures", *American Comic Books and Graphic Novels, Amerikastudien / American Studies*, Vol. 56, No. 4, (2011), pp. 531-553.

Gottlieb, Saul. "The Living Theatre in Exile: Mysteries, Frankenstein". *The Tulane Drama Review*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Summer, 1966), pp. 137-152.

Hume, Robert D. Gothic versus Romantic: A Revaluation of the Gothic Novel, *PMLA*, Vol. 84, No. 2 (Mar., 1969), pp. 282-290.

Livine, George. "Frankenstein and the Tradition of Realism". *NOVEL: A Forum on Fiction*, Vol. 7, No. 1 (Autumn, 1973), pp. 14-30.

Picart, Caroline Joan ("Kay") S. "Visualizing the Monstrous in Frankenstein Films". *Pacific Coast Philology*, Vol. 35, No. 1 (2000), pp. 17-34.

Punter, David. *The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fiction from 1765 to the Present Day.*, Longmans 1980.

Moers, Ellen. 'Female Gothic: The Monster's Mother'. First appeared in *The New York Review of Books*. Later adapted for Moers's *Literary Women*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1976. Newey, Katherine. *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. Sydney: Sydney University Press, 1993.

Butler, Marilyn. 'Frankenstein and Radical Science' *Times Literary Supplement* 4 April 1993. rpt. in *The Norton Critical Edition*, p. 302-313. Hatlen, Burton, 'Milton, Mary Shelley and Patriarchy'.

*Bucknell Review*, 28 (1983) p. 19-47. Sterrenburg, Lee. "The Last Man: Anatomy of Failed Revolutions". *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 33 (1978): 324-347.

Ward, Maryanne C. 'A Painting of the Unspeakable: Henry Fuseli's "The Nightmare" and the Creation of Mary Shelley's "Frankenstein"'. *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, Vol. 33, No. 1. (Winter, 2000), pp. 20-31.

Malchow, H. L. 'Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain'. *Past and Present*, No. 139. (May, 1993), pp. 90-130.

Tuite, Clara. 'Frankenstein's Monster and Malthus' "Jaundiced Eye": Population, Body Politics, and the Monstrous Sublime. Copyright 1998 The Johns Hopkins University Press. *Eighteenth-Century Life* 22.1 (1998) 141-155

Levine, George and U. C. Knoepfelmacher, eds. *The Endurance of Frankenstein: Essays on Mary Shelley's novel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979. Mellor, Anne K. *Mary Shelley: Her Life, Her Fiction, Her Monsters*. New York & London: Methuen and Routledge, 1988.

Voller, Jack G. "Mary Shelley." *The Literary Gothic*. 18 Jan. 2008. 8 Sep. 2008.

Malchow, H. L. 'Frankenstein's Monster and Images of Race in Nineteenth-Century Britain'. *Past and Present*, No. 139. (May, 1993), pp. 90-130.

Law, Jules. 'Being There: Gothic Violence and Virtuality in Frankenstein, Dracula, and Strange Days'. *ELH* 75 (2008) 625-652 © 2008 by The Johns Hopkins University Press 625.

THE PEOPLE'S  
UNIVERSITY

---

## UNIT 3 *FRANKENSTEIN*: SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

---

### Structure

- 3.0 Objectives
- 3.1 Introduction
  - 3.1.1 The Origin of the Subtitle
  - 3.1.2 Brief Bio Note of the Novelist
- 3.2 Story of Frankenstein
  - 3.2.1 Victor's Journey
  - 3.2.2 Captain Walton's Conclusion
- 3.3 General Analysis Of The Novel
- 3.4 A Brief Analysis Of The Characters In The Novel
  - 3.4.1 Victor Frankenstein
  - 3.4.2 The Monster
  - 3.4.3 Captain Robert Walton
  - 3.4.4 Elizabeth Lavenza
  - 3.4.5 Henry Clerval
  - 3.4.6 Caroline Beaufort
  - 3.4.7 Alphonse
  - 3.4.8 William
  - 3.4.9 Justine Moritz
  - 3.4.10 Mr. Waldman
  - 3.4.11 De Lacey
  - 3.4.12 Felix
  - 3.4.13 Agatha
  - 3.4.14 Saeed
- 3.5 Situating Frankenstein In The Domain Of Gothic, Horror And Science Fiction
- 3.6 Realities And Myths Associated With Frankenstein
- 3.7 Romantic Literature And Frankenstein
- 3.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.9 Questions And Answer Keys
- 3.10 Suggested Readings

---

### 3.0 OBJECTIVES

---

This chapter will:

- provide you with a basic understanding of the novel through a detailed summary
- give you the analysis of various major and minor characters.
- help you to grasp the novel from a broader framework of romanticism, science fiction, gothic ideology through a general and analytical overview.

---

## 3.1 INTRODUCTION

---

“Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus” is a horror novel which was written by a renowned English author Mary Shelley (1797 - 1851). The author has written many poems, travel narratives, short stories and several other novels. Nevertheless, Frankenstein is the first-ever novel written by her when she was just eighteen years old. Mary Shelley finished the novel and it was published anonymously in the year 1818 in London when she was twenty. Later, in 1823, her name appeared as the author of Frankenstein on the second edition which was published by her father William Godwin. Since Frankenstein is the pioneer of all other Gothic and fictional stories, it is still regarded as a masterpiece in English literature and for the genre of science-fiction. This novel was hailed by many literary stalwarts those days. As this novel was written during the romantic era so no wonder that it is a part of romanticism. It is the amalgamation of horror, gothic, and science-fiction. The story is all about a monster (or) creature which was created by Victor Frankenstein in an unorthodox scientific experiment and so the problem begins from there. The story might leave us with some horrific thoughts but it will not be a dull experience while reading this novel.

### 3.1.1 The Origin of Subtitle of Frankenstein: The Modern Prometheus

Victor Frankenstein is the protagonist of the novel and also the creator of the monster. The name ‘Frankenstein’ has sometimes been used to refer to the monster itself. The creature calls itself as Frankenstein in some places. “I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel...” These lines describes that the monster is defining itself as an angel from heaven. The main theme of the story is dealing with Victor Frankenstein creating a monster that brings tragedy to his life.

The Modern Prometheus is regarded as the subtitle of the novel. The name Prometheus is referred in many ways. According to Greek mythology, Ancient Greeks shaped a civilization in the ninth century to the end of antiquity. They believed and passed on some myths which are known as Greek mythology which deals with the history and stories concerned with the origin and the nature of the world. Significance of Greek’s ritual practices, the lives and activities of the heroes and some mythological creatures are also part of these accounts. One of those mythological creatures is Prometheus. Greek mythology consists of deities, which is a pantheon of gods, goddesses and some other divine figures from ancient Greek religion. All these myths are a part of ancient Greek literature. So, Prometheus is a mythological creature. Prometheus is also defined as the “cultural hero” i.e. anyone who changes the world through some new sort of invention or discovery of something that can be helpful to the humankind. In the novel, the author ironically defined Prometheus as a ‘trickster figure’ and so named the monster as The Modern Prometheus.

According to the study of folklore and religion pertaining to Greek mythology, trickster figure is a creature or character in a story who is said to be highly intelligent, strong and possesses secret knowledge in order to play some tricks. This trickster disobeys rules and conventional behavior. It can be also called as a Titan. In the Greek religion, Prometheus has never been an evil figure. He is known as the champion of humankind and also seen as the precursor of the human arts and sciences. Seemingly, he is credited with the creation of humanity and as a result of stealing fire from God by this Titan to human civilization, it was sentenced to eternal torment. Zeus, king of Olympian gods, punished him for his

transgression by bounding him to a rock. Each day an eagle, the emblem of Zeus, was sent to eat the liver of Prometheus which would grow back overnight to be eaten again for the next day. It was eventually freed by a Greek hero Heracles. Since Prometheus is not an evil creature, the author subtitled the novel as 'The Modern Prometheus' that is, Modern Prometheus in a new form through evolution.

This idea might have struck or impressed the novelist through her grip and understanding of some Western classical tradition. The classical tradition is the Greco-Roman practices involving some different ideas and concepts on various mysterious aspects of life. According to the Western classical tradition, Prometheus is defined as a creature which is depicted as what humankind is striving for and a quest for scientific world which may result in some unintended consequences through the act of overreaching something. In this novel *Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus*, the author is defining the creature as grotesque.

Victor Frankenstein is the prime mover in the novel who is a scientist and an alchemist who is utilizing most of his time in some scientific experiments and as a result of this, he is creating a creature using a corpse with the ideas of bringing back the dead to life. Victor is an alchemist and so he is trying the concept of galvanism in his experiment as he thought that it would bring him name, fame and success but this creature is shaped against his preconceived pattern. Eventually, the creature brings no good but only tragedy to the creator's life. Galvanism is a method involving various mechanisms from biology, physics and chemistry of bringing back life to certain organisms using electricity. It is a process of contraction of muscles by stimulating it by passing electricity and there involves a chemical reaction within the dead organism. The novelist Mary Shelley and the era in which she lived, had a basic understanding of this process. At the same time, few scientists had taken further initiatives on this process with great hope of resurrecting the dead.

Coming back to our discussion on the story, the author made use of her thoughts and experiences related to this scientific process in producing the horror novel. As a result of these ruminations, Mary Shelley gave birth to *Frankenstein* which is saturated with components of the fictional elements and the revolutionary ideology of Romantic Movement. It still has a substantial privilege in English literature and created a genre of gothic and horror stories, films and plays successfully.

