



Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*: Frankenstein and the Monster Transcript

Presenter: Frankenstein's monster, over time, has taken his creator's name in the popular consciousness. While Frankenstein is the scientist, and the creator, many mistakenly call the monster 'Frankenstein', although he is never actually given a name. Let's look at these two inextricably linked characters.

As soon as Victor Frankenstein creates the grotesque, but conscious being he abandons it. He refuses to acknowledge the creature's humanity or even give it a name. Victor refers to it as:

Frankenstein: Demon! Fiend! Wretch! Enemy! Persecutor!

Presenter: In a sense, they are two sides of the one personality. The monster is Frankenstein's double, or shadow, the dark side of his obsessive scientific pursuits. When we read the monster's account in volume two he tells of his lonely wretched existence. Our understanding of his point of view transforms him into a sympathetic character, an alienated romantic figure.

Monster: Shall each man find a wife for his bosom, and each beast have his mate, and I be alone?

Presenter: He tells how he has longed to be part of human society only to be continually rejected because of his gruesome, repulsive appearance. Intent upon self-development, the monster educates himself learning to speak and read by observing Felix, Agatha, and their father in the cottage.

In his quest for wisdom and knowledge he reads three major literary works: *Paradise Lost*, *Plutarch's Lives*, and *The Sorrows of Werter*.

Monster: I persuaded myself that when they should become acquainted with my admiration of their virtues they would compassionate me, and overlook my personal deformity.

Presenter: He reads Frankenstein's diaries to better understand his creator.

Monster: Accursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even you turned from me in disgust? God, in pity, made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance.

Presenter: We discover from his narration that the creature is nothing like the monster Victor portrays in his diary and in his conversations with Walton. He is an outsider in the purest sense, alone, and misunderstood. His humanity, including his desire to belong and be accepted, is deeply profound and moving. He saves a girl from drowning, a noble and heroic act, but is rejected by her friend, and by the blind man's son, Felix. And it is when Victor's brother, William, rejects the creature that it becomes a murderer.





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Presenter: The only solution for the creature's loneliness is to have a partner. He threatens more death and destruction if Frankenstein does not create one for him. Frankenstein reluctantly agrees, but worries that a second monster could not only double the havoc, but also produce horrifying progeny.

Frankenstein destroys it.

Frankenstein: I tore to pieces the thing on which I was engaged. The wretch saw me destroy the creature on whose future existence he depended for happiness...

Presenter: Driven by revenge the raging monster becomes a ruthless and all powerful force of nature.

Monster: You can blast my other passions; but revenge remains – revenge, henceforth dearer than light or food.

Presenter: The monster kills Clerval and Elizabeth. Frankenstein's father dies from sorrow, and now everything Victor lives for has been destroyed. The final image of the novel provided by Walton's narration is of the monster.

Walton: He sprang from the cabin window... upon the ice-raft, which lay close to the vessel. He was soon borne away by the waves and lost in darkness and distance.

Presenter: He survives his creator.

Victor Frankenstein is first presented to the reader near the end of his life. Through the eyes of his rescuer, Walton.

Walton: His eyes have generally an expression of wildness, and even madness, but there are moments when, if anyone performs an act of kindness towards him or does him the most trifling service, his whole countenance is lighted up, as it were, with a beam of benevolence and sweetness that I never saw equalled.

Presenter: His first name, Victor, is ironic because he isn't a Victor. Like the monster he is a romantic, yet tragic hero enslaved and ruined by his own creation.

In contrast to the monster's life we learn from Frankenstein's own narration that he enjoyed a happy childhood experiencing many things his monster never had. He was the idol of his parents, adored his cousin Elizabeth, showed intellectual promise, and was determined to learn the secrets of heaven and Earth. However, his curiosity and well-intended desire to help humanity led him to create a monster. Like Prometheus in Greek mythology, who stole fire from the gods, Frankenstein over reaches himself. Obsessed with the greatest mystery, how to create life, Victor alienates himself from family and friends. He becomes a solitary figure alone in his laboratory, beyond the limits of human ethics.





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Frankenstein: So much has been done, - more, far more, will I achieve; treading in the steps already marked, I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation.

Presenter: He wants to play God. When he finally succeeds Victor abandons his creation only for it to begin pursuing and persecuting him. Victor has one moment of insight into the monster's predicament after hearing his story of trying to join the human race, and being rejected.

Frankenstein: For the first time, also, I felt what the duties of a creator towards his creature were, and that I ought to render him happy before I complained of his wickedness.

Presenter: But ultimately Victor becomes fixated on the monster's destruction, destroying himself in the process. Frankenstein has become the monster's doppelgänger living only for revenge as Victor pursues his creation. He has gone from a man obsessed with creation to one obsessed with destruction. While the supporting characters in the novel, Elizabeth, Clerval, and his father, universally adore Frankenstein, and Walton admires him, we can see him as cowardly and irresponsible in his dealings with the monster.

