



It's Alive! Part II: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

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Overview

Topic: Cloning, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Ethics of Responsibility. The basic moral questions of Mary Shelley's 1818 classic *Frankenstein* have never been more pertinent than in our time as cloning and other genetic experiments become reality. This two-part unit introduces students to the *Frankenstein* novel. The second lesson introduces the "creation of the creature" in Shelley's novel, and compares it with films that have interpreted it and depicted it visually. It also creates a framework for reading and discussing the complete novel. This unit is appropriate for Advanced Placement.

Time Allotment

Four-five days of in-class activities based on a 90-minute class period. The instructor will determine in how many days the novel should be read based upon the reading skills of the students

Media Components

Famous Authors #20, Percy Bysshe Shelley
Various film versions of *Frankenstein* (optional)
Literature circles roles at: www.englishcompanion.com/pdfDocs/litcirclepacket.pdf California educator Jim Burke's website provides many free resources for English teachers, including this hand-out explaining the duties and roles for creating literature circles. The roles include discussion director/illuminator, illustrator, connector, word watcher, and summarizer.

Learning Objectives

The student will be able to:

- examine the creation of the monster from two points of view in the novel, compare those passages, and compare the passages to the Biblical creation story
- compare various film depictions of the monster's creation to the book, and discuss the directors' choices in depictions
- determine Percy Shelley's influence on the novel by reviewing his/her reflections of facts on Percy Shelley in a notebook
- discuss and explain the novel in small group and whole class settings
- respond in short paragraphs to sections of the novel
- write a passage in the style of Mary Shelley
- evaluate the novel using standards they created to discuss the issue of cloning
- complete worksheets on tone, diction, and syntax (Advanced Placement option)
- write a 40-minute timed essay (Advanced Placement option)

(The lesson addresses Va. SOL Social Studies GOVT.3; English ENG.12.1, ENG.12.3, ENG.12.7)



GE Fund



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Materials

- 1818 version of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (class set)
- *Frankenstein* #1 and #2 hand-outs (for AP English)
- Grading rubrics for assignments—one for each student or one posted in classroom or on teacher's website
- Major works data sheet at www.teachnlearn.org/MajorWorksDataSheet.htm – This hand-out asks the students to fill in important information about the novel as they read, as well as commenting on the significance of certain aspects of the novel (sample attached)
- Grading rubric for AP option for each student
- Prize for Mary Shelley writing contest
- Literature circles roles for each student (found at www.englishcompanion.com/pdfDocs/litcirclepacket.pdf)

Teacher Preparations

The class should be prepared to begin the novel after completing lesson one, the cloning summit. Hand out the novel, rubrics, major works data sheet, grading rubrics, and literature circle bookmarks. The teacher might also post a bulletin board focused on cloning and/or the novel.

Introductory Activity

At the end of the summit (in Part 1), begin discussion:

1. You are a scientist who can create a new life, with or without cloning. Would you do it? Why or why not?
2. You decide to create this life. It is a superior being in every way—except it is hideously ugly. What do you do? How do you react? Why?
3. Do you have the right to take that life? Why or why not?
4. You are the creation. Your creator abandons you. The world fears and hates you on sight. What will you do? What will you become? Why?

5. This is the story of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Of what do we traditionally think when we hear the word "Frankenstein"?

Look at chapter 11 for creation's description of his own creation.

- a. outline the events
- b. list nouns, verbs, and adjectives that seem the most important
- c. summarize your impressions in 2-3 sentences

Chapter 5: Victor Frankenstein's version of events

- a. outline the events
- b. list nouns, verbs, and adjectives that seem the most important
- c. summarize your impressions in 2-3 sentences

Examine the Biblical creation account in Genesis 2. The creation tells Frankenstein that he is Frankenstein's Adam. Were there parallels or differences to God's creation process and Frankenstein's?

Discuss: Who has your sympathy at the moment: Frankenstein or his creation? Why? Did Frankenstein have the right to create a life? A responsibility? What were his responsibilities once he did? Are there any circumstances that excuse him from responsibility?

How do these passages compare to the story of God's creation of Adam in the Bible? Does becoming a creator of life automatically make Frankenstein a "god"? What theology has been suggested in the novel so far?

