Climax: 
writes a letter to his sister, 

Antagonist: 

Setting: 

Mary Wollstonecraft was the daughter of the philosopher William Godwin and the writer Mary Wollstonecraft, who wrote "Vindication of the Rights of Woman" (1792). Shelley’s mother died in childbirth and she was raised by her father. At age 18 Shelley ran off with Percy Bysshe Shelley, a leading British Romantic poet, who she married in 1816. The couple had a son, but after her husband died in a shipwreck in 1822, Mary Shelley fell into poverty. She continued to write fiction to support herself. *Frankenstein* (1818) was her first and by far her most successful work of fiction.

**Historical and Literary Context**

*Frankenstein* was the first novel to be published under the female笔名 Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, written in 1818 by the young woman aged 20. It is the story of a young Swiss scientist, Victor Frankenstein, who creates a human being from parts of dead bodies and then becomes the monster’s creator. The novel also tells the story of the monster’s creation and its subsequent search for a mate. The novel is set in the English countryside in the late 18th century, and the story is told in the form of a letter from the protagonist to his sister, the narrator. The novel is a cautionary tale about the dangers of hubris and the power of human knowledge.

**Key Facts**

- **Full Title:** *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus*
- **Genre:** Gothic novel
- **Setting:** Switzerland, France, England, Scotland, and the North Pole in the 18th century
- **Climax:** The Monster’s murder of Elizabeth Lavenza on her wedding night to Victor
- **Protagonist:** Victor Frankenstein
- **Antagonist:** The Monster
- **Point of View:** Frankensteins is told through a few layers of first person narratives. Walton is the primary narrator, who then recounts Victor’s first-person narrative. In addition, Victor’s narrative contains the monster’s first person story as well as letters from other characters.

**Plot Summary**

Robert Walton, the captain of a ship bound for the North Pole, writes a letter to his sister, Margaret Saville, in which he says that his crew members recently discovered a man adrift at sea. The man, Victor Frankenstein, offered to tell Walton his story. Frankenstein has a perfect childhood in Switzerland, with a friend, who soon becomes Victor’s closest friend, and speak so well.) The monster blames his rage on humanity’s inability to perceive his inner goodness and his resulting total inhumanity. (The monster also explains how he learned to read and write, and how he managed to find a way to speak. He explains that he was able to read and write by using gestures, and that he learned how to speak by observing people.) The monster’s story is a warning about the dangers of science and the consequences of playing God.

**Characters**

**Victor Frankenstein** – The eldest son in the Frankenstein family, the eventual husband of Elizabeth Lavenza, and the novel’s protagonist and narrator of most of the story (he tells his story to Robert Walton, who relates it to the reader). From childhood, Victor has a thirst for knowledge and powerful ambitions. These two traits lead him to study biology at university and then become a scientist. But Frankenstein is also prejudiced, and cannot stand his creation’s ugliness. He thinks it a monstrous creature, though in fact it’s kind and loving. Victor’s abandonment of his “monster” creates a cycle of guilt, anger, and destruction, in which first the monster takes vengeance upon Victor, and then Victor swears vengeance on the monster. In the end, Victor believes the monster hates him far more than he would care to imagine.

**The Monster** – The hideous-looking creature that Victor Frankenstein creates (though the name “Frankenstein” has become associated with the monster, the monster is, in fact, nameless). Though the monster is originally kind and sensitive and wants nothing more than to be loved and accepted, it is surrounded by people who judge it as evil because of its terrible appearance. The monster is isolated and demonized by human society, and soon becomes embittered and enraged at its treatment. Eventually, the monster becomes a killer, not from a criminal thirst to hurt, but from a desire for revenge against Victor and all of humanity for rejecting him.

**Robert Walton** – An explorer who rescues Victor from the ice, hears his harrowing story, and sets down his paper in letters to his sister, Margaret Saville. Walton’s quest for knowledge in the North Pole parallels Victor’s search for education and enlightenment at Ingolstadt. Because he parallels Victor in this way, Robert Walton is a “double” of Victor, whose actions, by mirroring or contrasting Victor’s own, serve to highlight Victor’s character and various themes in *Frankenstein*.

