Background info

Progress. At a time when writers and thinkers had begun to believe in the "infinite perfectability of man," Gothic novelists portrayed human beings as woefully imperfect and at the mercy of far more powerful forces, such as nature and death.

EXTRA CREDIT

A ghost story. On a stormy night in June of 1816, Mary Shelley, her husband, and a few other companions, including the Romantic poet Lord Byron, decided to try to write their own ghost stories, but Shelley couldn’t come up with any ideas. A few nights later, she had a dream in which she envisioned "the pale student of unshallowed arts" kneeling beside his creation—the monster. She began writing the story that became Frankenstein the next morning.

The Tale of Two Frankensteins. Shelley published the first edition of Frankenstein anonymously, perhaps due to her concern that such a grim and violent tale would not be well received by her audience if they knew her gender. She revised the novel and published it under her real name in 1831. Some key differences exist between the editions, namely that in the first edition, Elizabeth is Alphonse’s niece and, therefore, Victor’s cousin. In the 1831 edition, the more popular version and the one used in this Outline, the Frankensteins adopt Elizabeth from another family.

Plot Summary

Robert Walton, the captain of a ship bound for the North Pole, writes a letter to his sister, Margaret Saville, in which he says that his crew members recently discovered a man adrift at sea. The man, Victor Frankenstein, offered to tell Walton his story.

Frankenstein has a perfect childhood in Switzerland, with a loving family that even adopted orphans in need, including the beautiful Elizabeth, who soon becomes Victor’s closest friend, confidante, and love. Victor also has a caring and wonderful best friend, Henry Clerval. Just before Victor turns seventeen and goes to study at the University at Ingolstadt, his mother dies of scarlet fever. At Ingolstadt, Victor dives into "natural philosophy" with a passion, studying the secrets of life with such zeal that he even loses touch with his family. He soon rises to the top of his field, and suddenly, one night, discovers the secret of life. With visions of creating a new and noble race, Victor puts his knowledge to work. But when he animates his first creature, its appearance is so horrifying he abandons it. Victor hopes the monster has disappeared forever, but some months later he receives word that his youngest brother, William, has been murdered. Though Victor sees the monster lingering at the site of the murder and is sure it did the deed, he fears no one will believe him and keeps silent. Justine Moritz, another adoptee in his family, has been falsely accused based of the crime. She is convicted and executed. Victor is consumed by guilt.

To escape its tragedy, the Frankensteins go on vacation. Victor often hikes in the mountains, hoping to alleviate his suffering with the beauty of nature. One day the monster appears, and despite Victor’s curses beg him incrediblly eloquently to listen to its story. The monster describes his wretched life, full of suffering and rejection solely because of his horrifying appearance. The monster also explains how he learned to read and speak so well. The monster blames his rage on humanity’s inability to perceive his inner goodness and his resulting total isolation. It demands that Victor, its creator who brought it into this wretched life, create a female monster to give it the love that no human ever will. Victor refuses at first, but then agrees.

Back in Geneva, Victor’s father expresses his wish that Victor marry Elizabeth. Victor says he first must travel to England. On the way to England, Victor meets up with Clerval. Soon, though, Victor leaves Clerval at the house of a friend in Scotland and moves to a remote island to make his second, female, monster. But one night Victor begins to worry that the female monster might turn out more destructive than the first. At the same moment, Victor sees the first monster watching him work through a window. The horrifying sight pushes Victor to destroy the female monster. The monster vows revenge.
warning Victor that it will "be with him on [his] wedding night." Victor takes the remains of the female monster and dumps them in the ocean. But when he returns to shore, he is accused of a murder that was committed that same night. When Victor discovers that the victim is Clerval, he collapses and remains delusional for two months. When he wakes his father has arrived, and he is cleared of the criminal charges against him.

Victor returns with his father to Geneva, and marries Elizabeth. But on his wedding night, the monster instead kills Elizabeth. Victor's father dies of grief soon thereafter. Now, all alone in the world, Victor dedicates himself solely to seeking revenge against the monster. He tracks the monster to the Arctic, but becomes trapped on breaking ice and is rescued by Walton's crew.

Walton writes another series of letters to his sister. He tells her about his failure to reach the North Pole and to restore Victor, who died soon after his rescue. Walton's final letter describes his discovery of the monster grieving over Victor's corpse. He accuses the monster of having no remorse, but the monster says it has suffered more than anyone. With Victor dead, the monster has its revenge and plans to end its own life.

CHARACTERS

Victor Frankenstein – The oldest son in the Frankenstein family, the eventual husband of Elizabeth Lavenza, and the novel's protagonist and narrator of most of the story (he tells his story to Robert Walton, who relates it to the reader). From childhood, Victor has a thirst for knowledge and powerful ambition. These two traits lead him to study biology at university in Ingolstadt, where he eventually discovers the "secret of life" and then uses that knowledge to create his own living being. But Frankenstein is also prejudiced, and cannot stand his creation's ugliness. He thinks it a monster though in fact it's kind and loving. Victor's abandonment of his "monster" creates a cycle of guilt, anger, and destruction, in which first the monster takes vengeance upon Victor, and then Victor swears vengeance on the monster. In the end, Victor resembles the monster he hates far more than he would care to imagine.

The Monster – The hideous-looking creature that Victor Frankenstein creates (though the name "Frankenstein" has become associated with the monster, the monster is, in fact, nameless). Though the monster is originally kind and sensitive and wants nothing more than to be loved and accepted, it is surrounded by people who judge it as evil because of its terrible appearance. The monster is isolated and demonized by human society, and soon becomes embittered and enraged at his treatment. Eventually, the monster becomes a killer, not from a criminal thirst to hurt, but from a desire for revenge against Victor and all of humanity for rejecting him.

Robert Walton – An explorer who rescues Victor from the ice, hears his harrowing story, and sets it down on paper in letters to his sister, Margaret Saville. Walton's quest for knowledge in the North Pole parallels Victor's search for education and enlightenment at Ingolstadt. Because he parallels Victor in this way, Robert Walton is a "double" of Victor, whose actions, by mirroring or contrasting Victor's own, serve to highlight Victor's character and various themes in Frankenstein.

Elizabeth Lavenza – Victor's sister by adoption, and later his wife. Elizabeth is a stunningly beautiful and remarkably pure girl whom Victor's mother adopts. All the Frankensteins adore Elizabeth, and Victor, about four years her elder, quickly begins to "protect, love, and cherish" her. Eventually Victor and Elizabeth marry. Through all of it, Elizabeth remains gorgeous, pure, and passive. NOTE: In the first edition (1818) of Frankenstein, Elizabeth is Alphonse's niece and, therefore, Victor's cousin. In the revised 1831 edition, the Frankenstein's adopt Elizabeth, as described above.

Henry Clerval – Victor's dear friend from childhood. Victor describes Clerval as having a vast imagination, a sensitive heart, and boundless love of nature. Clerval serves as Victor's guiding light throughout Frankenstein, selflessly helping Victor but never prodding him to reveal his secrets. Clerval's optimism also stands in contrast to Victor's gloominess.

Alphonse Frankenstein – Victor's father. A devoted husband and parent, and a well-respected public magistrate. Alphonse is a loving father to Victor, and a man who believes in family and society.

Justine Moritz – A young woman who the Frankensteins adopt at the age of 12. She is convicted of the murder of William Frankenstein on circumstantial evidence and executed. Though all the Frankenstein's believe she is innocent, only Victor knows that the monster is the true murderer.


Ernest Frankenstein – Victor's younger brother by six years. He is the only Frankenstein to survive the novel.

Caroline Beaufort – Beaufort's daughter, Victor's mother, and Alphonse Frankenstein's wife. Caroline is an example of idealized womanhood: smart, kind, generous, and resourceful. Caroline dies of scarlet fever when Victor is seventeen.

Beaufort – Caroline's father and a close friend to Alphonse Frankenstein.

Beaufort was a merchant who fell into poverty and moved to Lucerne with his daughter. He died soon thereafter.

De Lacey – A blind old man who lives in exile with his children Felix and Agatha in a cottage and a forest. As a blind man, De Lacey can't perceive the monster's wretched appearance and therefore does not recall in horror at his presence. He represents the goodness of human nature in the absence of prejudice.

Felix – The son of De Lacey and brother of Agatha. Felix falls in love with Safie and marries her in exchange for helping her father escape from prison. When the monster enters his family's cottage in Germany, Felix pelts it with rocks and chases it away.

Agatha – De Lacey's daughter. She represents an ideal of womanliness: kind, gentle, and devoted to her family.

Safie – The young Turkish "Arabian" whose beauty captivates Felix. Though raised as a Muslim, she longs for a freer and happier life with Felix, a Christian.

Margaret Saville – Robert Walton's sister and the recipient of his letters, which frame the novel.

M. Waldman – Victor's chemistry professor at Ingolstadt. He supports Victor's pursuit of "natural philosophy," especially chemistry, and becomes a mentor to Victor.

M. Krempe – Victor's professor of natural philosophy at Ingolstadt. A short squat conceived man, Krempe calls Victor's studies "nonsense."

Mr. Kirwin – An Irish magistrate.

FAMILY, SOCIETY, ISOLATION

In its preface, Frankenstein claims to be a novel that gives a flattering depiction of "domestic affection." That seems a strange claim in a novel full of murder, tragedy, and despair. But, in fact, all that tragedy, murder, and despair occur because of a lack of connection to either family or society. Put another way, the true evil in Frankenstein is not Victor or the monster, but isolation. When Victor becomes lost in his studies he removes himself from human society, and therefore loses sight of his responsibilities and the consequences of his actions. The monster turns vengeful not because it's evil, but because its isolation fills it with overwhelming hate and anger. And what is the monster's vengeance? To make Victor as isolated as it. Add it all up, and it becomes clear that Frankenstein sees isolation from family and society as the worst imaginable fate, and the cause of hatred, violence, and revenge.

