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| ***Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley** | | | | | |
| **A. Context** | | **B. Vocab** | | **C. Key characters** | |
| Mary Shelley | A radical Romantic author who composed Frankenstein at 18 years old, building on a tale she told in a horror competition with her husband, Percy Shelley, and Lord Byron. | Brutality | Savage physical violence or cruelty | Frankenstein | The tragic hero, brilliant and obsessive yet imperious. |
| Vulnerable | Exposed to harm, physically or emotionally | The monster | Frankenstein’s grotesque yet intelligent creation. |
| Sacrilegious | Transgressing religious expectations | Walton | The Romantic seafarer who resembles young Frankenstein |
| Romanticism | An ideology that prioritises a) primacy of the individual b) subjective experience c) the power of nature d) radical ideas of equality and freedom. | Paternal | Relating to the role and behaviour of fathers | Elizabeth L. | Patient, passive and empathetic, Victor’s adopted cousin. |
| Admiration | A deep respect for someone or something | Alphonse F. | Victor’s father, sympathetic and wise, focused on family. |
| Sheltered | Protected from danger or knowledge | Henry Clerval | Victor’s childhood friend, ambitious and devoted to V. |
| Gothic Horror | An extreme form of Romantic fiction combining fiction, horror, death and romance. Some tropes include a virginal maiden, a tragic hero, a tyrant or villain, and a decaying or sublime setting. | Possessive | Controlling of someone or something | William F. | Victor’s darling youngest brother, innocent and weak. |
| Destabilised | Losing control of oneself, acting frenzied | Justine Moritz | A young girl with a tragic origin, devoted and loyal to the Frankenstein family and wrongly blamed for William’s death, an innocent victim of Frankenstein’s creation. |
| Nature | The innate qualities of something or someone |
| Galvanism | Named after scientist Luigi Galvani, who investigated the effect of electricity on dissected animals in the late 1700s, galvanism is the contraction of muscles in response to electricity, once thought the key to life. | Nurture | The encouragement and growth of qualities | Caroline Beaufort | Frankenstein’s mother, whose death leads to Victor’s obsession and focus in the creation of the monster to escape grief. |
| Innate | Irremovably part of someone or something |
| Imperious | Arrogant belief of your own superiority | M. Waldman | Professor at the University, admired by Frankenstein and reflective of the scientific interest in galvanism, biology and electricity that fascinated Shelley. |
| Occultism | An obsession with that which is “hidden” or “paranormal”, or knowledge only meant for certain people. Often the study of knowledge which extends beyond reason and physical science. | Restraint | Discipline and the ability to control oneself |
| Foolhardy | Disregard or lack of care for consequences | De Lacey | Once noble and wealthy, now a blind old man forcibly exiled from Paris. He is benevolent and initially open to the monster’s pleas. |
| Malevolent | Wishing or causing evil on others |
| ‘Paradise Lost’ by John Milton | An epic poem of over 10,000 lines of verse by 17th century poet John Milton concerning the biblical story of the Fall of Man: the temptation of Adam and Eve by the fallen angel Satan and their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. | Duplicitous | Two-faced; pretending to be someone you aren’t | Felix | De Lacey’s son, bold and benevolent, caused the family’s exile by assisting the Turk in escaping his unjust death sentence. In love with Safie, drives away the monster when he sees him. |
| Fanaticism | Completely obsessed with one idea, dangerously so |
| Occultism | An obsession with that which is forbidden | Agatha | Felix’s passive and gentle sister |
| Remorse | Intense regret or guilt for one’s actions | Safie | Felix’s love interest, she abandons her manipulative and duplicitous father to be with Felix after they are exiled. |
| Satan in ‘Paradise Lost’ | Formerly called Lucifer, Satan was once the most beautiful of all angels who says “Better to reign in Hell than serve in Heaven.” and leads a failed rebellion against God in the name of self-determinism. | Objective truth | The belief in unchangeable, unarguable truth existing |
| Subjectivity | The idea that experience is unique to each person | Mr Kirwin | The magistrate who accuses Victor of Henry’s murder. |