**Historical and Literary Context**

- **When Published:** 1818
- **Literary Period:** Switzerland and London, England: 1816–1817
- **Related Literary Works:** The Gothic novel flourished in English literature from the publication of Horace Walpole’s *The Castle of Otranto*, which established the genre in 1764, until about 1820. Gothic novels emphasized mystery and horror, and almost always contained dark forests, castles, the supernatural, trap doors, secret rooms, and other similar elements now familiar from “horror” movies. Yet while *Frankenstein* is one of the most famous novels in the Gothic genre, it was written at a time when the Gothic novel was slowly giving way to the literary movement of Romanticism, and the novel shares the Romantic emphasis on the “sublime” power of nature. In writing *Frankenstein*, Shelley also drew heavily on John Milton’s seventeenth century *Paradise Lost*, an epic poem that traces humankind’s fall from grace. The epigraph of *Frankenstein* is a quotation from *Paradise Lost*, in which Adam curses God for creating him, just as the monster curses Victor Frankenstein, his creator.

**Related Historical Events:** Most critics consider the Gothic genre a reaction to the “Age of Reason,” a movement in 18th-century British and European art and politics that stressed the power of the human mind above all. Empowered by an unchecked faith in humanity, people set out to reshape society: The American and French Revolutions erupted, and the Industrial Revolution forced people into long grueling days in factories. The Gothic novelists aimed to represent the dark side that accompanied this age of apparent human progress. At a time when writers and thinkers had begun to believe in the “infinite perfectability of man,” Gothic novelists portrayed human beings as woefully imperfect and at the mercy of far more powerful forces, such as nature and death.

**Extra Credit**

- A ghost story. On a stormy night in June of 1816, Mary Shelley, her husband, and a few other companions, including the Romantic poet Lord Byron, decided to try to write their own ghost stories, but Shelley couldn’t come up with any ideas. A few nights later, she had a dream in which she envisioned “the pale student of unhallowed arts” kneeling beside his creation—the monster. She began writing the story that became *Frankenstein* the next morning.

- The Tale of Two Frankensteins. Shelley published the first edition of *Frankenstein* anonymously, perhaps due to her concern that such a grim and violent tale would not be well received by her audience if they knew her gender. She revised the novel and published it under her real name in 1831. Some key differences exist between the editions, namely that in the first edition, Elizabeth is Alphonse’s niece, and therefore, Victor’s cousin. (In the 1831 edition, the more popular version and the one used in this Outline, the Frankensteins adopt Elizabeth from another family).
Elizabeth Lavenza – Victor’s sister by adoption, and later his wife. Elizabeth is a stunningly beautiful and remarkably pure girl whom Victor’s mother adopts. All the Frankenstein’s adore Elizabeth, and Victor, about four years her elder, quickly begins to “protect, love, and cherish” her. Eventually Victor and Elizabeth marry. Through all of it, Elizabeth remains gorgeous, pure, and passive. NOTE: In the first edition (1818) of Frankenstein, Elizabeth is Alphonse’s niece and, therefore, Victor’s cousin. In the revised 1831 edition, the Frankenstein’s adopt Elizabeth, as described above.

Henry Clerval – Victor’s dear friend from childhood. Victor describes Clerval as having a vast imagination, a sensitive heart, and boundless love of nature. Clerval serves as Victor’s guiding light throughout Frankenstein, selflessly helping Victor but never prodding him to reveal his secrets. Clerval’s optimism also stands in contrast to Victor’s gloominess.

Alphonse Frankenstein – Victor’s father. A devoted husband and parent, and a well-respected public magistrate. Alphonse is a loving father to Victor, and a man who believes in family and society.

Justine Moritz – A young woman who the Frankenstein’s adopt at the age of 12. She is convicted of the murder of William Frankenstein on circumstantial evidence and executed.

Themes

In LitCharts, each theme gets its own corresponding color, which you can use to track where the themes occur in the work. There are two ways to track themes:

• Refer to the color-coded bars next to each plot point throughout the Summary and Analysis sections.

• Use the ThemeTracker section to get a quick overview of where the themes appear throughout the entire work.

Family, Society, Isolation

In its preface, Frankenstein claims to be a novel that gives a flattering depiction of “domestic affection.” That seems a strange claim in a novel full of murder, tragedy, and despair. But, in fact, all that, tragedy, murder, and despair occur because of a lack of connection to either family or society. Put another way, the true evil in Frankenstein is not Victor or the monster, but isolation. When Victor becomes lost in his studies he removes himself from human society, and therefore loses sight of his responsibilities and the consequences of his actions. The monster turns vengeful not because it’s evil, but because its isolation fills it with overwhelming hate and anger. And what is the monster’s vengeance? To make Victor as isolated as it. Add it all up, and it becomes clear that Frankenstein sees isolation from family and society as the worst imaginable fate, and the cause of hatred, violence, and revenge.