AMBITION AND FALLIBILITY

Through Victor and Walton, Frankenstein portrays human beings as deeply ambitious, and yet also deeply flawed. Both Victor and Walton dream of transforming society and bringing glory to themselves through their scientific achievements. Yet their ambitions also make them fallible. Blinded by dreams of glory, they fail to consider the consequences of their actions. So while Victor turns himself into a god, a creator, by bringing his monster to life, this only highlights his fallibility when he is completely incapable of fulfilling the responsibilities that a creator has to its creation. Victor thinks he will be like a god, but ends up the father of a devil. Walton, at least, turns back from his quest to the North Pole before getting himself and his crew killed, but he does so with the angry conclusion that he has been robbed of glory. Neither Victor
lost or destroyed by the harsh reality of human nature. Shelley suggests that innocence is fleeting, and will always be either portrayed as uniquely gentle, kind, and, above all, innocent. Through these flaws inherent in his own species (an unquenchable thirst for love, a tendency toward violence, and a bloodthirsty need for justice and revenge) the monster is (originally) warm and open-hearted. Again and again the monster must be dangerous based on its outward appearance, when in truth it will never be accepted in human society. Second, because by taking revenge the monster eliminates any hope of ever joining human society, which is what it really wants, revenge becomes the only thing it has. As the monster puts it, revenge became “dearer than light or food.” Revenge does not just consume the monster, however. It also consumes Victor, the victim of the monster’s revenge. After the monster murders Victor’s relatives, Victor vows a “great and signal revenge on [the monster’s] cursed head.” In a sense then, the very human desire for revenge transforms both Victor and the monster into true monsters that have no feelings or desires beyond destroying their foe.

PREJUDICE

Frankenstein explores one of mankind’s most persistent and destructive flaws: prejudice. Nearly every human character in the novel assumes that the monster must be dangerous based on its outward appearance, when in truth the monster is (originally) warm and open-hearted. Again and again the monster finds himself assaulted and rejected by entire villages and families despite his attempts to convey his benevolent intentions. The violence and prejudice he encounters convinces him of the “barbarity of man.” That the monster is right: mankind is barbaric, and blinded by its own prejudice.

LOST INNOCENCE

Frankenstein presents many examples of the corruption of youthful innocence. The most obvious case of lost innocence involves Victor. A young man on the cusp of adulthood, Victor leaves for university with high hopes and lofty ambitions. He aims to explore “unknown powers” and enlighten all of humanity to the deepest “mysteries of creation,” but his success and his pride brings an end to his innocence. He creates a monster that reflects back to him the many flaws inherent in his own species (an unquenchable thirst for love, a tendency toward violence, and a bloodthirsty need for justice and revenge) and in himself (prejudice based on appearance). And, in turn, Victor’s cruel “un-innocent” behavior also destroys the monster’s innocence.

Victor and the monster’s losses of innocence ultimately lead to the deaths of William, Justine, Elizabeth, and Clerval, four characters whom the novel portrays as uniquely gentle, kind, and, above all, innocent. Through these murders, Shelley suggests that innocence is fleeting, and will always be either lost or destroyed by the harsh reality of human nature.

CHAPTER 13 QUOTES

All men hate the wretched; how then, must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things? Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us.— the Monster
Frankenstein

When I looked around I saw and heard of none like me. Was I, a monster, a blot upon the earth from which all men fled and whom all men disowned? — the Monster

CHAPTER 16 QUOTES

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. — the Monster

CHAPTER 20 QUOTES

You can blast my other passions, but revenge remains—revenge, henceforth dearer than light of food! I may die, but first you, my tyrant and tormentor, shall curse the sun that gazes on your misery. — the Monster

CHAPTER 22 QUOTES

If for one instant I had thought what might be the hellish intention of my fiendish adversary, I would rather have banished myself forever from my native country and wandered a friendless outcast over the earth than have consented to this miserable marriage. But, as if possessed of magic powers, the monster had blinded me to his real intentions; and when I thought that I had prepared only my own death, I hastened that of a far dearer victim. — Victor

CHAPTER 24 QUOTES

Seek happiness in tranquility and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries. — Victor

The fallen angel becomes the malignant devil. Yet even the enemy of God and man had friends and associates in his desolation; I am alone. — Victor

Was there no injustice in this? Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all human kind sinned against me? — the Monster

THE PREFACE

The Preface explains the origin of the novel. Shelley spent the summer of 1816 near Geneva, Switzerland, where much of the novel takes place. One rainy night, Shelley and her friends challenged each other to write ghost stories. Frankenstein was the only one of the stories to be completed. The Preface also reveals Shelley’s aim in writing the novel: to present a flattering depiction of “domestic affection” and “universal virtue.”

LETTER 1

Frankenstein begins with a series of four letters from Robert Walton to his sister, Margaret Saville. The first letter is written on December 11 from St. Petersburg, Russia, sometime in the eighteenth century. Walton is about to set out on a journey at sea to reach the North Pole, which he considers a region of warmth, “eternal light,” and unparalleled beauty.

Walton’s description of the North Pole reads like a Romantic poem full of beautiful images of nature, and establishes that nature and its beauty will play a major role in the novel.

LETTER 2

In his second letter on March 28th of the following year, from Archangel, Russia, Walton describes himself as lonely. He worries that his refined upbringing has made him too sensitive for the “brutality” of life at sea.

Walton writes that his resolution to carry out his journey is “fixed as fate.” He confesses his “romantic ... love for the marvellous” and his passion for the dangers of the sea, which he attributes to his fondness for Coleridge’s poem, “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.”