### **3.1.2 Brief Bio Note of the Novelist**

Mary Shelley (1797-1851), also known as Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley is a British novelist who was born in London. She was an author of the romantic era whose first novel, a world-famous *Frankenstein* is still regarded as one of the best and mind-boggling works of English literature. She suffered many hardships at an early age. Mary lost her mother just ten days after she was born. After that, it was her father who raised her. Mary had a stepmother with whom she had an unwilling relationship. Her stepmother was hardhearted and focused her attention on her own children's well-being but not on Mary. Mary also had a romantic love life and an intimate relationship with the finest poet of those days called Percy Bysshe Shelley. She lost Percy after eight years of their love life. She suffered from ostracism and went through mental depression many times as she couldn't digest the early death of people from her family circle at their young age at a quick succession. Her contributions are many including novels, short stories, travel narratives, poems etc. She always believed in her ability and highly determined on her future writings despite many challenges. There was never a famine when it came to the shortcomings and tribulations in her life. Despite her emotional

anguish, she remained focused on her goals toward success. While reading her novel along with her biography, the following mysterious lines of the novel reverberates in the minds of the readers "There is something at work in my soul, which I do not understand"

---

### 3.2 STORY OF FRANKENSTEIN

---

The story begins with a captain Walton taking his ship into the Arctic Ocean with his crew. He was an English adventurer who was hoping to make some important scientific discoveries by undertaking a voyage in a ship as a part of exploring the North Pole. Due to severe winter, a sheet of ice formed all around the ship and so it got stranded for a few days. It was damn cold that day and Captain Walton and his crew were exploring various possibilities to escape from that icy spot. Suddenly, they heard some strange sound from the west side. Walton, through his telescope, saw an eight feet tall gigantic man who was driving a dog-sled across the ice. After a while, he along with his crew witnessed another man of average size on another dog-sled chasing and trying to shoot the first one, but he stumbled and slipped down from the sled. Walton asked his crew to rescue the man from the ice where he was almost dead from exhaustion and exposure to freezing cold wind. As an eleventh hour Samaritan, the captain decided to take him aboard with them. They treated him and helped him recover from the trauma. The man was none other than Victor Frankenstein. While he was recovering, Walton started making enquiries to Victor about his identity and that gigantic man who was chasing him. Thus Victor narrated the story of his life or the origin of the monster to Walter which was narrated by the captain to his sister in the form of epistles.

Victor Frankenstein was born and brought up in Geneva by his father Alphonse and his mother Caroline. His father was an important person in the government, hence the family had no financial crisis. Since childhood, Victor had his interests in scientific experiments and an unquenchable thirst to accomplish something new in the field of human science and anatomy. He was also obsessed with studying outdated theories that focused on simulating natural wonders. When Victor was five years old, his parents adopted Elizabeth Lavenza, the orphaned daughter of an expropriated Italian nobleman. Along with his cousin, Victor was gifted with a little brother William. Days went by, Victor's affection for Levenza grew gradually, he fell in love with Elizabeth which was duly reciprocated by her and was also acknowledged by his parents. Meanwhile, Victor's parents took in another orphan Justine Moritz, who not only became a member of the family but also William's nurse. Victor had his childhood friend Henry Clerval by his side, who was always hanging out with him. His mother Caroline died of scarlet fever a few weeks before he was planning to go to the University of Ingolstadt in Germany to pursue his scientific studies. During her last moments, Caroline called both Victor and Elizabeth to her side and took assurance from Elizabeth that she will marry Victor. Deeply disturbed by the death of his mother, Victor engrossed in his experiments to deal with the grief and that made him determined to find a solution to those unsolved mysteries of nature like death and disease.

At the university, he mastered the subject of chemistry and excelled in other sciences which propelled him to develop a secret technique to impart life to non-living matter. At the end of the first day's class, Victor met his professor Mr. Waldman and discussed about his interest in scientific experiments and his ideas on creating life from the dead. The professor could see a spark in him and his aspiration in making some innovative experiments using new ideas in the field of human science. Hence he helped Victor in the initial stage of his series

of experiments by teaching him about galvanism. In medicine, galvanism refers to any form of medical treatment involving the application of pulses of electric current to body tissues provoking the contraction of muscles that are stimulated by the electric current. Victor tried applying his ideas using galvanism on a dead frog and as a result of the experiment, the legs of the frog twitched upwards. This incident gave him a sudden motivation and encouraged him to indulge in wilder imagination. He thought that if he could stimulate the frog then why couldn't he produce the same reaction from the heart and muscle of the human corpse? Victor told his ideas to his professor but the professor warned him not to try any unorthodox scientific experiments infringing nature's law. However, Victor was never to give up his enthusiasm on this idea of resurrecting life from death. Eventually, he embarked on the process of creating a humanoid.

In order to carry out this experiment, he exhumed different body parts of corpses from the graveyard. Due to the difficulty in replicating the minute parts of the human body, Victor made the Creature tall: about 8 feet in height and proportionally large. Despite Victor's selecting its features as beautiful, upon animation the creature was hideous with watery white eyes and yellow skin that barely concealed the muscles and blood vessels underneath. After making necessary preparations, he connected the electrode with the dead corpse. One night, Victor was in the laboratory. The night sky was filled with lightning and thunder. Instantly, the electrodes connected to the corpse started reacting by initiating some chemical reactions in the dead corpse with a heavy noise. The dead corpse came back to life. The corpse moved his hands and fingers slowly and tried to open its eyes. When Victor was excited by his achievement for his arduous exertion, the creature behaved abnormally after raising from the experiment table. Shocked by his work, Victor fled by pushing the monster onto the laboratory floor. The creature also left the laboratory and it wandered around mountains and forests experiencing nature's beauty.

While wandering the streets, Victor met his childhood friend Henry Clerval and took him back to his apartment. After reaching the apartment, Victor was very much frightened by imagining Henry's encounter with the monster. Since the monster had escaped from the laboratory, he felt a sigh of relief. Victor fell ill, so Henry took care of him and nursed him back to health. Every night Victor had nightmares about that creature and he went through emotional turbulence. Despite these nightmares, Victor gradually recovered from his fatigue and exertion. After a period of four months recovery, he received a letter from his father informing him of the murder of his brother William. Victor immediately started for his home. After arriving in Geneva, he encountered the Creature near the crime scene for the first time out of the laboratory. He saw the monster climbing a mountain which led him to believe that his creation is responsible for William's murder. Instead of the monster, Justine Moritz William's nanny was convicted of William's murder because William's locket which had contained a miniature portrait of Caroline was found in her pocket. Victor became utterly helpless to prevent Justine from being hanged as he knew no one would believe his story. Tarnished by sorrow and feelings of guilt, Victor retreated into the mountains. During his lonely and burdensome wanderings, he met the monster once again where it pleaded him to listen to his tale.

The creature's narration: the Creature narrated his first few days of life where he lived alone in the wilderness and found that people were afraid of him and hated him due to his hideous appearance, which compelled him to hide from them. One day while it was roaming with absolute perplexity, it stepped into a house

and saw some fruits on the table. As it felt hungry, it hurriedly swallowed the fruits. Suddenly, a lady from that house got frightened by seeing an eight feet tall creature and shouted loudly crying for help. The neighbors rushed to her house with sticks and stones. All the people there kicked the creature and tried chasing it by throwing stones at it. It ran farther away with some bruises. After this incident, it felt very bad for its painful position and melted in torment and anguish, developing malignance towards its creator. In this condition, the monster came across a lonely cottage and decided to take shelter in it. While living in an uninhabited and abandoned shed connected to a cottage, the creature, through a crack, could see the activities inside the house. There were four members living in that house: Felix the brother and Agatha his sister, a blind old father De lacee and Safee, lover of Felix. The monster noticed that they loved each other and lived a happy life with gregariousness. The creature also wanted to lead a life like them. It grew fond of the poor family living there and he secretly collected firewood for them. While living in isolation with the family for few months, the Creature learned to speak by listening to them and he also taught himself to read after discovering a bag of books which consisted of Paradise Lost, The Sorrows of Werter, and Plutarch's Lives in the woods. When he saw his reflection in a pool, he realized his physical appearance was hideous and it terrified him as it terrified normal humans. Though this realization gave him a basic understanding about himself, the creature did not lose hope with humanity. With this positive thought, he approached the family with great expectations of becoming their friend. Initially he was able to befriend the blind father figure of the family when he was alone. When the rest of them came back, they were frightened and they chased the monster out of their house thinking that it had tried to kill their father. This incident threw the creature into depths of utter disappointment. He traveled to Victor's family estate using details from Victor's journal, murdered William, and framed Justine by leaving William's locket in her bag.

The Creature demanded Victor to create a female companion like himself. He argued that as a living being, he has a right to happiness. The Creature promised Victor that if his creator fulfills his request, he and his mate will vanish into the South American wilderness and will never reappear. The monster on the other hand warned Victor that if he refused his request, will kill Victor's remaining friends, loved ones and will not stop until he completely ruins him. Since Victor had already experienced the wrath of the monster, he reluctantly agreed to create a companion for the monster. The Creature further said that he will watch over Victor's progress.

