

Characters in *Frankenstein* (1831 Edition)

Characters

- Understand each **main character** in depth:
 - Their **traits** (e.g., brave, manipulative).
 - Their **development** throughout the text (character arc).
 - Their **relationships** with others in the story.
 - Their **role** in conveying themes.
- Be able to discuss **minor characters** if they play a critical role.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* features characters whose actions and relationships drive the novel's exploration of ambition, morality, and human responsibility. Each main character represents a facet of these themes, and even minor characters contribute to the narrative's depth.

Main Characters

Victor Frankenstein

- **Traits:**
 - Victor is ambitious, brilliant, and obsessed with the pursuit of knowledge. However, he is also arrogant, irresponsible, and prone to self-pity, particularly when confronted with the consequences of his actions.
 - **Development:**
 - Victor begins as an idealistic young scientist eager to unlock the mysteries of life. His triumph in creating the Creature quickly turns to horror, and he abandons his creation.
 - Throughout the story, Victor's guilt and regret grow as the Creature's vengeance destroys his loved ones. By the end, Victor is consumed by a desire for revenge, mirroring the Creature's own descent into bitterness.
 - **Relationships:**
 - *The Creature*: Victor's relationship with his creation is fraught with rejection, blame, and mutual destruction. His failure to empathise with the Creature underscores his lack of responsibility.
 - *Elizabeth Lavenza*: Victor's fiancée represents love and domesticity, the opposite of his scientific obsession. Her death symbolises the ultimate cost of Victor's hubris.
 - *Henry Clerval*: Victor's loyal friend and a symbol of moral goodness. Clerval's death further isolates Victor and underscores the Creature's revenge.
 - **Role in Themes:**
 - Victor embodies the dangers of unchecked ambition and the consequences of defying natural boundaries. His arc warns against the misuse of knowledge and highlights the importance of ethical responsibility.
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The Creature

- **Traits:**
 - The Creature is intelligent, sensitive, and initially benevolent. However, repeated rejection and isolation turn it vengeful and destructive.
 - **Development:**
 - Initially, the Creature seeks companionship and understanding, demonstrating a desire to connect with humanity.
 - After being rejected by society and its creator, the Creature's bitterness grows. It becomes an agent of vengeance, targeting Victor's loved ones.
 - By the end, the Creature expresses deep remorse for its actions, reflecting on the pain it has caused and its own suffering.
 - **Relationships:**
 - *Victor Frankenstein*: The Creature's creator, whom it blames for its misery. Their relationship is marked by a cycle of rejection, revenge, and mutual destruction.
 - *The De Lacey Family*: The Creature observes this family in secret, learning language and human emotions. Their rejection solidifies its view that it will never be accepted.
 - **Role in Themes:**
 - The Creature symbolises the consequences of neglect and the dangers of societal rejection. Its experiences explore themes of isolation, identity, and the moral responsibilities of creators.
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Elizabeth Lavenza

- **Traits:**
 - Elizabeth is gentle, loyal, and compassionate. She represents the domestic ideal, contrasting with Victor's scientific pursuits.
 - **Development:**
 - Elizabeth's character remains static, serving primarily as a symbol of innocence and love.
 - Her tragic death on her wedding night is the Creature's ultimate act of revenge against Victor.
 - **Relationships:**
 - *Victor Frankenstein*: Elizabeth is devoted to Victor, even as his obsession with science isolates him from her.
 - *The Frankenstein Family*: Elizabeth is an adopted member of the family and is beloved by all, symbolising unity and virtue.
 - **Role in Themes:**
 - Elizabeth represents the consequences of Victor's actions. Her death highlights the personal cost of his ambition and failure to take responsibility for his creation.
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Henry Clerval

- **Traits:**
 - Clerval is kind, idealistic, and deeply empathetic, embodying the moral and creative aspects of humanity.
 - **Development:**
 - Clerval serves as a foil to Victor, showing how ambition can be pursued ethically and with consideration for others.
 - His murder by the Creature represents the shattering of Victor's last link to innocence and friendship.
 - **Relationships:**
 - *Victor Frankenstein*: Clerval is Victor's closest friend, providing support and companionship. His death deepens Victor's isolation and guilt.
 - **Role in Themes:**
 - Clerval underscores the theme of friendship and humanity, highlighting what Victor loses in his obsessive quest for knowledge.
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Minor Characters

Captain Walton

- **Traits:**
 - Walton is ambitious and determined, mirroring Victor's early traits, but he is also introspective and capable of learning from others.
- **Role:**
 - Walton frames the narrative through his letters, serving as a witness to Victor's tale.
 - His decision to abandon his Arctic quest contrasts with Victor's relentless pursuit of knowledge, reinforcing the theme of ambition and its limits.

The De Lacey Family

- **Traits:**
 - The family is compassionate and loving, representing the ideal of human community.
- **Role:**
 - Their rejection of the Creature despite its initial kindness illustrates the theme of societal prejudice. Their role emphasises the consequences of exclusion and the longing for acceptance.

William Frankenstein

- **Traits:**
 - Victor's younger brother, William, is innocent and trusting.
 - **Role:**
 - William's murder by the Creature is its first act of revenge against Victor, symbolising the loss of innocence. His death sets the tone for the subsequent tragedies in Victor's life.
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Conclusion

The characters in *Frankenstein* are central to the novel's exploration of ambition, morality, and the consequences of human actions. Each relationship and development deepens the narrative, allowing readers to reflect on Shelley's cautionary messages about responsibility, rejection, and the destructive power of unchecked ambition. Understanding these characters in depth provides insight into the novel's enduring relevance and complexity.