| Aestheticism | All meaning from a text can be derived from within | **B. Vocab cont.** | |
| Prometheus | The Greek god credited with creating humans out of clay and then disobeying Zeus’s rule to give them fire to progress humanity and civilisation – the champion of mankind, he sacrifices himself to save humanity. | The Sublime | Romantic sensation of delight from nature’s power | Divine muse | A heavenly or godly inspiration for a creative artist |
| Romantic | Primacy of the individual, emotion and nature | Concentricity | https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/media/english/thumb/c/con/conce/concentric.jpgShapes (or ideas) that sit within each other 🡪 |
| Epistolary | A collection of documents that form a narrative | Intertwined | Connected inseparably to something else |
| Romantic form | Romantic poetry combines the narrative of ballads and the emotional exploration of lyrics to form open-ended and subjective literary experiences. Wordsworth and Coleridge’s *Lyrical Ballads* began the movement and focus on nature, lives of the poor, and the individual. | Enlightenment | An era which prioritised science, rationality and logic | Salvation | Being saved in a religious sense from damnation |
| Hubris | Excessive pride or arrogance | Repression | Restraining or suppressing thoughts, desires, emotions |
| Hamartia | A tragic hero’s fatal flaw or weakness | Hysteria | A Victorian medical term for psychological stress |
| Anagnorisis | When a tragic hero realises they caused their downfall | Free will | The idea that humans have control over their actions |
| Aristotle’s tragic hero | The protagonist of a tragedy in dramas, a relatable character who experiences a reversal of fortune leading to their demise despite their good intentions. They must face their downfall with pride and dignity. | Peripeteia | The moment a hero’s fortune is reversed | Determinism | The idea that all actions are controlled externally |
| Pathos | Greek term for pity, sympathy or empathy | Discourse | Written or spoken communication or debate |
| Catharsis | Purification through pain seen from a safe-distance | Freudian | Referring to Freud’s focus on sexuality in behaviour |

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| ***Author*** | | ***Key words*** |  |  | **D. Critical Approaches** |
| Marx, K. 1867. | **Marxism** | | All texts are irremovably linked in creation and criticism to the economic, cultural, historical and political powers of the world. They cannot be viewed as separate or distinct. | | |
| Greenblatt, S. 2013. | **New Historicism**  Marxism  Foucault | | Every expressive act is connected inseparably to society and culture;  Every act of unmasking, criticising and opposing society uses the tools (usually language) it condemns and risks being corrupted and infiltrated by society also;  Literary and non-literary "texts" circulate inseparably;  No discourse (debate) can gives access to objective truth or express inalterable human nature; | | |
| Foucault, M. | **Social Constructionism** | | All meaning can only exist in relation to society and culture due to its communication through discourse and signs such as language. Language can only defer or put off true meaning as it has been corrupted and infiltrated by society and culture. | | |
| Butler, J. | **Gender theory/ performativity** | | Gender as an idea does not exist in isolation, it is an idea constructed by society. Male or female behaviour is a result as well as source of certain actions, thoughts, behaviours etc. that society has agreed are ‘male’ or ‘female’. Gender is not something one **is**, it is something one **does**. | | |
| Schug, C. 1977. | **Romantic form** Classical | | The Romantic form of Frankenstein encourages subjective experience through discomfort. The book changes as we read it as new information adds complexity rather than clarity. The audience is pulled in contrasting directions by the sympathies of the three narrator’s. Visceral experience leads to analysis. | | |
| Rueckert. 1978 | **Ecocriticism** | | The study of literature and the environment from an interdisciplinary point of view, where literature scholars analyse texts that illustrate environmental concerns and examine the various ways literature treats the subject of nature. | | |
| Phillips, B. 2006. | **Ecocriticism** New-Historicism | | An ecocritical approach to Frankenstein negates mainstream interpretations of the monster representing industry and suggests that Shelley’s ‘wet ungenial summer’ due to volcanic eruption, her knowledge of science and the catalyst of supernatural stories inspired the nature-symbolising monster. | | |
