

Summer Reading for AP Literature:

Please read the **background information** on the next few pages and complete the following assignment prior to beginning class in September. All responses **MUST** be **HANDWRITTEN** and submitted in a notebook/journal. Writing by hand is a necessary AP skill; if your handwriting is too messy to read, consider this exercise another chance to fix that so that your AP prompts, whether for us or for the AP test itself, can be scored.

We have chosen for this year's AP English Literature and Composition summer reading ***Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley: ISBN 9781593081157**. Students who purchase a different edition of the book might experience difficulty during assessment and discussion as page numbers will likely vary, and if we need to check the validity of your text excerpts, the page numbers that you must give with **EVERY** answer will also vary. The text is \$5 from Barnes and Noble, although you could find a cheaper used version using an online vendor. We have several at Tremper that can be checked out for students who need them and cannot afford them; contact us if you feel you meet this criteria.

Please understand that we have familiarized ourselves with summaries from various online “help” sites, and we are not interested in you paraphrasing from them; doing so cheats you, who should desire to sharpen your literary analysis skills in order to perform well in this rigorous class as well as the challenging AP test in May, as much as it is academically dishonest. Asking a classmate for a hint is perfectly reasonable, but **working on this assignment together is not allowed**. Your submissions of this journal will be the first time that we read your writing and thinking skills, so consider this if you are thinking about copying from someone else: if your work on a timed, in class prompt is absolutely nothing like your journal responses, you come across, from the outset, like a cheater. Understand that we are keeping several analytical questions “back” in order to give you just such prompts **early** in the class, and like the questions that follow, you will need text evidence (as always with a page number) as well as an understanding that neither copying nor “sparknoting” can provide.

We will **not** collect *Frankenstein* to grade markings or annotations, but if you do not use some system, you will struggle with the in-class prompts that you will write early in the fall because you will not be able to find the passages that you want for text evidence within an allotted time. Getting used to employing text evidence and writing “on the clock” is critical for your growth as a writer in AP Lit and in general: both the FRQ 1 and 2 prompts need references back to the texts provided, and success on the AP multiple choice test requires **close** reading, a skill that annotation often helps improve. The more active you are as a reader, thinker, and writer, the better you will do on this assignment, in this course, and in college.

Background Information: read the following and visit suggested links before reading the novel.

Annotated *Paradise Lost* http://www.dartmouth.edu/~milton/reading_room/pl/book_1/text.shtml

Note: you need not read the entire epic of course, but it might be helpful to read Book 1 to familiarize yourself with Shelley's literary allusion to Milton's epic masterpiece.

"Rime of the Ancient Mariner" <http://www.bartleby.com/101/549.html>

Shelley also refers to this poem in her novel, and it will be helpful to find parallels between the "Mariner" and other characters in the novel.

Romanticism vs. Realism

Romanticism is a complex artistic, literary, and intellectual movement that originated in the second half of the 18th century in Western Europe, and gained strength in reaction to the Industrial Revolution. In part, it was a revolt against aristocratic social and political norms of the Age of Enlightenment and a reaction against the scientific rationalization of nature, and was embodied most strongly in the visual arts, music, and literature, but had a major impact on historiography, education and natural history.

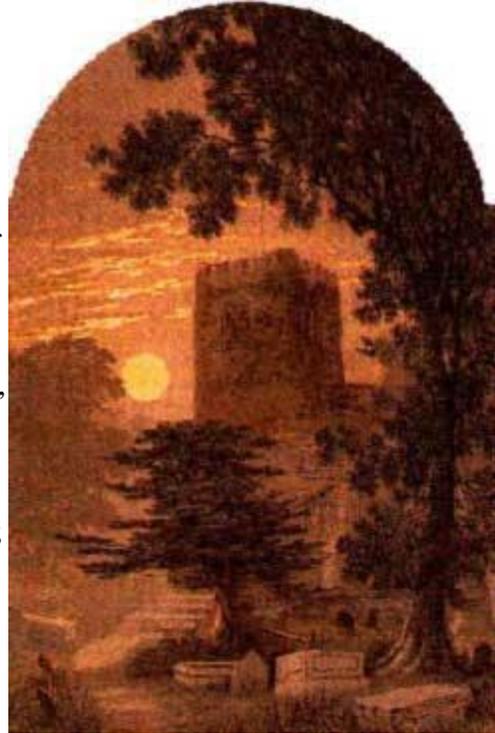
The movement validated strong emotion as an authentic source of aesthetic experience, placing new emphasis on such emotions as trepidation, horror and terror and awe—especially that which is experienced in confronting the sublimity of untamed nature and its picturesque qualities, both new aesthetic categories. It elevated folk art and ancient custom to something noble, made of spontaneity a desirable character (as in the musical impromptu), and argued for a "natural" epistemology of human activities as conditioned by nature in the form of language and customary usage.

