

# FRANKENSTEIN

de Kenneth BRANAGH

## FICHE TECHNIQUE

Titre original (original title) : Mary Shelley's Frankenstein  
Pays (nationality) : USA  
Durée (running time) : 2h08  
Année (year) : 1994  
Genre : Fantastique  
Scénario : Steph LADY et Frank DARABONT d'après la nouvelle de (based on) Mary SHELLEY('s novel), *Frankenstein*, écrite en (written in) 1818  
Directeur de la photographie : Roger PRATT  
Décors : Tim HARVEY  
Costumes : James ACHESON  
Maquillage : Daniel PARKER  
Effets spéciaux : Dave ELTHAM, Steve HAMILTON, Garth INNS  
Musique : Patrick DOYLE  
Coproduction : American Zoetrope / TriStar Pictures / Japan Satellite Broadcasting / Indieprod Films  
Distribution : Columbia TriStar Films  
Interprètes (cast) : Kenneth BRANAGH (Le docteur Victor Frankenstein), Robert DE NIRO (la créature / l'unijambiste), Helena BONHAM CARTER (Elizabeth)  
Sortie : 11 janvier 1995

## SYNOPSIS

Victor Frankenstein, a young scientist, is willing to create life artificially. By assembling parts of dead bodies, he manages to create a monster who vows revenge on his creator after being rejected by society.

## A FEW NOTES ON MARY SHELLEY AND HER NOVEL

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, born in 1797, was the daughter of William Godwin and Mary Wollstonecraft, a staunch defender of women's rights. She was courted by the Romantic poet Percy Shelley (who was already married) in the summer of 1814. Two years later, they spent the summer in Switzerland with Lord Byron (another Romantic poet) amusing themselves by reading and writing ghost stories. Mary Shelley wrote *Frankenstein*, a novel built in three layers :

- In the outermost layer, Robert Walton, in his letters to his sister, describes his voyage to the North Pole, and his encounter with Victor Frankenstein.
- In the middle layer, Frankenstein tells Walton how he created the monster and abandoned it in disgust and how the creature avenged itself by murdering all those his creator loved.
- In the central layer, the monster addresses Frankenstein and describes the development of his mind after the flight from the laboratory and how men rejected him, until he dies by committing suicide.

M. Shelley's novel is one of the highest achievements in the gothic genre.

Gothic means that the author emphasizes the grotesque elements (ex : the monster), the mysterious (some things are never told or explained to the reader), the desolate environments (ex : the Arctic), the horrible (the murders), the ghostly (evocation of the monster in eerie situations) and the fear that may be aroused in the reader or the writer.

All gothic stories have many qualities in common :

- Sense of remoteness and indefiniteness
- Emphasis on the physical aspects of the various structures (here : the laboratory)

- The monster is a super-sensitive hero but due to his physical appearance he cannot share his feelings and thus is rejected
- Sort of psychic communication between some characters. The creature always seems to know where his creator is.

## MAIN THEMES

- Birth and creation
- The pursuit of knowledge
- Alienation and isolation, loneliness
- Life and death
- Family

## PISTES PÉDAGOGIQUES

Ces pistes sont proposées pour des sections plutôt littéraires y compris des 1<sup>ères</sup> L ayant choisi l'option Anglais renforcé.

Amorce possible de la séquence à partir du document iconographique proposé dans *Broadways Ties* ES/S/L p.145.

### Excerpt 1 : abridged from chapt. 5 pp 56 – 57

#### EXCERPT 1

#### USEFUL VOCABULARY

l.1 I beheld	= I saw
l.2 toils	= my works
l.5 pattered	= knocked
l.6 panes	= windows
l.11 delineate	= give an idea of
l.13 features	= traits du visage
l.18 dun-white socket	= une orbite d'un blanc terne
l.19 shrivelled	= ridé, flétri
l.22 sole	= only
l.31 dew	= sweat
l.32 shattered	= claquaient
l.38 wrinkled	= plissait, tordait
l.39 stretched out	= tendu
l.40 detain	= hold
l.46 countenance	= face
l.47 endowed with animation	= being able to move again
l.49 joint	= articulation

#### WORDS TO BE TRANSLATED WITH THE HELP OF THE CONTEXT

l.5 dismally	=
l.6 candle	=
l.7 glimmer	=
l.7 dull	=
l.9 limb	=
l.11 pain	=
l.11 wretch	=
l.12 endeavoured	=

l. 23 health	=
l.29 forgetfulness	=
l.30 disturbed	=
l.30 wildest	=
l.31 started	=
l.36 curtain	=
l.37 jaw	=
l.38 grin	=
l.48 gazed on	=

## EXCERPT 1 UNDERSTANDING

### I General analysis

1. Whose point of view? (= who sees the scene?)
2. Who tells the story? So what sort of narrative is it?
3. What can you deduce from this information?
4. What event does this passage narrate? Give a title to the extract.
5. Who are the two characters?

### II Detailed analysis

#### *The setting*

1. Where does the scene take place? Justify your answer with one element from the text.
2. When does it take place?
3. What is the atmosphere like?
4. Pick out the various elements creating this atmosphere
5. What is Mary Shelley's intention here?