### 3.2.1 Victor's Journey

Clerval accompanied Victor to England. Since Victor already had plans to fulfill the promise given to the monster, he wanted to travel alone so they resumed their journey in different directions from Perth, Scotland at his insistence. Meanwhile, Victor's suspicion grew stronger as he felt that the Creature was following him. With these tormenting thoughts, he started working on the creation of the female creature on the Orkney Islands. He was plagued by premonitions of disaster such as the female hating the Creature or becoming more evil than him. More particularly, the two creatures might lead to the breeding of a race that could overpower and threaten mankind. Disturbed by these hallucinations, he destroyed the unfinished female creature by tearing and burning it. While doing so, he saw the Creature who had indeed followed Victor watching through a window. At the same time, Henry visited Victor when he was at work to destroy the female monster. When Henry demanded an explanation, Victor narrated everything.



After hearing the entire account from him, Henry told Victor not to worry about the threats given by the monster and also not to subject himself to create more disharmony and evil in the society by creating yet another female monster. The Creature later confronted and threatened Victor into making the female monster again. Victor was already convinced and came to a conclusion that the Creature is evil and that its mate would be evil as well and the pair would threaten all humanity. Since Victor destroyed his work and did not keep his promise, this not only irritated the monster but also kindled the fire of revenge further more. The Creature vowed that he will "be with [him] on [his] wedding night". After this encounter, Victor sailed out to dispose of his instruments and the charred remains of the unfinished monster. He fell asleep in the boat and was unable to return to shore because of changes in the winds and ended up being blown to the Irish coast. No sooner had Victor landed in Ireland, was he taken into custody by the police accusing him of Clerval's murder as the Creature had strangled Clerval to death and left the corpse to be found where his creator had arrived, causing the latter to suffer another mental breakdown in prison. This incident collapsed Victor's mental balance hence he became sick once more and was nursed back to health. Eventually, he was released as there was no proof against him regarding the murder of Henry. Victor returned home with his father who had restored to Elizabeth some of her father's fortune.

In Geneva, Victor was about to marry Elizabeth and prepared to fight the Creature to death arming himself with pistols and a dagger. During the matrimonial ceremony, he lost himself in some thoughts of agony. As the party was going on, he had hallucinations as he felt the presence of his younger brother William. Victor hurried near his brother but suddenly Elizabeth stopped Victor from his illusionary behavior and brought him back to the present occasion. That night following their wedding, Victor asked Elizabeth to stay indoors while he looked for "the fiend", the monster. When he was searching the house and its surroundings, the Creature strangled Elizabeth to death. From the window, Victor saw the Creature, who tauntingly pointed at Elizabeth's corpse. He tried to shoot him but the Creature escaped. Victor's father, weakened by age and hearing the death of his precious Elizabeth, died a few days later. Victor lost all his loved ones and was left to mourn in grief in pensive isolation. Seeking revenge, Victor pursued the Creature to the North Pole but collapsed from exhaustion and hypothermia before finding the monster.

### **3.2.3 Captain Walton's Conclusion**

At the end of Victor's narrative, Captain Walton resumed the story, closing the frame around Victor's recounting. A few days after the Creature vanished, the ship became trapped in pack ice and multiple crewmen died in the cold. The rest of Walton's crew insisted on returning south once it is freed. Upon hearing their complaints and angered by the crew's pleas to their captain, Victor motivated them with a powerful speech. He told them that it is hardship, not comfort and easiness that defines a glorious undertaking such as theirs. He urged them to be men, not cowards. The ship was freed and Walton, owing it to the will of his men regretfully decided to return to the South. Victor, even though in very weak condition, stated that he will go on by himself to hunt for the enemy to complete his revenge. He was adamant that the creature should die. Unfortunately, due to physical and mental exertion Victor died shortly after speaking to Walton. His last words were "seek happiness in tranquility and avoid ambition". After Victor's death, Walton discovered the Creature on his ship, mourning over Victor's body. The Creature told Walton that Victor's death has not brought him peace. Rather,

his crimes have left him completely alone. The Creature vowed to kill himself so that no one will ever know of his existence. Walton watched as the Creature drifted away on an ice raft that was soon "lost in darkness and distance", never to be seen again. Walton had actually taken his ship out to carry some scientific discoveries. But after hearing the story of Victor Frankenstein, he gave up his mission and travelled back home with a single thought: scientific discoveries are not worth at the sacrifice of our life.

---

### 3.3 GENERAL ANALYSIS OF THE NOVEL

---

After reading the detailed summary of the novel Frankenstein, a general overview of the novel will fulfill our curiosity to fill the gaps and analyze it from different dimensions. The vivacious teenage of Mary Shelley made her use her wilder and unlimited power of imagination to conceive and create a novel like this. Her imagination is to be saluted because of the power it has to draw the attention of entire humanity. Few experiences of her life tutored her to take this majestic step of fantasizing this awful and marvelous work of art. Born as a daughter of a bold and courageous feminist, Mary Shelley's understanding of women, their pregnancy and motherhood should have left her in great dilemma on the principles of nature regarding the origin of human species which is dealing with the laborious and mysterious process of birth and death. Keeping these things in her mind, she designed the story where Victor is projected as a man who is attempting to generate life through an impossible and an abnormal process. Meenakshi Mukherjee in her essay "The Revenge of Prakriti" attempted to delineate Victor's monster making process in the following lines:

"the absent 'friends' include Elizabeth, who was later to be his wife and waited for him in Geneva while later pursued his scientific studies at Ingolstadt. As he got engrossed in his secret experiment to animate a human frame, Elizabeth receded from his life. The botched and monstrous creature that would relentlessly dog Victor's path for the rest of his life was, thus, flawed in its very conception. The assumption that a man working alone in his laboratory can generate life went against the basic principle that all life is created by the union of male and female. The exclusion of the female principle in bringing the creature into existence negated a primary law of nature." (p1)

In the above given quote, Meenakshi Mukherjee lucidly identifies the fountainhead of Victor's crisis. By doing so, she loudly echoes the mindset of Mary Shelley during her novel writing process. The above given observations of the critic raises multiple questions in the readers' minds on the challenging mission of Mary Shelley. A young woman contemplating upon an idea of conceiving or creating a human being without the roll of a female may superficially sound revolutionary. At the same time, the end which led to a major catastrophe not only brings out the actual mindscape of Mary Shelley but it also provides answers for many long pending queries of mankind.

Robert H. Goddard, the famous American rocket scientist, shared these following powerful lines on dreams: "It is difficult to say what is impossible, for the dreams of yesterday is the hope of today and the reality of tomorrow." The dreams of Mary Shelley were built upon great hope to resolve many unanswered questions of humanity. Excluding the torment and consternation which she experienced during those nightmares, the purpose of this dream process was noble. At the same time, this noble thought re-kindled many philosophical and ethical questions which added fuel to the fire through the personification of the monster which

she witnessed in her dreams. In her 1831 introduction to *Frankenstein*, she made following observations about her dreams:

“I saw – with shut eyes, but acute mental vision,-I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling before the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy half vital motion. Frightful must it be; but supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the creator of the world.”

As we all are aware about the labor pain which a woman undergoes during the time of child delivery, Mary Shelley had undergone it so many times. Since she wrote this novel along with these experiences, she attempted to find a solution for these repeated and tedious processes. On the other hand, death was one of the major mysteries which kept on taunting the novelist and humanity as well. Though nature can be attributed its due credits for the spectacular process of creation, mystery strongly oscillates between birth and death till date. A literary writer who was aspiring to contemplate and was exercising her power of imagination to conceive something which is completely in the domain of science and technology was not only great but also a revolutionary initiative. A common reader can still argue that this quest for Mary got ignited by Lord Byron through his competition to write a short-story. The actual fact is that the fire was within her already which was driving her towards something or some kind of an invention which was fueled by the above mentioned competition. Human mind is an excellent tool through which one can create heaven or hell. Using this equipment, Mrs. Shelley gave birth to this monster who will be eternally alive in the minds of the readers and the scientific thinkers.

In the modern times, this monster found its place in almost all disciplines of the intellectual arena. It has ascertained a place for itself as a personification of anything which is invincible, immortal and despicable. It is because of these qualities and the monster's deeds in the novel that the creature is always associated with representations of malediction and negativity. Monstrosity is seen not just in physiological terms but in moral terms as well, so that deformity is seen as a physical manifestation of moral aberration. And it is this combination of aesthetic and ethical perspectives that finds its way into a great deal of eighteenth and nineteenth century writing. Since, we are familiar with the definition and description provided by Plato and Aristotle on the creative thought processes of a poet, the readers can visualize the design of the monster which might have taken shelter in Mary Shelley's mind during the process of writing this gothic novel.

It is very much evident that Mary Shelley's grip over the gothic ideology might have motivated her to chisel such a monster by gathering a plethora of thoughts in the form of flesh and bones from various graveyards. David Punter in his essay *gothic and romanticism* gives the following possibilities which could have functioned as catalysts for Mary Shelley to visualize and create the monster by epitomizing the gothic ideology:

“Blake's notion of ‘Giant Forms’; Coleridge's nightmare phantoms; Shelley's portrayal of the grandeur of Ozymandias: in relation to all of these, Gothic can be seen as a way of imagining the unimaginable, whether it is the distant depths of history or the even more distant sounding of the unconscious. The Gothic is a distorting lens, a magnifying lens; but the shapes which we see through it have nonetheless a reality which cannot be apprehended in any other way.” (p4)

He goes on to point out the reasons which could have functioned as the fountain head for such creations in the following lines.

