AQA English Literature GCSE

Frankenstein

Glossary of Definitions

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Glossary of Key Terms

Techniques – Language

Alliteration – The repetition of the same consonant sounds at the start of words, often creating a staccato rhythm.
["devilish despair"]

Allusion – An indirect reference to a concept or theme without explicit mention.
[Shelley alludes to the Prometheus myth when Victor creates life.]

Anaphora – Repeating a word or phrase at the start of successive clauses.

Antithesis – A rhetorical device where contrasting concepts are placed together in a text, typically a sentence, to highlight how different they are.

Archetype – The perfect example of something with universally recognisable traits.
[Victor is arguably the archetypal tragic hero.]

Assonance – The repetition of vowel sounds (a, e, i, o, u) within words close to each other, often creating emphasis or musicality.

Auditory imagery – Language which appeals to the reader's hearing.
["howl"]

Connotation – Implied meanings of words beyond their literal definitions.

Consonance – The repetition of consonant sounds anywhere within words close to each other in a sentence, often creating a harsh sound.

Dynamic character – A character who undergoes a significant transformation through the course of the novella or book.
[Walton is a dynamic character who learns from his mistakes and excessive ambition.]

Epitome – The perfect or ultimate embodiment of a quality.

Hyperbole – The use of exaggerated statements.

Interjection – A sudden remark, used often as an interruption or aside in the text.

Irony – Using language typically implying the opposite of what the writer is intending to express, often for a humorous effect.
[It is ironic that Victor intends to create life, but his creation results in the deaths of those closest to him.]

Juxtaposition – Comparing two concepts, characters, or clauses, in close proximity in a passage for the effect of contrast.
*[Shelley juxtaposes the monster's initially benevolent nature with his **"deformed"** appearance.]*

Motif – A recurring image, idea or symbol throughout the novella.
[Light is a motif in the novel, often symbolising knowledge.]

Oxymoron – Two opposing terms are placed next to each other.

Pathetic Fallacy – Weather or nature reflecting characters' feelings or the mood of the scene.

Personification – Attributing human qualities to non–human things.
["the storm that was even then hanging in the stars and ready to envelop me"]

Protagonist – The central character of a literary text.
[Victor is often seen as the protagonist of the novel.]

Round Character – A complex character.

Semantic Field – Words which are linked by a theme or topic throughout a text or passage.
*[Shelley employs the semantic field of science through the words **"experiment", "discovery" and "animation".**]*

Sibilance – Repetition of 's' sounds.

Staccato – Describes a rhythm which is stop–start and abrupt.

Symbolism – Using one object or character to represent a wider concept running throughout the novel.

Syntactic – Relating to the arrangement of words within a sentence within a text.

Temporal deixis – Language which references time.

Techniques – Structure

Climax – The height of the tension in the novella.

Circular structure – A text which begins and ends with the same idea.
[The novel begins and ends in the Arctic.]

Dichotomy – A contrast of two beings or things that are opposed or distinctly different.

Embedded narrative – A story within a story.

Epistolary narrative – A story told through letters.

Exposition – The beginning of a text. It provides all the background information required to understand the forthcoming plot and the characters involved.
[The exposition of the novel consists of Walton's letters.]

Falling action – After the climax, comes the falling action. This is where the tension is diffused, preparing the reader for the **resolution**.

First–person narrative – Uses the "I" pronoun.
[Victor narrates in the first person.]

Flashback – When authors shift from the present to the past.
[Victor's narrative following Walton's letters acts as a flashback.]

Flat character – A simple, two–dimensional character that lacks depth.

Foil – A character which serves to contrast another, to emphasise certain characteristics of the other character.
[Henry acts as Victor's foil, representing human connection.]

Foreboding – An indication that something bad is about to happen.

Foreshadow – To subtly allude to an event which happens later in the novella.
[Victor's anxiety before creating the monster may foreshadow the later tragedy.]

Frame narrator – A narrator within a narrative, meaning there is an outer and an inner narrator.
[Walton acts as the frame narrator.]

Parallelism – The use of grammatically identical or similar components repeated in a sentence or multiple sentences.

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Rising action – Follows the **exposition** and builds the tension before the **climax**.

Key Vocabulary

Atavism – Reverting to something primitive.
[The monster's animalistic qualities could be seen as atavistic to some contemporary readers.]

Catharsis – Relief derived from releasing repressed emotion.
[The monster's final speech could be seen as his catharsis.]

Contemporary reader – A reader of the book at the time it was published.

Debased – Reduced in value or status, especially morally.

Facade – An exterior pretense.
[Despite Victor's facade of respectability, Shelley highlights how his immoral character lies beneath.]

Galvanism – The act of using electricity to stimulate life.

Hubris – Excessive pride leading to a character's tragic downfall.

Morality – Awareness of the principles of right and wrong conduct.
[Shelley encourages the reader to consider the importance of morality in relation to science.]

Multifaceted – Having many different aspects.

Nature vs Nurture – The debate over how much people are shaped by their environment versus their innate qualities.
[The monster's changing personality encourages the reader to evaluate the role of nature vs nurture.]

"Other" – A term used to refer to someone outside the dominant ethnic or social group.
[The monster is seen as other due to his physical appearance.]

Physiognomy – The theory that a person's character can be garnered through interpreting their facial features.

Rationality – The philosophical attitude that privileges logical thinking over emotions.
[Victor's overreliance on rationality over emotions leads to his downfall.]

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Romanticism – An artistic movement which emphasised emotion, the imagination and nature.

Social Mobility – The movement between different social classes.
[Georgian society offered little opportunity for social mobility.]

Sublime – Feelings of awe, beauty or terror elicited by nature.