LETTER 3

Written on July 7th, this short letter describes Walton’s journey so far as a “triumph.” His men remain resolved and loyal, and the weather has been fine, though sheets of ice in the ocean suggest worse conditions may soon threaten. Walton closes his letter with the rhetorical question, “What can stop the determined heart and resolved will of man?”

LETTER 4

In the first entry of this three-part letter, Walton says his crew has observed a huge “savage” figure in a dog-sledded speed across the ice. The next morning his crew members discover another man, this one normal sized and European, within reach of the ship.

Walton’s use of the word “savage” places him alongside the many other characters in Frankenstein who prejudge the monster based on appearance alone.
The man comes aboard. Walton says he showed a "benevolence and sweetness" unequaled by anyone else he had ever met. As the days pass and the stranger recovers his strength, Walton comes to love him as a brother and considers him the friend he never thought he would meet on his voyage.

In the second part of the letter, Walton tells the stranger that he is on a quest for knowledge, which upsets the stranger. The stranger tells Walton that he has lost everything and is at the end of his life, yet Walton is more interested in the stranger's sensitivity to nature.

In the third part of the letter, the stranger says he's decided to tell his story to either help Walton in his quest for knowledge, or convince him to give it up. He hopes that Walton might "deduce an apt moral" from hearing his tale.

Walton tells the stranger that his destiny has already been determined. Walton then promises his sister that he will take down the stranger's story to either help Walton or to give it up. He hopes that Walton might "deduce an apt moral" from hearing his tale.

CHAPTER 1

The stranger, Victor Frankenstein, says he was born in Naples and grew up in Geneva, Switzerland. His father, Alphonse, and his mother, Caroline, first became close when Alphonse's friend and Caroline's father, Beaufort, died. Alphonse became Caroline's protector, and eventually married her.

When he was five, his mother discovered a beautiful blond orphan girl named Elizabeth Lavenza in an Italian village and adopted her.

Victor, his parents, and all the Frankensteins adored Elizabeth. She became to him a "more than sister." The two children referred to each other as cousins, rather than brother and sister.

CHAPTER 2

Victor describes his perfect childhood. He and Elizabeth got along perfectly, though she favored poetry while he longed to unravel the "physical secrets" of life, including the "hidden laws of nature."

In addition to Elizabeth, Victor shares a close friendship with Henry Clerval, his well-read schoolmate. Like Victor, Clerval possesses a "soaring ambition" to leave his mark on human history.

As he grows up, Victor becomes fascinated with "natural philosophy," and reads widely among the thinkers in this field who want to penetrate the "citadel of nature."

One day, when Victor observes lightning strike a tree, he realizes that the laws of science are beyond human understanding and decides to focus on studies based in fact, like mathematics, rather than natural philosophy. Yet he notes that he eventually returned to it, leading to his "utter and terrible destruction."

CHAPTER 3

Just before Victor turns seventeen, Elizabeth catches scarlet fever and passes it on to Victor's mother, who dies. Her dying wish is for Victor and Elizabeth to marry. Still in grief, Victor says goodbye to Clerval, Elizabeth, and his father and leaves to study at Ingolstadt, a university in Germany.

He meets with his professor of natural philosophy, M. Krempe, who tells Victor that his previous studies have all been a waste of time. Yet Victor then attends a class with M. Waldman, a chemistry professor, whose lecture on the power and recent successes of science inspire Victor to dedicate himself to revealing "to the world the deepest mysteries of creation." The next day Victor visits Waldman, who supports his plan.

CHAPTER 4

Victor becomes so caught up in natural philosophy that he ignores everything else, including his family. He progresses rapidly, and suddenly after two years of work he discovers the secret to creating life.

Victor decides to build a race of beings, starting with one creature. He spends months alone in his apartment building a body to reanimate, spurred on by the lure of fame and glory, imagining a "new species" that will bless him as its creator.

CHAPTER 5

After months of effort, Victor is successful in bringing his creature to life. But once alive, the creature's appearance horrifies him.
Victor runs from the room and tries to sleep, but nightmares of death and tombs wake him, and he opens his eyes to see the monster by his bed, reaching out and grinning. He runs, and spends the night outside.

Still avoiding his apartment, Victor wanders Ingolstadt, and runs into Henry Clerval, who has come to university to embark on "a voyage of discovery to the land of knowledge."

Victor checks to see if the monster is still in his apartment, and is overjoyed to find that it isn't. He invites Clerval up, but once there falls ill with a "nervous fever," which lasts for months. Clerval nurses him, not revealing the illness to anyone. When Victor recovers, Clerval asks Victor to send a letter to his father and family, and gives him a letter from Elizabeth.

CHAPTER 6

In her letter, Elizabeth updates Victor on his brothers, and says that Justine Moritz, a former servant of the Frankenstein family, has come to live with them after the death of her mother.

Victor introduces Clerval to his professors, but though they praise him Victor finds anything connected with natural philosophy causes him distress. So he gives up such studies for a while, and studies Middle Eastern language with Clerval. Near the end of term, as Victor and Clerval wait to travel back to Geneva, they take a tour around Germany which rekindles Victor's love of nature and raises his spirits.

CHAPTER 7

On returning from the tour, Victor receives a letter from his father saying that his youngest brother, William, has been murdered. Shocked and upset, Victor and Clerval rush to Geneva. But the town gate is locked when they arrive. Victor visits the spot where his brother died. On the way he sees lightning playing over the peaks of the mountain Mont Blanc.

Near where his brother died, Victor sees a figure resembling the monster. He realizes that the monster killed William, which means that he, Victor, is really responsible since he created the monster.

As family bliss and innocence are destroyed, Victor's descriptions of nature turn dark, reflecting his psyche. Lightning is a reminder of his earlier realization that mankind can never understand nature. It's a lesson he forgot, to his detriment.

Victor realizes the cost of his arrogant assault on nature and begins to lose his innocence. And he realizes the monster is revenging itself on him.

When Victor arrives home the next day, his brother Ernest tearfully informs him that Justine has been accused of William's murder: in her pocket the police found a portrait of Victor's mother that William had been wearing.

Victor announces to his family that Justine is certainly not guilty, but says no more since he fears anyone hearing his story would think him insane. But Victor is confident that Justine could not be convicted for a crime she did not commit by circumstantial evidence.

CHAPTER 8

Victor wishes he could confess in Justine's place, but his absence at the time of the murder would make his confession sound like nonsense.

At the trial, Justine maintains she is innocent, but cannot explain how William's portrait of his mother wound up in her pocket. She is sentenced to death.

Victor speaks with a member of the court, who says that Justine has already confessed to the crime. Victor and Elizabeth visit Justine in prison, and she explains that she was pressured into confessing by her jailors. She succumbed, and confessed a lie. Justine says she's ready to die and leave behind the "sad and bitter world."

The next day Justine is executed. Victor feels guilt overwhelm him for his secret role in William's and Justine's deaths.

CHAPTER 9

Victor despairs that his good intentions have resulted in such horror. Soon the Frankenstein family goes to their vacation home in Belrive to escape the bad memories of what's happened. Yet Victor still has thoughts of suicide and begins to desire revenge against the monster.

One day Elizabeth tells Victor that she no longer sees the world the same way after witnessing the execution of an innocent.

Victor, who thought himself a creator of life, is now responsible for the death of two innocents.

By concealing his role in William's death and Justine's fate, Victor isolates himself and must bear all the consequences of his ambition alone.

The Frankenstein family continues to be blissful and innocent.

Victor's innocent joy in natural philosophy has been destroyed; now he seeks to isolate himself.

The Frankenstein family continues to be blissful and innocent.

Victor views nature as a Romantic poet would: sublime, impenetrable, free from the burdens of fallible human life. It provides him with relief.

Victor, the creator, abandons his creation. Because it's ugly he imagines that it's evil. Victor's innocent belief in himself is gone.

Clerval's words, though innocent and earnest, now sound dangerously ambitious and naive.

Victor makes the mistake of isolating himself and keeping his secret all to himself; it eats away at his peace of mind and ruins his health. Knowing he has a secret but not what it is, Clerval tries to reconnect him to society.

Victor could confess everything, including his secret, but instead he chooses silence and isolation.

Justine confesses to a crime she did not commit. She gives up her innocence, to "save" her soul. She has given up her innocence, and now no longer sees the world as innocent either.

By concealing his role in William's death and Justine's fate, Victor isolates himself and must bear all the consequences of his ambition alone.

Victor now understands the grave consequences of his ambition, but he continues to keep his secret.

Victor's response to the monster's betrayal of him mirrors the monster's response to Victor's betrayal: both isolate themselves and seek revenge.

Elizabeth, for so long a perfect model of innocence, begins to lose her innocence.
A while later, Victor decides to travel to Chamonix, France, hoping the trip will provide relief from his sorrow. Along the way, he gazes at waterfalls and the towering Mont Blanc. At times the sights remind him of happier times, but not for long.

CHAPTER 10

At Chamonix, Victor continues to feel despair. He again tries to escape it through nature: he climbs to the peak of a mountain called Montanvert. But just as the view begins to lift his spirits, Victor sees the monster. He curses it and wishes for its destruction. But with great eloquence the monster claims to be Victor’s offspring. “I ought to be thy Adam,” it says.

The monster continues that it was once benevolent, and turned to violence only after Victor, its creator, abandoned it. It begs Victor to listen to its story. Victor, for the first time thinking about his responsibilities as a creator, follows the monster to a cave in the glacier, and sits down to listen.

CHAPTER 11

The monster describes its early days after being created: running from Victor’s apartment, seeing light and dark and feeling hunger and cold, and discovering fire and its ability to both cook and burn. Wherever the monster goes it’s appearance terrifies humans, so it decides to avoid them. Eventually it finds a place to hide in the darkness near the side of a cottage. Inside he observes a man, woman, and an old man and watches them at their daily tasks.

CHAPTER 12

The monster wonders why the family seems unhappy and realizes it is because the old man is blind and the family is poor and hungry. To make up for adding to their misery by eating their food, it gathers wood for them and leaves it outside their cottage at night. It also realizes they communicate through sound, and sets about learning their language. It learns that the young man is named Felix, and the girl, Agatha.