"In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the Gothic seems to have been in part a limited but genuine substitute for the sciences of history and of psychology, a way of gaining access to, and understanding of, those barbaric areas where knowledge had not quite penetrated." (P4).

Looking at other factors from the personal domain of the novelist which might have contributed to the shift from radicalism and create this monster. We are reminded of the references made by Lee Sterrenburg in the essay *Mary Shelley's Monster: Politics and Psyche in Frankenstein* through the following lines.

"Her mother's early death, her quarrels with William Godwin, her marital difficulties with Percy Shelley, her own political instincts, her extensive readings on the French Revolution, along with the fact that she came to intellectual maturity during the decline of Napoleon and the Metternichian Restoration that followed, all contributed to her growing detachment from radicalism." (P2)

There is a possibility and a dire need of drawing a parallel between Victor and the monster. Victor in this novel is shown as a man of average virtues who is very much connected with his family but not with the outer world in a great deal. On the other hand, the monster is left in complete isolation. He was not gifted with a family or a friendly circle with the rest of the world. His wretched appearance had branded him as "anti-social entity" which provided a license for the society including the creator to isolate him and treat him as fiend. The irony lies in Victor's unwillingness to comprehend the problems of the monster from the monster's perspective. This injustice rendered to the creature has constructed the antisocial self of the monster for which Victor is morally responsible for creating a situation where the monster is pushed to the extent of committing a series of murders only from Victor's family. David Punter, in the same article emphasizes on the repercussions of such injustices rendered to anyone including the monster in the following lines. "A great deal of gothic is about injustice, whether it be divinely inspired, or meted out by man to his fellow men and women. The Wanderer and Frankenstein's monster are powerful symbols of that injustice;" p12

On the whole, the novel is a kaleidoscopic representation of various scientific, anthropological, and sociological issues which are still baffling the humanity. This brief analysis may not do justice to bring in all the critical concepts and ideas predominantly used in this novel. Hence the students are advised to read this novel carefully through the lines, between the lines and beyond the lines. Then only can they grasp the real essence of the novelist's ambitious project.

---

### **3.4 A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTERS IN THE NOVEL**

---

#### **3.4.1 Victor Frankenstein**

He is the protagonist of the story and a scientist who creates the monster. His diligence and credence on his unorthodox scientific experiments eventually led to his own ruin. He found a mission from the ideas of bringing back the dead to life and so he devoted his life to experimenting in the same. His love for Elizabeth was beautifully portrayed in the novel and also their separation shows substantial emotion and pain. He was supposed to take care of the creature which was created by him, but his irresponsible behaviour brings tragedy to his life. He took no care in protecting his family and his friend Henry. He did not oblige

in creating another creature as per the request of the monster by assuming that it would bring even more calamities and destruction for his life and the entire humanity. The following words of Victor re-iterates the above discussed idea:

“I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room.”

While pondering over the character of Victor, we cannot resist our temptation to bring a parallel between the novelist Mary Shelley and the novel's protagonist Victor. The author created the novel using some of her own personal life instances that took place in her life which locates the text in the realm of autobiographical novel partially. She also paid her attention to incorporate certain aspects of romanticism in this novel wherever it was possible which are blending with Victor's character. Robert D. Hume in his essay on the gothic versus romantic presents us a comparison in the following lines which stands as the quintessence of Victor's nature, his ambition along with its pros and consequences.

"Victor Frankenstein is explicitly described as a man with originally benevolent impulses and great potentiality for good. His striving for a more than human greatness destroys the warmth of his humanity, and gradually he becomes totally involved with the monster which objectifies all his own inadequacies." Gothic versus Romantic: A Revaluation of the Gothic Novel, by Robert D. Hume. Vol. 84, No. 2 (Mar., 1969), p. 286

### **3.4.2 The Monster**

The hideous creature is also called as a monster or a grotesque figure. It was created in an unorthodox scientific experiment and not embraced by any sort of warmth or love from its creator. Its piteous heart for making love and family with humans was neither welcomed nor seen by anyone. It was abandoned by the human society and was also ignored by its creator but never did it have any intention of raising a war against the humans. The creature requested Victor to create another female counterpart in order to have a companion. Victor denied this genuine demand of the monster and hence paved way for his own damnation. The following lines from the novel's tenth chapter spoken by the monster in which he is expressing his past and present along with his helplessness presents us with literary echo from Paradise Lost and PB Shelley's poem Mutability: “I ought to be thy Adam, but I am rather the fallen angel...”. It describes that the monster is describing itself as an angel from the heaven for its creator once and had become a fallen angel due to his deeds driven by fate; a fate which was orchestrated by his creator. The author defined the love and affinity of the monster in a different way which is admired by many intellectuals, poets and novelists. The creature felt the warmth from the fire for the first time while it was tortured by cold. It also witnessed a compassion and tenderness between Victor and his fiancé and longed for such a love and cordial relationship. On the otherhand, it ended up having nothing but only loneliness in its life. Though it killed the family, of Victor out of hopelessness and spite, it felt bad for its actions and finally destroyed itself. A single question which the monster is asking is not only rhetorical in nature, it carries profound significance in the human philosophy which is also alluded by Joyce Carol in her essay Frankenstein's Fallen Angel: "Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all human kind sinned against me?" (Carol, p 543).

### 3.4.3 Captain Robert Walton

He is an English Adventurer often addressed as Captain Walton in the story. He is depicted as the eleventh hour Samaritan who rescued Victor who was in his dying moments of exertion without which the world would have missed Victor's mindboggling life narrative. Captain Walton had actually undertaken this journey in search of some scientific discoveries. But after listening to the story of Victor, he decided to retreat thinking that scientific discoveries are not worthy of the sacrifice of our life.

### 3.4.4 Elizabeth Lavenza

She is the cousin of Victor and also his bride. She stayed at Victor's house since their childhood so she often cares much for the strength and success of Victor. She is a woman with a practical rationale who is very much aware of Victor's nature, his unquenchable thirst for scientific discoveries, his abilities and the determination to find answers for some of the mysterious riddles of life. It is because of this reasoning quality that Elizabeth allows Victor to leave home even at crucial and critical times to pursue his studies. She often helped Victor to recover from his torment and pain. Elizabeth is presented as being angelically good and a woman of incomparable beauty.

### 3.4.5 Henry Clerval

He is portrayed as the one and only best friend of Victor since his childhood. When Victor was about to commence his preparation to make a female companion as per the wish of the creature, it is Henry who prevented him from doing so by presenting strong arguments and making Victor to realize the consequences of creating another monster. For an ordinary reader, these views put forth by Henry may create confusion like Victor who was also initially baffled by the perspectives shared by Henry. When one can look at those counter arguments of Henry as an alternate self of Victor which was reflected through him, there is a possibility of gaining clarity on the scientific endeavour of Victor and the expected negative scenario of the mission. The monster murdered Henry in order to take revenge on Victor. This act of the monster clearly indicates and emphasises the depth of friendship that prevailed between Henry and Victor. It is through this act the creature wanted Victor to become weak, feel lonely and suffer from an irreparable loss. On the whole, Henry is perhaps a symbol of the destruction of Victor's own goodness and potential.

### 3.4.6 Caroline Beaufort

She is the mother of Victor Frankenstein who was often addressed as Caroline in the story. She died after a few months of giving birth to her second son William. In this novel, she is represented as a woman who showered love and affection to all the members of the family unconditionally. Her acceptance of Elizabeth and Justine in the family signifies that she treated everyone equally without differentiating any one.

### 3.4.7 Alphonse

He is the father of Victor Frankenstein. His happiness depends on the happiness of his children. This tendency of Alphonse allowed Victor to take any important decision of his life without any objection from his father as well as his mother. Alphonse wanted Victor to marry Elizabeth soon and he eagerly anticipated a happy life for both of them despite all the hardships. Victor's father's painful death which was followed by the murder of Elizabeth vividly shows the amount

of care and affection which he had bestowed upon her. However, both the parents of Victor are nevertheless blamed for not preventing him from embarking upon a dangerous project which is the root cause of the destruction of the entire family.

### **3.4.8 William**

He is Victor's younger brother who was killed by the monster. His death at the hands of the monster leaves Victor at a great loss and was also considered as an act of great moral violation. This murder is seen as the monster's targeted attacks of Victor's family which begins from innocent William's sacrifice.

### **3.4.9 Justine Moritz**

She is an orphan adopted by Victor's parents and she proved her worthiness by being loyal to the entire family. Justine assumed the role of a nanny for William in Victor's family who was also loved by all of them. When she was accused of murdering William and was subsequently hanged by the court, she happily embraced the gallows and died as a symbol of fidelity and loyalty to Victor's family. Even though Justine knew very well that she did not commit the murder, she simply accepted the punishment for two reasons: a) She was very happy to know that Victor's family did not suspect her for the murder and b) She faced her death for the sake of the family's honour.

### **3.4.10 Mr. Waldman**

He is portrayed as a professor who identified the scientific bent of mind within Victor and encouraged him to pursue his quest. At the same time, he had warned Victor not to experiment any unorthodox scientific tests infringing nature.