Focus For Media Interaction

To focus and prepare students for the use of media in this lesson, SAY: You have worked hard to research and examine your personal beliefs on cloning and to support a given position on cloning using your research. Please keep all of that in mind as we begin to study *Frankenstein*. Mary Shelley was eighteen when she wrote this story. She was married to the poet Percy Shelley. We're going to watch a video on Shelley's life and beliefs and see if we can find any of his influence in the novel, other than the revisions he made. We're also going to look at several video depictions of the most dra-

matic part of the novel, the creation scene, and discuss why the directors may have made their decisions in portraying that scene. How faithful are they to Mary Shelley's vision?

Time Cues

To synchronize your VCR with the time cues that are included with this lesson, zero/reset your time counter at the very beginning of the program, before the introduction and titles. Time cues are expressed as "minutes:seconds;" for example, 3:15 means three minutes and fifteen seconds.

Pause vs. Stop

When using a video interactively with students, teachers need to decide when to use **PAUSE** and when to use **STOP**. **PAUSE** the video when the anticipated discussion or activity will take less than two minutes. **STOP** for longer periods. Pausing for too long at one time can cause video heads on the VCR to become clogged which may require cleaning to correct.

Learning Activities

Videotape Screening

SAY: Mary Shelley was eighteen when she wrote this story. She was married to the poet Percy Shelley. We're going to watch a video on Shelley's life and beliefs and see if we can find any of his influence in the novel, other than the revisions he made.

Famous Authors #20. FOCUS: Give the students a copy of the following questions, without the time cues. Tell them these questions will help to focus the viewing of the video for discussion purposes. **STOP** or **PAUSE** the video at the times given to answer and review each question. Use the questions as **FOLLOW-UP** to the video and probe as necessary with additional questions.

START the video at the beginning of the program on Shelley. Begin your video counter as soon as the program starts.

1. Did Shelley come from a life of poverty and want or privilege? (2:11)
2. How had his grandfather Sir Bysshe established his fortune? (2:38)
3. How many sisters did Shelley have? (3:26)
4. With what kind of stories were Shelley and his sisters fascinated? (3:58)
5. In what areas of science was Shelley interested? (5:36) You will need to **REWIND** at least once to get all of them.)
6. What three works on social justice greatly influenced Shelley and who wrote them? (9:18)
7. On what was the pamphlet that caused Shelley to be expelled from Oxford? (10:01) **FAST FORWARD** to 15:07: "Shelley sought out Godwin in London. . ."
8. Where did Shelley declare his love for Mary? (16:14)
9. On the title page of Mary's book, at the bottom in small print, where does it say they visited? (**PAUSE** the screen at 17:02)
10. Where did Byron, Shelley, Clare, and Mary spend the summer? (18:06)
11. What was the literary product of that summer? (19:00) **STOP** the tape at this point.

Literature Circles

1. Ask the students to list ten facts about Shelley from the video in their notebooks. They should leave space to add notes when they see an "influence" in the novel as they read.
2. Explain that in literature circles each student will have a role as outlined on the bookmarks. Hand out literature circle bookmarks, which will inform everyone of how to fulfill their roles. Explain that they will have a different role each week. The roles include discussion director/illuminator, illustrator, connector, word watcher, and summarizer. Set up a schedule for the students to read the novel and

It's Alive! Part II: Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

which role they will have in the circle each week. Ask them to fill in a major works data sheet as they read. The major works data sheet will ask them to fill in information about the novel as they read, such as important quotes, themes, and characters.

3. Have a literature circle for discussion of the reading assignments as often as the teacher decides.

4. To check their reading, each day select a quote from the reading assignment and ask for a short response paragraph before they get into their literature circles.

An example:

Chapter 4: "Sometimes I grew alarmed at the wreck I perceived that I had become; the energy of my purpose alone sustained me: my labours would soon end, and I believed that exercise and amusement would then drive away incipient disease; and I promised myself both of these when my creation should be complete."

Respond to this quote. Should Frankenstein have known something was wrong when his health went downhill and he lost interest in everything else? Is it always wrong to be so single-minded in purpose?

Film Selections (Optional)

Show the creation scene from Frankenstein movies, such as the versions by Boris Karloff, Kenneth Branagh, and Gene Wilder. Before viewing, list on the board or hand out the following: How did the directors choose to portray this scene? How does it differ from Shelley's interpretation? Why are the movies so radically different? What choices would you have made as director? Overall, why do movies so often differ from the novels on which they are based?