One day the monster sees itself in a pool of water. He realizes finally why people have screamed and run when they see him. Yet the monster becomes convinced that with gentle words and actions he could get the family to see past his awful appearance. Spring comes, lifting everyone’s spirits. The monster looks to the future with hope.

CHAPTER 13

When a dark and beautiful "Arabian" woman named Safie arrives at the cottage, the family’s mood, and Felix’s in particular, brightens. Safie does not speak the family’s language, and Felix teaches her from a history book. As she learns, so does the monster, which is disgusted that a race as noble as mankind is also capable of such evil. As he learns about society and humans, the monster realizes that it has no society of its own. It is a monster, doomed to be always without family or people. It wishes it had never gotten this knowledge about society, which makes it so miserable.

CHAPTER 14

The monster figures out the history of the family, the De Laceys. Once prominent and well respected, Felix fell in love with Safie and helped her father, a man wrongly accused of a crime, escape from prison. Felix’s role in the escape was discovered, and the family lost its wealth and was exiled by the government. When Safie’s father tried to force her to return to Turkey, she escaped, not wanting to be constrained by Islam’s oppressive stance on women, and came to find Felix.

CHAPTER 15

The monster next tells how it found three books in the woods, including John Milton’s Paradise Lost (an epic poem about humankind’s loss of innocence in the Garden of Eden). The monster at times sees itself as similar to Adam. Yet at others he sees himself as more like Satan, because he does not have the love of his creator. When a dark and beautiful “Arabian” woman named Safie arrives at the cottage, the family’s mood, and Felix’s in particular, brightens. Safie does not speak the family’s language, and Felix teaches her from a history book. As she learns, so does the monster, which is disgusted that a race as noble as mankind is also capable of such evil. As he learns about society and humans, the monster realizes that it has no society of its own. It is a monster, doomed to be always without family or people. It wishes it had never gotten this knowledge about society, which makes it so miserable.

The monster discovers its own ugliness, and realizes that people judge it on its looks rather than its nature. Yet it remains innocent enough to believe that it can overcome these prejudices, especially when Nature gives it joy.

A key turning point for the monster. In realizing humanity’s shallowness, he also realizes his own sorry fate as an outcast, a monster.

All kinds of human fallibility are at work here: Safie’s father is a falsely condemned criminal, Felix is a conspirator, and marriage, a supposedly pure union of souls, needs to be brokered like an illicit business deal.

Adam lost his innocence by disobeying God, his creator. The monster loses his innocence after being abandoned by his ‘god,’ Victor. Victor hasn’t acted like a god, but like a flawed man, and thereby made the monster a devil.

Victor created a monster unlike any other being on earth, dooming it to isolation.
The monster decides to reveal himself in the hope that men will be able to see past his ugliness. One day when Felix, Agatha, and Safie are out for a walk, he enters the cottage and introduces himself to De Lacey, sensing that the blind man will not be prejudiced against him. The conversation starts well, but just then the family returns. Felix attacks the monster; Safie runs in terror, and Agatha faints. The monster flees.

CHAPTER 16

The family's rejection plunges the monster into a fit of rage. But the beauty of the next day calms him. He decides to approach De Lacey again to try to make amends.

But by the time the monster reaches the house, the De Lacey's have moved out. He sees Felix terminating his lease with the landlord, and never sees any of them again. His last link with society destroyed, the monster gives in to rage and a desire for revenge. He burns down the cottage and heads for Geneva and Victor.

At one point along the way the monster sees a beautiful little girl from drowning in a stream, only to be shot by her guardian. His suffering only feeds his desire for revenge.

After a few weeks, the monster makes it to Geneva. There he encounters a young boy. Thinking the boy would be too young to be horrified by his appearance, the monster approaches him. But the boy is terrified, and shouts that his father, Frankenstein, will kill the monster. The monster silences the boy by strangling him. He dies.

The monster then finds a barn in which to spend the night, but finds a beautiful sleeping girl inside. Enraged that he is forever cut off from the delight of female beauty, the monster places a picture the boy wore and plants it in the girl's pocket.

The chapter ends with the monster's demand that Victor create a female counterpart for him.

CHAPTER 17

The narrative returns to Victor's voice. Fearing that two monsters will just cause more murder and destruction, Victor refuses to agree to the monster's demand to create a female.

The first and only kindness the monster receives comes from a blind man incapable of prejudice. The rest of the family, like the rest of humanity, responds to the monster cruelly, based on looks alone.

The monster's faith in old De Lacey shows its last gasp of innocence, saving it from the rage born of rejection. Its innocence and hopes of inclusion in society dashed, the monster is left with only pain, and naturally wants to hurt those who hurt it. That includes human society (symbolized in the house he burns) and its creator, Victor.

Another example of humanity's tendency toward prejudice, which only increases the monster's desire for revenge.

Again the monster shows an innocent belief in man, this time that the young will be less prejudiced than the old. His hopes again dashed, coupled with the boy's connection to Victor, spur the monster to uncontrollable revenge.

The monster then revenges itself on Justine because to the monster she symbolizes the society it can never have.

All the monster wants is a family, a community.

The monster's point was that it became vengeful only because of human prejudice and abandonment. But Victor is still prejudiced.

