

FRANKENSTEIN Study Guide

Letters 1-4

1. Who is writing Letter 1 (and all the letters)?

Robert Walton

2. To whom is he writing? What is their relationship?

Mrs. Saville, his sister

3. Where is Robert Walton when he writes Letter 1? Why is he there? What are his plans?

St. Petersburg, Russia. He is hiring a crew for his ship. He intends to sail to the North Pole and discover magnetism.

4. What does Robert Walton tell us about himself?

He is passionately committed to discovery and adventure. He wishes he had a friend with the same sensibilities and he says he is self-taught.

5. Where is Walton now? What do you think of Walton's question "What can stop the determined heart and resolved will of man"?

Walton is out to sea, sailing north. The quotation establishes the Romantic idea of the power of emotion over reason.

6. How much time has elapsed between Letter 3 and Letter 4? What "strange accident" has happened to the sailors?

One month has lapsed. The accident is the ship is trapped in ice and fog.

7. Why does the man picked up by the ship say he is there? What shape is he in?

The man says he is “seek[ing] one who fled from me” (11) and he asks which direction the ship is sailing. He is near death, weak and emaciated.

8. What sort of person does he seem to be? How does Walton respond to this man?

The man remains silent and this creates a sense of mystery around him. Walton finds the man eloquent, educated and refined.

9. How much time has elapsed when Walton begins writing again? What has happened in the meantime? How does the man respond to Walton's project? How is Walton responding to the man?

Walton begins writing the biography of Victor the very next day. Victor has slowly regained his health. Victor tells Walton that the quest for knowledge and his project will ultimately lead to his misery. Walton is intrigued and wants to hear Victor's story.

Ch 1- 5

11. What is the man's background? (Do we know his name yet?) Where is he from?

The man was born in Geneva, Switzerland. His father held a public office and both his parents doted on him and idolized him. His name is first mentioned on p. 21 by his mother.

12. What is the story of the man's mother, Caroline Beaufort? How does the man feel toward his parents, and what responsibilities does he feel they had toward him?

Victor's father's best friend was Caroline Beaufort's father. Beaufort fell into poverty and eventually died. Frankenstein Sr. rescued the young Caroline and married her when she came of age. Their “duty from heaven” was to raise Victor to be good and their guidance is responsible for all his future happiness or misery.

13. Who is Elizabeth Lavenza and what is her story? What gift does the man's mother give him? Do we know the man's name yet? Do we know his family name?

Elizabeth is the daughter of an Italian nobleman and a German woman. She was orphaned and taken in by a poor Italian family. Victor's family adopts her and gives her as a present to him.

14. Who is Henry Clerval and what is his relation to Victor?

Henry Clerval is Victor's childhood friend.

15. How does Victor characterize the interests and characters of Clerval, Elizabeth, and himself?

Clerval loves the stories of medieval knights and chivalry. Elizabeth enjoys the emotional aspect of poetry but does not pursue learning. She is nurturing and kind. Victor is fascinated with the study of science.

16. Who is Cornelius Agrippa and how does Victor find out about him? How does Victor's father respond, and how does Victor comment on that response?

On a rainy day while on vacation, Victor reads books he finds. Agrippa is an ancient scientist who studied alchemy. His books are outdated and unscientific. Victor's father criticizes Victor for reading such nonsense. Victor decides to read even more on the subject after his father's criticism.

17. What sort of science ("Natural Philosophy") is Victor learning from Agrippa, Paracelsus, and Albertus Magnus? How would a modern scientist respond to this sort of thinking?

Alchemy and the search for the fountain of youth. Modern scientists know these pursuits are foolish.

18. What happens when Victor sees an oak tree destroyed by lightning and hears an explanation? What does Victor then begin to study?

Victor decides to study electricity and galvanism - the process of using electricity to reanimate dead creatures.

19. Who or what does he credit for this change in direction? Who or what does he blame for his "utter and terrible destruction"?

He credits Krempe for encouraging him to study this field and he blames Waldman, his chemistry professor, for his destruction.

20. What happens to Elizabeth and to Victor's mother as a result of Elizabeth's scarlet fever? How does this compare with the mother's early history?