Ambition and Fallibility

Through Victor and Walton, Frankenstein portrays human beings as deeply ambitious, and yet also deeply flawed. Both Victor and Walton dream of transforming society and bringing glory to themselves through their scientific achievements. Yet their ambitions also make them fallible. Blinded by dreams of glory, they fail to consider the consequences of their actions. So while Victor turns himself into a god, a creator, by bringing his monster to life, this only highlights his fallibility when he is completely incapable of fulfilling the responsibilities that a creator has to its creation. Victor thinks he will be like a god, but ends up the father of a devil. Walton, at least, turns back from his quest to the North Pole before getting himself and his crew killed, but he does so with the angry conclusion that he has been robbed of glory. Neither Victor nor Walton ever escapes from their blinding ambitions, suggesting that all men, and particularly those who seek to raise themselves up in glory above the rest of society, are in fact rash and “unfashioned creatures” with “weak and faulty natures.”

Revenge

The monster begins its life with a warm, open heart. But after it is abandoned and mistreated first by Victor and then by the De Lacey family, the monster turns to revenge. The monster’s actions are understandable. It has been hurt by the unfair rejection of a humanity that cannot see past its own prejudices, and in turn wants to hurt those who hurt it. As the monster says when Felix attacks it and flees with the rest of the De Lacey family, “...feelings of revenge and hatred filled my bosom...[and] bent my mind towards injury and death.” But in taking revenge, two things happen to the monster. First, it enures that it will never be accepted in human society. Second, because by taking revenge the monster eliminates any hope of ever joining human society, which is what it really wants, revenge becomes the only thing it has. As the monster puts it, revenge became “dearer than light or food.”

Felix – The son of De Lacey and brother of Agatha. Felix falls in love with Safie and marries her in exchange for helping her father escape from prison. When the monster enters his family’s cottage in Germany, Felix pelts it with rocks and chases it away.

Agatha – De Lacey’s daughter. She represents an ideal of womanliness: kind, gentle, and devoted to her family.

Safie – The young Turkish “Arabian” whose beauty captivates Felix. Though raised as a Muslim, she longs for a freer and happier life with Felix, a Christian.

Margaret Saville – Robert Walton’s sister and the recipient of his letters, which frame the novel.

M. Waldman – Victor’s chemistry professor at Ingolstadt. He supports Victor’s pursuit of “natural philosophy,” especially chemistry, and becomes a mentor to Victor.

M. Krempe – Victor’s professor of natural philosophy at Ingolstadt. A short squat conceited man, Krempe calls Victor’s studies “nonsense.”

Mr. Kirwin – An Irish magistrate.

Symbols

Symbols are shown in red text whenever they appear in the Plot Summary and Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

Light

Light symbolizes enlightenment in Frankenstein. Walton expects to find the secrets of the universe unveiled in the North Pole, which he describes as “a country of eternal light.” Light also accompanies nearly all of Victor’s epiphanies. When he first discovers natural philosophy, he says, “A new light seemed to dawn upon my mind.” When he discovers the secret to creating life, he describes his feelings as if “a sudden light broke in upon me.” He envisions pouring “a torrent of light into our dark world” through the creation of a new species. Yet light that’s too bright is also blinding, and both Victor and Walton fail to see or consider the dangerous consequences of their quests for enlightenment.
Summary and Analysis

Frankenstein begins with a series of four letters from Robert Walton to his sister, Margaret Saville. The first letter is written on December 11 from St. Petersburg, Russia, sometime in the eighteenth century. Walton is about to set out on a journey at sea to reach the North Pole, which he considers a region of warmth, "eternal light," and unparalleled beauty.

Walton's purpose in venturing to the North Pole is twofold: to discover a northern passage to the countries on the other side of the world; and to determine the origin of the North Pole's magnetism. Walton says he once hoped to become a famous poet, but failed. Yet he has kept his childhood dream of reaching the North Pole. He adds that he could have lived his life in wealth and ease, but did not. For this reason, he feels that he deserves to "accomplish some great purpose."

Walton plans to rent a ship, hire a crew, and depart from northern Russia in June, unsure of when or if he will ever return.

In the second letter on March 28th of the following year, from Archangel, Russia, Walton describes himself as lonely. He worries that his refined upbringing has made him too sensitive for the "brutality of life at sea."

Walton writes that his resolution to carry out his journey is "fixed as fate." He confesses his "romantic love for the marvellous" and his passion for poetry while he longed to unravel the "physical mystery (and poets like Coleridge) established his innocence (and poets like Coleridge) on Shelley's work. Yet the fact that he will take down the stranger's story in a narrative. His "notes" frame Frankenstein's main narrative, which begins in Chapter 1.

The stranger, Victor Frankenstein, says he was born in Naples and grew up in Geneva, Switzerland. His father, Alphonse, and his mother, Caroline, first became close when Alphonse's friend and Caroline's father, Beaufort, died. Alphonse became Caroline's protector, and eventually married her.

When he was five, his mother discovered a beautiful blond orphan girl named Elizabeth Lavenza in an Italian village and adopted her.

Victor, his parents, and all the Frankensteins adored Elizabeth. She became to him a "more than sister." The two children referred to each other as cousins, rather than brother and sister.

Victor sees himself as a man of "experience" instructing another, "innocent" man. He clearly has something to say on the subject of ambition.

Shelley portrays Walton as a stubborn innocent fool. He chooses to ignore Victor's warnings and, believing himself to have achieved his ambition, trusts "fate" instead.

Victor's childhood is innocent and perfect. His family life is perfect domestic bliss.

In the 1818 edition of Frankenstein, Elizabeth is Alphonse's niece (and Victor's cousin).

More domestic affection, and the relationship between Victor and Elizabeth hints at future romantic love.
Chapter 3

Just before Victor turns seventeen, Elizabeth catches scarlet fever and passes it on to her mother, who dies. Her dying wish is for Victor and Elizabeth to marry. Still in grief, Victor says goodbye to his mother, whose lecture on the power and recent successes of science inspire Victor to dedicate himself to revealing the “world the deepest mysteries of creation.”

Chapter 4

Victor becomes so caught up in natural philosophy that he ignores everything else, including his family. He progresses rapidly, and suddenly after two years of study he discovers the secret to creating life.

Chapter 5

After months of effort, Victor is successful in bringing his creature to life. Yet once alive, the creature’s appearance horrifies him.

Chapter 6

In her letter, Elizabeth updates Victor on his brothers, and says that Justine Moritz, a former servant of the Frankensteins, has come to live with them after the death of her mother.

Chapter 7

On returning from the tour, Victor receives a letter from his father saying that his youngest brother, William, has been murdered. Shocked and upset, Victor and Clerval rush to Geneva. But the town gate is locked when they arrive. Victor visits the spot where his brother died. On the way he sees lightning playing over the peaks of the mountain Mont Blanc.

Chapter 8

Victor wishes he could confess in Justine’s place, but his absence at the time of the murder would make his confession sound like nonsense.

Chapter 9

Victor despairing that his good intentions have resulted in such horror. Soon the Frankensteins go to their vacation home in Belrive to escape the bad memories of what’s happened. Yet Victor still has thoughts of suicide and begins to desire revenge against the monster.

The Frankenstein family continues to be blissful and innocent.
Chapter 10

At Chamonix, Victor continues to feel despair. He again tries to escape it through nature: he climbs to the peak of a mountain called Montanvert. But just as the view begins to lift his spirits, Victor sees the monster. He curses it and wishes for its destruction.

But with great eloquence the monster claims to be Victor’s offspring. “I ought to be thy Adam,” it says.

The monster continues that it was once benevolent, and turned to violence only after Victor, its creator, abandoned it. It begins to listen to its story. Victor, for the first time thinking about his responsibilities as a creator, follows the monster to a cave in the glacier, and sits down to listen.

Chapter 11

The monster describes its early days after being created: running from Victor’s apartment, seeing light and dark and feeling hunger and cold, and discovering fire and its ability to both cook and burn.

Wherever the monster goes it’s appearance terrifies humans, so it decides to avoid them. Eventually it finds a place to hide in the darkness near the side of a cottage. Inside he observes a man, woman, and an old man and watches them at their daily tasks.