The monster argues that its violence stems from its misery, and that Victor, as its creator, is responsible for that misery. The monster adds that if Victor creates a companion for it, the pair will flee to South America and avoid human contact forever. Victor feels compassion at the monster's words, but feels hatred whenever he looks at it. Still, he agrees to the bargain. The monster tells him it will monitor his progress, and departs.

CHAPTER 18

Almost immediately, Victor begins to question the wisdom of creating a companion for the monster and delays. He also realizes that to complete the project he'll have to do some research in England.

Alphonse senses Victor's distress, and thinks it might stem from some reluctance on Victor's part to marry Elizabeth. Victor assures his father he'd like nothing more than to marry Elizabeth. Alphonse suggests they marry immediately as a cure for the family's recent sorrow. But Victor does not want to marry with his bargain with the monster hanging over his head, and uses the trip he has over his head, and uses the trip he has to take to England as an excuse to put the wedding off.

Alphonse and Victor agree that he will go to England for a time not to exceed a year, and that Clerval, looking to pursue his studies after having to spend some time working for his father, will accompany him. Yet Victor continues to feel like a "wretch."

CHAPTER 19

Victor and Clerval arrive in London in October. Victor continues to despair, avoiding people unless they have information that can help him create a second monster. Clerval, in contrast, is how Victor used to be: excited by learning and wanting to meet and talk to everyone.

Victor and Clerval travel to Scotland. There, Victor leaves Clerval with a friend and travels on alone. He goes to a remote island in the Orkney's, sets up a lab, and works in solitude on his secret project.

The monster's argument wins Victor over intellectually, and Victor is forced to recognize that he failed the monster in a terrible way. And yet, at the same time, Victor cannot completely overcome his prejudice.

On the mountain the monster's argument barely won out over Victor's prejudice. Now the scales start to tip.

Alphonse's hope in Victor and Elizabeth's marriage again shows the importance of family and connection, which is just what the monster lacks. But Victor continues to isolate himself from his family and keeps secrets, which will ultimately lead to disaster.

"Wretch" is the word the monster uses to describe itself, drawing a parallel between the two isolated beings. But Victor is isolated by choice, while the monsters is forced into isolation.

Clerval's innocence contrasts with Victor and shows the joy and delight Victor's ambition cost him.

Once again Victor isolates himself from society. Whenever he does this, he makes bad, reckless decisions that cause disaster.
CHAPTER 20

One night in his lab, Victor worries that the new creature he's creating might refuse to live away from humans, or that the two monsters might produce a "race of devils." Just then he looks up and sees the monster "grinning" at the window. Overwhelmed by loathing, Victor destroys his work. Outside, the monster howls in agony, and disappears.

Hours later, the monster returns to Victor's lab. It now refers to Victor only as "Man" and vows revenge. It promises: "I shall be with you on your wedding night." Victor thinks the monster means to kill him on that night, and fears for Elizabeth left alone as a widow.

A letter soon arrives from Clerval suggesting they resume their travels. Victor gathers up his laboratory materials and rows out into the ocean to dump them. Victor is so happy he doesn't understand the monster's true misery: isolation.

When Victor lands a group of angry townspeople gathers around his boat. He's a suspect in a murder that his isolation as enforced as its own. Victor panics in the boat because he fears being cut off from land, from human society. It is the same fear as the monster's, but Victor's prejudice doesn't let him recognize it.

A cliffhanger ending: it seems likely the monster has already taken some revenge, but how?

CHAPTER 21

At Mr. Kirwin's office, Victor learns that a man in his mid-twenties was found dead on the shore with black marks on his neck. And various witnesses testify that a boat much like Victor's was seen at sea. Victor is taken to see the body. It is Clerval. Victor falls into convulsions, and remains bedridden and delusional for two months.

When Victor regains awareness he is still in prison. Mr. Kirwin treats him kindly, advising him that he'll likely be freed. He also tells Victor that his father has come to see him.

Two weeks later Victor is released because the court has nothing but circumstantial evidence against him. Despairing and determined to protect his family from the monster, Victor returns with his father to Geneva.

CHAPTER 22

En route to Geneva, they stop in Paris so Victor can regain his strength. His father tries to help by getting him to engage with society, but Victor feels he has no right to. Victor even tells his father he murdered Justine, William, and Clerval. His father considers him deranged, and Victor says no more.

While in Paris, Victor receives a letter from Elizabeth. She expresses her desire to marry Victor, but worries he may have taken another lover during his long absence. Victor remembers the monster's vow to be with him on his wedding night, and decides that whether he kills it or it kills him, at least he will be free. He writes back that he wants to marry immediately, but adds that he has a terrible secret he will tell her the day after they are married.

A week later Victor and his father arrive in Geneva. The wedding takes place ten days later. Yet as Victor and Elizabeth sail to a cottage by Lake Como in Italy for their honeymoon, Victor's fear of facing the monster dissolves his happiness. Elizabeth tries to cheer him by pointing out the beauty in nature. It doesn't work.

CHAPTER 23

A storm rolls in after they arrive at the cottage. Victor, armed with a pistol and terrified that the monster will attack at any moment, sends Elizabeth to bed for her own safety. But as he searches the house, he hears a scream. Elizabeth has been murdered. While huddled over her lifeless body, Victor sees the monster at the window. He fires at it, but misses.

