

Discussion Questions for Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. New York: Barnes and Noble Books. 2003.

1. There are several parallels drawn between Frankenstein and the monster in the book. Can you name some of them? Please cite passages in the text that support your position. Why do you think that Shelley draws parallels between Victor Frankenstein and the monster?
2. Is the monster justified in acting badly towards humans? Why or why not? Please cite passages from the text to support your opinion.
3. Why does Frankenstein abandon the monster as soon as he created him? Do you think he is justified in abandoning the monster?
4. Several commentators have noted that aspects of the book remind them of childbirth and child rearing. Can you point out some of the similarities in the novel to childbirth and/or child rearing?
5. At various points in the novel, Frankenstein (and other characters) reference nature as being inspiring, calming, enervating, sublime, and frightening. Why do you think they are making these references? Is nature capable of inspiring these feelings in people, or do the people impute their own feeling toward nature?
6. The monster refers to Satan in *Paradise Lost* at several points throughout the novel. Does the monster identify with Satan, and if so, how? Why would the monster identify himself with Satan?
7. Frankenstein urges Walton to not strive after fame arising from scientific discoveries, yet Frankenstein does not heed his own advice. Why not? Does Walton listen to Frankenstein's advice? Is the pursuit of knowledge, to the exclusion of everything else, a worthy goal?
8. Shelley begins the novel with a series of letters from Walton to his sister. She ends the novel by a similar series of letters from Walton to his sister. This technique is known as a "Chinese box." Does the technique of using a "Chinese box" work in the novel? What could the author gain by using this technique? Does the technique seem outdated now?
9. Frankenstein has become synonymous with an ugly, rather dim-witted monster. Were you surprised that the monster was as intelligent as he was depicted in the novel? Is the monster more effective as being endowed with intelligence, or is it more effective to portray the monster as being dim-witted?

10. Is the monster portrayed sympathetically in the novel? Do you feel inclined to like the monster because of his portrayal in the novel?
11. What does the novel have to say about Frankenstein's attempt to create life? Does Shelley view the attempt to create life in a positive vein?
12. How does the novel compare with the "slasher" movies so popular at the present time? Does the novel look to present a murder a minute, or does it seek to develop the characters?
13. Are Victor Frankenstein's frequent fainting spells and mental anguish believable? Do you expect a man to behave in this manner? Does Victor's portrayal give a clue to the author's sex?
14. There are a number of forced coincidences in the novel, such as the introduction of Justine immediately before her death; the introduction of the Arabian girl at the house of the DeLaceys; and the deaths of Frankenstein's friends. Do these coincidences detract from the novel?
15. Did you find the plot of the novel believable? Were you interested in the characters? Did you care about the outcome of the novel? How effective a job did Mary Shelley do in writing the book? Was the use of the "Chinese box" helpful to the novel, or did it hurt the novel?