

Frankenstein

Education of Young Monsters

Parallel the education of Victor and his creation.

How is Victor educated? What does he desire to know?

Contrast Victor's interests with Henry's.

Notice the verb choice when Victor talks about "penetrating" nature which he genders as female (p 93, others) going on there?

Read chapters in which the monster details his education carefully. How is he like a child here? How unlike?

What does the monster learn from the DeLacey's? What do we learn?

What are the specific books the monster finds important? What do they teach the monster?

How is the monster like Adam or Lucifer? How is he different?

Race, Class and Gender

What kinds of critique of race, class and gender does the novel attempt?

How is this complicated?

Consider Justine's role as a woman, servant and orphan.

Two of the women in the story are foreign-born. What might this mean?

What information and what kind of opportunities are available to women in the novel?

Friends, Family, Love, Marriage and Sex

What is the importance of friends and family in the text? For Walton? For Victor? For the monster?

What impact does his mother's death have on Victor? Read his dream. When does she dream it?

How are familial relationships presented throughout the novel?

Do you notice anything incestual about Victor and Elizabeth's relationship?

How is Victor's relationship to mankind different from the monster's? Does he see this distinction?

In what ways are love and sex constructed by the novel?

Consider the positions of Madame Frankenstein, Elizabeth, and Safie in entering their marriages. What is unusual?

Consider the scene in which Victor destroys the female monster.

What does the monster mean when he tells Victor, "I'll be with you on your wedding night."?

How is the bridal scene represented? Why? How does the creature act in Victor's stead as "husband"?

Invention, Creation, and Childbirth

What is the difference between invention, creation, and childbirth?

Consider what Professor Donelan said in class-do you agree that the monster is an invention rather than a creation? Why or why not? What defines either?

Read the creation scene. Consider it both in light of Biblical creation or physical childbirth.

Consider Victor as both a godlike creator and a mother.

What is the role of the feminine or female in the creation of the monster?

“Victor Frankenstein and the monster share the same personality. Like father, like son.”

If we are created in God’s image and the Creature is created in Victor’s, what is the underlying meaning or message here?

Symbolic Parts of The Self: Doppelganger and Reflections

Frankenstein seems to have compartmentalized, at least symbolically/psychologically, various aspects of his personality.

Those he surrounds himself with, The Creature, Elizabeth, Henry, his teachers, etc. are reflection of himself. What does each symbolize or embody to Frankenstein?

What is left of Frankenstein if those he surrounds himself with are “horcruxes” for his personal traits? WHY does he feel the need to divide his personality in this way?

Notice, he doesn’t want to LOSE the other parts of himself. Significance?

Settings, too, are reflections of Frankenstein’s self.

What are Geneva, Ingolstadt, Mt. Blanc, England, Scotland, etc. in this context?

Questions

1. In classical and neoclassical doctrine, the “greatest of all contests” was the struggle of reason to control passion. In the nineteenth century, passion began to rise in esteem against reason. Feelings were more important. Yet this contest seems to continue. What elements of that struggle do you find in the novel? The characters of Victor and the monster are especially relevant to look at.
2. Does the geographical movement of the novel have metaphorically thematic or symbolic application? What is the meaning of ice, wind, Northern locations, darkness, etc.?
3. Discuss the elaborate framing device provided by the letters at the beginning and the end of the novel. What purposes does this strategy serve? Why is this wrap-around frame more effective or useful than the usual introduction-only frame?
4. “Mary Shelley in Frankenstein clearly comes down on the side of nurture in the Nature-versus-Nurture controversy.” Attack or defend.
5. “Victor Frankenstein and the monster share the same personality. Like father, like son.” Attack or defend.