

Investigate!

Frankenstein: Volume I

❖ Letters 1-4:

- Think about the structure of the novel
 - why do you think Shelley chooses to frame Victor Frankenstein's narrative with letters from Captain Walton? (See also Structure and Narrative).
- Consider what the reader learns about Walton from his letters
 - why, in Letter 2, does he tell the story of his lieutenant's unhappy love affair?
 - how does he respond to Frankenstein after he takes him on board?

❖ Chapter 1:

Think about Victor's childhood companionship with Elizabeth and Henry and his early scientific reading:

- on what kind of reading do they base their games?
- what aspects of science most excite Victor?
- in what ways do these details prepare us for the way in which the plot of the novel will develop?

❖ Chapter 2:

Victor's two principal teachers in Ingoldstadt are Professors Krempe and Waldman

- How do they differ in their scientific outlook?
- What effect does this have on Frankenstein's development as a scientist?

❖ Chapter 3:

This is the chapter in which Frankenstein begins to plan to create a being

- What kinds of issues does his plan involve from a scientific point of view?
- What moral and religious issues arise from his plan?

❖ Chapter 4:

- This is the chapter in which Frankenstein brings his creation to life

- What is the effect of Mary Shelley's vagueness about this process?
- What is the purpose of reintroducing Henry Clerval into the story at this point?

❖ Chapter 5:

- Most of this chapter is taken up with Elizabeth's letter
 - Why might Mary Shelley have wished to bring Elizabeth back into the narrative at this point?
 - What kind of changes has Victor undergone by the end of the chapter?

❖ Chapter 6:

This chapter could have the title 'The Creature returns'

- What is the effect on Frankenstein of the reappearance of his creation?
- What is the significance of the fact that the theft of a miniature of Victor's mother appears to be the motive for the murder?
- Why do you think the creature deliberately implicates Justine in the murder of William?
- A tremendous storm takes place in this chapter. Make a note of other instances where Mary Shelley uses weather conditions in a dramatic way.

❖ Chapter 7:

Think about Frankenstein's behaviour in this chapter

- What might be the moral implications of his reluctance to tell anyone, including Elizabeth and Justine, about his suspicions about the real murderer?
- Why do you think Mary Shelley uses the quotation 'In an evil hour' from *Paradise Lost* in relation to Justine's false confession? What does this suggest about Frankenstein's situation?