

Worksheet 2 – Science and the Supernatural

Review: Lecture 1

In the previous lecture of the unit, Prof. Groom discussed the influence of Mary Shelley's travels on her writing of *Frankenstein*.

- ✓ What examples did Prof. Groom give of locations Mary Shelley visited which evidently inspired the settings in her novel.
- ✓ Why were these landscapes the perfect settings for a story of the supernatural?

Recall: Lecture 2

Answer these questions after watching the video lecture to check how much you remember.

1. What is the subtitle of the novel?
a) The Occultist c) The Philosopher's Stone
b) An Archaic Epimetheus d) The Modern Prometheus
2. In the **second version** of the myth, as described by Prof. Groom, what did Prometheus steal from the Gods?
a) Fire c) The gift of life
b) A human corpse d) Electricity
3. What is Dr Frankenstein's first name?
a) Vincent c) Henry
b) Victor d) Robert
4. In the same year as *Frankenstein's* publication, a medical treatise was also published on which of the following topics?
a) Blood Transfusions c) Cosmetic surgery
b) Dissection d) Tooth transplants
5. What scientific discovery is Captain Walton in pursuit of?
a) Electricity c) Frankenstein's creature
b) Magnetic North d) Curing Smallpox

Analysis

6. In the lecture [2:11-3:27], Prof. Groom notes that alongside the scientific advances of the time, ethical debates were surfacing about the nature of scientific practices. Throughout

Frankenstein we can see the influence of these discussions on Shelley's characterisation of Dr. Frankenstein.

Read the passage below and answer the questions that follow.

I beheld the wretch—the miserable monster whom I had created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me. His jaws opened, and he muttered some inarticulate sounds, while a grin wrinkled his cheeks. He might have spoken, but I did not hear; one hand was stretched out, seemingly to detain me, but I escaped and rushed downstairs. I took refuge in the courtyard belonging to the house which I inhabited, where I remained during the rest of the night, walking up and down in the greatest agitation, listening attentively, catching and fearing each sound as if it were to announce the approach of the demoniacal corpse to which I had so miserably given life.

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Chapter 5.

- Select at least 2 quotations that show Dr Frankenstein's perception of the creature as monstrous. For each quotation, explain how the language conveys the creature's monstrous appearance effectively?
- At this point in the novel, is it fair for Victor Frankenstein to label his creation a 'monster'? Explain your answer.
- At the end of the passage, Victor runs away as he is so horrified by his creation, abandoning it for the night. Explain why this could be seen as an unethical thing to do.

Evaluation

"I am alone and miserable; man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the same species and have the same defects. This being you must create...It is true, we shall be monsters, cut off from all the world; but on that account we shall be more attached to one another. Our lives will not be happy, but they will be harmless and free from the misery I now feel. Oh! My creator, make me happy; let me feel gratitude towards you for one benefit! Let me see that I excite the sympathy of some existing thing; do not deny me my request!"

Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein*, Chapter 16-17

7. Despite his creation's impassioned plea for a companion, Dr Frankenstein refuses to make a second being. Was this the right decision?

Using the template below, make an essay plan with arguments for and against the creation of a companion for the creature. Use the arguments made in this passage and your knowledge from elsewhere in the novel.

Yes, Victor should have made a companion	No, Victor should not have made a companion

Success Criteria:

- Make at least 2 points for each column. Consider the risks of playing God, and whether or not the creature has a right to happiness.
- Include quotations from the passage and elsewhere in the novel.

Challenge: Relisten to the lecture from [3:00 -3:26]. Connect your ideas to the ethical debates occurring in the scientific community at the time.

Glossary

- **Occult** (noun) – Theories and practices claiming to use the influence of supernatural beings.
e.g. When I saw her chanting over a cauldron, I suspected she might be part of the Occult.
- **Vivisect** (verb) – Operating on or dissecting a living animal for the purpose of experimentation.
e.g. The rat was vivisected to better understand the effect of that medicine on a functioning heart.
- **Dissect** (verb) – To cut open to inspect the internal parts.
e.g. In Biology class, the students dissected a flower to see the different parts more clearly.