



Frankenstein

by Mary Shelley

Teacher's Guide

Written By Mary Ellen Snodgrass

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Synopsis

Letter 1

According to a letter composed December 11 to his sister, Margaret Saville, in England, Robert Walton, Arctic explorer, is raising an expedition to leave St. Petersburg, Russia, for a six-year voyage in June. Even though his father's dying words forbid the trip, Robert intends to find a route to the North Pacific Ocean.

Letter 2

On March 28, Robert reports from the port of Archangel that he has engaged a ship and crew, including a courageous Englishman as lieutenant. With no comrade to join in his romantic quest, Robert, at 28, is lonely, but anticipates satisfaction in conquering unexplored territory in the cold northern clime. He asks his sister to continue to write him.

Letter 3

On July 7, as the ship heads north, the crew functions well. Despite dangerous ice floes, a leak in the hull, and gales, Robert anticipates success.

Letter 4

On August 5, the ship has been immured in ice in unknown waters since the previous Monday, July 31, when a gigantic being driving a dog team and sledge appears half a mile to the north. Two hours later, the ship breaks free. The next morning, Robert rescues a European whose sledge had drifted on ice. Wretchedly depleted by hunger and cold, the survivor asks Robert's destination. Two days later, the stranger asks about the giant, but conceals a secret grief. On August 13, the stranger walks the deck, stares at a bleak horizon, and grieves for a lost friend. On August 19, the stranger is ready to relate his past.

Vol. 1, Chapter 1

A resident of Geneva, Switzerland, the stranger, later identified as Victor Frankenstein, comes from a worthy family. His father, Alphonse Frankenstein, a local syndic, had married Carolina Beaufort after discovering that her father lived in poverty in Lucerne supported only by her earnings from plaiting straw. Victor, their first child, who was born in Naples, thrives on his parents' travels and their humanitarianism. While visiting a hovel near Lake Como, Italy, when Victor was five, his mother adopts Elizabeth Lavenza, who endears herself to the Frankenstein family.

Vol. 1, Chapter 2

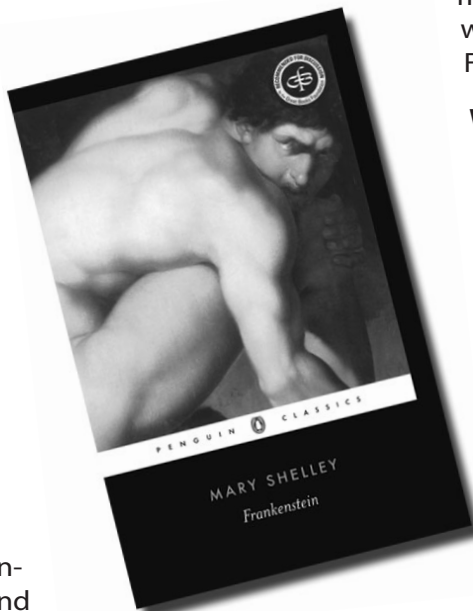
After the birth of Victor's brother two years later, the Frankensteins settle in Geneva. Victor is a friend of Henry Clerval, a principled romantic. At age 13, Victor reads the philosophies of Agrippa, Paracelsus, and Albertus Magnus, all medieval alchemists. At age 15, Victor sees lightning strike an oak and resolves to learn about electricity, galvanism, and the soul.

Vol. 1, Chapter 3

Before leaving for the University of Ingolstadt, 17-year-old Victor attends his mother, whose dying wish is that her son marry Elizabeth. A second blow to Victor is his separation from Henry. The night before departing Geneva, Victor says goodbye to Elizabeth, Henry, and Alphonse. On the first day at school, Victor encounters Monsieur Krempe, a natural philosopher who derides alchemists. Monsieur Waldman redirects Victor from medieval to modern science.

Vol. 1, Chapter 4

Waldman teaches Victor chemistry and anatomy. For two years, Victor neglects home and lives alone in a garret while studying the elements of life. He longs to resurrect dead tissue and grows thin, feverish, and pale in pursuit of the impossible. He robs graves, dissecting rooms, and mortuaries and uses corpses to build a giant eight feet tall.



Vol. 1, Chapter 5

In November at 1:00 A. M., Victor's creature awakens. The repulsive face causes Victor to flee the laboratory. The monster approaches his bed and holds out a hand. Victor runs away and wanders the streets until 6:00 A.M. He encounters Henry, his old friend, who has just arrived by coach from Geneva. Henry deduces that Victor suffers from brain fever. Until spring, Henry tends Victor, who lies in a semi-coma.

Vol. 1, Chapter 6

A letter from Elizabeth impels Victor to return home. She reports that his 16-year-old brother Ernest wants to join the Swiss army and tells of Justine, a family employee who tends Caroline. Victor replies to Elizabeth's letter. He shows Henry the university. Monsieur Krempe commends Victor's scholarliness. Victor joins Henry in the study of Persian, Arabic, and Sanskrit. Untimely cold forces them to spend the winter in Ingolstadt. In May, they take a two-week walking tour.

Vol. 1, Chapter 7

A letter from Alphonse reports the strangulation of seven-year-old William on May 7 while the family hiked in Plainpalais, south of Geneva. When he failed to return home, they searched by torchlight. Elizabeth blames herself for lending William a miniature, which may have induced a thief to kill him. In mid-June, after an absence of six years, Victor stops briefly at Lausanne on his way home. On the way across a lake near Plainpalais, a storm threatens over Mont Blanc in the Jura Mountains. In the distance, Victor spies the monster and deduces that he killed William. Victor blames himself for allowing the monster to roam free. The next morning, Victor reaches home and learns that Justine, the only suspect, goes on trial that day.

Vol. 1, Chapter 8

At 11:00 A.M., the Frankensteins attend the trial. Justine testifies that she was on the way to her aunt's house a league away in Chêne for the night, but at 9:00 P.M., she joined the search party and slept in a nearby barn until the gates of Geneva were unlocked the next day. She can't explain how she obtained the boy's locket. The next day, the jury reaches a guilty verdict. She confesses to the crime to avoid excommunication and damnation. The next day, Justine goes to the gallows.

Vol. 2, Chapter 1

The loss of William and Justine forces Victor to the brink of madness. The family goes to a vacation house in Belrive, where Victor broods over his responsibility in creating a monster. In mid-August, Victor flees to Chamounix to rest alone.

Vol. 2, Chapter 2

At the top of Montanvert, he locates the monster, which blames him for creating a "fallen angel." The monster lives like an outcast in glaciers and deserted mountains. Victor follows him to a deserted hut to hear his story.

Vol. 2, Chapter 3

When the monster first came to life, he fled to the woods near Ingolstadt and suffered hunger, depression, and misery. For three days, he foraged for food and located a rude hut, terrifying an elderly cottager. The monster ate the man's food, packed the remnants, and wandered to a settlement, where peasants drove him into the forest. At a cottage with an adjacent lean-to, he took shelter and peered through a chink at Felix De Lacey and his sister Agatha and their elderly father.

Vol. 2, Chapter 4

The children gave their share of food to their poor blind father. From observing them in secret, the monster learned to use tools, shoveled snow, and supplied the family with wood.

Vol. 2, Chapter 5

In spring, the family taught French to a visitor named Safie. In two months, the monster learned history, religion, and manners.

Vol. 2, Chapter 6

After the monster acquired language, he overheard how Felix fell in love with Safie in France, where her father was jailed for his Muslim faith. The night before the man was to be executed, Felix helped him escape. Felix left Safie in a convent; her family was exiled in Germany. Against her parents' wishes, Safie reunited with Felix.

Vol. 2, Chapter 7

That autumn, the monster empathized with the family. He found a leather bag full of clothes and books by Goethe, Plutarch, and Milton. He read and educated himself so he could read Victor's journal. He cursed Victor for his inhumanity. In winter, to

relieve isolation, the monster visited the blind old man while the others were away, but avoided questions about his past. Felix forced him from the hut; the monster fled to the lean-to.

Vol. 2, Chapter 8

The incident intensified the monster's hatred against Victor. The De Laceys abandoned the cottage, which the monster burned. Traveling southwest in search of Victor, the monster saved a girl from drowning, but her companion shot him. For weeks while the wound healed, the monster survived in the woods. Two months later, he reached Geneva, where he strangled William to spite Victor's family and implicated Justine. At last face to face with his maker, he insists that Victor make him a female companion.

Vol. 2, Chapter 9

Victor agrees to construct a female if the monster promises to depart forever. The monster offers to withdraw to South America, yet threatens to remain nearby until the project is complete.

Vol. 3, Chapter 1

Dismayed by the task, Victor journeys to England's lake district. Alphonse suggests that he marry Elizabeth, but Victor is too upset by his secret promise to the monster. In late September, Victor and Henry meet in Strasbourg and travel up the Rhine River to Rotterdam, Mannheim, Mainz, Cologne, Holland, and London, England, which they reach at the end of December.

Vol. 3, Chapter 2

In February, they travel to Edinburgh and Perth. Victor senses that the monster follows them. Victor withdraws to a thatched hut in the Orkney Islands for several months to complete his task.

