

PRE-READING ACTIVITY



What do you know about *Frankenstein*, the character? Give as much information as you can about him.

Now read an **INTRODUCTION** about the author of this story, Mary Shelley.



RICHMOND READERS

Frankenstein

Mary Shelley

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797-1851) was the daughter of famous parents. Her father was the radical philosopher, William Godwin. Her mother was Mary Wollstonecraft, an early feminist writer, who died when Mary was born.

Mary's early years were not entirely happy. She adored her father but hated his second wife, who was jealous* of the girl because of her famous mother. Although Mrs Godwin took care of her step-daughter's physical needs, she took no interest in her education and Mary was never sent to school. But she lived in a stimulating intellectual atmosphere. Her father's huge library* was open to her and she was able to listen to the conversation of her father's wide circle of friends. This included many men of great intellect and creativity, like the scientist, Humphry Davy and the poet, Coleridge. Mary later used ideas from the work of both these men in *Frankenstein*.

When she was only sixteen, Mary met Percy Bysshe Shelley, a brilliant young poet and political thinker who greatly admired her father. Shelley already had a wife but he and Mary at once fell deeply in love and ran away together to live in France. They could not marry until 1816 after the death of Shelley's wife. By this time, Mary had already had two babies, both of whom died young. Out of the four children born to her, only one, Percy, lived beyond childhood.

Mary deeply loved her brilliant young husband although neither of them was easy to live with. When he died tragically at sea in 1822, the best part of her life was over. From then on, she had to work very hard at her writing to give young Percy an education 'suitable for a gentleman's son'. Her health suffered and she died in 1851 aged only 53.

Although several men had wanted to marry the young widow*, Mary had rejected* all offers. 'I want to be Mary Shelley on my grave-stone,' she said.

Background to the story of *Frankenstein*

Mary Shelley wrote a number of other novels and some travel books but she is best remembered for *Frankenstein*, published in 1818. Many people wondered how a young woman could write such a powerful horror story. It happened when the Shelleys and some friends were reading ghost* stories together one evening. Someone suggested that they all write a story of their own. Mary could think of nothing to write at first but a few days later, the idea for *Frankenstein* came to her in a kind of day-dream.

In the story, Mary showed her understanding of the changes happening in science at the time - and how dangerous those changes could be. Her Victor Frankenstein is an aggressive, experimental scientist who wants to be the master of nature. But he takes no responsibility for his work. The monster he creates symbolises, perhaps even more powerfully for us than for Mary Shelley's contemporaries, the disastrous results that can come from uncontrolled scientific experiments.

INTRODUCTION ACTIVITIES: Answer the questions:

1. Who were Mary Shelley's parents?
2. Did Mary go to school? Why?
3. How could she get an education?
4. Who did Mary Shelley marry?
5. When was 'Frankenstein' published?
6. According to the introduction, what does the monster in the story represent?

PART I. CHAPTER 1

CHARACTERS IN THE STORY

Mr Alphonse Frankenstein of Geneva

Mrs Frankenstein his wife

Victor their eldest son

Ernest their second son

William their youngest son

Elizabeth Lavenza their adopted daughter

Henry Clerval Victor's friend

Justine Moritz a girl who lives with the Frankenstein family

Professor Waldman Victor's chemistry teacher at Ingoldstadt

De Lacey a blind man, exiled from France

Felix his son

Agatha his daughter

Safie a Turkish girl in love with Felix

Mr Kirwin an Irish magistrate

Captain Walton an arctic explorer

Margaret Saville his sister

The Monster Victor Frankenstein's nameless creature

PART I Captain Robert Walton's Story

August 15th - August 18th 1757, in the Arctic



CHAPTER 1

Caught in the Ice!

Letter from Captain Robert Walton, Arctic explorer, to his sister, Margaret Saville

Friday, August 15th 1757

Such a strange accident has happened to us! I cannot wait to tell you about it. But you will probably see me before this letter arrives.

Last Monday, August 11th, the sea froze all around our ship and we could not move. There was fog so thick that it was dangerous even to try to move. When the fog



A team of dogs appeared pulling a sledge fast across the snow.

cleared, we could see nothing but ice in every direction. My men were very frightened.

Suddenly, we saw something strange. A team of dogs appeared pulling a sledge fast across the snow. Something, which looked like a man but much bigger, was sitting in the sledge and guiding the dogs. Then they all disappeared in the distance.