Chapter 12

The monster wonders why the family seems unhappy and realizes it is because the old man is blind and the family is poor and hungry. To make up for adding to their misery by eating their food, it gathers wood for them, and realizes it is because the old man is blind and the family is poor and hungry. To make up for adding to their misery by eating their food, it gathers wood for them. The family is poor and hungry. To make up for adding to their misery by eating their food, it gathers wood for them. The family is poor and hungry.

One day the monster sees itself in a pool of water. He realizes finally why people have screamed and run when they see him. Yet the monster becomes convinced that with gentle words and actions he could get the family to see past his awful appearance. Spring comes, lifting everyone’s spirits. The monster looks to the future with hope.

Chapter 13

When a dark and beautiful “Arabian” woman named Safie arrives at the cottage, the family’s mood, and Felix’s in particular, brightens. Safie does not speak the family’s language, and Felix teaches her from a history book. As she learns, so does the monster, which is disgusted that a race as noble as mankind is also capable of such evil.

As he learns about society and humans, the monster realizes that it has no society of its own. It is a monster, doomed to be always without family or people. It wishes it had never gotten this knowledge about society, which makes it so miserable.

Chapter 14

The monster figures out the history of the family, the De Lacey’s. Once prominent and well respected, Felix fell in love with Safie and helped her father, a man wrongly accused of a crime, escape from prison. Felix’s role in the escape was discovered, and the family lost its wealth and was exiled by the government. When Safie’s father tried to force her to return to Turkey, she escaped, not wanting to be constrained by Islam’s oppressive stance on women, and came to find Felix.

Chapter 15

The monster next tells how it found three books in the woods, including John Milton’s Paradise Lost (an epic poem about humankind’s loss of innocence in the Garden of Eden). The monster at times sees itself as similar to Adam. Yet at others he sees himself as more like Satan, because he does not have the love of his creator.

The monster adds that when it fled from Victor’s apartment it accidentally journal entries, which turned out to describe its creation. It curses Victor for having created something so ugly.

Chapter 16

The family’s rejection plunges the monster into a fit of rage. But the beauty of the next day calms him. He decides to approach De Lacey again to try to make amends.

But by the time the monster reaches the cottage, the De Lacey’s have moved out. He sees Felix terminating his lease with the landlord, and never sees any of them again. His last link with society, his creator, the monster is left with only pain, its inclusion in society dashed. He burns down the cottage and heads for Geneva and Victor.

At one point along the way the monster saves a beautiful little girl from drowning in a stream, only to be shot by her guardian. His suffering only feeds his desire for revenge.

After a few weeks, the monster makes it to Geneva. There he encounters a young boy. Thinking the boy would be too young to be horrified by his appearance, the monster approaches him. But the boy is terrified, and shouts that his father, Frankenstein, will kill the monster. The monster silences the boy by strangling him. The boy dies.

The monster then finds a barn in which to spend the night, but finds a beautiful sleeping girl inside. Enraged that he is forever cut off from the delight of female beauty, the monster places a picture the boy’s boy and plants it in the girl’s pocket.

The monster’s faith in old De Lacey shows its last gasp of innocence, saving it from the rage born of rejection.

Its innocence and hopes of inclusion in society dashed, the monster is left with only pain, and naturally wants to hurt those who hurt him. That includes human society (symbolized in the house he burns) and its creator, Victor.

Another example of humanity’s tendency toward prejudice, which only increases the monster’s desire for revenge.

The monster adds that when it fled from Victor’s apartment it accidentally journal entries, which turned out to describe its creation. It curses Victor for having created something so ugly. The monster’s faith in old De Lacey shows its last gasp of innocence, saving it from the rage born of rejection.

The monster creates a female unlike any other being on earth, dooming it to isolation.

The first and only kindness the monster receives comes from a blind man incapable of prejudice. The rest of the family, like the rest of humanity, responds to the monster cruelly, based on looks alone.
Chapter 17

The narrative returns to Victor’s voice. Fearing that two monsters will just cause more murder and destruction, Victor refuses to agree to the monster’s demand to create a female.

The monster argues that its violence stems from its misery, and that Victor, as its creator, is responsible for that misery. The monster adds that if Victor creates a companion for it, the pair will flee to South America and avoid human contact forever. Victor feels compassion at the monster’s words, but feels hatred whenever he looks at it. Still, he agrees to the bargain. The monster tells him it will monitor his progress, and departs.