Vol. 3, Chapter 3

While creating the female giant, Victor sees the monster staring in the window. Rattled by the vision, Victor dismembers the incomplete body. The monster vows to make Victor repent. The next day, Victor discards the dismembered body parts in the sea. After hours on the open water, he lands at an Irish harbor, where the magistrate, Mr. Kirwin, questions him about a murder.

Vol. 3, Chapter 4

Witnesses testify that, two miles from their landing site, they found a 25-year-old male dead from strangulation. Victor views the remains and discovers that the monster has killed Henry and lapses into despair. He awakens in prison. At the trial, he proves that he was on the Orkneys the night of the murder. Exonerated, he and Alphonse sail to Havre-de-Grâce and travel to Geneva, where Victor takes laudanum and suffers nightmares.

Vol. 3, Chapter 5

In Paris, still berating himself for creating a ghastly killer, Victor becomes a recluse. Alphonse cannot understand his guilt. Back in Geneva, Victor prepares for marriage and arms himself against the spiteful monster. After the ceremony, he and Elizabeth journey to Evian and admire Mont Blanc.

Vol. 3, Chapter 6

At 8:00 P. M., the couple arrive at the hotel and walk by the lake. Elizabeth prepares for bed while Victor, armed with a pistol, searches the building for any sign of danger. In his absence, Elizabeth is killed. At the window, Victor confronts the jeering monster and fires a pistol, but misses. The monster dives into the lake. Guests pursue the monster in vain. Victor fears for Ernest and Alphonse, the remains of his family. He returns home, where Alphonse dies in his arms from the shock of Elizabeth's death. Victor goes insane and for months remains in an asylum. He confesses to a dubious judge about his role in making the monster, who has brought multiple deaths to his family. Victor vows to seek vengeance.

Vol. 3, Chapter 7

The laugh of the monster proves that he accepts Victor as an adversary. For months, Victor searches for the monster, who stows away on a ship headed to the Black Sea. Victor fails to locate his quarry in Tartary or Russia. He hires a sledge and dogs to guide him over the monster's icy trail, where Robert encounters him. On August 26, Robert writes to Margaret that the story and corroborating letters from Safie prove Victor's tale. The only details Victor concealed were the means of creating life from dead tissue. A week later, Robert plans to return home rather than risk death on the doomed expedition. The ship pulls free of the ice shortly before Victor dies. Robert discovers the monster bemoaning Victor's death. The monster leaps through the window and disappears.

Timeline of the Action

birth Victor Frankenstein is born in Naples.
age 5 Caroline adopts Elizabeth Lavenza.
age 7 Ernest Frankenstein is born; the Frankensteins settle in Geneva.
age 12 William Frankenstein is born.
age 13 Victor begins reading the medieval alchemists.
age 15 Lightning impresses Victor with its power to destroy an oak.
age 17 Victor's mother dies of scarlet fever. He leaves for school in Ingolstadt, where he studies under the direction of Monsieur Waldman and creates a monster from dead tissue.
age 19
September The De Laceys go into exile.
November The monster opens its eyes and terrifies Victor.
next day Victor encounters Henry on the stage-coach from Geneva. The monster takes shelter at the De Lacey cottage.
that winter The monster learns language by observing the De Laceys.
March 18 Elizabeth writes to Victor about the Frankenstein family.
spring Victor replies to Elizabeth's letter. Safie arrives at the De Lacey hut.
summer Victor is delayed in returning to Geneva.
autumn The monster locates three books and reads them.
winter The monster visits Mr. De Lacey. Felix drives the monster away. He is shot and stays in the woods until his wound heals.
next spring Henry and Victor take a walking tour.
May 6 Justine leaves for Chêne to visit her aunt.
May 7 The monster reaches Geneva and murders William.
May 8 Justine is arrested for murder. Victor sees the monster near Mont Blanc.
next day Victor attends Justine's trial. When threatened with damnation, she confesses to the crime to save her soul.
next day Justine is hanged.
that summer The Frankenstein family retires to Belrive.

mid-August Victor meets the monster on a glacier near Chamounix.
late
September Henry and Victor rendezvous in Strasbourg and go to England.
Dec. 11 Robert Walton raises an expedition to the North Pole.
February Henry and Victor are invited to Perth, Scotland.
March 27 They set out for Scotland.
March 28 Robert hires a lieutenant and shipmaster.
late spring Victor settles in the Orkney Islands and begins work on the monster's mate. The monster kills Henry in Ireland. Victor is jailed three months for murder before clearing himself of the charge.
May 18 Elizabeth writes a letter releasing Victor from their engagement.
one week later Alphonse and Victor arrive in Geneva. unknown period After Elizabeth's murder, Victor pursues the monster for many months.
July 7 Robert sails north from Archangel.
July 31 Robert spots a sledge and dog team.
Aug. 1 Victor is taken aboard Robert's ship.
Aug. 3 Victor answers questions about his journey.
Aug. 13 Robert and Victor form a lasting friendship.
Aug. 20 Victor begins telling his story to Robert.
Aug. 26 Robert is convinced of the story's truth.
Sept. 2 Ice immures Robert's ship.
Sept. 5 Robert abandons his expedition.
Sept. 7 Robert plans to return home.
Sept. 9 Victor collapses and dies; the monster vanishes.
Sept. 12 The ship pulls free from the ice.

Author Sketch

The daughter of social iconoclast William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, born August 30, 1797, lived motherless amid scholars. Her mother, a feminist also named Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, died of septicemia at age 38, only weeks after marrying Godwin and giving birth to her namesake. In 1801, Godwin married Mrs. Mary Jane Clairmont and added two stepchildren to the family. The household produced a loose model of family life on which Mary based her own adulthood.



In 1812, Godwin formed a close alliance with Percy Bysshe Shelley, a religious literary prodigy. Shelley came to love Mary, then age 16, and abandoned his wife, Harriet Westbrook, and their two children. In June 1814, he persuaded Mary to elope to France. Accompanying the couple was Godwin's stepdaughter Claire, who remained a sexual partner in the unconventional menage on a six-week tour down the Rhine River to Germany, Holland, and Switzerland. In November 1814, when the threesome returned to Windsor Great Park, England, public opinion inveighed against Shelley for his shocking behavior. He went into hiding to avoid creditors. In bohemian bliss, the Shelley household lived alternately in Bishopsgate (where son William was born in January 1814), Hampstead, Bath, Lechlade, and Marlow before leaving England a second time.

In fall 1816, after Shelley was diagnosed with tuberculosis, the trio returned to Lake Geneva, Switzerland, to join the restless, nomadic melange of guests and hangers-on at George Byron's Villa Diodati. During this pleasant idyll, Mary experienced a memorable dream that formed the kernel of *Frankenstein*. She shaped the images into a classic horror tale which became an immediate success on stage as well as in novel form. By September 1816, life became barely tolerable for Mary after Harriet drowned herself in the Serpentine River; Mary's half-sister Fanny Imlay also committed suicide.

On December 30, 1816, Mary married Percy, who needed a stable marriage as grounds for an unsuc-

cessful custody battle for his first two children. Mary gave birth to Clara on September 2, 1817, and completed the manuscript for *Frankenstein*. Hounded by creditors and gossips, the extended family settled permanently in Italy in spring 1818, adding to their household Percy's illegitimate daughter Elena Adelaide, whose mother has never been determined. The relationship between Mary and Claire grew so strained that Claire withdrew. In September 1818, Clara died. Mary blamed both her husband and Claire. On June 7, 1819, three-year-old William, affectionately known as Titmouse, died in Rome; Mary collapsed in despair.

The childless family rebounded with the birth of Percy Florence on November 12, 1820. While Percy, Sr., consulted physicians about his health and worked on his verse, the Shelleys roamed Italy. They were shaken by John Keats' death on February 23, 1821. In April 1822, the family leased a beach cottage on the Gulf of Spezia, Italy, where Mary suffered a life-threatening miscarriage and Allegra died. Mary's affection for her husband was irreparably hampered by his infidelities and unconventional lifestyle. Their union ended tragically on July 8, 1822, when he and a friend drowned off Viareggio when his sailboat overturned in a sudden storm. Mary requested that her husband's remains be cremated and retained the heart in a small cask to take back to England.

In 1823, Mary resettled in England, where readers clamored for her famous novel and suitors Washington Irving, John Payne, and Edward Trelawny unsuccessfully courted her. To support son Percy, she began writing short stories and novels in earnest, incorporating the motifs espoused by the romantic poets and the social themes of her parents. *Lodore*, one of her more mature works, treats the suffering, disillusion, and loss that marred her life. The deaths of her son Percy, William Godwin, and her father-in-law buffeted her traumatized spirit.

Mary recovered after a deceased relative left her financially secure. In relative calm for the first time in her life, she published a compilation of her husband's verse, followed by an edition of his essays, letters, and prose, but she abandoned an attempt at a definitive biography. Tended by Percy's wife, she spent her last seven years in serenity, producing mostly mediocre fiction. She died February 1, 1851, in Bournemouth and was buried alongside her parents and her husband's heart.

