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Mary Shelley

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P.O. Box 658, Clayton, DE 19938

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Response Journal

To The Student

Although we may read a novel, play, or work of non-fiction for enjoyment, each time we read one, we are building and practicing important basic reading skills. In our ever-more complex society, in which reading has become more and more crucial for success, this, in itself, is an important reason to spend time reading for enjoyment.

Some readers, however, are able to go beyond basic reading techniques and are able to practice higher thinking skills by reflecting on what they have read and how what they read affects them. It is this act of reflection—that is, stopping to think about what you are reading—that this journal is attempting to encourage.

To aid you, we have included writing prompts for each section; however, if you find something that you wish to respond to in the book more compelling than our prompts, you should write about that. We hope you enjoy reading this book and that the act of responding to what you have read increases this enjoyment.

After you read the indicated sections, choose the questions to which you will respond. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers to these prompts, and there is no one direction in which you must go.

Author's Introduction

1. This section of *Frankenstein* was written by Mary Shelley in 1831, thirteen years after the publication of the novel in 1818. It has been speculated that her husband, the poet Percy Bysshe Shelley, actually wrote it, but that has not been proven. The "Author's Introduction" gives us a fine glimpse into Mary Shelley's creative mind. We learn of her childhood daydreams, her imagination, and her writings, in which she says, "I did not make myself the heroine of my tales." Think back on the creative writing you have done during your schooling. Using the "Author's Introduction" as a model, evaluate your own past writing in a one-page essay. Include things like where you think your ideas come from, how imaginative you think your writing is, and how much of your writing is centered on yourself.
2. How *Frankenstein* came to be written by Mary Shelley in 1816-1817 is interesting. She had run away to Switzerland with the married man who would later become her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley. Because they and some friends were housebound because of incessant rain, they decided to have a competition to see who could write the best ghost story. *Frankenstein* won. It is written in a style called "Gothic Horror" or "Gothic Science Fiction." Works referred to as "Gothic" have a style, which has elements of gloom, the grotesque, or the supernatural, and often take place in centuries past. Usually, castles and large country homes are involved. Write a plot for a story in the Gothic style. Be sure to include when and where the story is set, details about the main character and at least three other characters, what the most exciting part of the story would be, and how it ends.
3. The author states that, in her novel, she wished "to preserve the truth of the elementary principles of human nature." She cites four other literary works that she feels do this. They are: *The Iliad*, *The Tempest*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Paradise Lost*. Look up these works in a dictionary or encyclopedia. List the author of each and write a summary of what the work is about.

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Letter II

6. Captain Walton tells his sister about hiring his crew to begin his “enterprise.” He shares his loneliness and his deep need for a friend with his sister. The need for good friends is a universal one. Write a letter to Captain Walton in which you explain your understanding of his need for a friend. Include an example from your own experience or that of someone close to you when you felt the lack of friendship.
7. Shelley includes a reference to the “Ancient Mariner.” As you probably know, the allusion is to a long narrative poem about the sea, whose full title is “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.” It was written by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1798. Like Coleridge, Captain Walton describes his “passionate enthusiasm for the dangerous mysteries of ocean...” Think about your experiences with the ocean. These could be pleasant or not. Explain the feelings you associate with the ocean to a friend who has never seen it. If you have not seen an ocean in your lifetime, tell that to your friend, explaining what you imagine such a power must be like.

Letter III

8. This brief letter from Captain Walton to his sister in England tells us that he is well on his way to the North Pole. He is assuring his sister that he is feeling secure over “the pathless sea” and, though it is untamed, the sea is “yet obedient.” Many television programs and films have been made about action on the high seas. “Titanic,” “Moby Dick,” “Mutiny on the Bounty,” and even “Love Boat” come to mind. Write a review of one of the above or any other film about the sea which you have seen. Be sure to state how you feel about its portrayal of what life aboard a ship is like.

Response Journal

25. When Victor arrives home, he learns that Justine Moritz, the girl whom the Frankensteins adopted and who grew up with the family, has been accused of William's murder. Victor does not tell his father of his certainty that the monster killed his brother because Victor believes that Justine will be found innocent at her trial, which is beginning that day. He seems determined to protect his secret about creating the monster. Write a letter to Victor explaining how you feel about his not telling anyone about the monster, despite the danger it poses.

Chapter VIII

26. In this chapter, Shelley presents the unjust trial and execution of the innocent Justine Moritz for the murder of William Frankenstein. In the present day, there is a strong argument for eliminating the death penalty, not only in this country, but throughout the world. Suppose you are a person who feels very strongly about the death penalty issue. Write a speech that you would give to an assembly at your school in which you argue against the death penalty, if you feel that way. If, however, you feel that there are times when the death penalty should be imposed, write your speech to reflect that point of view. Be sure to backup your opinion with facts.

Chapter IX

27. Victor now has thoughts of murder, hatred, and revenge. He is also guilt-ridden for having created the monster and feels that he is truly the real murderer. Imagine that you are Victor's closest friend, Henry Clerval, and you have learned that Victor created the monster that is still at large. What advice would you give to Victor? What will you do if he does not take your advice.

Frankenstein

39. After reading *Paradise Lost*, the other book the monster found, he begins to think he may be able to ease his dreadful loneliness. As autumn begins to turn into winter, the monster decides on a plan to approach one of the members of the family living in the cottage in hopes of finding comfort in human company. He knows the way he looks frightens people, so he resolves to go to the cottage when he knows the blind man would be there alone. The monster is terrified of doing this, but he makes himself go to the cottage and knock anyway. Write a letter to a friend about a time you, someone you saw or read about, or someone close to you had an experience of having to do something that was terrifying. Try to describe the feelings as vividly as possible. Be sure to tell what the feelings were like when the action taken was completed, also.
40. The scene at the end of this chapter when the family sees the monster is very sad. The monster is being judged solely on his appearance. This is particularly important, because we know from all that we have read about him that he is sensitive, intelligent, and only trying to relieve the pain of his loneliness. Suppose you were Felix. Write the dialogue you would have with your blind father telling him why you attacked the monster.

You: Father, Father, you cannot believe the horrible appearance of the man! There is no telling what he might have done to you.

Father: But, Felix, what makes you think he would have harmed me in any way?

You: