

# Mary Shelley and Frankenstein: An AP Introduction



CARL LAEMMLE  
presents

# FRANKENSTEIN

THE MAN WHO MADE A MONSTER /

COLIN CLIVE - MAE CLARKE  
JOHN BOLES - BORIS KARLOFF

DWIGHT DRYE  
EDWARD VAN SLOAN  
and FREDERIC KERR

MUSIC BY WALTER BRUNNEN  
CAST BY WALTER BRUNNEN



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# When?



In the summer of 1816, 19 year old Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin and her lover, the poet Percy Shelley, visited the Lord Byron at his villa beside Lake Geneva in Switzerland.

# The Motivation

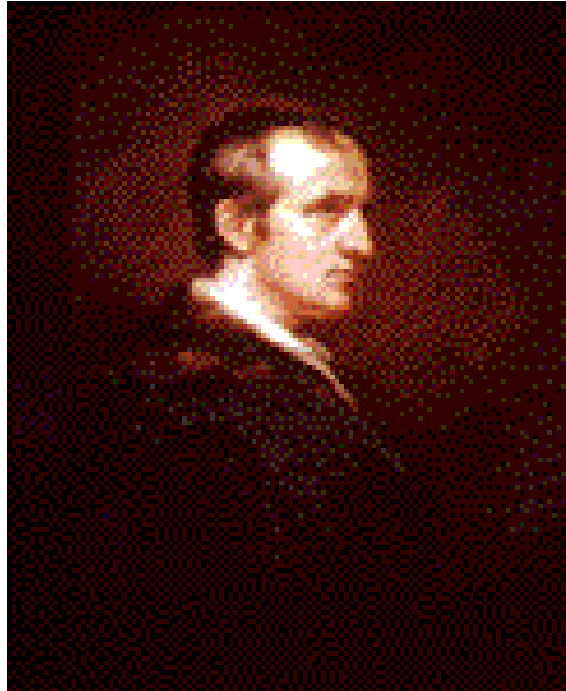
Stormy weather frequently forced them indoors, where they and Byron's other guests sometimes read from a volume of ghost stories. One evening, Byron challenged his guests to each write one themselves. Mary's story, inspired by a dream, became *Frankenstein*.



# Her Family's Influence

Her father, William Godwin, was a political thinker and writer.

Her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, was a feminist.



# Women's Rights

- Shelley is the daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft, *Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1798)—demanded equal rights to vote of all who were deprived (middle class, workers, women)
- Mother died when she was 11 days old
  - What does it mean to grow up without a mother?

# Women's Rights

- Most women in *Frankenstein* act how they are supposed to act—subservient, passive, submissive
- Irony—written by female child of an early feminist, yet there are very few female characters and only one seemingly strong female role

# Condemnation of “Patriarchy”

- Male scientists violating female Nature—usurping the woman’s ability to bear children
- Male work ethic—self-destructive to pursue power against all odds, must sacrifice relationships with family and friends (Victor Frankenstein and Robert Walton)
- Who is the monster?



# Society's Influence: Educational Theories of the 1800s

- John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) argued that a child is a "blank slate" (tabula rasa) that is formed only through experience.
- Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Emile, or On Education* (1762) promotes the idea that a child's upbringing is responsible for his nature.

# ROMANTICISM

- Analyze Caspar David Friedrich's 1818 Romantic painting *Wanderer above the Sea of Fog*.
- Consider the following:
  - What is the most **dominant image**? What is on the periphery?
  - Describe the artist's use of **color, medium, and style**.
  - What **mood** or **theme** does the painting evoke?
  - How might the **title** affect the analysis?