Critic's Corner

As the daughter of radical William Godwin and feminist Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin and the wife of poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, Mary Shelley spent her life in the literary shadow of three radical geniuses. None of her later works compare with the intensity and thematic wholeness of *Frankenstein*, a gothic classic which stands today as her literary monument. She never realized that the demonic creation myth would emerge in later generations among the English classics. One of the longest-lived impetuses to film and drama, the novel remains strong in the imagination of the Western world, on a par with and often compared to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. Appropriately, the author dedicated the work to her father, a beleaguered free spirit and the fiery champion of the oppressed.

A puzzling gothic horror/epistolary novel, *Frankenstein* blends fantasy, crude science, melodrama, and scenic beauty in a philosophic redux of the Pygmalion myth. A chance outgrowth of the intense romantic ferment of Lord Byron's circle of colleagues, the work, which was at first published anonymously, received more serious analysis in the 1970s after the rise of American feminism. Her blend of intuitive and cognitive energies powers the study of man creating man, a perversion of the Christian ideal of God's handiwork. The shifting settings and mysterious and violent deaths reflect not only Mary Shelley's dream but also the bitter realities of her life with a raffish artist colony whose relationships and offspring clung to as tenuous an existence as that of the monster.

The bold, ragged, and somewhat naive stitchery that holds together the monster's frame prefigures the tragedies of Mary Shelley's own life as wife and mother. By 1831, when she appended her famous introduction, Mary Shelley could claim little hold on stability or hope. It is not surprising that her creation, a monster composed of miscellaneous body parts exhumed from cadavers, wanders off into the Arctic, a cold symbolic landscape into which Mary Shelley breathed a shallow life by collecting her husband's writings and devoting herself to a secular nunhood of memories and adulation.

Other Published Works by Mary Shelley

Journal of a Six Weeks Tour, 1817
Frankenstein, the Modern Prometheus, 1818
Mathilde, 1819
Valperga: The Life and Adventures of Castruccio, Prince of Lucca, 1823
Posthumous Poems, ed. 1824
The Last Man, 1826
Shelley's Verse, ed., 1830
The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck, 1830
Introduction to Frankenstein, 1831
Lodore, 1835
Falkner, 1837
Shelley's Poetical Works, ed., 1839
Essays; Letters from Abroad, ed., 1840, 1847
Rambles in Germany and Italy in 1840, 1842, and 1843, 1844
Tales, posthumous, 1890
Proserpine and Midas, posthumous, 1922
Letters, posthumous, 1944
Journal, posthumous, 1947
Collected Tales and Stories, posthumous, 1976

Related Reading

Isaac Asimov, *I, Robot*
T. Coraghessan Boyle, *East Is East or Water Music*
Ray Bradbury, *R Is for Rocket*
Charlotte Brontë, *Jane Eyre*
Karel Capek, *R. U. R.*
John Gardner, *Grendel*
Daniel Keyes, *Flowers for Algernon*
Christopher Marlowe, *Dr. Faustus*
Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
Robert Louis Stevenson, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*
Mary Stewart, *The Crystal Cave* and *The Hollow Hills*
Bram Stoker, *Dracula*
Alfred Tennyson, "Gareth and Lynette"
J. R. R. Tolkien, *The Hobbit*
H. G. Wells, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*
T. H. White, *The Sword in the Stone*

Cross-Curricular Sources

For more information about the background of the English romantics and monster lore, consult these sources:

Creation Stories (CD-ROM), Library Video Company
Dracula (audiocassette), Caedmon
The 100 Most Influential Women of All Time, Citadel Press

The Penguin Encyclopedia of Horror and the Supernatural, Viking
The Poetry of Byron (audiocassette), Caedmon
The Poetry of Shelley (audiocassette), Caedmon
The Romantic Age in English Literature (video), Charles Clark
The Shelleys and the Godwins, Johns Hopkins

Also, consult these web sites:

"Bibliography and Filmography Links,"
<http://www.scottiedog.co.uk/links.html>.
 "Frankenstein, the Immortal,"
<http://www.scottiedog.co.uk/welcome.html>.
 "Movies of *Frankenstein*,"
<http://www.english.upenn.edu/~jlynch/Frank/Pop/movies.html>.
 "Myths That Became History,"
<http://www.or.net/~veils/veilsv1n1/myths.html>.

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 "The Life of Mary Shelley,"
<http://www.netaxs.com/~kwbridge/life.htm>.
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 "Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*,"
<http://www.netaxs.com/~kwbridge/franken.htm>
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 "Shelley's *Frankenstein*,"
<http://www.georgetown.edu/irvinemj/english016/franken.html>.
 Sunstein, Emily W. *Mary Shelley: Romance and Reality*. New York: Johns Hopkins, 1991.
 Thornburg, Mary K. *The Monster in the Mirror: Gender and the Sentimental-Gothic Myth in Frankenstein*. Ann Arbor, Mich.: Books on Demand, 1994.

General Objectives

1. To define romanticism
2. To account for the use of coincidence
3. To characterize the effects of nature on human behavior and mood
4. To outline the role of care givers
5. To discuss the difference between alchemy and natural philosophy
6. To summarize the style of a framework novel
7. To explain the role of temperature and weather in the story
8. To evaluate narrative objectivity
9. To locate examples of foreshadowing
10. To isolate epiphanies resulting from education and research
11. To characterize the lust for scientific knowledge and power
12. To define didacticism

Specific Objectives

1. To discuss *Frankenstein* as a creation myth
2. To describe the physical, mental, and emotional effects of a failed career
3. To account for the monster's mixed feelings about Victor's death
4. To contrast Robert and Victor as dreamers and scholars
5. To describe the effects of isolation on Victor
6. To account for the weakness of female characters, particularly Justine, Elizabeth, Caroline Frankenstein, Safie, and Margaret Saville
7. To justify Victor's guilt
8. To enumerate segments of the monster's education
9. To discuss individual scenes contributing to the theme of justice
10. To express the author's purpose is writing about creation

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Mary Shelley's style, present the following terms and applications of her classic horror novel:

Epistolary Novel: a stylized novel told through letters, as demonstrated by Aphra Behn's *Love Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister*, Samuel Richardson's *Pamela and Clarissa Harlowe*, Fanny Burney's *Evelina*, and

Choderlos de Laclos' *Dangerous Liaisons*. Because Mary Shelley sets her novel across Europe, she is obliged to keep her characters in communication with each other to inform them of happenings. The use of letters to explain Captain Robert Walton's expedition establishes the first-person point of view in the framework. The convention of letters, journals, and messages to Victor continues in the body of the story.

Fantasy: a dimension of imaginative literature that blends the real world with incredible characters, talking beasts, and unreal beings, and may be interpreted as allegory or symbolism. Shelley's mad scientist and grotesque giant are examples of an inventive element that overwhelms the realism of the story's motivation, i. e., a young man seeking an education in science. The unwieldy nature of the revenge plot carries her far to the frozen north, where she abandons the monster after Victor dies trying to right the injustice of his ghoulish, inhuman scientific experimentation.

Gothic: romantic writing that highlights isolated or ominous locales; large, rambling structures; implied danger to isolated or vulnerable characters; and horrific distress or menace, such as mysterious disappearances or deaths, supernatural manifestations, omens, unexplained events, or an atmosphere of terror and suspense. *Frankenstein* is liberally supplied with the elements of gothic romance, particularly isolation on a fearful glacier and an ice floe, menace by a yellow-skinned monster, unexplained strangulations, murder of a delicate bride on her wedding night, and an atmosphere of looming disaster for Victor, whose curiosity about nature and the soul creates a doom-laden scenario that engulfs his family and friends.

Melodrama: a romantic or sensational plot carried to the extremes of emotion in weeping, consternation, dismay, disillusion, or resignation to circumstance. Characteristic of Victor is the neurasthenic collapse at moments that overwhelm his sensibilities. Although he is capable of spending months locked away in his lab reviving corpses, he quails at the consequences and flirts with madness, commitment to an asylum, and self-destruction. After his extensive confession to Robert, Victor is relieved of the emotional burden he has recklessly imposed on himself. He dies in repose far from the home he destroyed through unholy and ill-advised interest in the secrets of the universe.

Romanticism: a tendency in prose or poetry to rebel against the strictures of classicism and to exult in imagination, grotesquerie, untamed nature, gothic details, coincidence, symbolism, individualism, love of liberty, faraway places, and melancholy. All of the elements of romanticism thrive in Mary Shelley's horror novel, particularly Victor's individualism and the melancholy that engulfs his family after unexplained killings and stalkings end their peaceful existence. Necessary to the plot are frequent coincidental meetings and letters, symbolic moments contemplating Mont Blanc and the glacier, the monster's love of liberty, and his odyssey across lands and seas.

Shelley's Use of Setting

The milieu of *Frankenstein* covers much of Europe, opening symbolically in St. Petersburg and Archangel, both places that serve as the gateway to the North Pole. Victor and Robert flirt with sacrilege as they depart from the known environment to investigate the forbidding landscape of the laboratory and the North Pole. The bulk of the story ranges outward from Geneva, Victor's home, and from Ingolstadt, the German university where he makes his hellish advances into reviving necrotic tissue. The monstrosity that emerges from his laboratory becomes an unstinting stalker who gives Victor no peace in England, France, Holland, Germany, Scotland, Ireland, Russia, or Turkey.