Culminating Activities

SAY: Now that you have held a summit on cloning and read the novel Frankenstein, examine the question of Frankenstein's creation of life. Is it legal and responsible? On what moral system did Mary Shelley base her "theology" in the novel, or does one

exist? On what basic beliefs did you base your answers? On what do you think the United States will base its decision to ban or pursue cloning? In his 2003 State of the Union address, President Bush called for a ban on cloning. Will that happen? Why or why not? Are the issues we are facing on cloning different or the same as the ones Frankenstein faced? How could Frankenstein's decisions have been different? Was there a path he could have followed with positive consequences?

Choose a key event and write a different outcome. Try to imitate Shelley's use of language and syntax. Meet in peer revision groups on the due date.

When the final draft is handed in, the teacher will choose the top five to read aloud. The class will vote for the winner whose picture will then be posted with a copy of the winning passage.

Assessment

Pass/fail:

1. creation comparisons
2. Percy Shelley facts and influence notebook
3. Mary Shelley writing imitation
4. Language worksheets (Advanced Placement option)

Graded:

1. Major works data sheet (attached)
2. Daily short responses: assign 1-10 points on each short response. Total the points at the end of the unit and determine the grade scale.
3. 40-minute essay: grade holistically, assigning a 1-9 (Advanced Placement option)

Community Connections

1. Invite a local family therapist to discuss the issues in the novel and suggest approaches for solving the problems.

2. Interview different businesses in your town that are related to physical beauty, such as the beauty parlor, gym, tanning salon, etc. Find out how much business they do. Discuss what the findings tell about our culture.

Cross-Curricular Extensions

1. Have the students investigate the history of electricity, especially before 1818.
2. Have the students Research the teachings of the scientists mentioned in the novel.
3. Invite the biology teacher to explain the obstacles that Frankenstein would have faced in reviving a collection of inanimate parts as a living creature.
4. Trace the journey of Frankenstein and the creature on the globe or a world map. Investigate the topography of the areas they crossed and the needs they would have to meet as they traveled.

Adaptations

1. Use the *Wishbone* Frankenbone video for ESL students.
2. Examine movie posters for the various movie versions. Create a poster for the book which is based only on the facts of the novel.
3. Create Frankenstein cartoon strips to retell the story. This could be done in a computer graphics program.
4. Using the Jeopardy PowerPoint template widely available on the Internet, students create a game for review.
5. Dramatize and videotape scenes from the book. If the novel is read near Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter, or other major holiday, ask the students to choose four characters from the novel. Ask them to write dialogue for fifteen-twenty minutes for a family get-together on the holidays for the characters. Then ask four students to volunteer to read the dialogues to the class.
6. For Advanced Placement English, finish the unit by completing the hand-outs that focus on syntax, tone, and diction. Then, in a forty-minute timed writing, have the students address this question (a released item from the 1999 AP English literature

exam): "The eighteenth-century British novelist Laurence Sterne wrote, 'No body, but he who has felt it, can conceive what a plaguesome thing it is to have a man's mind torn asunder by two projects of equal strength, both obstinately pulling in a contrary direction at the same time.'

7. "From Frankenstein, choose a character (not necessarily the protagonist) whose mind is pulled in conflicting directions by two compelling desires, ambitions, obligations, or influences. Then, in a well-organized essay, identify each of the two conflicting forces and explain how this conflict within one character illuminates the meaning of the work as a whole. "

8. Write songs for a film version using the tunes of popular songs.

9. Pair the book with Doris Lessing's *The Fifth Child*, the movie *The Elephant Man*, Stephen Crane's short story "The Monster," or Marge Piercy's poem "Barbie Doll."

10. Write a poem about the book.

11. Write a letter to one of the characters in the book.

12. Write a chapter in which Frankenstein creates a female partner for the monster.

13. Research plastic surgery. Create a chart or graph on the age and gender groups that are getting it and the types of surgery they are having. Analyze the data.

14. Research the life of Mary Shelley and her parents Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin and William Godwin.

15. Read *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* by Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Mary Shelley identified this poem as the greatest influence on her novel.