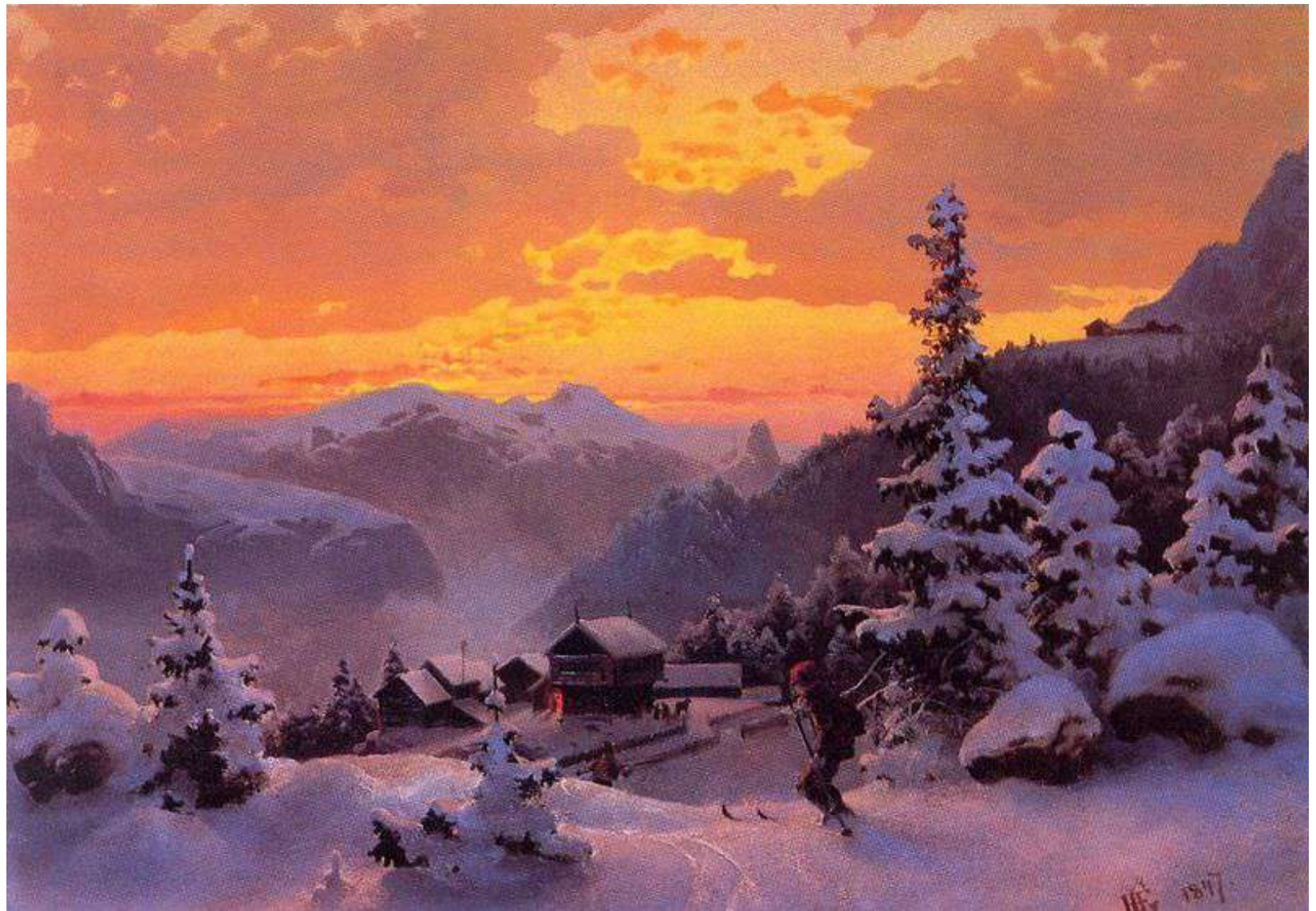


# Emotion and Intuition

- Romanticism emphasizes **rejection of the rational** and **intellectual** (by products of the Enlightenment) in favor of **intuition** (gut feelings) and **emotions**.
  - Romanticism was a **revolt** against aristocratic social and political **norms** of the Age of Enlightenment and a reaction against the **scientific rationalization of nature** (neoclassicism).
  - **Emotions** are the sole province of art; characters are **dominated by emotions**, which sometimes leads to erratic or non-rational behavior.

# Setting and Time

- Romantic literature usually has an **obscure** or **unknown place** (such as a foreign country) as the setting and often is set in a **remote time**, all of which are vague.
  - Writers use new or different worlds so that readers would concentrate on unusual themes and ideas.
  - *Frankenstein* may be somewhat of an exception to this characteristic since Shelley wanted to emphasize the use of modern science in her era.



# Role of Nature

- Romantics believed in the **healing power of nature** and in the nobility of “the savage.”
  - Rousseau, a French philosopher of that time said, “Society makes the innocent bad or evil.” (belief in **innate goodness**)
  - The emotions of horror, terror, trepidation, and awe were recognized as legitimate reactions when one encounters the **sublimity of untamed nature**.
  - A common idea was that of the disenfranchised man. Such men found themselves unable to live in society and were often revered and/or sympathized with.
    - They sought **solitude** in nature, believing that the key to all emotional healing could be found in nature.