Frankenstein's tragic story reaches its conclusion in an unidentified frozen expanse north of Europe, where the monster recedes into the distance beyond human habitation. Shelley's implication that a soulless being cannot survive on a civilized continent undergirds her themes of self-destructive curiosity and the use of intelligence to probe God-controlled phenomena that are not meant for human understanding. Likewise, Captain Robert Walton's parallel expedition into uninhabited frozen climes dooms itself to failure against icy forces. Wisely, Robert learns from Victor, his soul-mate, that despair and destructive spiritual torment are too much to bear. As the monster departs into the gloom, Robert, redeemed from death by his compassion for Victor, is free to sail home again.

Themes and Motifs

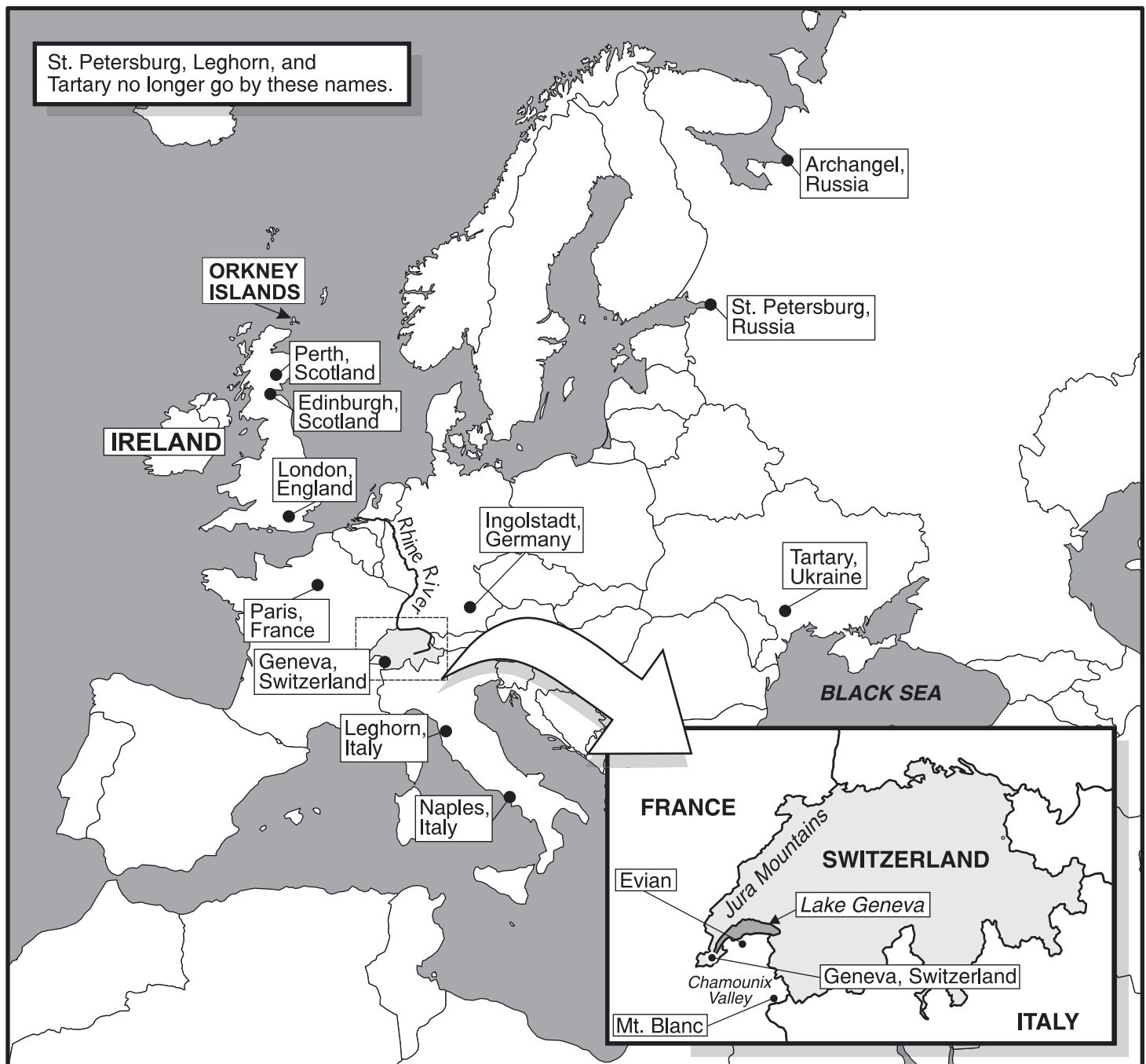
A study of the central issues and situations in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* should include these aspects:

Themes

- poverty
- cruelty
- intolerance
- prejudice
- idealism
- frustration
- vengeance
- achievement
- autonomy
- self-fulfillment
- compassion
- sensitivity
- self-destruction
- doom

Motifs

- seeking to understand the universe
- coming to knowledge
- confronting failure
- struggling to control cataclysmic forces and events
- searching for love, friendship, and affirmation
- coping with death, loss, and isolation
- righting wrongs



Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, or sentences that have a particular meaning in the story. Explain the meaning of each. Letter, chapter, and page numbers are provided so that you can re-read the passage from which the item is taken.

1. I have no ambition to lose my life on the post-road between St. Petersburg and Archangel. (Letter 1, p. 17)
(Captain Robert Walton, in a letter to his sister, Mrs. Margaret Saville, describes his whereabouts during a voyage to the North Pole. St. Petersburg lies to the northeast of European Russia along the Baltic Sea. The route that connects it to Archangel, now called Arkhangelsk, is a mail route that leads toward the Arctic Circle. In view of the date of this letter—December 11—Walton has reason to take precautions against extreme cold.)
2. I am going to unexplored regions, to “the land of mist and snow,” but I shall kill no albatross; therefore do not be alarmed for my safety, or if I should come back to you as worn and woeful as the “Ancient Mariner.” (Letter 2, p. 21)
(Walton refers to a famous poem by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in which the main character, an unnamed mariner, recounts his killing of an innocent seabird and the terrible penance he must undergo in order to rid himself of sin.)
3. The father of their charge was one of those Italians nursed in the memory of the antique glory of Italy—one among the *schiaivi ognor frementi*, who exerted himself to obtain the liberty of his country. (Vol. 1, Chap. 1, p. 36)
(Victor describes Elizabeth’s foster father as one of the “slaves always thrilling,” meaning that he never gave up his hope for military glory, such as Rome had in ancient times.)
4. In this house I chanced to find a volume of the works of Cornelius Agrippa. (Vol. 1, Chap. 2, p. 40)
(Henricus Cornelius Agrippa (1486-1535) of Nettesheim was a scholar and writer of the occult. His three most famous works—Three Books on the Hidden Philosophies (1529), Concerning the Vanity of the Sciences (1530), and Concerning the Nobility and Superiority of the Female Sex (1550)—helped establish his reputation as a magician and brought him to the attention of the Inquisition. He came in conflict with the established tenets of the church through his lectures and his defense of a woman accused of witchcraft.)

5. When I returned home my first care was to procure the whole works of this author, and afterwards of Paracelsus and Albertus Magnus. (Vol. 1, Chap. 2, p. 41)
(Victor shows great interest in the works of Theophrast Bombast Paracelsus (1493-1541), a Swiss physician and lecturer who strayed from orthodox science into alchemy, astrology, and mysticism. Even though he was derided by his detractors, his followers established a brotherhood known as the Rosicrucians, a mystical order with a deep interest in religion and healing. Paracelsus’ most famous works include On Nymphs, Pigmies, Salamanders and On Dwarfs and Monsters.)

The third theoretician to interest Victor is Albertus Magnus or Albert of Cologne (ca. 1200-1280), a Dominican friar and Christian scholar whose most famous student and disciple was Thomas Aquinas. Albertus Magnus is best known as an authority on Aristotle.)

6. I was required to exchange chimeras of boundless grandeur for realities of little worth. (Vol. 1, Chap. 3, p. 48)
(The crux of Victor Frankenstein’s disagreement with Monsieur Krempe is that Krempe forces him to forego the dreams of the occult and to apply himself to empirical fact. Victor belittles the knowledge of his own time and longs to return to fantasies founded on the occult. Krempe’s words echo in Victor’s rebellious brain: “The ancient teachers of this science . . . promised impossibilities and performed nothing. The modern masters promise very little; they know that metals cannot be transmuted and that the elixir of life is a chimera.”)
7. Ever since I was condemned, my confessor has besieged me; he threatened and menaced, until I almost began to think that I was the monster that he said I was. He threatened excommunication and hell fire in my last moments if I continued obdurate. (Vol. 1, Chap. 8, p. 88)
(In this passage, Mary Shelley, child and wife of freethinkers, depicts religion as cruel and thoughtless. Justine, who is pressured to confess or else suffer exclusion from Heaven, chooses to lie about William’s murder rather than stick to her original story. This turn of plot makes little sense in that Justine is more at risk of hellfire because of her lie than from any hold the confessor has over her soul.)
8. Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us. (Vol. 2, Chap. 2, p. 102)

(Victor's first meeting with the runaway monster establishes a pattern that dominates the theme of the novel. To the monster, Victor is his creator, whom he addresses with a biblical thou. Like a lost child seeking a reconciliation with a dissolute parent, the monster chastises Victor: "Do your duty towards me, and I will do mine towards you and the rest of mankind. If you will comply with my conditions, I will leave them and you at peace; but if you refuse, I will glut the maw of death, until it be satiated with the blood of your remaining friends.")