### **3.4.11 De Lacey**

He is a Parisian-turned blind peasant who lived in a cottage with his son and daughter. He is a nice old man descended from a good family in France. According to the story, he is pictured as the only person who showed love and mercy towards the monster because he could not see the obnoxious and frightening appearance of the creature. The monster was telling him its longing for company and a loving family in the absence of his children. His character poses so many questions about the preconditioned notions of the people who tend to judge a person by his or her physical appearance. Mary Shelley's representation of this particular character clearly depicts the parochial and short-sighted nature of the society.

### **3.4.12 Felix**

He is the Son of De Lacey, who drives off the monster from the house fearing that the monster tried to kill his old father. He teaches English language to his fiancé who is an Arabian. On the other hand, the monster used that teaching to learn English from the shed itself.

### **3.4.13 Agatha**

Daughter of de Lacey, she is yet another example of selfless womanhood, caring for her brother and her father despite their poverty.

### **3.4.14 Safie**

She is an innamorata of Felix who is learning English from him. She is presented as exotically beautiful and kind-hearted woman. The de Lacey family wishes to marry her to Felix and convert her to Christianity.

---

### 3.5 SITUATING FRANKENSTEIN IN THE DOMAIN OF GOTHIC, HORROR AND SCIENCE FICTION

---

Frankenstein is the first-ever novel in English literature that came with the blend of Gothic fiction, horror, and science fiction. This novel changed the landscape of horror and Gothic fiction in the minds of readers and critics. The author had given a quintessential representation of Gothic fiction incorporating certain aspects of romanticism. In 1764, the first-ever Gothic novel was published and it was named as “The Castle of Otranto”, subtitled as “A Gothic Story” which was written by a Gothic writer Horace Walpole.

Gothic is a British literary genre that includes Gothic romanticism. Generally, gothic characters are depicted as grotesque, clumsy, awkward and a shabby creature. Gothic characters are supposed to love all those things that are dark and mysterious. In this novel, the monster is described as a grotesque creature which is eight feet tall abnormally, with greenish and torn skin, unevenly stitched body parts with watery eyes and a shabby face-cut. Using some of the qualities of Gothic fiction, the author designed this novel as a horror thriller and made it an unconventional story. The monster had no intentions of killing anyone but its awkward appearance terrified and horrified humankind. Even though he had a soft and merciful tendency in his inner heart to shower love towards everyone, when he was approaching the people, they got frightened by its appearance and kept a distance from it, not only out of sheer hatred but due to the primeval fear. Discussion on gothic elements associated with this novel is provided in the chapter ‘Frankenstein A Gothic Novel’.

Looking at the role of science and technology in shaping the novel, we must have a basic idea about science and its related fantasy works. Science fiction is the genre of a broad category that encompasses various elements and it often sounds fictitious, futuristic, and involves far-fetched imaginative themes and ideas. These days, it deals with extraterrestrial life, time travel, parallel universes etc. In this novel, the author applies the technique “galvanism”. It is the process of stimulation of muscles through chemical reactions in bringing back the dead to life. Frankenstein is the first-ever novel which is covering different genres in one story.

---

### 3.6 REALITIES AND MYTHS ASSOCIATED WITH FRANKENSTEIN

---

“Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus” holds a myriad of modern realities bounded with myths. The concept is still ambiguous, but some scientific experiment is believed to have taken place in the early 1700s in a castle owing resonance to the title and the story of Frankenstein. The name Frankenstein is taken from the castle called “Frankenstein”, where a controversial Alchemist was said to have born. The scientist believed in immortality. In England, during the middle of 1751, The Murder Act was passed and that act allowed the bodies of executed killers to be used for scientific experiments and tests. Thereafter in 1786, an Italian professor called Luigi Galvani discovered that he could stimulate the muscle of the dead frogs. After few years, scientists turned their attention and started applying the concept of galvanism on dead human bodies. An Italian scientist Aldani was the first one who tried the concept of galvanism in applying electric current into dead corpses in order to bring it back to life. However, his experiment didn't give him a good hand but it did capture the curiosity of people



to know about the facts behind the concept. This helped the author to create such an imaginative story involving the elements of Gothic and science fiction.

---

### **3.7 ROMANTIC LITERATURE AND FRANKENSTEIN**

---

Majority of the people are under the misconception with the term “romantics” due to their parochial understanding of this term by associating it with love and infatuation alone. Contrary to that, it is a movement which accommodates nature, freedom, love, hate, horror and gothic qualities, aesthetics, rustic elements, myth and glorification of death. Romanticism was an artistic and intellectual movement that originated in Europe between 1800 and 1850 and that period was precisely known as the romantic era. The poets and the writers of that era had their free expression of feelings on something in their own literary styles. The novel *Frankenstein* by and large echoes the romantic ideology in every possible aspect. The author lived in the same romantic era, then how it would be possible for her to neglect the influence of this movement? The novelist incorporated the inexplicable beauty of nature through vivid thoughts throughout the novel. For instance, a scene where Victor wakes up with fear one morning after creating the creature and says that the weather is “dismal and wet” is an example of romanticism. The author repeats the theme by describing that the weather conditions are similar to Victor's feelings and thoughts. This shows the appraisal of nature in the novel. When the monster was wandering in the forest in terrible cold, it found fire for the first time. While it was suffering from cold, fire gave warmth to the monster. This exemplifies symbolism in the novel like the time the creature found joy for the first time in his life through fire.

When the monster enters the house of Felix thinking that they would accept his beastly appearance, it was neglected and hated. However, this expectation of the monster is considered as an act out of sheer ignorance. Even though he was literate and had educated himself and could speak the people's language, they would never accept this monster in their life. This shows imagination in the novel also exemplifies that one cannot set their hope too high by transgressing the limits. The monster encounters the endearment between Safie and Felix and wanted to have a life and a companion like them. Though it was a monster, love and affection are common for all creatures and the monster is not an exception from this law of nature. This particular thought of the novelist exemplifies that the longing for affinity is common for all. Eventually, the author describes that science only corrupts but nature soothes. In solidarity with all mixed emotions expressed by the characters from the novel, *Frankenstein* has become the best romantic novel of its time. “Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change” said Mary Shelley in this novel.

---

### **3.8 LET US SUM UP**

---

After reading this chapter, the students must be in a position to comprehend the novel from various socio-psychological dimensions. It will help the students to situate the novel under the broader umbrella of science fiction and other literary genres. This chapter provided you with the summary of the novel along with the basic analysis on the text and the characters. It will fulfil some of the curious expectations of the students in order to create clarity about various concepts which adorn the novel.

---

### 3.8 QUESTIONS AND ANSWER KEYS

---

1. What are the factors which motivated Victor to create the monster?

Points to ponder while preparing the answer:

Victor's zeal to achieve something in the field of science, His determination to resolve some of the unanswered questions of humanity, Applying galvanism in order to bring back the dead to life.

2. What are the demands of the creature?

Key points to keep in mind while answering this question:

The monster's forced isolation, Its demand for a female companion, the creature's minimum expectations from humanity like love and affection, The monster's painful loneliness.

3. How did the author exemplified romanticism in this novel?

Points to remember

Appreciation of nature, comparing the weather to Victor's feelings and mind set, symbols related to romantic movement, Wilder imagination, The monster's yearning for a gregarious family filled with love and harmony, creature's loneliness, grotesque appearance, elements of horror.

4. Critically examine some of the rhetorical and seminal concepts which are explored in this novel.

Key terms to ponder: galvanism, anatomy, raising from the dead, monster, creating life without the help of a woman, transgressing the rules of nature.

---

### 3.10 SUGGESTED READINGS

---

Hume, Robert D. Gothic versus Romantic: A Reevaluation of the Gothic Novel, PMLA, Vol. 84, No. 2 (Mar., 1969), pp. 282-290.

Punter, David. The Literature of Terror: A History of Gothic Fiction from 1765 to the Present Day., Longmans 1980.

Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus, Lackington, Hughes, Harding, Mavor & Jones, Volume I, First edition, 1st January 1818, p.280.

Shelley, Mary. Introduction to Frankenstein or Modern Prometheus, 1831.

Mukherjee, Meenakshi. The Revenge of Prakriti?, p.7.

Mukherjee, Suroopa. Frankenstein's Monster and the 18th century Discourse of Rationality, p.18.

Sterrenburg, Lee. Mary Shelley's Monster: Politics and Psyche in Frankenstein, p.23.

Carol Oates, Joyce. Frankenstein's Fallen Angel, The University of Chicago Press, Critical Inquiry, Vol. 10, No. 3 (Mar, 1984), pp. 543-554.

---

## UNIT 4 *FRANKENSTEIN*: MAJOR THEMES

---

### Structure

#### 4.0 Introduction

#### 4.1 Themes

- 4.1.1 Overarching Ambition and Hubris
- 4.1.2 Creation versus Procreation
- 4.1.3 Revenge
- 4.1.4 The Feminist Critique
- 4.1.5 Education
- 4.1.6 The Dichotomy between Nature and Science
- 4.1.7 Nature and Sublime
- 4.1.8 Monster and Monstrosity
- 4.1.9 Isolation and Society

#### 4.2 Let Us Sum Up

#### 4.3 Check your progress (Questions with answer keys)

#### 4.4 Suggested Readings

---

### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

---

Frankenstein or The Modern Prometheus (1818) by Mary Shelley is a seminal literary piece encompassing a plethora of themes, ranging from overarching scientific ambition to human isolation, conflict between nature and culture, usurpation of female rights and powers, etc. Although it was published almost two hundred years ago, its relevance has only increased with the passage of time because the novel embraces several themes that speak to the modern reader as well. The creation of the monster as the pinnacle of scientific brilliance and human indifference are indicative of a deeper need of reconciling ambition with emotions. While scientific advancements have cloned animals and bionic limbs have become common, Shelley's Frankenstein exhibits the consequences of divorcing science from humanity.