# Verisimilitude—the appearance of being real

- The Romantic writer is usually NOT interested in creating realistic or believable characters.
  - Victor Hugo called Romanticism “liberalism in literature.” **The artist and the writer were free from restraint and rule.**
  - The **subject matter is strange, bizarre, unusual, and unexpected.** There is a fascination with mystery and the supernatural.
- Romantics placed emphasis on human individuality and advocacy of free thought.
  - Romantic literature usually cannot be construed as real. It builds on a psychological desire to **escape the realities of life.**



# Gothicism

- Brainstorm the characteristics of the Gothic tradition based on your knowledge of modern horror movies like *Nightmare on Elm Street* (Freddy Kruger) or *Silence of the Lambs* (Hannibal Lecter).
- Try to find these and additional elements of Gothicism in Michael Jackson's *Thriller*.



# The Gothic Novel

Gothicism derives its name from characteristics of Gothic architecture which depict **man's conflict with supernatural forces** (gargoyles, angels, demons, monsters.)

# DIAGRAM OF A GOTH GIRL

dark eye makeup  
so they can see  
the world how it  
really is...dark and  
evil

dyed hair with dark color  
streaks

pierced face, anything that can  
have a hole in it

dog collar...for  
some reason

shirt with some band on it

sleeves that arent  
attached to  
anything

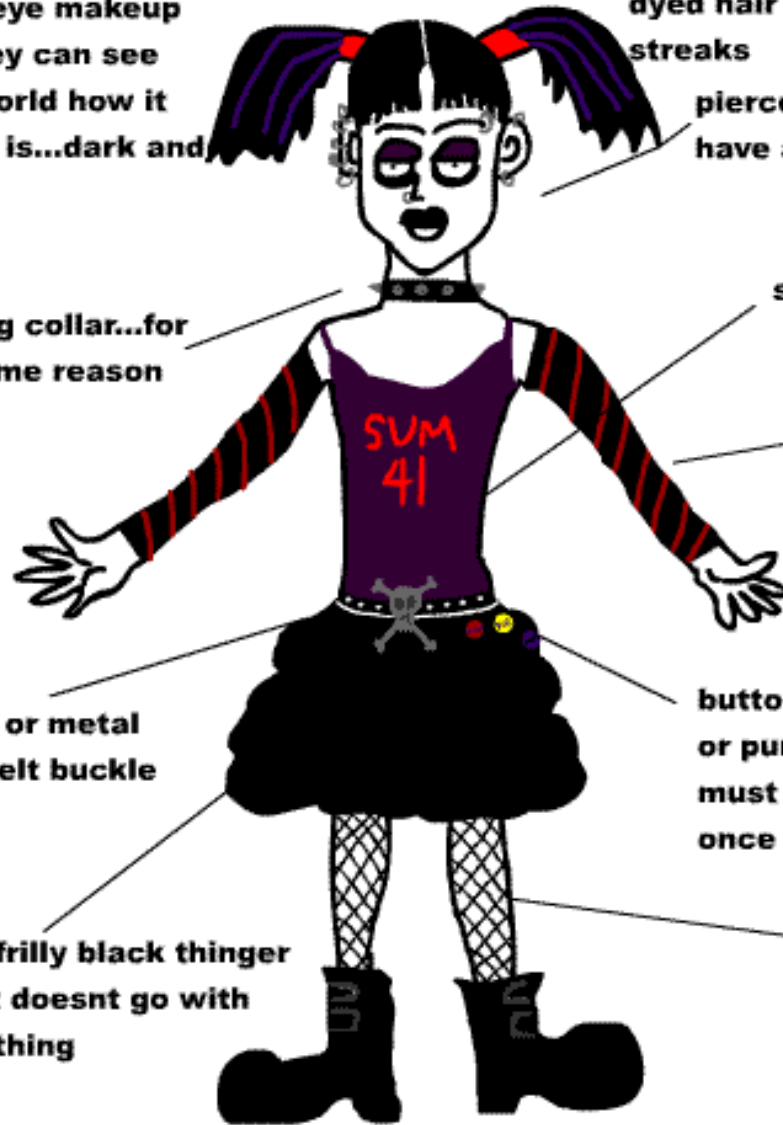
skull or metal  
big belt buckle

buttons saying stuff like, death,  
or punk rocks, the word punk  
must appear on a goth at least  
once

big frilly black thinger  
that doesnt go with  
anything

fishnet stockings  
because only a goth  
can get away with  
wearing them...or  
whores

oversized combat boots



# Characteristics of Gothicism

- An offshoot of Romantic literature
- The predecessor of modern horror movies in both theme and style—evoke terror and horror
- The author emphasizes the **grotesque** and the **mysterious, desolate environments**, the horrible, the ghostly, and the abject **fear** that can be aroused in either the reader or the viewer.
  - Prominent features of gothic novels included terror, mystery, the supernatural, ghosts, haunted buildings, castles, trapdoors, doom, death, decay, madness, hereditary curses, and so on.

