

8C: Science & Science Fiction

In this unit, students read *Gris Grimly's Frankenstein*, a graphic novel that adds engaging illustrations to an abridged version of Mary Shelley's famous 1818 book. Grimly's haunting representations of Frankenstein's creature help students understand and work with some of the novel's central themes: Frankenstein's responsibility for his creation, the role of society in shaping our identity and sense of belonging in the world, and the promises and risks of technological advances. Students trace Victor Frankenstein's level of empathy for his creation throughout the story, rewrite and act out key scenes from the creature's point of view, analyze Shelley's allusions to figures and stories from Greek mythology and Biblical texts, and debate whether Victor owes the creature a companion. At the end of the unit, after research and debate, students write an essay to develop their claim about whether or not Victor's creature should ultimately be considered human.

In the Poetical Science sub-unit, students read two poems, a speech, and excerpts from Chapter 1 of Walter Isaacson's *The Innovators* to compare and contrast the ways in which William Wordsworth, Lord Byron, and Ada Lovelace view man's relationship with technology. The texts in this unit raise the question: Are we the masters of our machines, or are the machines our masters?

Core texts your student will read:

- *Gris Grimly's Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley and Gris Grimly
- Excerpt from Genesis 2, Revised Standard Version
- "Frankenstein (1931) A Man-Made Monster in Grand Guignol Film Story"
- "Prometheus," from *Heroes, Gods and Monsters of the Greek Myths* by Bernard Evslin
- Excerpts from *The Innovators* by Walter Isaacson
- "The Tables Turned" by William Wordsworth
- "Debate on the Frame-Work Bill, in the House of Lords" by Lord Byron
- "All Watched Over by Machines of Loving Grace" by Richard Brautigan

What my students will do/learn:

- Students read and discuss Gris Grimly's graphic novel, using the text and the illustrations to understand both Victor's and the monster's perspectives and to consider their own level of sympathy for the monster compared to Victor's.
- Students review two texts that influenced Mary Shelley in her writing of *Frankenstein*: the Greek myth "Prometheus" and the account of Adam's creation in Genesis. They reflect on the ways in which these works influenced Shelley's depiction of Victor and his monster.
- Students debate central questions, including whether the creature deserves a companion and whether Dr. Frankenstein or his creature are more deserving of the reader's sympathy.

- Students examine poetry and non-fiction texts written during the same time period that Shelley wrote *Frankenstein* to explore the advances and debates surrounding technology, and to connect these texts to themes in *Frankenstein*.
- Students continue to use key classroom routines, including the sharing routine, during which classmates respond to shared writing by noting one effective way the writer used details or evidence.
- Students continue to write in response to prompts 2–3 times weekly, and practice analytic writing in response to text by developing an idea or claim and providing support with details or evidence.
- Students write an end-of-unit essay responding to the following prompt: Is Frankenstein's creature human?

Here are some conversation starters that you can use during this unit to promote discussion and encourage continued learning with your student.

1. Did you sympathize with Dr. Frankenstein or the creature more? Why?
2. In what ways did the illustrations affect the way you read the *Frankenstein* text? How did it help? Were there any drawbacks? What were your favorite illustrations?
3. What type of responsibility does Frankenstein have for the care and actions of the creature he created?
4. Ada Lovelace's thinking allowed humans to develop computers to be as powerful as they are today. Do you think she would be happy or concerned about how our lives have been impacted by computing technology? Can you share a piece of writing with me in which you used evidence or details from the text to support your controlling idea or claim? (Provide feedback to your student by finding something in their writing that you can respond to as a reader. For example, "I like how you explained that Victor's quote—'I lived in daily fear, lest the monster whom I had created should perpetrate some new wickedness (74)'—shows that he fears the creature rather than cares for it.")
5. How would you describe Frankenstein's creature? In what ways might some claim he is human? How might some view him as inhuman?