

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; however, (and into nearly 30 film adaptations!) it's easy to lose sight of the power and originality 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 including family, love, gender, revenge, ambition, and the human search for knowledge. It's pretty darn good. Shelley also started it when she was 19, so you better get a move on.

Assignments:

- 1) Take **notes** during your reading of the book (see below)
- 2) During the first week of class, complete a **reading check**/quiz (quote identification and context)
- 3) Complete a theme-based take-home analysis **paper** (3-4 pages) in the first week.

Taking Notes:

So, taking notes is pretty important, and it's also important that the notes you take be YOUR 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.

Rather than attempting to take notes as you read, you should take breaks to 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. I also **strongly** suggest that you **handwrite notes rather than typing them – this is proven to enhance recall and understanding.** Your notes will be considered your first homework grade of quarter 1.

I recommend getting in the habit of creating a note shorthand that you take down as you read. The process I use works like this:

- I break up my notes into sections for each chapter or section
- As I read, I create a bulleted list of notes and quotes, labeling each with a page number when I can (see sample below).
- On each line I jot down shorthand notes for any interesting observations; I look for things such as:
 - major plot events
 - major themes
 - recurring motifs
 - new characters or settings
 - changes to existing characters
 - interesting description or imagery
 - 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 (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 (136)
 - premonitions, clairvoyance, curses (138, 139)
 - arbitrary events
 - rumor
 - death
 - suicide
 - rejection
 - reality/fiction
- Questions:
 - Family dynamics?
 - What statement is GGM making about power?
 - Are his characters symbolic?
 - Close reading practice: 145-146