Romanticism reached beyond the rational and Classicist ideal models to elevate a revived medievalism and elements of art and narrative perceived to be authentically medieval, in an attempt to escape the confines of population growth, urban sprawl, and industrialism, and it also attempted to embrace the exotic, unfamiliar, and distant, harnessing the power of the imagination to envision and to escape.

The modern sense of a romantic character may be expressed in Byronic ideals of a gifted, perhaps misunderstood loner, creatively following the dictates of his inspiration rather than the mores of contemporary society.

In literature, Romanticism found recurrent themes in the evocation or criticism of the past, the cult of "sensibility" with its emphasis on women and children, the heroic isolation of the artist or narrator, and respect for a new, wilder, untrammelled and "pure" nature. Furthermore, several romantic authors, such as Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne, based their writings on the supernatural/occult and human psychology. Romanticism tended to regard satire as something unworthy of serious attention, a prejudice still influential today.

Gothic Literature The English Gothic novel began with Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1765), which was enormously popular and quickly imitated by other novelists and soon became a recognizable genre. To most modern readers, however, *The Castle of Otranto* is dull reading; except for the villain Manfred, the characters are insipid; the action moves at a fast clip with no emphasis or suspense, despite the supernatural manifestations and a young maiden's flight through dark vaults. But contemporary readers found the novel electrifyingly original and thrillingly suspenseful, with its remote setting, its use of the supernatural, and its medieval trappings, all of which have been so frequently imitated and so poorly imitated that they have become stereotypes. The genre takes its name from *Otranto's* medieval—or Gothic—setting; early Gothic novelists tended to set their novels in remote times like the Middle Ages and in remote places like Italy (Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, 1796) or the Middle East (William Beckford's *Vathek*, 1786).



What makes a work Gothic is a combination of at least some of these elements:

- a castle, ruined or intact, haunted or not, old mansion or estate
- ruined buildings which are sinister or which arouse a pleasing melancholy,
- dungeons, underground passages, crypts, and catacombs which, in modern houses, become spooky basements or attics,
- labyrinths, dark corridors, and winding stairs,
- shadows, a beam of moonlight in the blackness, a flickering candle, or the only source of light failing (a candle blown out or an electric failure),
- extreme landscapes, like rugged mountains, thick forests, or icy wastes, and extreme weather,
- omens and ancestral curses,
- magic, supernatural manifestations, or the suggestion of the supernatural,
- a passion-driven, willful hero or villain,
- a curious heroine with a tendency to faint and a need to be rescued—frequently,
- a hero whose true identity is revealed by the end of the novel,
- horrifying (or terrifying) events or the threat of such happenings.

The Gothic creates feelings of gloom, mystery, and suspense and tends to the dramatic and the sensational, like incest, diabolism, and nameless terrors. Most of us immediately recognize the Gothic (even if we don't know the name) when we encounter it in novels, poetry, plays, movies, and TV series. For some of us—and I include myself, the prospect of safely experiencing dread or horror is thrilling and enjoyable.

PLEASE read all of the questions before commencing your assignment: some elements from the end of this assignment must be addressed throughout your reading.