Victor rushes back to Geneva. The news of Elizabeth's death overwhelms his father, who dies a few days later.

Victor goes mad for several months and is kept in a cell. When he regains his senses he tells his entire story to a local magistrate, hoping to enact justice on the monster. The magistrate listens but doesn't entirely believe Victor and, anyway, considers tracking down the monster impossible. Victor resolves to seek his revenge on his own.

He curses the magistrate and all of humanity. "Man," he cries, "how ignorant art thou in thy pride of wisdom!"

As Victor's father seeks to draw him into society, Victor increasingly resembles the monster in his sense that he's an outcast. As part of his isolation, Victor continues to keep his deadly secrets.

Victor's cutting himself off from society makes Elizabeth doubt his love for him. But won't waiting until after his wedding to tell his secret be too late? A selfish half-confession by Victor, who thinks more about himself than Elizabeth.

By now a painfully familiar scene: Victor depends on the temporary relief of Nature and the support of his companion, now Elizabeth instead of Clerval or Alphonse, in order to ease his anxiety.

A storm rolls in after they arrive at the cottage. Victor, armed with a pistol and terrified that the monster will attack at any moment, sends Elizabeth to bed for her own safety. But as he searches the house, he hears a scream. Elizabeth has been murdered. While huddled over her lifeless body, Victor sees the monster at the window. He fires at it, but misses.

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Victor assumed the monster would attack him, not realizing that the monster wanted revenge by subjecting him to the same horror to which he subjected it: isolation. This mistake resulted in Elizabeth's death.

Now the monster's revenge is complete: Victor is alone (besides Ernest).

Finally, Victor tells his secret. But it's too late. Now he faces the same predicament as the monster: rejected by humankind, he must seek revenge on his own.

His curse is similar to the monster's curse of him. They are now essentially the same.
CHAPTER 24

Victor decides to leave Geneva forever. While visiting the graves of his family he swears revenge, and hears the monster’s voice calling him a “miserable wretch.”

For months, Victor tracks the monster northward into the frigid Arctic regions, led by clues and taunting notes the monster leaves behind. Victor chases the monster onto the frozen ocean with sleds and dogs, and comes within a mile of the monster’s own sled, but then the ice breaks up beneath Victor’s sled.

This is the point at which Walton’s ship rescued him. The narrative comes to the present. Victor, knowing he’s dying, begs Walton to take vengeance on the monster if he should happen to see it.

WALTON, IN CONTINUATION

The novel returns to the frame of Walton’s letters to his sister. Margaret Saville. In a letter on August 26, Walton says that he believes Victor described himself as the victim of “lofty ambition,” which brought him to despair. Walton laments that he did not know Victor when they could have accepted. Both men end up trapped against their hope for love and acceptance. Both cases, their ambition worked that his own “purpose” remained firm.

In his final letter on September 12th, Walton says that he has turned back, his hopes of “glory” and “utility” crushed. In addition, Victor, has died. Walton had objected to Walton’s decision to turn back his ship and said that his own “purpose” remained firm. Walton then tried to rise and return to the ice, but could not. He reaffirmed his certainty that he acted well in trying to defend his fellow man against the monster, his creation. He then died quietly, eager to rejoin the relatives he had lost in life.

In a letter on September 5, Walton says that his crew have demanded that he turn the ship around and head for home as soon as the ice frees them. Victor speaks up in his defense, telling the rebellious crew members they should “be men” for they had set out to be the “benefactors of [their] species.” The speech changes the crew’s mind, but Walton fears only temporarily. He says he’d rather die than return in shame with his “purpose unfulfilled.”

In a letter on September 7, Walton says he has agreed to the crew’s demand to turn back. He considers what has happened an injustice.

Like Victor, Walton blames his failure not on his ambition or his fallibility, but on others.

In a letter on September 10, Walton tells Margaret that he has just seen the monster crying over Victor’s corpse. To Walton’s shock, the monster says he suffered remorse and pity for Victor all along. Walton calls the monster a “wretch.” The monster is unsurprised, having been rejected by people from the start. He says that it abhorred itself even as it was doing evil, and describes itself as a “fallen angel,” yet it also wonders why only it, and not Felix, or the man who shot it, or Frankenstein, is considered a “criminal.” The monster then promises to end its own life, springs from the cabin back onto the ice, and disappears.

Walton maintains the innocent ideal notion that he can somehow enlighten all of humankind by seeing the North Pole. The same mix of arrogance, benevolence, and lust for fame fuels both his and Victor’s ambitions. Victor’s speech implies that he has not, in fact, changed much at all.

Like Victor, Walton’s ambition destroys everything around him until he’s left alone. Victor, quick to judge everything but himself, expects Walton to stick to his convictions, but his own conviction is a need for revenge. If he had truly acted in “good faith,” he would have confronted his prejudice, or, failing that, told his secret earlier.

The last person the monster encounters before killing itself treats it unfairly, with the same prejudice and bitterness the monster faced throughout its life. The monster’s use of religious language to describe its plight suggests the connection between Frankenstein and Paradise Lost, and between the monster, Adam, and Satan. With a final condemnation of the prejudice it has always faced and the weakness of men, the monster reveals its final loss of innocence: it’s own self-hatred, and wish to die.