---

### 4.1 THEMES

---

Let's explore the key themes, dear student.

#### 4.1.1 Overarching Ambition and Hubris

The full title of the novel, Frankenstein or the Modern Prometheus, hints at the significance of Frankenstein's ambition and subsequent punishment. According to Greek mythology, Prometheus was one of the wisest Titans who stole fire and gave it to humankind. Use and knowledge of fire was restricted strictly to Gods. So, when Prometheus disobeyed the dictum, Zeus sentenced him to severe eternal punishment. He was chained to a rock and an eagle was to peck at his liver every day. Each night the liver would re-grow for the eagle to eat it the next day. His daring act and subsequent eternal punishment is the allegory that guides Victor Frankenstein's life. Victor Frankenstein admits that his ambition to acquire esoteric knowledge of the origins of life made him employ his precocious talents at chemistry and alchemy to conduct radical experiments. In his eagerness to redefine the threshold of creation, he sacrifices his family and friends' love and he dedicates all his time to his solipsistic endeavours. He is inspired by his

Professor's speech. When he speaks of scientists who have "acquired new and almost unlimited powers; they can command the thunders of heaven, mimic the earthquake, and even mock the invisible world with its own shadows", Frankenstein's ambition is stoked. His hubris drives him to succeed at artificially creating life. 'I was surprised that among so many men of genius, who had directed their enquiries towards the same science that, I alone should be reserved to discover so astonishing a secret' (Shelley 30). His undertaking to arrive at the very core of nature's secrets was guided by his curiosity and design to reach the pinnacle of scientific invention. His theory of fusing mystical pseudo-science of alchemy with modern advancements in science, lead him to create a composite being whom he calls a monster. He is misguided in his pursuit to animate an amalgamation of dead bodies despite its human cost. His reckless desire for greatness proves fatal for his family and friends. His creation is doomed from the very beginning of its animation. His life becomes a cautionary tale for Walton to learn about the consequences of playing with the laws of nature. Unbridled ambition isolates Victor Frankenstein and Walton from living a wholesome life with family and friends. Both are alone in their pursuit of new and radical discoveries. Frankenstein fulfills his ambition to create life anew and Walton reaches the brink of the Arctic Circle, mistakenly looking for a northern passage through the ice. Both feel the burden of mental isolation in their respective journeys. Neither can confide in a peer, their strife for greatness. Walton's ambitious voyage mirrors Frankenstein's desire to push the boundaries of the known knowledge. He rushes his crew to an arctic expedition to find a passage to the North Pole in his mistaken belief in its existence. He acts as a foil to Frankenstein's character in his attempt for making a grandiose discovery. In his letters to his sister, he confesses that he spent six months undertaking this expedition and implies that he needs to complete the expedition to prove his worthiness to his family and himself. Walton's chronicle doesn't merely provide a narrative frame to Frankenstein's story. His decision to turn the ship around and retreat is the direct lesson he learns from Frankenstein's life story. His aspiration to gain a new path is restrained in the nick of time and he heads home, leading his men to safety. Shelley uses not one, but two characters to emphasize the terrible consequences of nursing an unbridled ambition. Walton has the opportunity to turn back, to the safety of his crew but Frankenstein pays the ultimate price for his folly.

#### **4.1.2 Creation versus Procreation**

'Then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils, the breathe of life, and the man became a living creature' (Genesis 2:4-25) "A new species would bless me as their creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me. No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs." (Shelley 32) Victor Frankenstein's hubris dictates his need to create human life anew in the vein of God and Prometheus. Shelley gives ample allegories between the biblical creation of man and Frankenstein's creation of the creature. Frankenstein goes against the natural processes of procreation in his desire to play God and create life. However, upon seeing the flawed countenance of his creation, he shuns him unlike the biblical God who cares for Man, creates a heaven like habitat for him in the garden of Eden and provides him with a mate. In his hurry to bring to life his scientific experiment, he forgets the importance of parenting. He doesn't think and ideate about the fact that the creature needs to be taught the very basics of society. He needs to be taught language, social mores of acceptable behaviour, education, and to be provided a loving family. He ignores the most fundamental

tenets of parenting. He usurps the roles of mothers and fathers and finds himself unequal to raise the creature he brought into the world. He cruelly shirks the responsibility that he has towards his creation and abandons him in a fit of revulsion. Unlike parents or the biblical God, he isn't pleased to see his creation stir. He is shocked and dismayed at the monstrosity of his physique. He alienates his creation further by not bestowing a name upon him. In popular culture, Frankenstein's creature is mistakenly seen as a monster named Frankenstein, thereby, confusing the creator with the creation. It is an indictment of Victor's failure as the creator that the creature remains nameless. The creature is bereft of any parent or guardian's presence. Consequently, he doesn't have any moral guidance in life except for what he observes from the De Lacey family. Mary Shelley presents a nuanced critique of Victor's lonesome act of creation as a single male scientist. He usurps the role of a thoughtful parent and fails to take care of his charge. His abhorrence of his own creation serves as a reminder to understand the difference between giving birth and animating an assortment of body parts. His lack to provide love, care, food, clothes etc. is a testament to his failure as a creator and a parent. His inability to perceive his creation as unique, if flawed, heightens the unnatural aspect of this experiment. The scientific aspect of creation is opposed to the biological and biblical element of procreation consisting of two parents whose union has been ordained by society. The asexual production of the monstrous child is a charge against Victor Frankenstein's attempt to keep society and women out of the process of biological creation.

### 4.1.3 Revenge

Revenge and retribution have been a central theme in much of Gothic fiction. In seminal novels such as Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), Matthew Gregory Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), vengeance and retribution for wrongdoing are dominant themes. Shelley, too, uses vengeance as the motive for much villainy within the novel. Frankenstein's desertion of his creation and subsequent cruel treatment at the hands of Felix and random strangers leads him to vow vengeance against them. His natural innocence and good intentions remain unseen by people and he doesn't get a fair chance to prove his good nature. Everywhere he goes, he is met with revulsion and fear because of his towering body and unusual appearance. Feelings of murderous rage fill his erstwhile blameless self. He kills young William Frankenstein and frames the beloved family maid, Justine for the murder. He kills Henry Clerval, Victor's wife Elizabeth, and leads to Alphonse Frankenstein's untimely death as well. "You can blast my other passions, but revenge remains. Revenge, henceforth dearer than light or food. I may die, but first you, my tyrant and tormentor, shall curse the sun that gazes on your misery." (Shelley 149) The creature and Frankenstein are both motivated by blind revenge to destroy each other. While Frankenstein is held vulnerable because of his family and friends who fall easy prey to the creature's violence, Frankenstein follows the creature to the Arctic to find and annihilate him. In several Biblical verses, revenge is disregarded as all judgment is reserved for God. It is said, 'Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people but love your neighbour as yourself. I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19:18) Yet, Frankenstein is driven by an insane need to seek vengeance from the creature. He dies a premature death from cold and exposure and his creation is left to live a miserable lonely life in the unforgiving Arctic till his last day. Revenge consumes both the creator and the creation.

#### 4.1.4 The Feminist Critique

Feminism can be referenced in several different ways; however, at its very heart it refers to the idea of equal rights and opportunities for women and men. While the novel is predominantly male oriented, it does provide a critique of patriarchal society. All the female characters in *Frankenstein* lack narrative agency and exist in a subordinate position to their male counterparts. Shelley presents a refined account of the nineteenth century society by showcasing the fall of male folly. She rejects the superiority of men by creating a self-absorbed protagonist who treats the women around him as secondary to himself. Each female character, with the exception of Safie, exists in relation to Victor Frankenstein. They are all docile, submissive, and without any voice of their own. Their existence is to serve him in the roles of nurturing mother, caring fiancée, and dutiful maidservant. Safie, belonging to a Christian mother and Turkish father, assumes control of her own life and destiny as she defies her father to unite with Felix. While, Safie presents an icon of strong female will, her presence in the novel is short lived as the focus shifts to the creature's tale. However, as Safie's story is recounted by the creature to Victor, and subsequently by Victor to Walton, and Walton to his sister, the idea of a self-fashioned woman is subtly reinforced by Mary Shelley. Female characters are invisible in the events of action, they are present in the male narratives for the sake of exposition. Their own opinions and travails find little space within the novel. Shelley created a novel which sacrifices women's role to perilous male ambition. The innocent and subservient female characters such as Elizabeth suffer from patriarchal construction of gender roles. Their position is predestined by their gender and they only exist for the functional purpose of providing revenge motive to both Frankenstein and his creation. Elizabeth is frequently described as a pleasant insect or a delightful animal by Victor. His inability to consider her an equal partner is the cause for his solitary distress. She is predestined to be his wife and no other vocation or options are available to her. She is ordained to bring domestic joys to his life by his dying mother. She lives to be his wife and she is killed for the same reason. Unlike Safie and Felix, Victor and Elizabeth do not form an equitable domestic partnership. Daniel Cottom stresses upon the absence of maternal figure in the Creature's life. The Creature believes that he is an 'abortion' since he has a father but no mother: "It is the female which is missing in the authorship of the monster" (Shelley 69). Not only does he not have a mother, there is an explicit lack of mothers in the novel. Victor Frankenstein's mother died of scarlet fever when he was only seventeen, the otherwise exemplary De Lacey family has an old father but no mother, and the Creature is created by a male scientist. Mother nature is violated by an ambitious Victor Frankenstein who intrudes on the natural process of procreation. All the female characters either die a gruesome death or exist on the margins. Victor's fiancée Elizabeth is strangled by a vengeful Creature on her wedding night. Justine Moritz is wrongly sentenced to death, signifying the death of innocence. Safie suffers from the hands of parochial parents. The most evidently sidelined female character is Robert's sister, Mrs. Saville, who is the silent recipient of her brother's letters. Women are either relegated to margins, silenced, or killed in quick succession within the novel. The tragedy that befalls the male characters is heightened by their isolation from their female counterparts; mothers, wives, and sisters. The spheres of public versus private play a crucial role in the text. Notably, the consequences of this division affect both men and women in their nineteenth century domestic and public realms. The De Lacey family can be read as a feminist ideal alternative familial structure. "A vision of a social group based on justice, equality and mutual affection" is witnessed