9. Sometimes, indeed, I felt a wish for happiness; and thought with melancholy delight of my beloved cousin; or longed, with a devouring *maladie du pays*, to see once more the blue lake and rapid Rhone, that had been so dear to me in early childhood: but my general state of feeling was a torpor, in which a prison was as welcome a residence as the divinest scene in nature; and these fits were seldom interrupted but by paroxysms of anguish and despair. (Vol. 3, Chap. 4, p. 187)

(Victor is ambivalent about his release from the Irish prison, where he remained for three months under the charge of murdering Henry Clerval. The surge of homesickness that engulfs him upon his father's arrival is not strong enough to displace the malaise that grips his spirit. Victor's attitude parallels that of Byron's "Prisoner of Chillon," (q.v.) who also has difficulty adjusting to freedom.)

10. His tale is connected, and told with an appearance of the simplest truth; yet I own to you that the letters of Felix and Safie, which he showed me, and the apparition of the monster seen from our ship, brought to me a greater conviction of the truth of his narrative than his asseverations, however earnest and connected. (Vol. 3, Chap. 7, p. 212-213)

(Captain Walton feels it necessary to emphasize proofs that Victor's story is true. The letters of Felix and Safie, which substantiate the monster's story about his sojourn near the De Lacey family, and a confrontation with the monster itself serve to tie the parts of this epistolary novel into a unified and believable whole.)

Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. Describe Victor's response to the monster on the day he gives it life.

(At one A.M. on a rainy November night, Victor comes to the end of two years' work after he infuses the "spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay" at his feet. In the glimmer of candle light, Victor observes the opening of a "dull yellow eye," hard breathing, and "a convulsive motion" through the creature's limbs. Torn by mixed emotions about the creature's appearance, Victor surveys the yellow skin that "scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath," lustrous black hair, pearly teeth, watery eyes, dun-white sockets, shrivelled complexion, and "straight black lips.")

Victor rushes to his chamber, paces the floor, and falls into a troubled sleep before being awakened by the grinning monster holding up the bed curtains and muttering inarticulate sounds. Its hand stretches toward its creator, who escapes and rushes downstairs. Victor passes the remainder of the night in the courtyard, his body palpitating with emotion. Bitterly disappointed that his dream has turned into nightmare, Victor rushes out the gate at 6 A.M. to avoid further contact with the monster and wanders distractedly through the streets of Ingolstadt.)

2. How does the monster show his concern for the De Lacey family?

(Drawn to the gentle De Lacey family, consisting of Agatha, her brother Felix, and their blind father, the monster hides in a low hovel that adjoins their cottage. Warmed by the adjacent chimney and fed by a stolen loaf of bread and water from a nearby source, he observes the family at close range through a chink in one of the cottage windows. Stirred by their poverty and close familial relations, the monster ceases to steal their stores and feeds himself on "berries, nuts, and roots" from the woods.)

The monster determines to help the struggling family by using Felix's tools to collect several days' supply of firewood. Felix, surprised at the gift, is able to spend his time in "repairing the cottage and cultivating the garden," which provides most of the De Laceys' meals. Also, Felix assists Agatha with her chores and works for a neighboring farmer, according to the monster's assumption. The monster continues living alongside the De Laceys, learning language by eavesdropping on their conversations, and performing manual labor, such as clearing the path of snow. The De Laceys never observe him at his labors and refer to him as a "good spirit.")

3. Describe how the monster responds to rejection.

(When Victor first encounters the monster at the top of Montanvert, the monster begs him to do his duty. Comparing himself to Adam, the monster describes himself as "rather the fallen angel, whom thou drivest from joy for no misdeed." Overwhelmed by the happiness of people, the monster, spurned

and hated on every side, must lurk in "desert mountains and dreary glaciers" and live in ice caves.

Victor, following the monster to a rocky place, listens to his story about his sojourn with the De Lacey family. The monster explains how he admired them and how, after viewing himself in a transparent pool, "started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror." Convinced of the grossness of his appearance, the monster hopes that "knowledge might enable me to make them overlook the deformity of my figure."

The monster's attempts to establish friendship with the De Laceys come to nothing after he approaches the old blind man and narrates his despair. The old man's sympathies have a positive effect, but their conversation ends in disaster when Felix, Safie, and Agatha return. Agatha faints, Safie rushes out the door, and Felix forces the monster away from the old man, to whose knees he clings. Bitterly disappointed, the monster withdraws, sick at heart, and returns to the hovel.

The next day, the De Laceys flee their home, never to return. The monster weeps at the loss of his adopted family. He destroys "every vestige of cultivation in the garden, waits for moonrise, and sets fire to the cottage. Consumed by insanity, he dances about, waving a torch. When the cottage is irretrievably aflame, the monster withdraws to the woods.)

4. How does the monster learn about his creation?

(The monster utilizes three books that he finds in a leather portmanteau. His consciousness opened to the true state of human life, he discovers "some papers in the pocket of the dress which I had taken from your laboratory." Deciphering the characters in Victor's handwriting, the monster relives the four months that precede his creation. The minute notations of laboratory work produce disgust and loathing, particularly Victor's description of his "odious and loathsome person.")

While reading the papers, the monster perceives that Victor was horrified by his creation. Sickened by the experience, the monster rues the day he received life. He cries out in agony, "Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust?"

5. Explain how the monster wreaks revenge on Victor's wedding night.

(Victor, fearful that the monster will make good his vow to find him on Victor's wedding night, approaches marriage to Elizabeth with foreboding. He arms himself with pistols and a dagger and remains alert to any indication that the monster is following him. While his family and fiancée anticipate the wedding, the groom "shut up, as well as I could, in my own heart the anxiety that preyed there and entered with seeming earnestness into the plans of my father, although they might only serve as the decorations of my tragedy.")

The newlyweds set out for Evian, where they plan to spend their wedding night. Elizabeth delights in the fish in the waters below and the clouds that "rise above the dome of Mont Blanc." They land at eight P.M., walk on the shore, and retire to the inn. At nightfall, a heavy rainstorm begins. Darkness triggers Victor's fears. He resolves to "sell my life dearly and not shrink from the conflict until my own life or that of my adversary was extinguished."

Victor paces the hallways, "inspecting every corner that might afford a retreat to my adversary." A scream brings him back to his room, where he finds Elizabeth's corpse "thrown across the bed." After her limbs are arranged and her face covered with a handkerchief, Victor returns to embrace her and finds the grinning monster staring through the open window, his finger pointed at the corpse.

Victor fires a shot. A crowd helps him track the intruder, but their manhunt proves fruitless. Victor falls into a "state of utter exhaustion." Fearful that the monster might murder Alphonse and Ernest, Victor leaves Evian and speeds back to Geneva.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretive Level)

6. Why does Victor journey to the Orkney Islands?

(Before Victor can marry Elizabeth, he must complete his part of the bargain with the monster—he must construct a female version. To gain knowledge from English philosophers, to avoid conducting his "loathsome task" in his father's house, and to conceal his own dismay at having to follow the same process that produced the first monster, he withdraws from Geneva.)

Victor hides these motives and pretends that he merely needs a change after the trauma of three deaths. Planning to be gone at the least a few months and at the most a year, at the end of September, Victor joins Clerval at Strasbourg. Their meeting is arranged by Alphonse Frankenstein to assure his son a companion.

Victor and Henry descend the Rhine to Rotterdam and sail to London, where they meet with "men of genius and talent who flourished at this time." The two men stand in stark contrast—Henry, filled with enthusiasm for travel and expanded consciousness, considers traveling to India; Victor, gloomy and distraught over his undertaking, concentrates on collecting materials for his project.

They move north in March. Victor intends to carry his instruments and materials to "some obscure nook in the northern highlands of Scotland." Separating from Henry, who plans to meet a friend in Perth, Victor chooses to "be absent a month or two" so that he can enjoy "peace and solitude." Grudgingly, Henry parts from Victor, who crosses the northern highlands and selects "one of the remotest of the Orkneys as the scene of my labours."

Victor describes the place as “fitted for such a work, being hardly more than a rock whose high sides were continually beaten upon by the waves. The soil was barren, scarcely affording pasture for a few miserable cows, and oatmeal for its inhabitants, which consisted of five persons, whose gaunt and scraggy limbs gave token of their miserable fare.” Locating a vacancy in one of the “three miserable huts” of the place, Victor resides in an appropriate environment—fallen thatch, unplastered walls, and a door off its hinges.)

7. Why does Victor destroy the second creature?

(Victor’s work proceeds well, but it brings no sense of accomplishment to his troubled mind. Each day he works in the morning and walks on the beach at evening, weather permitting. “Restless and nervous,” he dreads lifting his eyes to the horizon for fear of seeing the dreaded monster. Nearing the end of his task, Victor contemplates the results. Would a second monster “become ten thousand times more malignant than her mate and delight, for its own sake, in murder and wretchedness”? Would she refuse to live in desert places, as the first monster had promised? Even more problematic, would she produce children, “a race of devils . . . propagated upon the earth who might make the very existence of the species of man a condition precarious and full of terror”?