When Victor lands a group of angry townspersons gathers around his boat. He’s a suspect in a murder that occurred the previous night, and sent to meet with Mr. Kirwin, a local magistrate.

Chapter 18

Almost immediately, Victor begins to question the wisdom of creating a companion for the monster and delays. He also realizes that to complete the project he’ll have to do some research in England.

Alphonse senses Victor’s distress, and thinks it might stem from some reluctance on Victor’s part to marry Elizabeth. Victor assures his father he’d like nothing more than to marry Elizabeth. Alphonse suggests they marry immediately as a cure for the family’s recent sorrow. But Victor does not want to marry with his bargain with the monster hanging over his head, and uses the trip he has to take to England as an excuse to put the wedding off.

Alphonse and Victor agree that he will go to England for a time not to exceed a year, and that Clerval, looking to pursue his studies after having to spend some time working for his father, will accompany him. Yet Victor continues to feel like a “wretch.”

Chapter 19

Victor and Clerval arrive in London in October. Victor continues to despair, avoiding people unless they have information that can help him create a second monster. Clerval, in contrast, is how Victor used to be: excited by learning and wanting to meet and talk to everyone.

Victor and Clerval travel to Scotland. There, Victor leaves Clerval with a friend and travels on alone. He goes to a remote island in the Orkney’s, sets up a lab, and works in solitude on his secret project.

Once again Victor isolates himself from society. Whenever he does this, he makes bad, reckless decisions that cause disaster.

Chapter 20

One night in his lab, Victor worries that the new creature he’s creating might refuse to live away from humans, or that the two monsters might produce a “race of devils.” Just then he looks up and sees the monster “grinning” at the window. Overwhelmed by loathing, Victor destroys his work. Outside, the monster howls in agony, and disappears.

Hours later, the monster returns to Victor’s lab. It now refers to Victor only as “Man” and vows revenge. It promises: “I shall be with you on your wedding night.” Victor thinks the monster means to kill him on that night, and fears for Elizabeth left alone as a widow.

A letter soon arrives from Clerval suggesting they resume their travels. Victor gathers up his laboratory materials and rows out into the ocean to dump them. Victor is so happy he takes a nap in his boat. But he wakes into rough weather and can’t get back to shore. Just as he begins to panic, the winds ease.

Chapter 21

The monster’s point was that it became vengeful only because of human prejudice and abandonment. But Victor is still prejudiced.

The monster’s argument wins Victor over intellectually, and Victor is forced to recognize that he failed the monster in a terrible way. And yet, at the same time, Victor cannot completely overcome his prejudice.

At Mr. Kirwin’s office, Victor learns that a man in his mid-twenties was found dead on the shore with black marks on his neck. And various witnesses testify that a boat much like Victor’s was seen at sea. Victor is taken to see the body. It is Clerval. Victor falls into convulsions, and remains bedridden and delusional for two months.

When Victor regains awareness he is still in prison. Mr. Kirwin treats him kindly, advising him that he’ll likely be free. He also tells Victor that his father has come to see him.

Two weeks later Victor is released because the court has nothing but circumstantial evidence against him. Despairing and determined to protect his family from the monster, Victor returns with his father to Geneva.

Chapter 22

En route to Geneva, they stop in Paris so Victor can regain his strength. His father tries to help by getting him to engage with society, but Victor feels he has no right to. Victor even tells his father he murdered Justine, William, and Clerval. His father considers this deranged, and Victor says no more.

While in Paris, Victor receives a letter from Elizabeth. She expresses her desire to marry Victor, but worries he may have taken another lover during his long absence. Victor remembers the monster’s vow to be with him on his wedding night, and decides that whether he kills it or it kills him, at least he will be free. He writes back that he wants to marry immediately, but adds that he has a terrible secret he will tell her the day after they are married.

A week later Victor and his father arrive in Geneva. The wedding takes place ten days later. Yet as Victor and Elizabeth sail to a cottage by Lake Como in Italy for their honeymoon, Victor’s fear of facing the monster dissolves his happiness. Elizabeth tries to cheer him by pointing out the beauty in nature. It doesn’t work.

Chapter 23

A storm rolls in after they arrive at the cottage. Victor, armed with a pistol and terrified that the monster will attack at any moment, sends Elizabeth to bed for her own safety. But as he searches the house, he hears a scream. Elizabeth has been murdered. While huddled over her lifeless body, Victor sees the monster at the window. He fires at it, but misses.

