

SUMMER READING
AP Literature and Composition

Please read the **background information** on this page and complete the following assignment prior to beginning class in fall. All responses **MUST** be **handwritten** and submitted in a **neat and clean single-section notebook**. 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.

For this year's AP English Literature and Composition summer reading, the department head and I have chosen ***Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley: ISBN 0393927938**. This is the **Norton Critical edition**--when it comes to college English courses, many professors and lecturers require Norton Critical editions of texts (As a student, I was required to carry Norton Anthologies and other issued texts at UW--Madison, DePaul University, and even at the University of Westminster in London--they are academically ubiquitous). Students who purchase a different edition of the book will experience difficulty during assessment and discussion as page numbers will likely vary, and if I need to check the validity of your text excerpts, the page numbers that you must give with **every** answer will also vary. They will also lack the necessary excerpts from *Paradise Lost*, which are located in the index of the Norton edition. It is recommended that students purchase a used Norton-edition text from an online vendor like Amazon, as those run cheap.

Please understand that I have familiarized myself with summaries from various online "help" sites, and that I am not interested in rereading their ideas in your words--doing so cheats you. As much as paraphrasing from sites like SparkNotes or CliffsNotes is academically dishonest, I require you to feel the impetus to hone your literary analysis skills in order to perform well in this rigorous class as well as the equally difficult AP test in May. Asking a classmate for a hint is perfectly reasonable, but working on this assignment together is absolutely **not allowed** (...I should not even have to mention this). Your submissions in this journal will be the first time that I read your writing and evaluate your thinking skills, so consider this if you are considering copying from someone else: if your work on a timed in-class prompt is absolutely nothing like your work toward your journal responses, you come across, from the outset, as a cheater. Understand that I am reserving more analytical prompts to give you **early** in the year **during** class time, and, like the questions that follow, they will require cited direct quotes from the text on the fly, which neither copying nor "Sparknoting" can provide. Flex your analytical writing muscles early; it will be difficult at first to come up with complex college-level responses, but you will only become stronger.

I will **not** collect the text to grade markings or annotations, but if you do not use some system of annotation, you will struggle with the in-class prompts that you will write early on, because you will not be able to find the passages that you want for textual evidence within the allotted time. Familiarizing yourself with employing textual evidence and writing on the clock is critical for your growth as both a writer in AP Lit and in a prospective English 201-level college course: 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 which annotation directly benefits.

Do not forget your notebooks and your *Frankenstein* texts on the first day of class. I am requiring you to bring it every day until the end of the unit, in case I decide to assign you an in-class prompt or discussion.

Read all of the questions before commencing your assignment: some elements from the end of this assignment must be addressed throughout your reading. Cite all excerpts from the text using MLA-format in-text citations.

1. The Shadow archetype, as discussed by prolific mythologist and professor Joseph Campbell, is a dark reflection or doppelgänger 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*.
 - a. How does the monster play Shadow or doppelgänger to Victor Frankenstein?
 - b. Please list any character whom the monster kills or causes to die using deception and trickery.
 - c. After you have finished the book, reflect on whom the monster kills and consider: for what reason did Victor want each of these characters dead, even if subconsciously?
 - d. 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 (i.e. Romantic-era) and gothic writer, transcendental and supernatural elements are paramount.
 - a. How could one argue that *Frankenstein* demonstrates and supports atheistic tendencies? Offer at least three excerpts from the text that support your argument.
 - b. Contrastingly, how could one argue that the text demonstrates and supports belief in a religiously structured universe? Offer at least three excerpts from the text that support your argument.
3. Written during the Romantic era, *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, with its broad and epic landscapes. **Discuss, using three different textual excerpts, the story's reverence and respect for the outdoor settings of Victor's home country.**
4. When Victor discusses from where he obtained his ghastly materials in order to construct the creature, as well as when the creature discusses his first ever thoughts and experiences, it inspires an interesting study in nature versus nurture, as well as how realists believe a human personality comes into being and matures, as opposed to how someone with a Romantic or spiritual understanding believes this occurs. Was the creature a tabula rasa at its birth/creation, shaped and formed by the conditions that surrounded him, or is his personality the result of a lack of or a perversion of something spiritual? Could Shelley be presenting us a hybrid option? **Form an argument for why the creature turned out as he did using ideas from psychology, science, and spiritualism. Explain by using 2-4 short excerpts in your discussion.**
5. Though Ernest Frankenstein is a minor character, one finds him worthy of discussion. **Discuss fully his role in *Frankenstein*, focusing particularly 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. Read the excerpts from *Paradise Lost* starting on page 290 in the index of your *Frankenstein* text. The creature considers himself a parallel to Satan in that story. 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. **How is this comparison apt? Explain, using 2-3 pieces of textual evidence.**
7. Clearly, the monster’s perceived sins often center around violence resulting from wrath. If we say that Victor’s is often 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 at least one textual excerpt in each case.**
8. Readers often find the Satan character from *Paradise Lost* sympathetic, or at least more interesting than a stereotypical villain. The same can be said for the creature. List four times when you related to (or sympathized with) 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 does it reinforce it?**
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. **How are these juxtaposed elemental forces symbolic, and what to what end does that symbolism serve the text? How does this symbolism make sense, given your reading about Prometheus--and which character or characters is the proverbial 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 the bizarre process of reanimation, **do you believe the reason that he gives is authentic?** If it isn’t, **why else might he refrain? Explain.**
11. Like many others, Shelley employs a framed story (a story in a story). How does Victor’s tale prove cautionary to both Walton and society itself? **Use specific 4-5 excerpts from the text that imply what Mary Shelley wants you and other readers to learn, thematically, from her story:**

If you have any questions, please email me during the summer at vslana@teachers.kusd.edu.