Lest he “inflict this curse upon everlasting generations,” Victor shudders at the thought of being labeled a menace to humankind. At this point in his musings, Victor catches sight of the “demon at the casement,” who watches him destroy the second being. After brooding alone for several hours, Victor hears the monster approach. Their confrontation ends disastrously: Victor refuses to create a “demon whose delight is in death and wretchedness”; the monster, frustrated in his need for a mate, promises to “be with you on your wedding-night.”

Avoiding Victor’s threats, the monster rows away. Victor continues to pace his room through the night. At sunrise, he walks about the island and sleeps on the grass. On receipt of a letter from Henry urging Victor to join him at Perth, Victor forces himself to finish one last chore. The next day, he packs the “remains of the half-finished creature” in a basket, cleans and arranges his instruments, sails out four miles from shore between two and three A. M., and dumps the dismembered being into the sea.)

8. What does Victor’s name suggest about the narrative?

(There is a kind of mockery in the choice of so triumphant a name for Victor Frankenstein. For Caroline Frankenstein, the boy fills a void in the couple’s life. She and Alphonse reward him with “inexhaustible stores of affection from a very mine of love” and adopt Elizabeth Lavenza as “pretty present” for him when he is five years old.

From boyhood, Victor demonstrates a violent temper and vehement passions, despite the kindness and indulgence of his loving parents. Following his introduction to metaphysics at the age of thirteen during a visit to the “baths near Thonon,” he is consumed by a thirst for more knowledge. Like the ruined Dr. Faustus, Victor pushes himself toward the unspeakable goal of forbidden knowledge.

In one sense, he is a victor in that he triumphs in the academic world of Ingolstadt. Yet his victory comes with a high price—the loss of innocence and the awareness of his indirect responsibility for heinous murders, Justine’s execution, and the threat of a continuation of the monster’s vindictive killings. Victor redeems himself in his final act, the tracking of the monster to northern ice fields.

On his deathbed, Victor’s indomitable spirit resurges through sparkling eyes and cheeks renewed by a last flush when he hears a half dozen sailors demand that Robert Walton abandon his push northward. Earning the name of Victor, he proclaims, “Are you, then, so easily turned from your design? Did you not call this a glorious expedition? . . . You were hereafter to be hailed as the benefactors of your species, your names adored as belonging to brave men who encountered death for honour and the benefit of mankind.”

Concluding with strong words about the “stigma of disgrace” if they choose to turn back, Victor moves the sailors deeply. As his death approaches, he voices the wisdom he has gained from a career devoted to seeking the mysteries of life: “Farewell, Walton! Seek happiness in tranquillity and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries.”)

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. How does a flawed novel still succeed in becoming a classic?

(Mary Shelley’s ineptitude, apparent throughout the novel, leaves the reader wondering at character motivation, stylistic detail, and simple plot mechanics. For example, why does Victor Frankenstein choose to create life in the form of an eight-foot giant? Why not a normal-sized being? And how could so large a body subsist on roots, berries, and nuts?

Likewise, how does the monster live in cramped quarters within hearing distance of a family, shovel their snowy path, and stock their woodpile without being seen? Furthermore, how does Shelley account for the monster’s rapid movements through heavily populated sections of Europe without some rumor starting among local people? Other questions crowd the mind about the high-flown speeches of a formerly inarticulate subhuman, the inept investigation of Justine Moritz’s supposed crime, and Victor’s ease in acquiring limbs and tissue for two monsters, especially in view of his isolation while he constructs the second monster.

In spite of its frailties and inconsistencies, Frankenstein captures a vital aspect of the human condition—the fear that humanity may one day reach too high or go too far with its trust in science.)

10. Why does the stereotyped “mad scientist” exist in literature, advertising, and movies? *(Society has always viewed creative genius from a healthy distance. Throughout history, the seclusion of contemplative, creative people has resulted in ridicule, suspicion, ostracism, and persecution. The mythic figure of Merlin symbolizes the concept of the mad scientist—a person who inspires a blend of awe and terror in ordinary people who are either incapable or unwilling to adopt new philosophies.)*

Real scientists and philosophers have suffered more than the fictional characters. In Socrates’ day, a distrust of philosophy led to the poisoning of one of the great thinkers of the Western world. Centuries later, Copernicus risked excommunication and public execution by challenging religious dogma with empirical observation and a new theory of the solar system. In the twentieth century, Albert Einstein figured as the butt of egghead jokes and similar ridicule.

Although Mary Shelley did not pioneer the concept of the mad scientist, her character, Victor Frankenstein, has come to represent the general fear that experimenters are not to be trusted. Television, movies, and literature perpetuates the notion that true scientific genius carries with it the danger of madness or unbridled ambition. Often, such plots end in tragedy for the researcher and for all humankind.)

Questions 11 and 12 (Creative Level)

11. Report on the Faust legend. Compare Dr. Faustus’ thirst for knowledge with that of Victor Frankenstein. In what way do both men suffer for their pride?
12. Compose a scene in which the monster meets with Frankenstein’s second creature. Indicate how the two beings would communicate and what they would plan for their future.

Across the Curriculum

Cinema

1. View various film versions of the *Frankenstein* myth, for example, *Young Frankenstein*, *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein*, *Frankenstein Unbound*, and *Frankenstein Created Woman*. Discuss why filmmakers insert humor, lightning, bizarre characteristics in the monster, arcane lab machinery, mobs of angry villagers, and cruelty or manipulation in Dr. Frankenstein.

Economics

1. Discuss with a group the improbability of Victor’s ability to study and tour at will without any obvious source of income.

Science and Health

1. Role-play the part of caregiver as demonstrated by Henry, Elizabeth, Justine, Safie, Alphonse, Mr. Kirwin, Caroline, and Robert. Why does Shelley pair a return to physical vigor with the relief of mental anguish?
2. Discuss your response toward Robert’s extreme optimism and his immediate bonding with Victor. Why is friendship a significant theme in the novel? Why do Victor’s male associates seem to understand him better than his family or Elizabeth understand him? What might a letter from Margaret Saville add to the reader’s knowledge of Robert?
3. Compose a first person account of work in Victor’s laboratory. Discuss the job of assembling body parts from mortuaries and dissecting rooms and the complex task of creating a human figure from dead tissue. Explain why Victor keeps a journal.
4. Divide the class into small groups to study the background elements of the story, particularly galvanism, alchemy, and Newton’s contributions to science. How does Mary Shelley indicate that she knows little about anatomy and science? Why does she emphasize literature, history, the arts, travel, and landmarks?

Psychology

1. Explain why Victor’s mental and spiritual obsession and vengeful behavior bring about his death.
2. Make an oral report on the theme of monomania as it applies to Victor, Robert, and the monster. Why does Victor refuse wise advice to cease studying the alchemists? Why does Robert insist on searching for a northern route to the Pacific Ocean? Why does the monster grieve for the man who created him, rejected him, and destroyed his mate?

Geography

1. Enumerate examples of transportation, including the ship, ice sledge, sailboat, coach, diligence, hike, and walking tour. How might rail travel have altered the novel?

Art

1. Draw settings for a movie version of *Frankenstein*. Show the honeymoon chamber in Evian, the laboratory in the Orkney Islands, Victor's night sail to Ireland, the asylum where Victor recovers from insanity, the scaffold where Justine is hanged, Monsieur Waldman's office, the lean-to beside the De Lacey cottage, the deck of Robert's ship, and Caroline's sickroom. Make a list of appropriate lighting, costumes, and properties.

Social Studies, Religion, and Law

1. Compose an extended definition of family. Determine why Shelley emphasizes the great-heartedness of Caroline and Alphonse Frankenstein and of Safie and the De Laceys. Why does the monster resent the absence of a mate?
2. Survey the significance of religious prejudice against Muslims, execution of a prisoner on the basis of circumstantial evidence, Turkish harems, political exile, threat of excommunication and damnation, and mistreatment of American Indians.

Mathematics, Logic, and Computers

1. Make a computer database of 18th and 19th-century romanticism, especially works by Bram Stoker, Emily Brontë, Charlotte Brontë, Lord Byron, Percy Shelley, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Edgar Allan Poe, Johann Goethe, Heinrich Heine, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Sir Walter Scott, John Keats, William Blake, and Leigh Hunt.
2. Lead a debate about inconsistencies and unlikely events in the novel, e. g. mail sent and received from a ship trapped in an ice floe or to travelers on a stagecoach from Paris to Geneva, paths mysteriously shoveled clean of snow and firewood delivered from an unknown source, Safie's ability to comprehend people who speak another language, Victor's ability to finance journeys about Europe and to the Black Sea and the arctic, the monster's deliberate placement of the miniature in Justine's pocket, Victor's concealment of decomposing body parts in his garret room in Ingolstadt, and Justine's decision to plead guilty to murder.