Caroline catches scarlet fever and dies after nursing Elizabeth back to health. Caroline's father dies in similar circumstances. Victor experienced the same with Walton.

21. Why does Victor's father send him to the University of Ingolstadt? How old is Victor then? (Ingolstadt is in southern Germany, in Bavaria, on the Danube, 43 miles north of Munich. The university founded there in 1472 moved to Landshut in 1802 and to Munich in 1826.)

Victor's father believes Victor should study in another country. Victor is 17.

22. What does Victor learn from M. Krempe? How does Victor respond to him, and on what grounds? Is this a good basis for making such a decision?

Krempe teaches natural philosophy. Victor finds Krempe uncouth, repulsive and slovenly. Victor dislikes his appearance and manners.

23. What does Victor learn from M. Waldman? How does Victor respond to him? How does Victor think of his older science as opposed to modern science? What does M. Waldman say in describing modern chemistry that changes Victor's mind? What does Victor say he will now do?

Waldman teaches chemistry. Victor admires the man's sophisticated manners. Victor dislikes modern natural philosophy because the modern scientists are not seeking "immortality and power" (32). Waldman tells Victor that these modern scientists are looking into the mysteries of nature and acquiring almost "unlimited power" (33)

24. How well does Victor progress during the next two years? What does he then become interested in, and what ultimately does he discover?

Victor devotes his study only to natural philosophy and chemistry. He wants to create a human from dead body parts. He creates life and animates a corpse.

25. Will he share the knowledge of creating life with Walton? Why? (Note the "present" of the telling breaking through the narration here.)

Victor keeps his experiments a secret from everyone. When Victor interrupts the narration, he acknowledges Walton's eagerness to know the secret, but Victor says he will not reveal this to Walton.

26. How does he go about creating a human being, and what does he expect as a result of this creation? How long does the task take? What happens to Victor in the process?

Victor steals body parts from the charnel houses, dissection rooms and slaughterhouses. He spends a year. He becomes obsessed and does not eat or sleep. "The sun leaves his cheeks" (44)

27. Do you recognize the opening words of chapter five? Remember that Shelley gave them as the starting point of her story.

28. Given all the mad doctor and monster movies we've seen, including perhaps versions of Frankenstein, what is unexpected about the

description of the actual creation of life here? How much do we learn of the actual procedure?

In Shelley's novel, very little detail about Victor's methods is provided.

29. How does Victor respond to the actual creation of life? What surprises him about the way the creature he has brought to life looks? What does that do to Victor's response?

Victor wanted to create a beautiful man and is horrified by the creature's watery, yellow eyes, tight skin and black lips. Victor says his dream has vanished and his heart is filled with "disgust and horror" (42).

30. What does Victor dream? How does the dream grow out of, comment on, even explain what Victor has done and been through? He dreams he is embracing Elizabeth and she turns into the rotting corpse of his mother.

31. What does the creature do? How does Victor respond?

The creature reaches out his arms and smiles at Victor. Victor is horrified and runs away from his creation.

32. Whom does Victor meet arriving in a coach the next morning? How does Victor respond? What does Victor discover when they go to Victor's apartment? How does Victor respond? What happens to him and for how long? Is there any more news of the creature?

Victor sees Clerval. Victor is delighted and feels "for the first time during many months, calm and serene joy" (44). Victor is nervous that the monster is still in his apartment and that Clerval will see it. When he discovers the monster is gone, he cries out "Oh, save me!" then collapses. Clerval stays for many months to nurse Victor back to health.

Ch 6-8

33. What is waiting for Victor when he finally recovers? Who has nursed him during his illness?

A letter from Elizabeth is waiting for Victor. Clerval nursed Victor back to health.

34. Who is Justine Moritz and what is her story? What comments does Elizabeth make about her position in Swiss society? What religion is Justine?

Justine lived with an abusive mother before the Frankensteins took her into their house as a servant. After all her brothers and sisters died, her mother felt guilty and sought forgiveness, and then died. Elizabeth compliments the manners and morality of the Swiss peasants. She says they have none of the ignorance and lack of dignity of the English and French peasants. Justine is a Roman Catholic.

35. Who is William and how old is he? Have we heard of him before?

William is a five-year-old boy. He has not been mentioned before.