Until then, we had believed our ship was hundreds of miles from land. Now, we were not so sure. Of course, we could not follow the sledge because of the ice.

Two hours later, it was dark. The ice broke up and we were free. But there were still large pieces of ice in the water around the ship so it was too dangerous to move before daylight.

On Tuesday, I got up at first light. I found my seamen talking to someone in the sea. It was a young man. He was in another sledge on a piece of ice which was near the ship.

'Here's our captain,' a seaman said. 'He won't let you die in the sea.'

The stranger spoke English with a foreign accent. 'Before I come onto your ship,' he said, 'tell me where you're going.'

You can imagine my surprise at the question from a traveller in his dangerous situation!

'We are making a journey of discovery to the North Pole,' I replied.

'Then I'll come with you,' the stranger said.

The man looked ready to collapse. His arms and legs were almost frozen and his body was terribly thin. We kept him warm and gave him food. He did not speak again until Thursday, two days later.

He is an interesting man. Sometimes his eyes look wild, even mad ... At other times, he can be sweet and gentle, thanking us for our kindness. But often he seems to be very sad and very angry with himself.

PART I. CHAPTER 1: Comprehension questions:

1. What happened to Captain Walton's ship on Monday?
2. What did the seamen see in the snow on Monday?
3. Who did they find in a dangerous situation on Tuesday?
4. On what condition was the young man?
5. Why is he described as an interesting man by Captain Walton?

I wondered what had made my mysterious guest come to this wild region all alone.

'Why did you travel so far on the sledge?' I asked when he was strong enough to speak.

'I was trying to find someone who has run away from me,' he answered, with the saddest expression on his face.

'And was that person travelling in the same way - on a sledge?' I asked.

'Yes, he was.'

'Then I think we've seen him,' I said. 'On Monday, the day before we found you, we saw some dogs pulling a sledge across the ice. There was a man sitting in it.'

'Which way did he go?' our guest asked, excitedly.

'Towards the north,' I answered.

'Do you think the sledge was destroyed when the ice broke up?'

'I can't be sure,' I answered. 'The ice didn't break up until nearly midnight. Perhaps the traveller was in a safe place by that time.'

The stranger is now more active. He seems much stronger but he does not talk much about himself. I think he was once a very fine man. He is the friend I have always wanted. But I never expected to find him in this place.

Monday, August 18th 1757

Our guest's health is much better now but he is strangely restless and spends hours watching for the other sledge. We enjoy long conversations together in the evening. He has a very good intellect and is a most eloquent speaker. I admire him greatly but I am also sorry for him. He is a fine man destroyed by unhappiness. It makes me sad to see him.

Although he is so unhappy, he is very interested in my journey of exploration. I have spoken to him openly about my ambitions. He knows I want to discover a way across this wild region.

I told him all about my years of preparation, the hard life at sea and the long hours of study at night. Finally, I told him of my wish for a friend like him, with interests and feelings like my own.

As I spoke, he could not hide his sadness. 'You unhappy man!' he said. 'You have the same mad ambition that I had. I once had a friend - the finest of men. So I understand what real friendship is. You still have hope and life in front of you. But I - I have lost everything and I cannot begin my life again. Listen to my story, and be warned against ambition!'

'I'd like to hear your story, sir,' I said. 'And if I can help you, I'll gladly do so.'

'Thank you, Walton, but my life is nearly finished,' he said. 'I wait only for one event. Then I'll rest in peace. Now, listen to the story of Victor Frankenstein of Geneva. You will understand why I do not wish to live any longer.'

I shall write down his words every night, Margaret. I hope you will find the following pages interesting.

PART I. CHAPTER 1 (continued):

6. Why was the young man in that part of the world?

7. Now we know more about the stranger. What characteristics of personality has he got? How does he feel at the moment? Why does he feel like that?

8. What's the stranger's name?

PART II Frankenstein's Story

October 1748 - June 1754, in Geneva and Ingolstadt



CHAPTER 2

Victor Frankenstein of Geneva

I come from a famous family of Geneva. My father spent his early years in the public service and married late in life. My mother came from a good family although they had no money.

I had two younger brothers, Ernest and William. There was also a girl, Elizabeth Lavenza, of my own age who was taken into the family because her parents were too poor to look after her.

During my schooldays, I had few friends. My ambition was always to do better than other boys. I learned more

quickly than they did and I liked to study alone. My one close friend was Henry Clerval. He was a very intelligent boy but we were very different. He was always interested in philosophical questions of right and wrong. From my earliest years, however, I only wanted to learn the secrets of science.