Victor rushes back to Geneva. The news of Elizabeth’s death overwhelms his father, who dies a few days later.

Victor assumed the monster would attack him, not realizing that the monster wanted revenge by subjecting him to the same horror to which he subjected it: isolation. This mistake resulted in Elizabeth’s death.

Now the monster’s revenge is complete. Victor is alone (besides Ernest).

Finally, Victor tells his secret. But it’s too late. Now he faces the same predicament as the monster: rejected by humankind, he must seek revenge on his own.
Chapter 24

Victor decides to leave Geneva forever. While visiting the graves of his family he swears revenge, and hears the monster’s voice calling him a “miserable wretch.”

For months, Victor tracks the monster northward into the frigid Arctic regions, led by clues and tautening notes the monster leaves behind. Victor chases the monster onto the frozen ocean with sleds and dogs, and comes within a mile of the monster’s own sled, but then the ice breaks up beneath Victor’s sled.

This is the point at which Walton’s ship rescued him. The narrative comes to the present. Victor, knowing he’s dying, begs Walton to take vengeance on the monster if he should happen to see it.

 Walton, in continuation

The novel returns to the frame of Walton’s letters to his sister, Margaret Saville. In a letter on August 26, Walton says that he believes Victor’s story and recalls how Victor described himself as the victim of “lofty ambition,” which brought him to despair. Walton laments that he did not know Victor when they could have been friends. As Walton writes, “I have sought one who would sympathize with and love me.” Yet while Victor responded kindly to his offers of friendship, he remained fixated on his only remaining destiny: to destroy the monster.

Important Quotes

Letter 2 Quotes

I have no friend, Margaret: when I am glowing with the enthusiasm of success, there will be none to share my joy, if I am assailed by disappointment, no one will endeavour to sustain me in dejection. — Walton

Letter 4 Quotes

You seek for knowledge and wisdom, as I once did; and ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you, as mine has been. — Victor

Chapter 7 Quotes

[A] flash of lightning illuminated the object and discovered its shape plainly to me; its gigantic stature, and the deformity of its aspect, more hideous than belongs to humanity, instantly informed me that it was the wretch, the filthy demon to whom I had given life. — Victor

Chapter 10 Quotes

All men hate the wretched; how then, must I be hated, who am miserable beyond all living things? Yet you, my creator, detest and spurn me, thy creature, to whom thou art bound by ties only dissoluble by the annihilation of one of us. — the Monster

Chapter 13 Quotes

When I looked around I saw and heard of none like me. Was I, a monster, a blot upon the earth from which all men fled and whom all men disowned? — the Monster

Chapter 16 Quotes

I am alone and miserable: man will not associate with me; but one as deformed and horrible as myself would not deny herself to me. My companion must be of the same species and have the same defects. This being you must create. — the Monster

Chapter 20 Quotes

You can blast my other passions, but one remains — revenge, henceforth dearer than life itself! — the Monster

Chapter 22 Quotes

If for one instant I had thought what might be the hellish intention of my fiendish adversary, I would rather have banished myself forever from the world than to have consented to this frightful outcast over the earth than have consented to this miserable marriage. But, as if possessed of magic powers, the monster had blinded me to his real intentions; and when I thought that I had prepared only my own death, I hastened that of a far dearer victim. — Victor

Chapter 24 Quotes

Seek happiness in tranquillity and avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries. — Victor

Was there no injustice in this? Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all human kind sinned against me? — the Monster
The LitCharts ThemeTracker is a mini-version of the entire LitChart. The ThemeTracker provides a quick timeline-style rundown of all the important plot points and allows you to track the themes throughout the work at a glance.