# Setting

- The setting is often an **old decaying mansion in a desolate countryside or unfamiliar surroundings**; castles full of cobwebs, bats, strange noises, secret panels, etc.
- The Gothic novel is set in some **exotic place** like Italy and involving a heroine (or, less often, hero) in a struggle with the mysteriously evil and seemingly supernatural.
- The setting may be a **landscape of vast dark forest with vegetation that bordered on excessive**, concealed ruins with horrific rooms, monasteries and a forlorn character who excels at the melancholy.



# Nature

- Along with nature having the power of healing (like Romanticism), nature has the **power of destruction**. Storms destroy many things.
- One of the most common features is the indication of the **mood through the weather**. When bad things are going to happen, there is inevitably a storm outside.



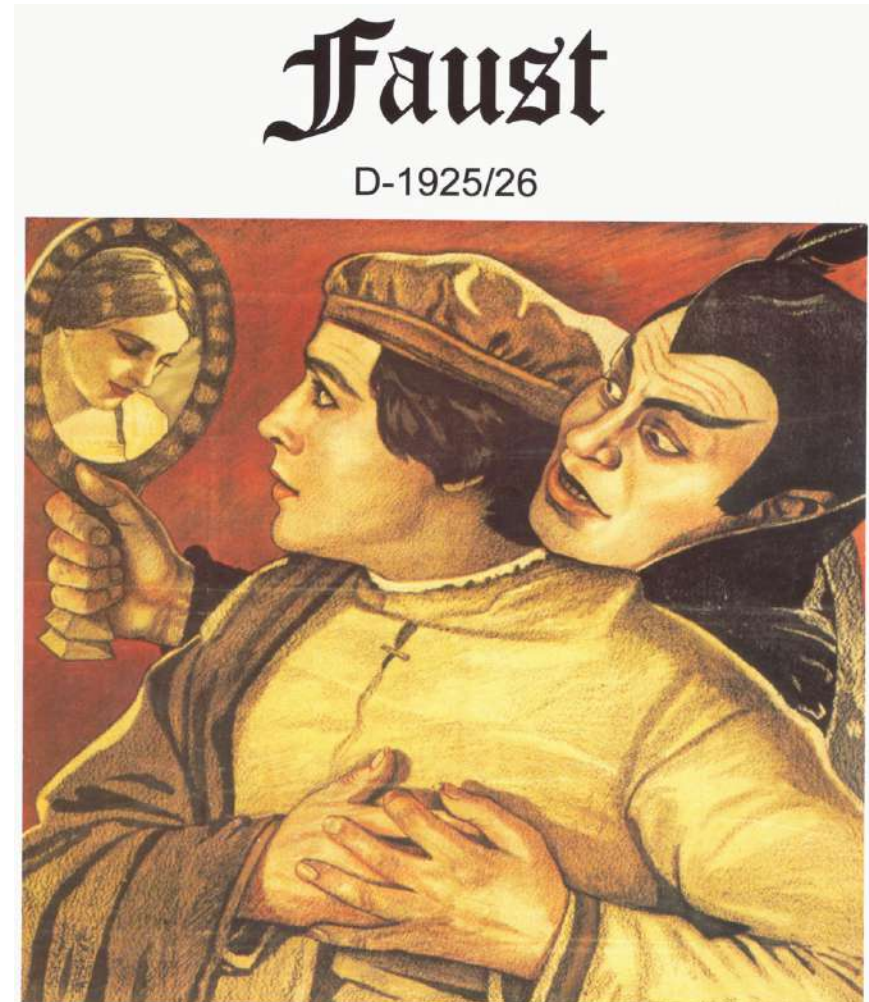
# Motifs in Gothic Literature

- **The Doppelganger or double self:** The double motif suggests that humans are burdened with a dual nature, a soul forever divided.



# Motifs in Gothic Literature

- **Forbidden Knowledge or Power:** Man tries to overcome human limitations and make himself into a "god." This ambition usually leads to the hero's "fall" or destruction.



# Motifs in Gothic Literature

- **Monster/Satanic Hero/Fallen Man:** The hero is isolated from others by his fall and either becomes a monster or confronts a monster who is his double. He becomes a "Satanic hero" if, like Satan, he has courageously defied the rules of God's universe and has tried to transform himself into a god.



# Motifs in Gothic Literature

- **Dreams/Visions:** Terrible truths are often revealed to characters through dreams or visions. When the person sleeps, reason sleeps and the supernatural can break through.