in the De Lacey household which contrasts directly to that of Victor's family. Safie, unlike the other female characters, is given the space and the opportunity to bring change and, ultimately, prosperity into the family using her resources. The feminist critique can be explicitly seen in Victor's refusal to create a female monster. His fears of a race of monsters spring from the same anxiety about women and female sexuality that made him reject Elizabeth in a previous episode. He is intimidated by the female will, desire, appetite and independence. As one whose most passionate dream was to usurp a woman's procreative role, Victor is simply unwilling to admit that women can openly affirm their aspirations. Their autonomy threatens man's right of property over them. Moreover, Victor concludes that by choosing freely, women may acquire powers that place them in a position of ascendancy, one of controlling and even abusing them. Above anything else, Victor fears the female monster's reproductive powers, especially her capacity to beget more monsters, the very opposite of the superior beings he had dreamt of fathering and whose adored patriarch he wanted to become. He had no desire to create a female being whose sexuality he could not master. Female autonomy is a threat to him, and he exerts male power by dismantling her. Shelley uses this episode to highlight fragile masculinity and its inability to cope with the idea of female liberation.

#### 4.1.5 Education

Concerning the mental and moral development of the monster, Mary Shelley appears to have been influenced by the works of John Locke. In his Essays "Concerning Human Understanding", Locke states that a newborn is to be compared to a 'tabula rasa', a clean slate; 'white, innocent and without any knowledge or inscription of civilized social life'. However, the Lockean form of knowledge acquired by the monster in the hovel is in stark contrast to the innate kindness projected by the creature in adherence to the Platonic ideology. This initiates the age old nature-nurture debate in the context of one's developmental process in a civilization. The creature is not born but created. He is oversized, sewn together from parts of different human bodies, with "watery eyes" and "yellow skin [which] scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath" Under such circumstances, developing a healthy sense of self and the ability to socially interact appear to be an unachievable quest. The creature's physical appearance not only hinders him from taking part in normal social life, it is also the source of all the painful and negative experiences he has to endure during the time of his educational development. Victor's creation never has the chance to experience the state of a "sound mind". Instead, his mind seems solely formed by social factors he experiences, most of which are negative and traumatizing. Safie's induction in the DeLacey family initiates her language learning and the creature benefits from the process too. Safie and the creature receive the same kind of knowledge. In addition, it is through the education that Safie receives that Shelley is able to initiate a dialogue with Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of The Rights of Woman which advocates qualitative as well as quantitative education for both men and women. The creature reads from Volney's Ruins of Empires, a book that informs his understanding of himself and the world of men. The reading of the book precipitates his knowledge of his own loneliness and the fact that human history has been marked by violence of wars and cruelty. He forms enduring impressions about human civilization based on that book. The enlightenment derived from this knowledge does not liberate him; rather it saddens him with knowledge of his own abnormality. The creature, Safie, and Victor Frankenstein display a thirst for knowledge and are educated according

to their respective stations in life. While Safie uses her education to express her independence of thought, the creature uses his scant education to comprehend the world around him. Victor pushes the very limits of education to acquire perilous knowledge that changes his fate and that of others. Education doesn't reward all the characters in the same manner.

#### 4.1.6 The Dichotomy between Nature and Science

Shelley carved a novel deeply informed with scientific knowledge and philosophical consequences of it. The dichotomy between science and nature is examined as Victor's scientific attempt to interfere with nature. Furthermore, there is a strange contradiction between the knowledge acquired by the creature in the society and the pursuit of knowledge chased by the real scientists, Victor Frankenstein and Ralph Walton, away from social interactions. The juxtaposition, in turn, validates the harmful implications of the probing aspects of science. This is further justified in the subversion of the roles of Victor and his creature. The unsympathetic traits of Victor can safely be paralleled with the 'humane' characteristics of the so-called 'monster'. Victor's vast scientific knowledge doesn't aid him to consider his progeny's just demands and concerns. The eighteenth-century Enlightenment philosophers promoted the broad assumption that nature was ordered and rational. Natural history concerned with the classification of plants, animals and the heavenly bodies revealed the systematic arrangements within nature. Investigation of the principles of regularities and uniformities of nature, rather than nature's hidden and ultimate pause, became standard for the academic philosophers of the Age of Reason. Victor Frankenstein, and even Ralph Walton to a certain extent, displays an interest in the exploration of the mysteries of nature instead of investigating the principles governing its ordered nature. In the novel, the art of science can be seen to be the full manifestation of the darkness within the human consciousness. In consideration of the science explored in Mary Shelley's time, it could be asserted that both, the people and the scientists of the nineteenth century were drawn to the allure of conquering death. Therefore, there is the glorifying satisfaction of attaining eternal life as can be seen in the case of the search for the elixir of life. Mary Shelley uses Victor's hostility towards women and his sphere of female sexuality as a vehicle to reflect on the terrifying consequences of men's use of technology. Victor restores the truth of patriarchy by disavowing the claims of the monster. His behavior can be traced back to the childhood events which are called accidents rather than decisions. There is a comparison drawn between those events and the natural occurrences that are unstoppable, unchangeable and uncontrollable. If one examines the novel as a science experiment gone awry from the creature's perspective, it is clear that the experiment was a success not only in the birth and existence of the creature but its future success as an intelligent and emotive being. As Marilyn Butler suggests, 'By tracking his own maturation from a solitary to a social animal, the Creature succeeds in the task that Frankenstein abandons, that of scientifically following up Frankenstein's technological achievement.' (Butler 308) He instinctively learns walking, eating edible things such as berries, drinking water, and acquiring language. His entire journey is a testament to the resounding victory of Frankenstein's original thought. The science behind animating the creature was not flawed, the lack of social and psychological perspective was the reason behind the doom that followed its creation. In natural and biological creation, the ready conventions and processes about raising a child provide social scaffolding to the parents. The Faustian urge to acquire scientific knowledge is divorced from a compassionate liability towards nurturing the creation. Therefore,



in 'Frankenstein', Mary Shelley exhorts that if an individual gives way to passions and excesses of life at the hand of the manipulation of the pristine natural world by unscrupulous science, it would ultimately cause degeneration of the progress of humanity.

#### 4.1.7 Nature and Sublime

Mary Shelley was inspired by the great romantics of her time. Her own writings display great fascination with romanticism. Her treatment of nature as a grand force and a restorative relief is evident in *Frankenstein*. The novel can be read as an allegory of nature's fury against industrial revolution and hasty advancements in science. Victor Frankenstein studies natural science and couples them with the industrial progression to push the horizons and invent a technical method to animate the dead. He invokes the wrath of nature by appropriating its role. While nature appears as refreshing and nurturing to the creature, it becomes a vengeful source of isolation and terror to Victor Frankenstein. Sublime is defined as "The passion caused by the great and sublime in nature . . . is Astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror. In this case the mind is so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other." (Burke, 58) The Romantics saw nature as sublime in its unparalleled beauty and its ability to invoke terror. Frankenstein is drawn towards natural phenomena and wishes to fathom the mysteries of nature. He displays his curiosity by recounting a childhood incident that he witnessed, 'the most violent and terrible thunderstorm. It advanced from behind the mountains of Jura, and the thunder burst at once with frightful loudness from various quarters of the heavens. I remained, while the storm lasted, watching its progress with curiosity and delight.' (Shelley 21) Frankenstein's imagination is captivated by nature and he uses scientific knowledge to understand and replicate the natural phenomenon. He is able to replicate the mysteries of nature but he is plagued by misery and loss for the rest of his life. He finds that nature is as unforgiving as it is beautiful. On the other hand, Shelley also showcases the restorative powers of nature as the divine springs, placid lakes, and snowy mountains. Frankenstein, the Creature, Walton; everyone finds solace in the majesty of infinite nature. In descriptive passages of the arctic journey, we find how nature is at once noble and imposing. The lush green woods are used to depict the worldview of an optimistic Creature while the merciless white sheets of ice are used to portray the fierce powers of nature.

