

Summer Assignment: *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley

Overview:

Few novels have had as lasting an impact on popular culture as Mary Shelley's 1831 novel *Frankenstein* (also titled *The Modern Prometheus*). References to the book thrive even today perhaps because it has become so integrated into our culture (and has been transformed into nearly 30 film adaptations!); however, it's easy to lose sight of the power and ingenuity of Shelley's vision.

The original *Frankenstein* has much to tell us – not only as an early example of the now-popular genres of science fiction and horror – but as a story that explores timeless themes about family, love, gender, revenge, ambition, and the human search for knowledge. It's a pretty powerful piece of writing. Shelley also started it when she was 19, so you better get a move on 😊

Summer Reading Assignments:

- 1) Take **high quality notes** during your reading of the book (see below) *Don't forget to read the Walton letters at the start of the novel; these are a critical part of the work as a whole.*
- 2) After finishing the novel, complete a **typed, 1-page reflection** about your personal interpretation of and experience reading the novel. Consider the following prompts if you are unsure how to reflect meaningfully:
 - a. *How have your values and beliefs altered your perceptions of this text?*
 - b. *How may have readers in different time periods or of different ages interpreted the text? How do they compare or contrast to you?*
 - c. *Which of your personal experiences or memories affected your perceptions of the story?*
- 3) During the first cycle:
 - a. Hand in your **handwritten notes** and **printed reflection**
 - b. Complete a **Progress Check** (quiz - quote identification and context)
 - c. Complete a literary analysis take-home **essay** (3-4 pages)
 - d. Theme-based comparative **group project**

Taking Notes:

A skill you will need to master before you graduate is taking effective notes. As a student in an honors-level course, you should NOT be consulting online sources or commercial study aids. Taking solid, reliable notes will make your life easier and give you material to study when you need it. We will discuss methods of note-taking in class this year (annotations, symbols, post-its, flashcards, voice notes, etc.), but initially, I would like you to use the Read-Pause-Reflect method.

Rather than attempting to take notes as you read, the Read-Pause-Reflect method encourages you to take breaks and then write up notes at the end of each chapter/whatever section you have read for the day. It's a great way to test your recall, and it's a more natural process than constantly stopping to jot notes as you are reading. **Notes must be hand-written, as studies have proven**

that hand writing strengthens recall/memory and understanding. Your notes will be considered your first grade of Quarter 1.

I recommend getting in the habit of creating a note shorthand that you take down as you read. The Read-Pause-Reflect method for literature should be organized like this:

- Break up notes into sections for each chapter or section
- As you read, create a bulleted list of notes and quotes, labeling each with a page number when possible (see sample below).
- On each line, jot down shorthand notes for any interesting observations; look for things such as:
 - major plot events
 - major themes
 - recurring motifs
 - new characters or settings / interesting description or imagery
 - changes to existing characters
 - interesting literary devices or rhetorical strategies
 - significant quotes (IMPORTANT)

Things to consider:

1. **Consider chapters** – Is there any thematic significance to the organization of the story? Do chapter titles, if chapters have titles, have any significance?
2. **Consider the characters** – Address how they have changed and the significant events that have affected them in each chapter or section of the novel.
3. **Note the Setting** – List the locale, time period, and length of time that passes in each section of the novel.
4. **Consider themes and motifs** – Reflecting on your earlier notes can be helpful with this, especially as you progress through the piece. Do you see any repetition of concepts? Images? Significant meaning in the piece?
5. **Consider the author's style** – What literary devices are important to the author's style? Which are used most often? What effect do they have?
6. **Quotations** – Although at this point it is difficult to predict exactly which quotations will be useful for future assignments and tests, you should still make note of powerful lines or scenes, lines that are well-written or are particularly interesting to you, and lines that reflect important qualities or changes in characters. Record in your notes the page number and some description of the quotations that you find important.

Sample Notes for *One Hundred Years of Solitude*:

(Ideally, these would be handwritten and include more quotes)

Chapter 7 (pages 133-153)

- Opening: Col. Aureliano Buendia is captured along with Col. Gerinaldo Marquez
- Events: Ursula visits C.A.B. in jail reminisces about assassination attempts soldiers afraid to execute him firing squad assembled (flashback: to chapter 1, ice, pg. 1) Jose Arcadio arrives and saves him, soldiers defect C.A.B. back to war returns to Macondo Arcadio's children (Remedios and twins Jose Arcadio Segundo and Aureliano Segundo) Jose Arcadio's death (blood) His embalming Rebeca a shut-in C.A.B. poisoned by coffee leaves to find allies, Col. Marquez in command Marquez & Amaranta JAB dies
- Closing: JAB's funeral, rain of flowers; "the exequies of the king"
- Motifs:
 - time & repetition (page 136)
 - premonitions, clairvoyance, curses (138, 139)
 - rumor
 - death
 - rejection
 - reality/fiction
- Questions:
 - Family dynamics?
 - What statement is GGM making about power?
 - Are his characters symbolic?
 - Close reading practice: pages 145-146