When I was seventeen, my parents decided to send me to university at Ingolstadt. But before I could leave home, the first terrible event of my life happened.



'I had always hoped to see you come together'.

PART II.CHAPTER 2: Comprehension questions:

9. Victor Frankenstein is from Geneva. Where is Geneva? How does it translate into Spanish?

10. Who was Henry Clerval? How were the two friends different?

Elizabeth became seriously ill. My mother took care of her without any thought of her own danger. Elizabeth's life was saved but then my mother also became ill. The doctors gave us no hope.

As she lay dying, my mother joined Elizabeth's hands with mine. 'My children,' she said, 'I had always hoped to see you come together. Now, only your father will have this happiness. Elizabeth, you must take my place with the younger children.'

She died calmly. Even in death, her face showed her love for us. I do not need to describe our feelings - our empty hearts.

CHAPTER 3

'I will show the world the mystery of life!'

I had stayed at home during my mother's illness and death. Now, the time came for me to go to Ingolstadt but I did not want to leave my family in their sadness. Above all, I wanted to stay and help Elizabeth, who tried so hard to console the rest of us. But at last I had to go. Henry Clerval spent the last evening with us. He could not go to university with me. His father wanted him at home to help in the family business. But I knew that this life would not suit Clerval.

They all came out to see me get into the coach*. My father held me close. 'God keep you safe, my boy,' he said.

'Give me your hand, Frankenstein,' Clerval said. 'I'll see you in Ingolstadt one day.'

Elizabeth kissed me. 'Dear Victor, don't forget us,' she said. 'Write to us often.'

I had always had my family and friends around me. Now, I was alone. Now, in the university, I would have to find my own friends and take care of myself. But I felt shy and I was never comfortable in the company of strangers.

These thoughts kept me busy during the long journey to Ingolstadt.

Next morning, I introduced myself to some of the most important university professors. Mr Waldman, the chemistry teacher, was a kind man with a gentle voice. I was very interested in what he said about his subject.

'The old teachers of chemistry promised to do impossible things,' he said. 'But they actually produced nothing. The modern ones promise very little and have done wonderful things. They go into the secret places of nature and show how it works. They have discovered how the blood moves round the body. They have found new and almost endless power ...'

My head filled with exciting thoughts. So much had been done, but I, Frankenstein, would do more! 'I too will explore the unknown,' I told myself. 'I will show the world the mystery of life itself!'

Quietly, I told Mr Waldman my ambition.

'I'm happy to have a follower,' he said. 'If you really want to succeed, I'm sure you will. There is still great work to be done in chemistry in the future.'

PART II.CHAPTER 2 (continued):

11. "...the first terrible event of my life happened". What terrible event was that?

CHAPTER 3: Comprehension questions:

12. Why did Frankenstein have to go to Ingolstadt?

13. What was Frankenstein's ambition?

A Lonely Student

From that day, I did nothing except study chemistry. I was too shy to join in the social activities of the other students so I made no friends. Instead, I became more and more ambitious to succeed in my work – and to do it alone! I read the best books by all the modern teachers. I went to all the classes and met the finest scientists in the university. Everyone gave me excellent information. Mr Waldman became a real friend. He helped me in my studies in a thousand different ways. I was not sure about my work at first but I became more certain as time passed. I often worked through the night in my laboratory.

Since I worked so hard, I learned very quickly. I surprised both students and teachers.

Two years passed in this way and I was too busy to visit Geneva. In science, there is always an opportunity for discovery. A student who spends his whole time on one subject must surely find something new. I was able to make some changes in laboratory methods. This brought me great admiration in the university.

The human body was a special interest of mine. I began to ask myself where life came from. It was a big question and has always been a mystery. I decided to make this question the subject of my personal study. At the time, I did not consider any of the possible dangers. I did not discuss my work with other students because I was afraid they might laugh at my ambition. So I made my decision entirely alone. More than anything else, I wanted to be famous but I did not want to share my ideas or my success even with my teacher, Mr Waldman. Sometimes, I thought of my father and Elizabeth, and above all, I wanted to talk

to Clerval. But they were all too far away to give me their advice.

