AQA English Literature GCSE

Frankenstein: Character Profile

Frankenstein's Monster

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Frankenstein's Monster

Character Summary



Frankenstein's monster (or creature) is Dr Frankenstein's creation, not to be confused with Dr Frankenstein himself. Frankenstein is very critical of his creation, referring to it as a ***"monster", "wretch", "daemon", "corpse"*** and ***"horrid"***.

In spite of Frankenstein's criticism of his monster, Shelley arguably presents the monster as a more **sympathetic** figure than Frankenstein. Whilst Frankenstein's suffering was self-inflicted by his thirst for knowledge, the monster is a **victim** of his circumstances, and enters the world being hated. Shelley taps into the **nature versus nurture** debate.

Key Themes

Isolation

In the monster's **dialogue**, he confesses ***"I am alone and miserable; man will not associate with me"***. Whilst Dr Frankenstein chooses to isolate himself from society, the monster's suffering is the consequence of his physical appearance.

The reader's first impressions of the monster are created entirely through Victor's **negative perspective** of him. However, in his dialogue, Shelley encourages the reader to pity the monster, presenting him as a mere **victim** of unfortunate circumstances.

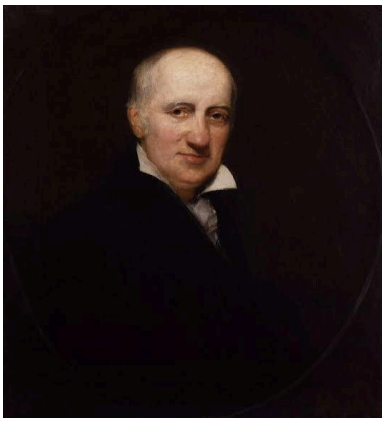


Nature vs Nurture

The creature confesses to stealing food from cottagers, but upon realising he ***"inflicted pain"*** on them, he ***"abstained".*** Shelley underscores how the creature is a **foil** to Victor. The creature is full of ***"kindness"*** and very self-aware, despite never having been raised to treat other people well. By contrast, Victor is from a respectable background, but neglects his manners to favour his **ego**.

The creature has a clearly defined **moral compass** and is quick to learn from his mistakes to help humanity. Ultimately, Shelley encourages the reader to consider to what extent people are defined by their upbringing versus their environment.

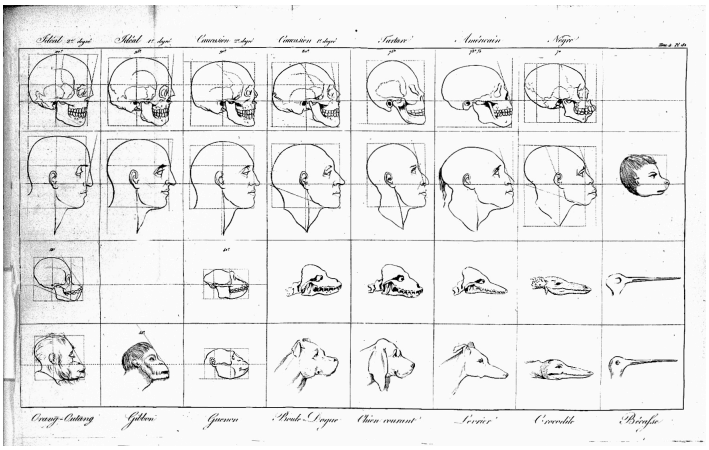
Context



William Godwin

Mary Shelley's father was the philosopher William Godwin. He believed in the **perfectibility of human nature**: the idea that people are not born evil, but can improve their nature through education. He also argued people were naturally "benevolent", the same word used by the creature to describe himself in *Frankenstein*. Likewise, the creature only becomes violent after experiencing social rejection. Shelley encourages readers to question to what extent the monster is responsible for his own behaviour.

Physiognomy



Physiognomy was the idea that a person's nature could be ascertained by analysing their facial features. This is particularly relevant to the monster: he is repeatedly rejected by people due to his ***"deformed"*** appearance, before people can see his initially **virtuous** nature.

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Key Quotations

"Divine a retreat to the Pandemonium appeared to the demons of hell"



- Despite Frankenstein's disparaging language towards his creation, Shelley's use of the **allusion** to John Milton's *Paradise Lost*, indicates the intelligence of the monster. The poem describes the fall of man.

- Shelley's **biblical allusion** to the fall of man also implies that Frankenstein is imitating God through creating the monster. It is **ironic** that his monster is able to immediately see that Frankenstein is playing God, whilst Frankenstein has to undergo mental and physical decline before recognising his wrongdoing.

"How dare you sport thus with life?"

- Shelley employs a **rhetorical question** and **direct address** in the monster's speech to reflect how he is a master of rhetoric. Despite Victor's narrative referring to the monster as ***"the daemon",*** Shelley portrays the monster as very articulate.

- The use of the **direct address** demonstrates how accusatory the monster is, clearly blaming his creator for his suffering. Shelley creates an aggressive and emotionally-charged **tone** to indicate how pained the monster is with Victor's neglect of him.

- Likewise, Shelley's use of the **verb** ***"sport"*** may indicate Victor's carelessness where he created the monster without proper forethought, nor the intention of raising him.

"I was benevolent and good; misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous"

- Shelley taps into the nature vs nurture debate again, elucidating how the monster is the **victim of the circumstances** he is in. Interestingly, the use of ***"again"*** demonstrates how nature is a mutable characteristic which is **in flux**.

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- Both the monster and Victor believe that creators have the power to shape their creation's nature. Victor described himself as his parents' ***"plaything"***, **delineating** how he considered his parents responsible for raising him with a good nature. It is **ironic** that Victor places such a huge emphasis on upbringing when he neglects his own creation.

- The monster's **imperative** ***"make me happy"*** illustrates the importance of environment in shaping people's nature. Again, Shelley invites us to sympathise with the monster as someone who just wants to feel happy. He lacks the grand aspiration of Victor, merely wanting to feel at peace.

- The monster's claim ***"misery made me a fiend"*** suggests that humans are to blame for the evil in the world. Despite the monster's benevolence, he was treated badly due to his ***"deformity".*** The **repetition** of the **alliterative** "m" sounds adds to the monster's aggressive **tone**, reinforcing his outrage from being mistreated by humans.

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