Language Arts

1. Compose an informal essay on myth. Compare the creation of Adam and Eve or of Lilith with the lab assembly of Shelley's monster. Contrast artistic views of the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden with Frankenstein's rejection of the monster and the jettisoning of the incomplete mate into the sea.
2. Compose a short speech in which you describe the selection of names. Consider these: Mont Blanc, Justine, Monsieur Krempe, Caroline Beaufort, Safie, and Agatha and Felix De Lacey. What name would you suggest for the monster? for the monster's mate? Explain how words can set the tone of a passage or predict how a character will act or a town will appear to a stranger. Explain the irony of Victor Frankenstein's name.
3. Complete a set of posters defining and illustrating these terms: charnel house, cabriolet, skiff, chamois, sledge, scaffold, portmanteau, and glacier.

Literature

1. Characterize the use of Mont Blanc as a symbol. Why is alchemy considered the dark side of scientific inquiry? Why is greed an inappropriate motivation for research? Why do significant scenes of confrontation occur on ice? What is Mary Shelley suggesting about frozen emotions? Comment on the monster's first experiences with light and fire.
2. Explain briefly how books and ideas influence Victor. Why is he drawn to the destructive power of lightning?
3. Discuss with a group how the Faust legend and the phoenix myth influence the novel. How does 18th-century science disprove the writings of the alchemists?
4. Compose a paragraph explaining why Arthurian romance and the chivalric era are significant to the novel. Contrast Henry Clerval's idealism with Victor's obsession with perverted science.

History and Current Events

1. Create a bulletin board illustrating the interconnected lives of Mary and Percy Shelley and their children, Leigh Hunt, Lord Byron,

Claire Clairmont, William Godwin, Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin, Edward Trelawney, Harriet Westbrook Shelley, Sir Percy Bysshe Shelley and his wife, and John Keats. Include a map to indicate places where groups of these people gathered for vacations or work.

Education

1. Join a group in studying the university system of Mary Shelley’s day. How did students select courses? Who supervised laboratories and reading? Where did students assemble for lectures?
2. Contrast the etymology of college and university.

Student Involvement Activities

1. Locate a variety of examples of similes in the text, such as “I could have torn him limb from limb, as the lion rends the antelope. But my heart sank within me as with bitter sickness, and I refrained” and “But the appearance of my father was to me like that of my good angel, and I gradually recovered my health.” Discuss how similes indicate sources of Mary Shelley’s imagery.
2. Make a map depicting the movement of the main characters. Mark the names of cities, mountains, rivers, and oceans. Contrast these routes with those covered by the Shelley family during their sojourns away from England.
3. Read examples of Percy Shelley’s poetry and contrast his view of nature with those of Mary Shelley. Which writer has the stronger grasp of detail?
4. Give an oral report in which you explain the importance of Safie to the story. Why does the author detail her father’s treachery? What effect does this minor plot have on the story of *Frankenstein* and the monster?
5. Cite passages of dialogue that seem stilted and unbelievable, particularly Victor’s explanations of his mental and emotional burdens. Rewrite these conversations in more convincing language.
6. Write a paragraph explaining why Mary Shelley refers frequently to Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*.

7. Suggest more plausible investigations for the crimes committed by the monster. Explain why Justine is an unlikely suspect. Describe how modern forensic medicine would exonerate both Justine and Victor of murder charges.
8. Using audiovisual sources, make an oral report on the Romantic Age. Discuss the time frame over which it extends. Compare the great creative writers of the period, particularly Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron, Charles and Caroline Lamb, William Wordsworth, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, and John Keats. Explain why *Frankenstein* belongs in the category of romantic literature.
9. Interview a coroner or pathologist. Inquire how students of anatomy are supplied with cadavers for study and how those corpses are disposed of afterward. Ask about the use of cybernetic anatomy models.
10. Lead a debate of the stereotype of the mad scientist. Discuss whether scientists should remain aloof from society or should involve themselves more closely in human affairs. Cite examples of famous research scientists, such as Pasteur, Fleming, Jenner, Sabin, Salk, Barnard, and DeBakey.

Alternate Assessment

1. List examples of curiosity, cruelty, suffering, fear, insecurity, intimidation, family love, honor, strategy, skill, compassion, madness, and innocence in the story.
2. Compile a list of actions that express Victor’s doubts and fears about himself and his work.
3. Compose a scene in which the corpse of the monster washes up near Archangel. Give Robert Walton’s comments to the authorities about Victor’s work.
4. Make a character list and explain the relationship of each to Victor. Include family members, professors at Ingolstadt, the judges and authorities, and friends.
5. Compose a chronological list of coincidences, such as Henry’s arrival, Robert’s rescue of Victor, and the dispatch of messages.

Vocabulary

A. Fill-In

Fill in the blanks in the passage below with words from the list that follows. Underline words that are context clues to your answers. You will have words left over when you finish. Refer to page 25 if you have difficulty.

aerial	ardour	disunion	enterprise	infidels	smitten
akin	benefactors	diversity	indiscriminately	metaphysical	sullen
ample	contemplated	divine	indulgence	seclusion	tempest

We were brought up together; there was not quite a year difference in our ages. I need not say that we were strangers to any species of (1)_____ or dispute. Harmony was the soul of our companionship, and the (2)_____ and contrast that subsisted in our characters drew us nearer together. Elizabeth was of a calmer and more concentrated disposition; but, with all my (3)_____, I was capable of a more intense application, and was more deeply (4)_____ with the thirst for knowledge. She busied herself with following the (5)_____ creations of the poets; and in the majestic and wondrous scenes which surrounded our Swiss home—the sublime shapes of the mountains; the changes of the seasons; (6)_____ and calm; the silence of winter, and the life and turbulence of our Alpine summers—she found (7)_____ scope for admiration and delight. While my companion (8)_____ with a serious and satisfied spirit the magnificent appearances of things, I delighted in investigating their causes. The world was to me a secret which I desired to (9)_____. Curiosity, earnest research to learn the hidden laws of nature, gladness (10)_____ to rapture, as they were unfolded to me, are among the earliest sensations I can remember.

B. Antonyms

Locate opposites for each of the following terms from the list above:

- _____ 1. sparse
- _____ 2. sunny
- _____ 3. accompaniment
- _____ 4. abstinence
- _____ 5. serenity
- _____ 6. meticulously
- _____ 7. accord
- _____ 8. unafflicted
- _____ 9. unrelated
- _____ 10. detractors

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Quotation Identification (20 points)

Match quotations with the names of speakers. Place the letters of your responses in the blanks provided at left. Note that some of the answers are used more than once and some not at all.

- | | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------------|
| A. Caroline Frankenstein | D. Felix De Lacey | G. monster | J. Margaret Saville |
| B. Alphonse Frankenstein | E. Robert Walton | H. Henry Clerval | K. Madame Moritz |
| C. Victor Frankenstein | F. father De Lacey | I. M. Kempe | L. Elizabeth Lavenza |

- _____ 1. I swear ... by the sun, and by the blue sky of heaven, and by the fire of love that burns my heart, that if you grant my prayer, while they exist you shall never behold me again.
- _____ 2. I have a pretty present for my Victor—tomorrow he shall have it.
- _____ 3. Oh, Frankenstein! Generous and self-devoted being! What does it avail that I now ask thee to pardon me?
- _____ 4. During the day I was sustained and inspirited by the hope of night, for in sleep I saw my friends, my wife, and my beloved country ...
- _____ 5. To be friendless is indeed to be unfortunate, but the hearts of men, when unprejudiced by any obvious self-interest, are full of brotherly love and charity.
- _____ 6. My wife and my sister will never recover from their horror. I entreat you not to reason with me any more. Take possession of your tenement and let me fly from this place.
- _____ 7. I will proclaim, I will prove your innocence. I will melt the stony hearts of your enemies by my tears and prayers. You shall not die!
- _____ 8. About five in the morning I discovered my lovely boy, whom the night before I had seen blooming and active in health, stretched on the grass livid and motionless; the print of the murderer's finger was on his neck.
- _____ 9. A youngster who, but a few years ago, believed in Cornelius Agrippa as firmly as in the Gospel, has now set himself at the head of the university; and if he is not soon pulled down, we shall all be out of countenance.
- _____ 10. This is what it is to live ... now I enjoy existence! But you, my dear Frankenstein, wherefore are you desponding and sorrowful!

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Supply a word or phrase in answer to each of the following questions. Place your response in the blank provided at left.

- _____ 1. Whose picture is on the miniature the monster places in the fold of Justine's dress?
- _____ 2. How does the monster destroy the hovel?
- _____ 3. How tall is the monster?
- _____ 4. What color is the monster's skin?

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

- _____ 5. Who dies in Victor's arms?
- _____ 6. Which teacher does Victor like?
- _____ 7. Which character springs out a cabin window and disappears into the darkness?
- _____ 8. Which character is the child of a Milanese nobleman?
- _____ 9. Which character is blind?
- _____ 10. Whom does the monster observe bearing a pail of milk on her head?