An almost unnatural enthusiasm now drove me on. Before examining the causes of life, I first had to learn about death. But it was not enough for me to study physiology. I had to go further – much further. Without any fear of the spirits of the dead, I did horrible things. I had to see all the smallest details of the change from life to death. I spent hours in dark places where dead bodies lay. I saw how corruption destroyed even the finest human bodies ...

In the middle of this darkness, I was filled with a sudden light. I had an idea that was so brilliant and wonderful – but



I spent hours in dark places where dead bodies lay.

CHAPTER 4: Comprehension questions:

14. Translate the following passage into Spanish:

“Two years passed in this way and I was too busy to visit Geneva. In science, there is always an opportunity for discovery. A student who spends his whole time on one subject must surely find something new. I was able to make some changes in laboratory methods. This brought me great admiration in the university”.

15. What was Frankenstein's special interest?

quite simple. I am not speaking the wild thoughts of a madman. I am telling you what is true.

After days and nights of endless work, I had discovered the origin of life. Not only that, but I also discovered how I could give life to something that had been lifeless. I was at first surprised that I alone among so many famous men of science had been the first to discover this secret. Then I soon forgot all the hard and painful work and saw only the result. Since the creation of the world, the cleverest men had always wanted this secret. It was now mine - and mine alone!

'No, Walton, I am not going to tell you the details of that secret. Learn from my example. Scientific discoveries can be very dangerous.'

When I found this great power in my hands, I did not use it at once. I thought about it for a long time. Once again, there was no one with whom I wanted to discuss my ideas. I was still quite content to work alone. I was now able to make life and, at first, I considered making a simpler creature than a living human. But my imagination had been greatly excited by that first success. I was soon quite sure that I could give life to an animal as complex as a man. But there was still a lot to do before I could start.

I almost expected to fail. But I felt that even if my work was not perfect, I still had a duty* to try. Perhaps I could make a completely new race of men. Through them I could do wonderful things for humanity. Perhaps, in time, I could even conquer death itself!

Filled with these ideas, I was ready to make a human being. It was quicker and easier to work on a really big one. So I planned to make it eight feet tall. After spending some months collecting my material, I started work.

The Monster

My great ambition drove me forward. I was the first to discover the secrets of life and death. I was going to bring a new light into the darkness of the world! I shut myself away in my lonely room at the top of the house. I became weak and thin as I worked. Sometimes I had to pause for a few hours. But I always returned to my horrible work with even more enthusiasm. Nothing could stop me. I even forgot my loved ones who were so far away. My father did not mention my silence in his letters. He only asked about my work.

Winter, spring and summer passed. But I did not enjoy the new flowers or the growing leaves as I used to do.

Every night, I felt hot and ill and I became very nervous. I stayed away from people as if I were a criminal. The least noise made me jump. I began to feel more like a slave* than a scientist doing the work he loved. Sometimes, I was alarmed by how unhealthy I looked. Only my love for my work drove me forward. I promised myself rest and exercise only when I had finished.

I know now that a healthy human being should always try to be calm and peaceful. If study upsets him then it means that his work does not suit him.

'But I'm slow to come to the interesting part of my story, Walton. I can see that you are impatient for me to go on ...'

At last, I finished my work on a dark November night. My heart beat painfully hard as I collected the instruments of life around me. Then I caused the lifeless thing at my feet to breathe. It was already one o'clock in the morning and the rain was beating against the windows. My oil lamp had burned low. By its weak light, I saw the monster's eyes open. It breathed hard and its body moved wildly.

CHAPTER 4 (continued):

16. What discovery did Frankenstein make?

17. What sort of creature did he decide to make?

CHAPTER 5: Comprehension questions:

18. How did Frankenstein feel while he was working on his discovery?

19. What did he create?

I cannot describe my feelings at that moment. The thing that came to life had enormous arms and legs. His hair was long and black and his teeth were very white. He had a horrible grey-white face and thin, black lips*.



I cannot describe my feelings at that moment.

I had worked without rest for two years. Now that I had finished, my beautiful dream suddenly disappeared. Fear filled my heart. I was unable to look at the monster, and I ran from the room. For a long time, I walked around my bedroom, before finally falling asleep.

I dreamed that I saw Elizabeth walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. I put my arms around her. But as I kissed her face, she became as white as death. Her face changed ... I seemed to hold the body of my dead mother in my arms.

I woke suddenly, terribly afraid. By the light of the moon through my window, I saw the monster by my bed. He was looking at me. His mouth opened and he made strange sounds. As I stood up, he put out his hand to stop me. But I managed to escape and run away. I spent the night walking around the garden. I was afraid the monster might appear again at any moment.