36. What does Victor do after his recovery? What is Clerval's "plan of life"?

Victor visits Krempe and Waldman. Clerval's plan of life is to study the Oriental languages. Victor begins to study this as well.

37. When does Victor finally plan to return home? What do he and Clerval do while waiting for his father's directions?

Victor plans to return to Geneva in the fall, but due to a sudden and harsh winter, he must delay his plans until the spring. He and Clerval spend two weeks hiking through the German countryside that spring before returning home.

38. What is waiting for Victor when he returns to his apartment? What news does his father have for him? And what is his father's name? How does Victor respond?

Victor's father, Alphonse, wrote a letter with news of William's death. William is Victor's younger brother. Victor decides to immediately return to Geneva.

39. How long has Victor been away from home? What happens the night he returns to Geneva? How does he respond?

Victor has been away for six years. There is a violent, yet beautiful storm, and Victor says it is nature's way of honoring William's death.

40. Whom does Victor see that night? When was the last time they saw each other? How long ago was that?

Victor sees the outline of the monster climbing to the top of Mont Saleve. Victor has not seen the monster in two years.

41. What does Victor now believe happened to William? What does Victor assume about the nature of the creature?

Victor believes the monster killed William. Victor believes the creature is a "depraved wretch" who delights in "carnage and misery."

42. Who has been identified as the murderer, and on what evidence? How does Victor respond to this news? Why doesn't he say anything about the real murderer?

Justine is identified as the murderer because the miniature portrait of Caroline Frankenstein was found in her pocket. Victor says he knows who the real murderer is and it is not Justine. He does not say anything though because he believes everyone will think he is insane.

43. What happens at Justine's trial? How does Victor respond?

Justine's defense is she was visiting an aunt and upon her return, heard of William being missing. She spent hours searching for him. The city gates were locked so she was forced to sleep in a barn. Could

the murderer have left the necklace in her pocket while she slept? Victor says nothing but becomes filled with despair and horror over his creation.

44. The next day, why does Justine say she has confessed to the murder of William? How does Victor respond to Justine's situation and to Elizabeth's anguish?

Justine confesses because her priest threatened to excommunicate her. Fearing this would damn her soul, she confesses a lie then feels even greater anguish over this sin. Victor retreated into the corner of the prison and does not speak out in Justine's defense.

Ch 9-12

45. How does Victor respond in the days after Justine's death? How have Elizabeth's views changed?

Unable to sleep, Victor retreats into solitude and shuns human company. Elizabeth sees evil in men. She says she never believed in capital punishment, but now she wants the true murderer to suffer for his crimes.

46. What journey does Victor undertake, and when? What places does he travel through? Where does he stay?

Victor journeys to the Swiss Alps. He leaves in August and first travels through the Arve Valley. He stays in the village of Chamounix.

47. Where does Victor go the next day? Where does he go the following day? P. B. Shelley mentions the glacier in a letter written at Chamouni (his spelling) on July 25, 1817:

He travels through the valley. Then, in the rain, on the following day, Victor decides to climb Montanvert.

48. How does he feel during this part of his journey? (Notice in this chapter that Frankenstein, in the late 1700s, is able to quote a poem written by P.B. Shelley in 1816.

Victor says he was “filled ... with a sublime ecstasy that gave wings to the soul and allowed it to soar from the obscure world to light and joy” (79).

49. Whom does Victor see? How does he respond?

Victor sees the creature running with amazing speed over the mountains. He is filled with horror and rage and ready to engage in “mortal combat.”

50. In this chapter, we finally hear the creature speak for the first time. What does he say? Is this what we expect from the creature?

The creature says he has suffered from loneliness. He says all men hate the wretched and he is hurt that his creator detests him. He says “do your duty towards me, and I will do mine to you and the rest of mankind” (81).

51. What does the creature ask of Victor? What does the creature say to Victor? Does his language remind you of another literary work? How good is Victor at performing the role of creator for his creature?

The monster says misery has made him a fiend. Victor despises his creation. The language resembles Milton’s Paradise Lost.

52. Why has the creature caused the deaths of William and Justine? Is he as inherently evil and bloodthirsty as Victor has assumed?