### Themes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Description</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Preface</strong></td>
<td>Explanation of the novel’s origin as a ghost story.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter 1</strong></td>
<td>Walton writes to his sister of his plans to journey to the North Pole on a mission of exploration and scientific discovery. He feels that he deserves to “accomplish some great purpose.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter 2</strong></td>
<td>Walton is lonely, yet he remains resolute about trying to reach the North Pole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter 3</strong></td>
<td>The voyage is going well. Walton writes: “What can stop the determined heart and resolved will of man?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letter 4</strong></td>
<td>Walton and his crew see a huge “savage” figure in a dogsled speeding across the ice. The ship then comes upon and rescues another man, who gets upset when Walton describes himself as on a quest for knowledge. The man describes himself as having lost everything, and decides to tell his story to Walton.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1</strong></td>
<td>Victor grows up in Geneva, Switzerland.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td>Victor describes his perfect childhood with Elizabeth, and with his friend Henry Clerval, who like Victor wants to leave his mark on human history.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3</strong></td>
<td>Victor turns 17 and his mother dies of scarlet fever. Victor goes to university in Ingoldstadt, Germany. Professor M. Waldman supports Victor in his goal of revealing “to the world the deepest mysteries of creation.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4</strong></td>
<td>Victor brings a creature to life, but is horrified by its appearance and abandons it, running from his apartment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5</strong></td>
<td>In the streets of Ingoldstadt, he runs into Elizabeth, and brings Clerval back to his apartment. The monster is gone, but Victor falls into a nervous fever that lasts for months.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td>Elizabeth and Victor exchange letters. She tells him that Justine Moritz, a former servant, has come to live with the Frankensteins in Geneva.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>7</strong></td>
<td>Victor feels guilt over William and Justine’s deaths, but remains silent.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td>Victor goes with his family to their vacation home in Belrive, but is wracked by guilt.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td>Victor takes a nature tour through France, but the sublime beauty of nature is not enough to keep his dark thoughts at bay for long.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td>During a hike to the top of Montanvert, Victor comes upon the monster. The monster tells Victor it turned to violence only after Victor abandoned it.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>11</strong></td>
<td>Just created, the monster’s appearance terrifies any people who see it. Eventually, it finds a place to hide near a small cottage and watches the family the De Laceys that lives inside.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>12</strong></td>
<td>The monster realizes the De Laceys are poor and that the grandfather De Lacey is blind. It collects and leaves firewood for the family.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>13</strong></td>
<td>The monster discovers its own ugliness in a pool of water, but is hopeful that with kind words and actions it can convince the De Laceys to see past its appearance.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td>The monster relates the De Lacey’s family history.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td>The monster finds a copy of Paradise Lost and feels at times like Adam, but at times like Satan because it does not have the love of its creator.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td>The monster plunges into a fit of rage, but the beauty of the next day calms him. He goes to see the De Lacey’s again, but they have moved away.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>17</strong></td>
<td>Victor at first refuses, but then finally agrees to the monster’s request. The monster says it will monitor his progress.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>18</strong></td>
<td>Victor’s father wants him to marry Elizabeth. Victor wants to marry her as well, but not with the obligation to the monster still hanging over his head. Victor leaves for England with Clerval, but worries about what might happen if he creates another monster.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Theme Key

- Family, Society, and Isolation
- Ambition and Fallibility
- Romanticism and Nature
- Revenge
- Prejudice
- Lost Innocence
- **Victor** seeks solitude, and travels alone to a remote island in Scotland to create the new monster.

- **Victor** notices the **monster** watching him work, and, overcome by loathing, destroys his work on the second monster. The monster vows revenge, saying, "I shall be with you on your wedding night."

- **Victor** returns by boat to the mainland to continue his travels with **Clerval**, but when he lands he discovers that he is a suspect in a murder.

- **Victor** learns that the murdered man is **Clerval**, and realizes that the **monster** killed him. **Victor** falls ill.

- **Victor's father** comes to get him. **Victor** is released because there is no real evidence against him. He returns with his father to Geneva.

- **Victor** refuses to engage with society. But a letter from **Elizabeth** convinces him to marry her whether or not the monster plans to kill him on his wedding night.

- **Victor** and **Elizabeth** wed. The couple departs for Italy, but Victor is so fearful of the monster he can take no joy in the beauty surrounding him.

- The **monster** kills **Elizabeth**. **Victor** rushes back to Geneva. **Victor's father** dies soon after learning the news of Elizabeth's death.

- **Victor** goes mad and is kept in a cell for several months. When he recovers, he vows revenge on the **monster**.

- **Victor** tracks the **monster** to the North Pole, but the ice breaks up beneath his sled before he can catch the monster. It is at this point that **Walton's** crew rescues Victor.

- Walton's crew forces **Walton** to turn back because the way forward is too dangerous.

- Walton sees the **monster** grieving over **Victor's** body. The monster says that it abhorred itself even as it was doing evil, but wonders why only it, and not Victor, is thought to be a wretch and criminal. It vows to kill itself and jumps from the ship onto the ice.