CHAPTER 6

The Best of Friends

At six o'clock the next morning, I started to walk around the streets. I was _____ to return to my rooms. I expected to meet the _____ at every corner.

At last I reached the place where the public coaches from Switzerland arrived. A man was walking _____ me. It was Henry Clerval!

'My dear Frankenstein,' he cried. 'I am so glad to see you. How lucky that you are here at this exact moment.'

I was so _____ to see him. He made me think of my father and Elizabeth. When I took his hand, I felt calm and _____ for the first time in many months.

CHAPTER 5 (continued):

20. Describe the monster's appearance.

21. Was Frankenstein pleased with his creation? How did he feel about it?

'You see, my father has let me come after all,' Clerval said. 'It was difficult but his love for me was _____ than his dislike of university education.'

'It's wonderful to see you again,' I said. 'Give me news of my father, brothers and Elizabeth.'

'They're very well and very happy,' Clerval said. 'But just a little surprised that they don't have a letter from you very often.' He stopped, and looked into my face. 'My dear Frankenstein, you look very _____ you are so white and thin!'

'I've been very busy, Clerval,' I said. 'I haven't had much _____ recently. But now I believe I've finished.'

We walked back towards my house together. When we arrived, I asked him to wait in the hall. Cold with _____, I stopped outside my own door. Then I _____ it open and went inside. The place was quite empty. I could not believe my good luck! I ran back to Clerval.

At that moment, I could not control myself. My loud _____ and wild expression frightened Clerval. 'My dear Frankenstein, what's the matter?' he asked. 'Don't laugh like that! How ill you are! What is it?'

'Don't ask me,' I cried, putting my hands over my face. In my terror, I imagined I could see the monster. I pointed at it. 'He can tell you. Oh, Clerval, save me! Save me!' I _____ madly with an imaginary monster. Then I fell _____ on the floor.

That was the start of a _____ that lasted for many months. Clerval alone took care of me. He did not want to worry my father and Elizabeth so he did not tell them the details of my _____.

With his help, I slowly became stronger and began to be interested again in the world around me. I saw the green signs of spring in the trees outside my window. Studying



Clerval alone took care of me.

had made me lonely but Clerval brought love and friendship into my life again. With his help, I became the same happy person who had left Geneva a few years ago.

'You're very good to me, Clerval,' I said. 'You've spent the whole winter taking care of me instead of studying. How can I ever thank you enough?'

'You can thank me properly by getting well as fast as you can,' he answered. 'And now you're so much better, I have something to tell you ...'

Something ...? About the monster perhaps? My face went white.

'Don't worry, Frankenstein,' Clerval said. 'I have a letter here from Elizabeth. She and your father very much want to hear from you. They don't know how ill you have been and they are worried by your long silence.'

He put the letter in my hands.

CHAPTER 6: The Best of Friends

22. Some words are missing in Chapter 6. Insert them in the correct place.

fear, fought, ill, illness, laugh, nervous illness, pushed, rest, stronger, unconscious

23. In chapter 6, find three sentences including comparatives.

1.-

2.-

3.-

24. Why does Frankenstein say 'Oh, Clerval, save me! Save me!/?'

CHAPTER 7: News from Home

25. Translate the letter from Elizabeth to Frankenstein.

CHAPTER 8: Murder!

26. Which studies did Clerval decide to take at university?

27. The title of this chapter is 'Murder!'. Who was murdered? How did he die?

28. Complete the sentences by using appropriate conditional structures:

a) Frankenstein will return to Geneva in the autumn if ...

b) If Frankenstein told Clerval his secret ...

c) The murder wouldn't have happened if ...

CHAPTER 9: Something Evil...

29. Where was Frankenstein travelling to?

30. Why was he travelling there?

31. What did Frankenstein see on the night he visited the place where William had been murdered? What did he think?

32. What did he decide to do?

33. Who was arrested for the crime?

34. What was the main evidence against Justine Moritz?

CHAPTER 10: **Injustice!**

35. Why did Justine say she had murdered William? Translate her words:

"..."

36. Translate the following words related to justice and the law:

Crime=

Innocent=

Evidence=

Guilty=

Lawyer =

Murder=

To arrest=

Murderer=

To question=

Justice=

Injustice=

The law=

Trial=

Court house=