The creature says Victor is determined to annihilate him; therefore, as long as Victor intends to destroy the creature, he will destroy Victor’s happiness in return. The creature is not just a scientific experiment; he is emotional, sensitive and intelligent. He possesses a human dignity and intellect!

53. What will cause the creature to change? Keep in mind his statement "I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous". What sort of psychological understanding is Shelley showing here?

Compassion and love will change the creature. Shelley seems to say that humanity's goodness is a result of the compassion and duty towards others.

54. How good of an ironic sense of humor does the creature have? (See the "hand" bit)

Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel has this famous painting.



55. Does Victor agree to listen to the creature's tale? What does Victor begin to feel? Where do they go?

Victor agrees to listen because he feels the duty of the creator is to "render him happy" (83). They go to the creature's hut.

56. What does the creature remember of his earliest days? How does he seem to be learning things? How well can the creature speak at this point of his existence?

The creature's five senses were not separated and light greatly bothered him. He was filled with pain and misery at the knowledge that he was so desolate.

57. How does the creature respond to his discovery of the fire? Why does he move?

He discovers that fire provides warmth and light, but also pain. He moves because he must search for food.

58. What happens during his first encounters with people? Is this more like what you expect from a horror story? But from whose point of view do we see these encounters?

When he encounters people, they scream, run away, faint or try to harm him. These encounters are told through the monster's pov.

59. Where does he finally find a place to stay? What does he learn about the people who live in the cottage? How does he feel toward them?

He finds a small kennel next to a cottage. He learns of music for the first time, as well as words and language. He feels a mixture of pain and pleasure.

60. How does the creature continue to learn about the family he is watching? How might a modern anthropologist or sociologist respond to the creature's methods? What is the condition of the family? How does the creature manage to help them?

The creature studies their daily routines. The creature thinks they have all the luxuries of life, but then realizes they are very poor. The creature clears the snow from their walk and leaves supplies of wood for the family.

61. How does the creature learn language? Why might he have trouble learning words such as "good, dearest, unhappy"?

The creature learns the words for food and objects. Abstract nouns and some adjectives are difficult to understand because they usually refer to or modify a condition, not a person, place or thing.

62. What are the names of the family members? Who are Agatha and Felix?

The old man is not named. Agatha and Felix are brother and sister.

63. What things bother the creature when he thinks of discovering himself to the family? How does he respond to his own appearance when he sees it?

He fears the family will be horrified by him. He sees his reflection and notices how ugly he is compared to the beautiful humans.

64. The creature is still there when spring comes. What has been happening to Victor in the meantime? (See Chapter 5.)

Victor is sick and being nursed back to health by Henry Clerval.

65. How does the creature hope to win over the family? How does he respond to the coming of spring?

The creature wants to learn to speak. Spring fills him with joy and hope.

Ch 13-15

66. Who arrives at the cottage in the spring? What is Safie's background? How does her language problem help the creature? Which of them learns faster?

Safie is from Turkey. Her father was wrongly accused and thrown into prison. Felix falls in love with her and teaches her French. The monster observes the reading lessons and learns faster than Safie.

67. How does the creature learn about reading? What book does Felix use to teach Safie?

Felix teaches Safie how to read with Volney's Ruins of Empires.

68. What does the creature learn from this book? How much of a monster can someone be who can say "but when I heard details of vice and bloodshed, my wonder ceased, and I turned away with disgust and loathing"?

The creature learns about the history of civilization and all the wars man has waged on one another.

69. What happens when the creature begins to think about himself? How does he compare with the humans described in the book? What questions does he ask himself? How does his knowledge make him feel?

The creature realizes he is the only one in existence like himself, he is monstrously ugly and he is utterly alone. He asks "What am I?" and "Who am I?" He feels absolute misery.

70. What does he learn about human relationships, and how does this make him feel?

The monster learns about families and their love for one another. He longs for companionship and feels wretched.

71. How did the De Lacey family come to be living in the cottage?

The De Lacey family fled France after trying to help Safie's father escape

72. How did Safie come to find and join them?

She found letters intended for her father that included the directions to Felix.

