

# Frankenstein

by Mary Shelley

**BILDUNGSROMAN**- novel about the moral or psychological growth of the main character

- Protagonist's literal or figurative journey from "youth" to "maturity" or "innocence" to "experience"
- Growth of self vs. the social order and the final reconciliation

## CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

- **Round Characters:** characters that are fully developed and multi-dimensional.
- **Flat Characters:** characters that are based solely on one trait or characteristic.
- **Dynamic Characters:** characters that develop through the course of the story.
- **Static Characters:** characters that do NOT develop through the course of the story.
- **Foil:** a character who is the opposite of another character used to shed light upon the character of the latter.
- **Catalyst:** a character (or event) that starts a chain of events. A catalyst is the first domino to fall and hit the other dominoes.



## STYLE—ELEMENTS OF ROMANTIC AND GOTHIC LITERATURE

- It was an offshoot of Romantic literature.
- Gothic literature was the predecessor of modern horror movies in both theme and style.
- Gothic literature put a spin on the Romantic idea of nature worship and nature imagery.

Romantics found awe in the everyday, natural life. While Shelley certainly heightens the natural elements to evoke mood, she also creates a creature who is not real or everyday but gives him very real human concerns and feelings.

Along with nature having the power of healing, Gothic writers gave nature the power of destruction. Frankenstein is full of the harsh reality of nature. Many storms arise in the book, including storms the night the creature comes to life and the night Frankenstein destroys the corpse of the second creature in the Irish Sea.

The most common feature of Gothic literature is the indication of mood through the weather. When bad things are going to happen in a Gothic novel, the reader knows it because there is inevitably a storm outside. This is still true in many books and films.

## PHILOSOPHICAL QUESTIONS

What does it mean to be human? How does life begin? What does it mean to exist? Shelley raises the big questions in *Frankenstein*. What is her answer to these questions?

Philosophy and science during the Romantic period are essentially the same disciplines. The study of nature and the desire to know how nature functions eventually came to be called "natural philosophy," but the quest for such knowledge was still more what we would consider philosophical than scientific.

Mary Shelley indicates that Victor is a student of this "natural philosophy" when she indicates who some of Victor's early influences were. While admitting that many of these men's theories had been discredited, Victor still admits that it was they who largely set him on the course he was eventually to take.