Part III: True/False (30 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- _____ 1. Victor robs graveyards and slaughter houses for materials to make a living being eight feet tall.
- _____ 2. The monster arrives at the ship as Victor is speaking his last words to Robert Walton.
- _____ 3. Mr. Kirwin, who sees Victor rowing out to sea, believes that the body Victor threw overboard was that of Elizabeth.
- _____ 4. M. Kempe discourages Victor from studying the occult.
- _____ 5. William struggles against the monster, who awakens the boy from his nap in the straw.
- _____ 6. In Henry Clerval, Victor Frankenstein sees the scholar he once hoped to be.
- _____ 7. Victor shoots at the monster.
- _____ 8. Caroline dies after nursing Elizabeth through scarlet fever.
- _____ 9. From an early age, Victor shows a strong interest in religion.
- _____ 10. On the day that Victor gives life to the monster, it leaps through the window and runs away toward Mont Blanc.
- _____ 11. Having suffered multiple family tragedies, Alphonse dies in his son's arms.
- _____ 12. After Victor's death, Robert Walton regrets losing a true friend.
- _____ 13. Without money from Mrs. Saville, Captain Walton would not be able to finance the expedition to Archangel.
- _____ 14. The monster admits that strangling Justine was a joy because he feels strong hatred for his creator.
- _____ 15. From the deck of the ship, Victor and Robert can see the dogsled driven by a large, misshapen creature.

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer complete sentences.

1. Describe Victor's years at the University of Ingolstadt.
2. Compare the monster, Henry, and Elizabeth as influences on Victor's behavior.
3. List and explain each death that occurs in the story.
4. Discuss the use of letters, messages, and journals to further the plot.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Identifying Locations (20 points)

Name the place which is described in the following quotations.

Archangel	Ingolstadt	North Pole	Perth
Belrive	Irish jail	Orkney Island	Russia
Chamounix	Lake Como	Oxford	St. Petersburg
Geneva	London	Paris	Turkey

- _____ 1. As I stood at the door, on a sudden I beheld a stream of fire issue from an old and beautiful oak which stood about twenty yards from our house; and so soon as the dazzling light vanished, the oak had disappeared, and nothing remained but a blasted stump.
- _____ 2. At length the high white steeple of the town met my eyes. I alighted and was conducted to my solitary apartment to spend the evening as I pleased.
- _____ 3. Mont Blanc, the supreme and magnificent Mont Blanc, raised itself from the surrounding aiguilles, and its tremendous dome overlooked the valley.
- _____ 4. Fortunately, as I spoke my native language, Mr. Kirwin alone understood me; but my gestures and bitter cries were sufficient to affright the other witnesses.
- _____ 5. The wretch saw me destroy the creature on whose future existence he depended for happiness, and with a howl of devilish despair and revenge, withdrew.
- _____ 6. I arrived here yesterday, and my first task is to assure my dear sister of my welfare and increasing confidence in the success of my undertaking.
- _____ 7. Felix had accidentally been present at the trial; his horror and indignation were uncontrollable when he heard the decision of the court.
- _____ 8. My ancestors had been for many years counsellors and syndics, and my father had filled several public situations with honour and reputation.
- _____ 9. She found a peasant and his wife, hard working, bent down by care and labour, distributing a scanty meal to five hungry babes.
- _____ 10. I often refused to accompany him, alleging another engagement, that I might remain alone. I now also began to collect the materials necessary for my new creation, and this was to me like the torture of single drops of water continually falling on the head.

Part II: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left. Some of the answers will be used more than once and some not at all.

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| _____ 1. wears the portrait of a lovely woman at his neck. | A. Justine |
| _____ 2. intends to sail from Russia toward the North Pole. | B. the Turk |
| _____ 3. feels it his patriotic duty to join the foreign service | C. Mr. Kirwin |
| _____ 4. daughter of Madame Moritz. | D. M. Waldman |
| _____ 5. sets fire to the De Lacey cottage. | E. Ernest Frankenstein |
| _____ 6. escapes from prison the day before execution. | F. Caroline Beaufort |
| _____ 7. collects witnesses and arranges for Victor's defense. | G. monster |
| _____ 8. encourages Victor to study every branch of natural philosophy. | H. William |
| _____ 9. plait straw to support a sick parent. | I. jailer's wife |
| _____ 10. nurses Victor in Ireland. | J. Robert Walton |

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Fill-in (30 points)

Supply a word or phrase from the list below to complete each of the following statements.

Beaufort	Ernest	laboratory	my father	seven
brother	Felix and Safie	lieutenant	M. Waldman	spire
club	Geneva	Madame Moritz	Naples	Turk
Cornelius Agrippa	Henry	Margaret Saville	Safie	three
dagger	hovel	Mont Blanc	sea	two
Elizabeth	Justine	my dead mother	sepulchre	valley

- ... I thought that I held the corpse of _____ in my arms; a shroud enveloped her form, and I saw the grave-worms crawling in the folds of the flannel.
- I had worked hard for nearly _____ years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body.
- The saintly soul of _____ shone like a shrine-dedicated lamp in our peaceful home.
- With trembling hand I conveyed the instruments out of the room, but I reflected that I ought not to leave the relics of my work to excite the horror and suspicion of the peasants; and I accordingly put them into a basket, and with a great quantity of stones, and laying them up, determined to throw them into the _____ that very night.
- I carried pistols and a _____ constantly about me and was ever on the watch to prevent artifice, and by these means gained a greater degree of tranquillity.
- His tale is connected and told with an appearance of the simplest truth, yet I own to you that the letters of _____, which he showed me, and the apparition of the monster seen from our ship, brought to me a greater conviction of the truth of his narrative than his asseverations, however earnest and connected.
- In this house I chanced to find a volume of the works of _____.
- I, their eldest child, was born at _____, and as an infant accompanied them in their rambles.
- My _____, for instance, is a man of wonderful courage and enterprise; he is madly desirous of glory, or rather, to word my phrase more characteristically, of advancement in his profession.
- Is _____ indeed come? How kind, how very kind! But where is he, why does he not hasten to me?
- William, Justine, and _____—they all died by my hands.
- Felix soon learned that the treacherous _____, for whom he and his family endured such unheard-of oppression, on discovering that his deliverer was thus reduced to poverty and ruin, became a traitor to good feeling and honour ...
- _____ related that her mother was a Christian Arab ...
- _____, thus received in our family, learned the duties of servant, a condition which, in our fortunate country, does not include the idea of ignorance and a sacrifice of the dignity of a human being.
- "I am happy," said _____, "to have gained a disciple; and if your application equals your ability, I have no doubt of your success."

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- Describe how the monster learns language, literature, and manners.
- Narrate Justine's experiences on the day William dies.
- Explain why Victor agrees to make a second monster.
- Contrast Victor and Robert as loving family members.

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

A. Fill-In

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. disunion (dispute) | 6. tempest (calm) |
| 2. diversity (contrast) | 7. ample (scope) |
| 3. ardour (intense) | 8. contemplated (appearances) |
| 4. smitten (thirst) | 9. divine (secret) |
| 5. aerial (creations) | 10. akin (rapture) |

B. Antonyms

- | | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| 1. ample | 6. indiscriminately |
| 2. sullen | 7. disunion |
| 3. seclusion | 8. smitten |
| 4. indulgence | 9. akin |
| 5. tempest | 10. benefactors |

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Quotation Identification (20 points)

- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. G | 6. D |
| 2. A | 7. L |
| 3. G | 8. B |
| 4. C | 9. I |
| 5. F | 10. H |

Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

- | | |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Caroline Frankenstein | 6. M. Waldman |
| 2. burns it | 7. the monster |
| 3. eight feet | 8. Elizabeth |
| 4. yellow | 9. De Lacey |
| 5. his father | 10. Agatha |

Part III: True/False (30 points)

- | | | |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. T | 6. T | 11. T |
| 2. F | 7. T | 12. T |
| 3. F | 8. T | 13. F |
| 4. T | 9. F | 14. F |
| 5. F | 10. F | 15. F |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Identifying Quotations (20 points)

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Belrive | 6. St. Petersburg |
| 2. Ingolstadt | 7. Paris |
| 3. Chamounix | 8. Geneva |
| 4. Irish jail | 9. Lake Como |
| 5. Orkney Island | 10. London |

Part II: Matching (20 points)

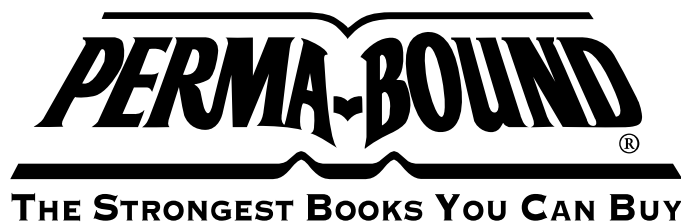
- | | |
|------|-------|
| 1. E | 6. B |
| 2. J | 7. C |
| 3. E | 8. D |
| 4. A | 9. F |
| 5. G | 10. I |

Part III: Fill-in (30 points)

- | | |
|----------------------|----------------|
| 1. my dead mother | 9. lieutenant |
| 2. two | 10. my father |
| 3. Elizabeth | 11. Henry |
| 4. sea | 12. Turk |
| 5. dagger | 13. Safie |
| 6. Felix and Safie | 14. Justine |
| 7. Cornelius Agrippa | 15. M. Waldman |
| 8. Naples | |

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.



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