73. What does the creature find in the woods?

Finds a suitcase and some books

74. What are the three books that the creature reads, and what does he learn from each?

Plutarch's Lives, Goethe's Sorrows of Werter, and Milton's Paradise Lost

He learns of man's cruel history of war, of man's melancholic nature and the noble thoughts of man in Paradise Lost

75. What else does the creature read and what does he learn from it?

Victor's notes and he learns who his creator is

76. How long has it been since the creature came to life? What is Victor doing at this point? (See chapter 6.)

Two years. Victor has been hiking and resting in Geneva

77. What does the creature hope will happen when he talks to De Lacey? What actually happens?

He hopes he will be befriended. They are horrified instead.

Ch 16-18

78. What happens to the De Lacey family after the events of chapter 15? How does the creature respond, and what does he do to the cottage?

The De Lacey's leave because they fear the monster will harm the old man. The creature burns down their cottage.

79. How does the creature travel? Does this remind you of any other people's travels?

The creature travels only at night. Vampires? Creatures? Runaway slaves?

80. What event during the creature's travels confirms his hatred of humans?

The creature tries to save a drowning girl and when the girl's companion sees the monster, the man shoots at the monster.

81. What event happens when the creature is near Geneva? Who is the boy? Who is the woman?

The creature encounters a small boy and wants to take the child and raise him not to hate the monster. The boy is William Frankenstein. The boy screams at the monster, and the monster kills him. The monster finds Justine sleeping in a barn and plants the necklace in her pocket.

82. When Victor visits the site of William's death in chapter 7, he says "I had turned loose into the world a depraved wretch, whose delight was in carnage and misery." After reading the creature's version of events, do you agree?

The creature frequently says he will leave all men alone once he has a companion.

83. What does the creature demand from Victor?

The creature demands a female mate.

84. How does Victor at first respond to the creature's demand? What response does he expect from the creature? What approach does the creature say he will take?

At first, Victor refuses, but through logical reasoning, the monster convinces Victor to create the female monster.

85. How effective is the creature in convincing Victor?

Very effective! Victor agrees.

86. What does the creature say will happen if Victor creates a female for him?

The monster agrees to live in the deserts of South America and have no further contact with humans.

87. What does Victor decide? What does the creature say he will do while Victor is at work?

Victor decides to build the female. The creature says he will monitor Victor.

88. How does Victor appear and respond to his family when he returns home?

Victor appears happy and healthy when he returns to Geneva.

89. Why does Victor's father think Victor might not want to marry Elizabeth?

Victor's father, Alphonse, believes Victor may have fallen out of love with Elizabeth over time.

90. Why does Victor want to visit England? What do you make of his talk of slavery?

Victor visits England because more advances in science have taken place in England. He says he is enslaved by his creation.

91. What is the effect of Victor's return to the present?

The break in the narrative brings the listener to the present and Victor foreshadows the death of Clerval.

Ch 19-21

92. What are Clerval's plans for his career?

Clerval wants to help with the progress of the English empire in India.

93. Where does Victor's journey end, and what does he plan to do there? Why is he afraid?

Victor's journey ends in Perth, Scotland, and the Orkney Islands. He is afraid the monster is angry that Victor is delaying on his promise.

94. Why does Victor change his mind about creating the female? Who watches him as he destroys the female?

Victor changes his mind because he does not want the female to breed other monsters. The creature sees Victor tear apart the body.

95. What happens shortly after Victor destroys the female? How is this similar to what happened after Victor created the Creature?

Victor falls into another sickness after he destroys the female.

96. What happens when the Creature visits Victor? What does the Creature promise to do? What does Victor understand that promise to mean?

The creature vows to “see him on his wedding night.” The monster vows to destroy Victor’s happiness. Victor interprets this to mean that the monster will kill him on his wedding night.

97. What happens when Victor goes out in a boat to dispose of the female creature's remains? Where does he end up? What happens when he lands?

He falls asleep in the boat. A strong wind blows the boat off course. He lands on the Irish shore and he is taken into custody as a murder suspect.

98. Who is Mr. Kirwin and how does he treat Victor? What has happened to cause Victor's arrest? What happens to Victor after his arrest? Mr. Kirwin is the magistrate. Clerval was found on the beach dead. Victor is in prison for two months. Victor becomes feverish. The magistrate finds papers and believes Victor is innocent.

99. What happens when Victor wakes up? Who is there? Victor wakes up, feeling better and the nurse is with him.

100. What happens at Victor's trial? Victor is found innocent because he was on the Orkney Island the same hour when the body was found.

**101. How does Victor feel as they leave Ireland and go to France?
Victor feels a truce has been established between him and the monster because of the death of Clerval.**

Ch 22-24

102. Why doesn't Victor get home quickly?

Victor must recuperate from another illness. Also, he desperately avoids human contact.

103. What does Elizabeth say in her letter? How does Victor respond to her?

She says she and Victor, as brother and sister, may not have an intimate love. She only cares for his happiness, and if Victor no longer loves her, they should not marry. She does say she truly loves Victor. Victor says he would die to make her happy, and if the monster kills him on his wedding night, so be it!

104. What are the marriage plans? How does Victor prepare for what he fears will happen?

Victor returns to Geneva. The marriage will take place in ten days. Victor fears the monster will kill him.

105. How do Victor and Elizabeth get to Evian and why do they stop there?

They sail to Evian to spend the night after their wedding. On the following day, they will continue to Villa Lavenza.

106. Has Victor understood the Creature's promise correctly? What happens on Victor's wedding night?

Victor believed the monster would kill him, not Elizabeth. The monster kills Elizabeth on their wedding night.

107. How does the Creature respond?

The monster jeers and points to Elizabeth's body from outside the window.

108. What happens when Victor returns to Geneva? What happens to Victor's father? What happens to Victor?

Victor returns to Geneva and shortly after, Alphonse dies of heart break. Victor falls into a sickness and madness which lasts for a few months.

109. What happens when Victor tries to get the authorities to help him hunt for the Creature?

The magistrate tells Victor to prepare for disappointment because the law can do very little to capture the creature.

110. What happens during Victor's pursuit of the Creature? Where to they go? What does the Creature do?

Victor sees the monster stow away on a ship bound for Russia. Victor follows the creature into the Arctic Circle with a dog sled.

111. What sustains Victor during his pursuit?

The creature leaves food for Victor to keep up his strength.

112. What does Victor ask Walton to do? What does he warn Walton about the Creature?

Victor asks Walton to destroy the creature. Victor warns Walton that the creature is eloquent and persuasive.

Walton's letter continues

113. Why wouldn't Victor tell Walton the details about the creation?

Victor tells Walton that he must never know the secret because it will destroy Walton's happiness.

114. How has Victor come to understand himself? How does Walton respond to Victor's impending death?

Victor says his passion for science has “chained him in an eternal hell.” Walton sees Victor as noble and lofty and regrets not knowing the younger, more powerful Victor.

1 15. How does Walton avoid the threat of a mutiny?

Walton agrees to turn the ship around once they are freed from the ice.

1 16. Why is Walton returning to England? What will Victor do?

Walton returns because the voyage is too dangerous and some of his crew has died. Victor swears to continue his pursuit of the monster.

1 17. Does Victor blame himself? What is Walton's response to Victor's death?

No! Victor says he is completely justified in his hatred for the monster. Walton cries over Victor's death and says his mind “is overshadowed by disappointment” in turning the ship around and admitting defeat.

1 18. What happens as Walton is writing? What is the effect of shifting to the present tense here?

The monster boards the ship and finds Victor's body. Suspense and terror are created by the appearance of monster.

1 19. When Walton sees the Creature in the cabin with Victor's body, what is familiar about the scene? Why has the Creature come to see Victor?

The roles are reversed. The creature stands above the lifeless body of Victor. The monster has come to ask for Victor's pardon or forgiveness.

1 20. How does the Creature explain what he has done? How does Walton respond to the Creature?

The creature says he at first found virtue appealing and hoped he would find someone to love him. However, his crimes have turned him into the lowest, most degraded of creatures. Walton is touched by the monster's explanation but remembers Victor's final words and calls the monster a hypocritical fiend.

121. What will the Creature do next? How does he feel about it?

The creature will take his own life. He says that no matter how wretched Victor may have felt and how much he suffered, none of it would equal the suffering of the creature. He cannot find acceptance from his creator, so he seeks solace in death.

122. Do we see the Creature die?

No. The monster floats away into the night on a block of ice.