

Frankenstein Discussion Questions

Directions: This is the written preparation portion for the *Frankenstein* Fishbowl; not only will your answers be graded, but they will help you prepare for the in-class discussion. Make sure you are thorough and detailed with your responses. Choose TWO of the topics below and answer the questions provided. You must choose one A topic and one B topic. Include direct quotes from the text (do not forget the page number). Typed is strongly preferred, but not required.

A. Narrative POV: Many novels use multiple voices to highlight the effect of narrative point of view. Explore how the narrative structure and differing points of view contribute to the effect of *Frankenstein* as a whole.

1. Identify the 3 narrators and the similarities and differences in their goals and perspectives. You might consider the following areas: isolation, ambition, view on power, acquisition of knowledge, exploration, and exemplification of Romantic ideals.
2. Why does Shelley use three narrators? What is the effect of having the differing view points? How are their stories the same/how are they different?
3. Isolate at least 2 key passages that illuminate the questions above.
4. How does the framed story device amplify the situation of each man/creature?

A. Power: One of the strongest human drives seems to be a desire for power. Discuss how a character or characters in *Frankenstein* free themselves from the power of others or seek to gain power over others.

1. Why is Walton exploring the arctic? What is his internal motivation?
2. What drives Frankenstein to scientific exploration? What motivates him?
3. How does the monster assert his power over Victor? What motivates him?
4. Consider the difference between intellectual and physical power and the power in destruction and the power in creation.
5. Find at least 2 key passages that relate to the above questions.

B. Portrayal of Women: Female characters often encounter issues and difficulties vastly different than their male counterparts. Examine how Shelley uses the female characters in *Frankenstein*.

1. How do the female characters reflect Shelley's own biographical situation?
2. What are the similarities and differences between Frankenstein's mother, Justine Moritz, and Elizabeth? What function does each character serve? How important are these women in the overall structure of the work? Are they credited with their own existence or are they used in service of other facets of the story?
3. Why does Shelley depict these women as essentially powerless?
4. How is Victor's encroachment on the uniquely feminine power of creation significant?
5. Why does the monster want a wife? Is this similar to the role the other women play in the lives of their mates?
6. Find at least 2 key passages that illuminate and support the questions above.

B. Identity: Authors throughout the ages have questioned what creates individual identity. Some theorize that identity is innate others that society creates our identity. Exploring the significant characters in *Frankenstein*, consider the factors that contribute to their identity. How does this portrayal affect the meaning of the work as a whole?

1. How does Shelley portray the role of fate in the lives of characters? How much are they in control of their own destiny? How does this contribute to their identity?
2. To what degree are the characters portrayed as innately good or innately evil? How does this contribute to their identity?
3. What role do reading and education play in the formation of character/identity? Trace through multiple characters. How are they educated? What are the ramifications of self education vs. formal schooling? How does this relate to the idea of character/identity?
4. What role does society play in the formation of identity? What about isolation?
5. How does a character's appearance affect their identity?
6. Find at least 2 key passages that relate to the above questions.