16. Put Victor Frankenstein and/or the Creature on trial for their crimes.

About the Author

Donna Shafer-Riha

Donna Shafer-Riha currently teaches English at Stonewall Jackson High School in Quicksburg, Virginia. After earning a B.A. in history at Mary Washington College and an M.A. in English at James Madison University, she taught English as an adjunct professor at Lord Fairfax Community College so that she could stay home with her daughter Ashley until she began school. During that time, Shafer-Riha also taught Advanced Placement U.S. history at a local high school, as well as the history and literature of Tudor England for the county's Gifted and Talented program. In 1997 she left LFCC to teach English at JMU and soon moved into the Honors Program as an administrative assistant. While in the HP, she also taught an Honors seminar on Willa Cather and published an article on Cather in the Willa Cather Pioneer Memorial Foundation Newsletter. Last year found her teaching technology to K-5 students at W.W. Robinson Elementary School in Woodstock, Virginia. Her hobbies are reading, writing, crafting, playing the piano, and historical interpretation and costuming. She has also been teaching Sunday School to all ages since she was sixteen. Her complete obsession with history led to her and her daughter's becoming extras in the movie *Gods and Generals* (release date winter 2002). When they aren't home the Rihas can be found in some historically significant spot.

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Mary Shelley's original	Percy Shelley's revision
<p>When I looked around for my materials they hardly appeared adequate to so arduous an undertaking, but I did not despair. I allowed that my first attempts might be futile, my operations fail or my work be imperfect, but I looked around on the improvement that every day takes place in science and mechanics and although I could not hope that my attempts would be in every way perfect, yet I did not think that the magnitude and grandeur of my plan was any argument of its impracticability.</p>	<p>The materials at present within my command hardly appeared adequate to so arduous an undertaking; but I doubted not that I should ultimately succeed. I prepared myself for a multitude of reverses; my operations might be incessantly baffled, and at last my work be imperfect; yet, when I considered the improvement which every day takes place in science and mechanics, I was encourage to hope my present attempts would at least lay the foundations of future success. Nor could I consider the magnitude and complexity of my plan as any argument of its impracticability.</p>

1. Mark the words that are the same in both passages.

2. What are the greatest differences between the two passages?

3. Look at the verbs, adjectives, and adverbs they both have chosen. What are the subtle personality differences between the two narrators?

It's Alive! Part II: Mary Shelley's Frankenstein

Mary Shelley's original	Percy Shelley's revision
<p>When Clerval died I returned to Switzerland heart-broken and overcome—I pitied Frankenstein and his bitter sufferings—My pity amounted to horror—I abhorred myself—But when I saw that he again dared hope for happiness—that while he heaped wretchedness and despair on me he sought his own enjoyment in feelings and passions from the indulgence of which I was forever barred—I was again roused to indignation and revenge. I remembered my threat and resolved to execute it—Yet when she died—Nay then I was not miserable—I cast off all feeling and all anguish. I rioted in the extent of my despair and being urged thus far—I resolved to finish my demoniacal design. And it is now ended—There is my last victim.</p>	<p>After the murder of Clerval, I returned to Switzerland, heart-broken and overcome. I pitied Frankenstein; my pity amounted to horror: I abhorred myself. But when I discovered that he, the author at once of my existence and of its unspeakable torments, dared to hope for happiness; that while he accumulated wretchedness and despair upon me, he sought his own enjoyment in feelings and passions from the indulgence of which I was for ever barred, then impotent envy and bitter indignation filled me with an insatiable thirst for vengeance. I recollected my threat, and resolved that it should be accomplished. I knew that I was preparing for myself a deadly torture; but I was the slave, not the master of an impulse, which I detested, yet could not disobey. Yet when she died!—nay, then I was not miserable. I had cast off all feeling, subdued all anguish to riot in the excess of my despair. Evil henceforth became my good. Urged thus far, I had no choice but to adapt my nature to an element which I had willingly chosen. The completion of my demoniacal design became an insatiable passion. And now it is ended; there is my last victim!</p>

1. Mark the words that are the same in both passages.
2. What are the greatest differences between the two passages? What effect does the different punctuation and dashes have on the passage?
3. Look at the verbs, adjectives, and adverbs they both have chosen. How do the word choices show different motivations in feelings?

Major Works Data Sheet Grading Rubric

<u>Category</u>	<u>Possible Points</u>	<u>Points</u>
Historical Information	5	—
Biographical Information	5	—
Characteristics of Genre	5	—
Plot Summary	10	—
Style	5	—
Example of Style	5	—
Quotations & Significance	20	—
Characters	10	—
Setting	5	—
Opening Scene	5	—
Closing Scene	5	—
Symbols	5	—
Old AP Questions	5	—
Themes	10	—
	<u>100</u>	Score= _____