

To what extent is *Frankenstein* written as a cautionary tale?

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was written in the 1818 and revised in 1831. Throughout *Frankenstein*, Shelly explores the repercussion of unrestricted scientific endeavours while focusing on a desire for fame and ego. Through her construction of the framed story, Shelly positions *Frankenstein* as a cautionary tale, condemning the actions her protagonist, Victor Frankenstein, takes and emphasising how these lead to his 'total and utter destruction'. In positioning *Frankenstein* as such, Shelley champions the beauty of nature and employs this to juxtapose Frankenstein's 'inner turmoil'. Despite this Shelley emphasises the repercussions associated with the actions those individuals driven by ambition take that ultimately fail to observe the demise of others around them that defy these 'immutable laws of nature'. In portraying *Frankenstein* as such, Shelley reiterates an unprecedented message throughout her construction cautioning against 'the acquirement of knowledge' and the 'sting' it presents.

Mary Shelley's constructions of the framed story through Frankenstein recounting his tale to Walton depicts the dangers of knowledge and thus acts as a warning for unchecked ambition. Frankenstein's deliberation to Walton 'do you share my madness?', 'Have you also drunk from the intoxicating draught' emphasizes Shelley's positions of her protagonist's actions as outside the norm. Through this association to the insane, Shelley conveys Frankenstein's unorthodox practice as unparalleled and depicts Frankenstein as 'the only unique thing' prepared to play God. In condemning his actions as 'madness', Shelley illustrates the damaging nature of his ambition and thus associates his desire to 'learn the secrets of heaven' as the foundation of his demise. Through this depiction, Shelley affirms the 'intoxicating' nature of desiring to 'be among the names of Shakespeare' and reinforces that the acquirement of 'godlike' powers does not bestow 'benevolent sensations' within an individual. Furthermore, through the construction of Frankenstein deliberating his version of events to Walton in a 'desolate state', Shelley underpins the 'inner turmoil' the protagonist exhibits and cautions against actions taken which directly challenge nature chronology.

In addition to this, Mary Shelley champions nature's attempts to caution Frankenstein and emphasises 'her' capacity to oppose Frankenstein's actions. This in essence exemplifies the capacity of nature to caution against uncontrolled creativity and thus, presents *Frankenstein* as a cautionary tale. Mary Shelley characterizes Frankenstein to demonstrate his dependence on nature to comfort his devastating emotions and highlights that Frankenstein acknowledges this when exclaiming 'inanimate nature [has] the power of bestowing in me the most pleasurable of sensations'. Through this Shelley champions nature as a restorative agent and utilizes this to further juxtapose Victor Frankenstein's inner 'misery'. As Frankenstein undertakes his experiment with 'initial benevolent intentions', Shelley employs pathetic fallacy to denote 'the moon [has] reached her summit in the heavens and began her descent'. In utilising this metaphor Shelley conveys the unforgiving nature of the natural world and its capacity to taunt individuals that defy her 'immutable' laws. Shelley pursues this notion in positioning Elizabeth as a part of the natural world and reiterates her capacity to comfort Victor Frankenstein. In associating Elizabeth as a 'saintly soul', Shelley juxtaposes her inner tranquility with Frankenstein's desolate state by means of conveying nature's opposition to

Frankenstein's actions and thus confirms the requirement to caution against her 'sting' and affirms Frankenstein's tale to be cautionary.

With this in mind, Shelley presents *Frankenstein* as a cautionary tale to generations throughout the repetitions of mirroring throughout the novel, thus emphasizing the demise of individuals failing to tread with caution. Through Frankenstein's deliberations, 'I ardently hope the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you' Shelley connotes the acquirement of knowledge with the book of Genesis to reiterate the significance of this caution. Through this utilisation of biblical allusion, Shelley associates the ambition to aspire to 'godlike' powers as a source of damnation. This notion of the 'serpent' particularly symbolizes the temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden that ultimately leads to Adam and Eve's banishment from this tranquil place. Shelley repeats the intertextuality (with *Paradise Lost*) by means of verifying and exemplifying the significance of Frankenstein's cautionary tale to Walton, as Walton ultimately mirrors Frankenstein's desire for fame through wishing to treat a land 'uncharted by the foot of man'. Thus, Shelley substantiates the positioning of the framed story as a cautionary tale through her verification of its significance throughout the ages.

On the other hand, Shelley condemns actions individuals take that are in the realm of self-benefit and thus employs *Frankenstein* to criticize human ambition in addition to cautioning against it. Through the characterization of the Creature, Shelley portrays an individual that understands firsthand the repercussions of unchecked ambition, yet the Creature mirrors Frankenstein's 'negligence' when circumstances involve his own advancement. The Creature questions 'was this the reward for benevolence?' Through this ideology Shelley connotes the Creature as embodying the repercussions of Victor Frankenstein's unorthodox ambitions and affirms the 'sting' of nature's judgment. Yet, despite this Shelley criticizes and condemns human ambition through the Creature's demand, 'I am your master! Obey!' to infuse life into another inanimate object and thus challenge the nature chronology once again. In emphasizing the apparent irony in this situation, Shelley explores a fatal flaw exhibited in mankind throughout the ages. The Creature furthermore embodies this notion through this aspiration to 'godlike sciences' and therefore Shelley portrays his resemblance to Victor Frankenstein and mirrors that individuals will aspire to ego and in essence neglect both the warnings from nature and those around them who descend to a 'creature [that is unparalleled] in its] misery'.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is presented through a framed story cautioning against defiance of natural law but is also furthermore employed to critique human ambition and explore the repercussions of such actions throughout the ages. Mary Shelley substantiates this by mirroring the same drive for ambition throughout Frankenstein and Walton and emphasizes the severity of Frankenstein's actions through his 'desolate state' and depiction of events to Walton. By affirming the omnipotence of nature, Shelley conveys the significance and relevance of unrestrained creativity in tempting an individual to explore an avenue that only leads to 'misery'. Shelley furthermore acknowledges this fatal flaw throughout humanity and emphasizes 'how much happier that man is who believes his native town to be the world than he who aspires to become greater than his nature will allow'.