#### 4.1.8 Monster and Monstrosity

Victor Frankenstein, in usurping the laws of nature, is set forth on an irreversible journey swarmed by numerous miseries. In his exertion to free the society of the pains of ageing and dying, he animates a consolidation of body parts into a single being. What began as an enthusiastic exercise of genius turned into a grotesque spectacle. At the sight of the animated creatures we see him being taken over by repulsion, anger and intolerance. The helpless creature lying on the table at the beginning of his life is piteously unaware of his lack of aesthetic appeal. His massive height, watery eyes and sallow skin barely covering his arteries, constructs his physical appearance as grotesque. When the creature sees his reflection in a small pool of water, he realizes that he appears repulsive. In a stark contrast with the mythological Narcissus who sees his own reflection and falls in love with his own beauty, the creature sees a hideous reflection and is revolted by his own appearance. However, a deep exploration of the lives of Victor and his creation reveals the true meaning of monstrosity with regards to

their respective actions and not their appearances. Victor's self-imposed solitude and agitation brings him closer to be the monster that he abhors. On the other hand, the monster is articulate, logical, eloquent and emotionally sensitive. Once he starts talking, it is not through his over towering physical features but through his intellect that he tries to identify himself. His winning speeches are laced with reason and remorse for his brutal actions. His actions and exposition suggest that he cannot be defined by his physical features. The monster comes into the world with a pure mind, unaffected by education, without any knowledge of good or evil and uninfluenced by society. Knowledge influences a human being's mind as well as forms opinions and ideas, as the author refers to Locke's theory. The monster's position is comparable to that of a newly born child who is given a chance to be good and whose role is to follow his parents and live in accordance to societal conventions. However, the monster becomes an orphan at the beginning of his life as his creator disowns him, and therefore, he loses a model of a caring and responsible parent. By the end we witness a role reversal happening between Victor and the monster where the monster takes up the role of the master and makes claims on his own creator. The entire act is seen, not in the light of revenge, but as a rebalancing or reparation. Furthermore, the nurse's chastising of Victor demonstrates a parallel between Victor and the monster's situation. Victor undergoes the same sufferings, the same loneliness and the same misunderstanding as the monster. Still, he is incapable of moving beyond his own self and indeed becomes a prisoner of his own solipsistic thinking. The novel, therefore, starts with Victor's sincere desire to free humanity from the terrifying presence of death and ends with his own mental and spiritual imprisonment. He creates a space where science and love, work and marriage are inharmonious and incompatible. His humanity is eclipsed by his desire to first meddle with, and finally control the laws of nature. His reasoned humanity and superior knowledge do him a disservice and he is unable to distinguish between the physical appearance and the moral fortitude of his own creation. True monstrosity lies in Frankenstein's denial to perceive his creation with kindness and respect.

#### **4.1.9 Isolation and Society**

While the creature wants company, love and acceptance of people, he is shunned by all except the blind De Lacey. On the other hand, Victor Frankenstein has a loving family and friends but he chooses to lead a life of isolation first in his attempt to reanimate the assortment of dead bodies and subsequently to hunt down the creature and kill him. Victor Frankenstein is lovingly raised as the older child of the household; he is nursed back to health by his bosom friend Clerval and has a loving fiancée who waits for him patiently while he pursues his experimentation. He shuns the company and counsel of everyone close to him. His prodigious project is kept a secret from his professors and guides. He refuses to share the scientific principles and techniques he uses to bring the creature to life. Even his endeavour to hunt down and kill the creature is a solitary one. In contrast to Frankenstein's tendency to a lonesome life, the creature yearns for human compassion and friendship. After acquiring language and observing the De Lacey family, he wishes to have unconditional love and understanding from others. His intentions are pure in the beginning. He is unaware of his deformity in the beginning. Regardless of his eight-foot-tall body, he is still intellectually an infant. He craves love and care when he notices the bonhomie between every member of the De Lacey family. He reconciles with the idea that his appearance is a hindrance in forming friendly ties between him and other people. He begs Frankenstein to create a mate for him so that he is not left alone in the harsh and

unforgiving world. Frankenstein dismantles the female creature after creating her for the fear of a future progeny of monsters. Unlike the biblical Adam who is endowed with a companion by God, the creature is denied a chance to love and be loved. The polarity between Frankenstein and his creation is emphasized in many ways. Frankenstein's need for isolation can be contrasted with the creature's longing to live in a society. One gives up his family and friends' love to devote his life to scientific research while the other one is ostracized by society for his grotesque appearance. Walton follows Frankenstein's tendency to isolate himself in his pursuit of his goals but he shares the creature's need for fellowship and love. He can be perceived as the balance between Frankenstein's solitary quest for glory and the creature's desire for fellowship.

---

## 4.2 LET US SUM UP

---

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is an immortal piece of fiction that deals with multiple themes. It can be read as a gothic romance or a precursor to modern day science fiction. It is a cautionary tale that pits excessive scientific curiosity against forces of nature. It deals with profound themes of creation, definition of monstrosity, lack of feminist voice, significance of human company etc. The book warns about the obvious horrors of "the eight feet tall monstrosity" that is "composed of stolen body parts" but it also presents a serious commentary against alienation and shallowness of visual judgment. Dear student, if you go through all the themes, you will comprehend the richness and variety offered by a young Mary Shelley to her readers. It should encourage you to examine the novel in all its complexities.

---

## 4.3 CHECK YOUR PROGRESS (QUESTIONS WITH ANSWER KEYS)

---

### 1. Examine the dichotomy between nature and science with reference to Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.

*Frankenstein* presents a critique of the industrial revolution. It pits nature against modern science and creates a cautionary tale against tinkering with the laws of nature. It presents nature as a sublime and pristine force which is violated by unnatural experimentation. The asexual reproduction used to create the creature, is a travesty against the natural process of procreation. Frankenstein's design to enter the citadel of nature. Science when not guided by spirituality could lead to tragic circumstances as we learn in the case of Frankenstein and his creation.

### 2. How does Shelley define monstrosity in *Frankenstein*?

Victor Frankenstein assembles body parts robbed from sundry graves and animates them using esoteric sciences. The creature thus born is so unnatural and hideous that his creator flees from his presence leaving him alone and defenseless. The monstrosity of the creature does not lie in his unusual appearance or his unnatural birth. His murderous rage and cunning that results in the death of innocent characters such as Elizabeth, Justine etc. defines his deformity. He was once benign and innocent and is turned to villainy after summary rejection faced by him. At the same time Victor Frankenstein whose name gets conflated with his creation in popular culture, displays irresponsibility and ugliness of character by his refusal to perceive his creation as something akin to human beings, desiring warmth and companionship.

### 3. How are the female characters portrayed in Shelley's Frankenstein?

Female characters either die in quick succession within the novel or are presented without any voice. Justine is framed for the murder of her little charge while Elizabeth is strangled by the creature. Mrs Saville is not given any narrative voice as she silently receives her brother's letters. The most significant of all female characters present in the novel, is the female mate created at the behest of the creature. She is ripped apart right before completion by Frankenstein who is horrified at the idea of a future progeny of the monsters. Her very existence is the source of mysterious fear for the protagonist. Refer to the relevant unit for more details.

### 4. Explore the theme of vengeance in Frankenstein.

Shelley uses the Gothic theme of revenge to underscore the creature's hatred for Frankenstein. His benevolent beginnings win him no friends or benefactors. The De Laceyshun him after he makes attempts to help them and he is shot by a man when he rescues a woman from drowning. He realises that he is damned to suffer a life of loneliness and persecution because of his gruesome appearance. Locate his justified demand to have a companion and his reaction to Frankenstein's demolition of the female.

### 5. What is the role of ambition in Frankenstein's experimentation and Walton's voyage?

Vaulting ambition is an enduring theme in Shelley's Frankenstein. Victor Frankenstein wishes to unveil the complex mysteries of nature and goes on to usurp them. He is estranged from the genial influences of family and friends while dedicating his life to his experiments. He meddles with the laws of nature and without providing enough thought conducts an experiment that wrecks much havoc on him and people around him. Walton's erratic desire to find a non-existent Arctic passage imperils his crew's life as he navigates his ship to the frozen north pole. Both the characters are blind to the folly of their ambitions. While Walton is able to learn from Frankenstein's tragedy, the latter succumbs to an early death and misery is visited upon all his loved ones as a direct result of his deeds.

---

## 4.4 LET US SUM UP

---

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus*.

New York: Oxford UP, 1994. Blamires, Harry. "Mary Shelley." *The Age of Romantic Literature*.

Harlow, Essex: Longman/York Press, 1990. 115-116. Bloom, Harold, ed. *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*.

New York: Chelsea, 1987. Burke, Edmund. *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*.

London: Printed for J. Dodsley, 1767. Gilbert, Sandra M., and Gubar, Susan. "Horror's Twin: Mary Shelley's Monstrous Eve." *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*.

New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984. 213-247. Hitchcock, S. T. (2007). *Frankenstein: a cultural history*.

Mellor, Anne K. "The Female in Frankenstein." *Romanticism and Feminism*, ed. Anne K. .... Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1988. Pp. 220-232.

Levine, George. *The Realistic Imagination: English Fiction from "Frankenstein" to "Lady Chatterley."* Chicago: U of Chicago Press, 1981.

London, Bette. "Mary Shelley, Frankenstein, and the Spectacle of Masculinity." *PMLA* 108.2 (March 1993).

Small, Christopher. *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein: Tracing the Myth.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973.

Veeder, William. *Mary Shelley and "Frankenstein": The Fate of Androgyny.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986.



ignou  
THE PEOPLE'S  
UNIVERSITY

**NOTES**



**ignou**  
THE PEOPLE'S  
UNIVERSITY