| Bauman, R. 2018. | **Historical** | | The scientific nature of the creature’s creation, namely galvanism and a vague reference to the elixir of life, are actually described in little detail because the real focus of Shelley’s novel is not science, but the emotional effect of nurture and upbringing on character. | | |
| Morus, I. 2009. | **New-Historicism** Radicalism Galvanism | | A New-Historical exploration of galvanism and its reputation as a dangerous scientific movement due to its association with radical politicians, controversial air-pump experimentation, and Romanticism. Tory ‘mud-slinging’ contributed to its non-self-evident reputation as an outsider, occult science. | | |
| Lamb, J. 1992. | **Social constructionism** Identity theory | | Paradise Lost influences the monster because he relates to Lucifer’s isolation, betrayal and seeks an inalterable identity as given by his Creator (God or Frankenstein). Lamb asserts that the novel’s real focus is Shelley’s criticism of the hubristic bourgeois ideal of identity sought by male Romantics and the idea that the monster’s attempt to identify as Adam or Lucifer is synonymous with the futility of seeking objective self-identity due to language’s corruption and infiltration. | | |
| Britton, J. 2009. | **Psychological analysis** Freudian Social constructionism | | Britton, who asserts that sympathy plays a role in driving the narrative since it leads to a subjective experience of meaning in the novel (which lacks an objective narrator), reveals how different methods of sympathy such as oral and written stories that explore the Romantic conventions of sensibility and individual experience must be “reconfigured” into text form because sympathy is best achieved by “matching perspectives” as humans won’t necessarily feel sympathy for base experiences such as pain [see Stanford Prison Experiment]. | | |
| Hobbs, 1993. | **Gender performativity**  Social constructionism  New Historicism | | Hobbs describes how hysteria was a feminine affliction in the Victorian era and that the male ideal was “noble strength” which was used to repress female emotions. Frankenstein suffers in the novel due to his hybridity of both male and female Victorian identity, which can be explained using Butler’s gender performativity. Frankenstein’s repression of emotions and bouts of hysteria are symptomatic of a patriarchal society’s isolating repression of femininity in men. | | |
| Peck, H. 1914. | **Objectivity** | | Paradise Lost contains Classical conceptions of objective truth in isolation, such as the existence of concepts such as good and bad, and inalterable identities. The monster’s moment of peripeteia could be when he begins his futile search for the answer to his question “Who was I?” under the guidance of the principles of objective truth and identity presented in Paradise Lost. | | |
| Curran, S. 1988. | **Feminism**  Gender performativity  Social constructionism | | Curran places Shelley among the context of a movement of Romantic female writers who, despite traditional critical assertions of feminine passivity and lack of education, were actually writing Gothic radicalism and deeply political literature intertwined with the “quotidian” (everyday) and feminine sensibility. Their freedom due to the lack of limitations as a result of being constrained by the conventions and expectations of art groups allows them to differentiate themselves from their male counterparts, and Shelley’s intertwining of feminine sensibility and masculine sublime in the novel reveals her privileged hybridity as both a ‘male’ and ‘female’ writer (in regards to Butler’s gender performativity). | | |
| Douglas Perry Jr, J. 1973. | **Gothic form**  Narrative structure  Identity theory | | Perry asserts that “gothic is not only a matter of theme or image” but also “of narrative form”. He labels three structural features of gothic horror: concentricity, predetermined sequence and character repetition. Concentricity refers to the “whirlpool” of narrative layers into which the reader falls. Predetermined sequence refers to the loss of control as the reader is sucked into the gothic horror as each new increasingly horrific part of the narrative is reached (in Frankenstein’s case, each new narrator). Character repetition allows us to see the effect of the gothic world as similar character are shown but are “increasingly grotesque, distorted more and more by the whirlpool’s pull”. | | |