#### *The scientist*

1. Using these words "endeavoured", "I had worked hard", "deprived myself of rest and health", "ardour", "exceeded moderation", draw a moral portrait of the man.
2. Imagine the way of life he has led the weeks before this crucial moment.
3. Quoting the text and using your own words, describe his state of mind all through this passage.
4. Explain what is meant by 'the different.....human nature' l.20
5. Can you account for his present feelings?
6. Express some of his regrets starting your sentences with 'I'

#### *The creature*

1. What words does the scientist use to talk about it?
2. From line 10 to line 19 pick out the elements describing the creature.
3. From line 31 to line 45 show that the monster may not be entirely inhuman

### III Conclusion

According to you, what makes this passage forceful?

**1<sup>ère</sup> évaluation portant sur les connaissances acquises sur l'œuvre et son auteur.**

### ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS

1. What is specific about the name Frankenstein?
2. What does the name Frankenstein generally evoke?

3. Give some pieces of information on the author (name, date of birth and death, age when she wrote the novel, parents and life)
4. Why has her novel become a myth?
5. Give a definition and the characteristics of the Gothic genre.
6. Make a summary of the plot.
7. Describe the main elements of the visual we studied and explain why it is a crucial moment in the story.

## Excerpt 2 : abridged from chapt 5 pp 116-117

### EXCERPT 2 WORKSHEET

'These narrations' l.1, refer to the daily conversations between a father and his grown-up children, the De Laceys, in their cottage.

### USEFUL VOCABULARY

l.3 base	= bas
l.4 scion	= extension
l.6 befall	= échoir à
l.9 blind mole	= taupe aveugle
l.9 harmless worm	= ver inoffensif
l.13 loathing	= répugnance
l.14 induce	= amener à
l.16 unsullied	= pure
l.19 doomed	= condamné à
l.22 endued	= dote de
l.23 loathsome	= repoussant
l.24 coarse	= grossier, rude
l.25 diet	= (ici) nourriture
l.25 bore	= supporter
l.26 frame	= (ici) corps
l.27 blot	= une tâche
l.29 disown	= désavouer
l.31 dispel	= dissiper
l.31 sorrow	= chagrin
l.42 intercourse	= relations
l.43 by stealth	= par ruse

### GENERAL UNDERSTANDING

1. Who is speaking?
2. What recurrent punctuation mark can you see all along this passage?
3. What are they used for?
4. In what way is the character different in this excerpt?

### DETAILED UNDERSTANDING

#### §1

*From line 1 to 5*

Can you account for the 'strange feelings' experienced by the character?  
What vision does he have of man?

*From line 6 to 13*

What surprises the narrator?

Then, what can you infer (= déduire) on the narrator's personality?

## §2

l.15 'Your' who do you think the narrator is addressing?

l.16-20 What does he discover about the human race?

l.20-30 What feelings must he be experiencing?

What does he indirectly reproach his creator for?

In what ways is he different from man?

## §3/4

Using the following words, account for the narrator's feelings and thoughts

'agony' l.30 ; 'knowledge' l.32 ; 'death' l.39 ; 'shut out' l.42 ; 'increased the desire' l.44

## Conclusion :

What impression does this passage convey on the reader?

Express some of the narrator's wishes

## 2<sup>nd</sup>e évaluation : compréhension écrite d'un extrait.

### Excerpt 3 : abridged from chapt. 10 pp 140-141

#### EXCERPT 3

#### THE REQUEST

#### I Find the following words (in order) (4pts)

perplexe :

monstre :

méchant :

principalement :

se faire plaisir :

bonheur :

frissonner :

devoir (verbe) :

#### II General understanding on the whole excerpt (3pts)

1. Who are the main characters? (0,5)
2. L.4 'proposition' : what does it consist in? Explain in your own words and quote the text to justify your answer. (1,5)
3. Does Frankenstein accept? Briefly define his position. (1)

#### III Detailed understanding

*From line 1 to 18 (7pts)*

1. What argument does the creature give for her request (= demande)? Explain and support your answer with one quote. (2)
2. What sort of relation is established between them now? (2)
3. 'I am malicious because I am miserable' l.14. What can you deduce about the creature from this sentence? (2)
4. What will she do if Victor Frankenstein does not accept her request? (1)

*From line 19 to 34 (6pts)*

1. Account for the creature's feelings. (1,5)
2. What is she ready to do if her request is accepted? (1,5)

3. What impact do her words have on the reader? (1,5)
4. So, what is Shelley's intention? (1,5)

*From line 35 to 40 (5pts)*

Explain the scientist's difficult choice and his new feelings.

**IV Conclusion : in about 50 words say what excerpt you liked best and why. (5pts)**

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**Dernière activité proposée en accompagnement de la correction du devoir.**

**WORD FORMATION**

Try to fill in the blanks. Some of them will remain blank!

Verb	Noun	Adj.	Adv.
	Wonder		
		Powerful	
	Loathing		
		Hot	
			Coldly
	Sorrow		
Know			
		Hungry	
			Thirstily
Think			

**INFORMATIONS COMPLÉMENTAIRES**

- ▶ Plusieurs sites web sont accessibles.
- ▶ Article sur Mary Shelley et son œuvre dans *Speakeasy* Sept./oct. 2005
- ▶ Un dossier sur l'œuvre et son auteur a été également publié dans *Standpoints* n°25 Sept.2005

Il est préférable de réserver l'étude des extraits pour des élèves qui ont un bon niveau d'Anglais, mais certains des thèmes peuvent être traités également avec des élèves de Terminales S en particulier à partir du document iconographique de *Broadways Tles* cité précédemment.