1. The “shadow,” as discussed by Joseph Campbell, is a dark reflection of a central character, often the protagonist. Stevenson is perhaps most famous for turning this type of character into Edward Hyde in his tale, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. How is the monster a “shadow” of Victor Frankenstein? Please list any character whom the monster kills, or causes to die using deception and trickery. After you have finished the book, reflect back on whom the monster kills and consider: in what way or for what reason did Victor want each of these characters dead, even if subconsciously? For at least half of the characters whom you list, offer a text excerpt that *implies* that Victor resented the character whom the creature murdered.
2. Little is known of Mary Shelley’s views of religion, but we do know that both her husband and her father were atheists. Still, as a romantic and gothic writer, transcendental and supernatural elements are of paramount importance. How would you argue that *Frankenstein* demonstrates Shelley’s atheism? How would you argue that it demonstrates a belief in something of a more traditionally and religiously structured universe? Please offer several text excerpts as you consider these opposing views.
3. Written during the romantic literary movement, *Frankenstein* illustrates the romantic view of nature as a force of awesome beauty and danger: something to be appreciated without ever being trifled with. Although Shelley is from England, she sets her story predominantly in Switzerland. Discuss, using three different text excerpts, the story’s reverence and respect for the outdoor settings of Victor’s home country.
4. When Victor discusses where he obtained his “materials” in order to construct the creature, as well as when the creature discusses his first ever thoughts and experiences, we get an interesting study in nature versus nurture, as well as how realists believe a human personality comes to be, as opposed to how someone with a romantic or spiritual understanding believes this occurs. Make your argument for why the creature turned out as he did using ideas from psychology (a science) as well as from a more spiritual viewpoint. In other words, was the creature a tabula rasa at “birth,” shaped and formed by the conditions that surrounded him, or the result of a lack or perversion of something spiritual? Could Shelley be presenting us a hybrid option? Explain by using 2-4 short excerpts in your discussion.
5. As a minor character, Ernest Frankenstein is seldom considered worthy of discussion by academics. Discuss fully his role in *Frankenstein*, focusing particularly on the ways that Shelley juxtaposes him with Alphonse, Victor, and William. He is only mentioned thirteen times in the novel, but please use 4-5 text excerpts from these occasions in your discussion. AP Lit tests have, in the past, asked how minor characters impact the overall story in significant ways, so this will be a good study in such a prompt.

6. The connections to *Paradise Lost* in *Frankenstein* are of central importance. The creature considers himself a parallel to Satan in that story. How is this comparison apt? (offer 2-3 pieces of text evidence). If the creature is Satan, then Victor becomes the “God” character. Obviously, Victor cannot measure up in most ways, but the creature takes him to task in the same way that Satan rages at God. Explain using 2-3 pieces of text evidence.

7. Clearly, the monster’s “sins” often center on violence resulting from wrath. If we say that Victor’s “sins” often stem from catastrophic ambivalence resulting from pride and arrogance, can you prove it? Discuss three instances (not including his construction of the creature) when Victor allows terrible things to happen that he might have prevented if he simply felt responsible and took action. Use text excerpts in each case.

8. Continuing on this thread, consider the problem John Milton had with the Satan character and the good characters in *Paradise Lost*: the upright, pious, and solidly good characters come across to human readers as dry, self-righteous, or just boring. Instead, readers often find the Satan character sympathetic, or at least more interesting. The same can be said for the creature. List four times when you related to (or just generally liked better) the monster as opposed to his victims, particularly Victor. How, if at all, does this threaten the warning and the theme that Shelley is hoping to achieve? How, on the other hand, does the monster’s “likability” reinforce the theme?

9. Do a little research on Prometheus (his name appears not coincidentally in the extended title) using the internet. After you have, consider the setting at beginning and end. What is Shelley doing symbolically with juxtaposed elemental forces? How do these ideas make sense given your reading about Prometheus? Which character or characters is “modern Prometheus?” Explain:

10. What rationale does Victor offer about why he will not construct a second creature when he knows doing so *could* solve the problem? Considering his mastery of anatomy, physiology, and this bizarre process, do you believe the reason that he gives is authentic? If it is not, why else might he refrain? Explain:

11. Like many others, Shelley employs the “framed” story (a story in a story). How does Victor’s tale serve as cautionary to Walton? How is it cautionary to society? Use 4-5 specific excerpts from the text that imply what Mary Shelley wants you to learn, thematically, from her story.

Display your skills as a writer and thinker with insightful analysis, proper grammar, distinguished vocabulary, and syntax variety. You will be assessed on the level of effort, complex thought, detail, originality, and thoroughness you put into each response.

If you have any questions, please email either of us during the summer.

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