



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR FRANKENSTEIN BY MARY SHELLEY

1. Why does Victor delay fulfilling his promise to the creature? What reason do you think is most important?
2. Why is there no account of what Frankenstein learns from his contacts in London, “the information necessary for the completion of my promise”? What might Victor need to learn to assemble a female creature that he did not already know?
3. Victor refers to himself as “a blasted tree; the bolt has entered my soul”. To what does this refer? How might you compare Victor’s metaphor of being struck by lightning to the creature’s experience of the “spark of life”?
4. There are differences between how Victor approaches his first experiment and how he approaches his second experiment, despite his solitude in the latter. What are they? Is there a relationship between his different attitudes and their respective outcomes? Does Victor have a clearer sense of the second experiment’s potential outcomes? Why? Can we fully think things out in advance?  
Why does Victor decide to destroy the new creature? Is it simply because of the first creature’s appearance and a “countenance [that] expressed the utmost extent of malice and treachery”, observed in the dimmest of light? If the creature had not appeared, would Victor have finished his work?
5. The confrontation between the creature—“You are my creator, but I am your master;—obey!”—and Victor in this chapter is perhaps the most dramatic scene in the novel. Is the creature’s wrath justified? Have the tables turned as thoroughly as the creature imagines? Does Victor fully understand the scope of his decision not to cooperate with the creature’s demands?
6. What else must Victor believe if he believes that creating a new creature would be an act of “the basest and most atrocious selfishness”? Can he reasonably hold this belief in his head while at the same time feeling that he “was about the commission of a dreadful crime” when he is disposing of the torn-apart remains of the second creature?  
Victor refers to destiny often in this chapter. Is choice now extinguished for him, and is fulfilling his destiny all that he has left to do? In what does Victor see his destiny? Are there points when he could have changed it? Is destiny the same thing as path dependency?
7. Compare the respective legal cases against Justine and Victor and how they play out. What are the crucial pieces of evidence? How do the accused and the judicial authorities behave? How do the physical evidence, the circumstances, and other factors come together for a verdict?  
Why does Victor continue to insist to his father that he is a murderer?
8. Why does Victor not tell Elizabeth about the creature, especially before or at least on their wedding night? Are his potential reasons the same as or different from his reasons for not telling his father or Clerval?
9. Why does Victor skip quickly over his period of madness after Elizabeth’s murder and his father’s consequent death? Might he have been subject to another trial, this time for the murder of his bride?



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10. Victor expresses an extensive oath (or small prayer?) in this chapter, seemingly the first time he has invoked some religious or quasi-religious power. Where does this oath come from? Does his turn to spirituality here have anything to do with his experience with science? With law?
11. Why does Victor make a distinction between the “ardent desire of [his] soul” and “the mechanical impulse of some [external] power”? Is this distinction easy to make for him? For us? Can Victor’s creature make such a distinction? If we were to make such a creature today, would it be able to do so?
12. Why, in his letter to Margaret, does Captain Walton tell her that he really believes Victor’s story? Is Victor’s account sufficient?
13. Even though it is science fiction, Mary’s novel is set in the past. Given that the novel is told through letters and stories passed from one person to another, do you think the readers of its day might have taken it as a real-life, nonfiction account? As an alternate history? As something like the radio broadcast of H. G. Wells’s *The War of the Worlds* in 1938?
14. Walton quotes Victor as calling the creature a “sensitive and rational animal” and then shortly afterward “a man”. Is the former a good and full definition of the latter? How do we define personhood today? Can personhood include non rational animals? Rational nonanimals? Is personhood unitary, or can there be different varieties of it?
15. Victor recognizes that he has a duty to support “his [creature’s] happiness and well-being” and a duty to humanity “paramount to that”. What is the logic of Victor’s assigning the duty to humanity the paramount value? Is this view utilitarian—emphasizing the good of the many over the good of the one? Is it communitarian—that the creature really doesn’t belong to a broader community, whose values and safety are more important than the outsider’s? Is Victor’s logic here instead simply an excuse for his earlier mistakes? Are there times when the logic of privileging the larger number over the smaller number is incorrect and we should risk the well-being of the community for the individual?
16. Across the novel, there is something of a comparative ethics of suffering: Victor asserts that his suffering is greater than Justine’s, and Walton overhears the creature claiming that his suffering is greater than Victor’s. Is there any sense to be made of these comparisons? Can one being suffer more than another? Can suffering be objectively determined? Or is it entirely subjective? Is my suffering always more than yours simply because it is mine?
17. Do you agree with Walton that the creature does not feel true remorse but instead feels only frustrated that Victor is now free of him?
18. Do you believe the creature will extinguish himself? If you believe that promise, then do you believe the rest of his representations of his feelings and intentions? Why or why not?

***Discussion questions provided by Frankenbook.com.***



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