

Frankenstein: Man or Monster

Literary Analysis Paper

Is Frankenstein a man, whose ambition led to a disaster; or a monster, which created a life with disregard for the human race? Frankenstein, in my opinion, was the monster not the life that he had created. Frankenstein never admitted to his family what he had done, never admitted responsibility for his actions. He might as well have killed Elizabeth, William, Justine, and Clerval with his own hand. The so called “Monster” only wanted companionship; he did not want to murder those people. The circumstances forced him to commit murder. Frankenstein was the instigator of those circumstances.

To me, Frankenstein and the monster are one and the same. While reading this book the thought that kept occurring to me was that Victor had multiple personality disorder. Although the book Frankenstein is a work of fiction, does it not suggest that Victor was the one committing these vile acts? The persona of the monster is just his conscience making it easier for Victor to dismiss the atrocious acts that he had committed. Shelley’s reference to “*My first thought was to discover what I knew of the murderer and cause instant pursuit to be made. But I paused when I reflected on the story I had to tell.*” (Frankenstein, Mary Shelley), showed that Victor had the knowledge that he was the reason William was dead. Frankenstein didn’t need to know about the murderer, because he was the murderer. *No Hero in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* cites “He is so self-centered that his lack of interaction and love for others after his experiment has been completed, would barely qualify him as a person, if the difference between being human and being a person lies in the ability to have relationships with others.” This

statement suggests to me that he created this other personality so that he didn't have to deal with his own shortcomings.

The word "Frankenstein" is defined in the dictionary (Encarta Dictionary) as "a creator of something that causes ruin or destruction, or brings about a personal downfall. Shelley definitely chooses the name well. Victor certainly created something that caused destruction, not only in his own life but in others lives as well. Justine took the fall for Victor, dying for his secret. Elizabeth died because Victor chooses not to create another monster. The monster did not necessarily want another monster-like companion, he just wanted acceptance. Victor brought about his own destruction. In *Finding Virtue in Frankenstein* the author states, "Never learning self-criticism, Victor believes that the Monster is an ill-fortuned mistake and not a reflection of his own character or misjudgment." Victor's own choices created the war he was in.

Victor's ability to deal with the real world was almost nonexistent. He had only one friend, Clerval. His choice for a wife was a person he called "cousin", but in fact was his adopted sister. Did Victor create this so-called "monster" to have a friend, the one thing the monster wished for? Victor denied his friendship to the monster, but why? The joy of creating life, the monster, overruled his judgment. He was denying the fact he had committed such a vile act upon humanity. "*A being whom myself had formed, and eluded with life, had met me at midnight among the precipices of an inaccessible mountain.*" (Frankenstein, Mary Shelley)

Victor may have admitted to creating the monster, but he denied that he had driven the monster to commit murder. He needed to admit, not only to himself, but to his family that he was the one responsible for William's murder. By not admitting this, he allowed his friend Clerval and his wife Elizabeth to be murdered as well. Justine was put to death in his place because he would

not take the blame for his actions. His determination that his secret not be discovered became his downfall. Victor was responsible for every action of his own and for the actions of the monster.

Frankenstein's monster only wanted to be accepted for what he was. Don't we all? The monster needed a friend. Someone he could talk to, someone to love him, and someone to love back. Does Shelley have the same need? Maybe her lack of friendship led to her writing a book about the loss of it. She certainly knows a lot about the lack of love and companionship that every human being needs. *"While his creator, Victor Frankenstein, shrouded himself in secrecy to avoid his fellow students, family and friends, the Monster drifted toward civilization to find comfort and fellow feeling. However much he wanted to have and to be a friend, community was unimaginable."*(*Finding Virtue in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*) Friendship was not possible. Unfortunately, the human race is very shallow. We tend to judge the appearances of others, rather than getting to know the person inside. A person's appearance is only the shell in which they live, it never reflects the person they are. Frankenstein's monster wanted a friend, not judgment.

Was Frankenstein mentally unstable? I don't believe that he was. *"I remembered also the nervous fever with which I had been seized just at the time that I dated my creation, and which would give an air of delirium to a tale otherwise so utterly improbable."*(Frankenstein, Mary Shelley) Frankenstein's "nervous fever" is his own conscience realizing what he had done. He created a monster! His excitement resulted from the total lack of responsibility that he took in making this monster. If he can understand that he had created the mess he was in, then he was not mentally unstable. Victor's "delirium" was caused by being worried that someone would discover his secret. How could anyone discover his secret? He had told no one of the monster

he had created. He stole body parts from cemeteries and mausoleums. The dead don't care if they are stolen from. Victor's mental instability only stemmed from his own guilt.

"In his dying moments Frankenstein wishes death upon his creature." (No Hero in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein) In the end, Frankenstein didn't care whether he lived or died. Victor wants the war to end. He has lost every battle he and the monster have fought. I only think that he wishes death upon the monster so that the murders will stop. Even in the end Frankenstein was selfish. He wanted Walton to finish his quest. He did not want anything to stand in the way of science. Had he learned nothing? At least Walton had learned that maybe people should take responsibility for their actions. Walton did let the crew turn the boat around and not face the inevitable, death. *"Just as he had sentenced his creature to a life of loneliness, void of love, so may he sentence himself to a lonely death" (No Hero in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein)*

Frankenstein made his bed, and now he's lying in it. In the end, Frankenstein died while the monster survived.

So in the end, Frankenstein lost everything. Frankenstein led himself down the path of destruction. He lost his friend, wife, and brother. He was loved by no one. All those whom he had cared about were dead. His experiment had turned him into a shell of hatred and despair. His focus on his creation, led him to a black hole, from which there was no escape. Frankenstein's ambition did lead to disaster, but he was also the monster with no regard for human life.

Now that Frankenstein was in the afterlife, the monster could now end his own life. His quest was over. He had won the revenge that he sought. He only waited for his creator to die. He choose to end his miserable existence, rather than face life alone and lonely. He was

right to blame Frankenstein for his failures; his appearance, the way society accepted him, his need for companionship. The monster was the reflection of the man that the world couldn't see.

References

Shelley, Mary. Frankenstein (1818). pg.64, 212-213

123HelpMe.com *No Hero in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*

123HelpMe.com *Finding Virtue in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*

Encarta Dictionary: English (North America)