### Form and Structure

**Epistolary novel**
- Novel written in the form of letters. This allows the author to establish the narrative point of view clearly (who is telling us the story) and change it at different times (e.g., when Robert Walton writes, or when Victor writes). It also allows the character to reflect on events as they re-tell them.

**Embedded Narrative/Framed Narrative**
- A narrative within a narrative. E.g., We start and end with the story of Robert Walton. Within that, and for most of the novel, we follow the story of Victor Frankenstein. Within that, we also have the story of the Creature! This firstly allows us to see events from different perspectives. It also allows the characters in the ‘outer’ layer to reflect on the moral/point of the inner stories.

**Dramatic Irony**
- This is when the reader knows something which the characters don’t; the reader is in a privileged position. For example, in Frankenstein we know that Victor ends up in the Arctic Circle in very poor health, but we don’t know why. This creates anticipation and narrative intrigue for us.

**Foreshadowing**
- This is when an event, word etc gives the reader a hint about what will happen in the future.
The Plot

1. Victor Frankenstein’s father Alphonse and his best friend’s daughter Caroline get married and have a child (Victor).

2. Victor has a happy and loving childhood, well cared for by his parents, who also have 2 more sons: William and Ernest.

3. Victor’s family adopts Elizabeth Lavenza, a pretty blonde Italian orphan. Victor also has a best friend – Henry Clerval. The three of them enjoy learning together.


5. Victor attends university in Ingolstadt. He finds that lots of his previous learning is out of date, but soon finds a professor who can teach him lots about Biology. Victor becomes obsessed with his studies, and his mission to create a human life.

6. Victor locks himself away for months, constructing a human body from corpses he finds and steals from graveyards. He eventually brings the creature to life.

7. Horrified at what he has done, Victor runs away from the creature and hides from it in his bedroom. Rejected, the creature flees.

8. Victor becomes ill due to months of self-neglect and guilt. His friend Henry arrives in Ingolstadt and nurses him back to health, over a period of some months.

9. The creature, along and confused, wanders the countryside in search of food and warmth. He is rejected and feared by any humans who see him, and hides in the woods.

10. The creature hides in a hovel and spies on a family; the De Lacys. He watches their lives and learns more about how people live together. The creature helps the De Lacys by preparing fire wood for them. He also learns English as the old man teaches Safie (the Turkish woman) to speak their language.

11. The creature grows to love the family and wants to reveal himself to them, hoping for acceptance. The creature helps the De Lacys by preparing fire wood for them. He also learns English as the old man teaches Safie (the Turkish woman) to speak their language.

12. Having finally recovered, Victor heads home to Geneva to see his family. When he approaches, he sees the creature in the woods. Arriving home, Victor learns that William has been murdered and the family servant Justine Moritz has been accused of the crime.

13. Strongly suspecting that the creature murdered William and framed Justine, Victor says nothing (because of his own guilt, and because he doesn’t think people will believe him). Justine is executed.

14. Guilty and sad, Victor retreats to the mountains of Chamonix. There, he sees the creature, who begs him to listen to his story. Victor tries to attack the creature.

15. The creature explains his sad story to Victor, and demands that Victor make him a female companion. Victor reluctantly agrees.

16. Victor starts to make a female companion but finds the work disgusting. He changes his mind and destroys the partly-made companion. The creature, who is spurning on him, sees, and kills Henri Clerval in revenge.

17. Victor is arrested on suspicion of murdering Henri Clerval and becomes ill. He is eventually set free.

18. Victor returns to Geneva and marries Elizabeth, even though the monster has threatened ‘I will be with you on your wedding night’.

19. The creature murders Elizabeth. With no family left to live for, Victor decides to hunt down the creature and kill him for revenge.

20. Victor finally agrees to turn the ship around and return to the north pole. Victor meets a starving and ill Victor Frankenstein on his way there. Victor decides to explain why he is heading towards the North Pole.

21. Walton meets a starving and ill Victor Frankenstein on his way there. Victor decides to explain why he is heading towards the North Pole.

22. Walton finally agrees to turn the ship around and return to the north pole.

23. Walton discovers the creature mourning Victor, crying. He has nothing left to live for so disappears into the night, presumably to kill himself.
### Themes and quotes

| **Ambition/Obsession** | Both Walton and Victor aim for major discoveries/achievements, and risk others’ safety and happiness to achieve their goals. Both seem foolishly proud and vain (‘hubris’) for doing so. Victor’s tale is a warning for Walton not to be too ambitious, as others could be harmed (and he heeds this warning; he abandons his quest). | • “deeply smitten with the thirst for knowledge” (Victor)  
• “You seek for knowledge and wisdom as I once did.” (Victor)  
• “I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation.” (Victor)  
• “One man’s life or death were but a small price to pay for the acquirement of the knowledge…” (Walton)  
• “But success SHALL crown my endeavours. Wherefore not? Thus far I have gone, tracing a secure way over the pathless seas, the very stars themselves being witnesses and testimonies of my triumph. Why not still proceed over the untamed yet obedient element?” (Walton) |
| **Family/Love** | Family is important to Victor and he describes having an exceptionally happy family. Family and love are all the Creature longs for, but he is always rejected by his ‘father’ Victor, strangers and the De Lacy family. The creature would be happy with a female companion; he robs Victor of Elizabeth as revenge. | • “My parents were possessed by the very spirit of kindness and indulgence!” (Victor)  
• Elizabeth described as ‘The innocent and helpless creature bestowed on them by heaven”. Also described as ‘Saint’, ‘angel’. (Victor)  
• “I remembered Adam’s supplication to his Creator. But where was mine? He had abandoned me, and in the bitterness of my heart I cursed him.” (Creature) |
| **Death/the visceral** | Body parts, horror, gore – physical deformities, the use of drugs, medicine etc. The De Lacy family reacts to seeing the Creature with horror due to his appearance. Victor is disgusted by his creation, and by his attempts to create a female companion. | • ‘His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath: his hair was of a lustrous black and flowing; his teeth of a pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contrast with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.” (Victor) |
| **Man vs God** | Both Victor and Walton talk of ‘conquering’ nature with science, rather than exploring or enjoying it. This emphasises their ambitions and risk-taking natures. Victor’s main goal in the novel is to ‘cheat death’ – to create life. This bold aim would be seen as shocking and blasphemous to a mostly religious audience. The link to Prometheus is important as it foreshadows the danger of ‘playing God’ and implies that such a lofty goal is dangerously ambitious. | • ‘I ought to be thy Adam but I am rather the fallen angel’ (Creature)  
• “Ever since that fateful night, the end of my labours, and the beginning of my misfortunes, I had conceived a violent antipathy even to the name of natural philosophy.” (Victor)  
• ‘Acursed creator! Why did you form a monster so hideous that even YOU turned from me in disgust? God, in pity, made man beautiful and alluring, after his own image; but my form is a filthy type of yours, more horrid even from the very resemblance.’ (Creature) |
| **Innocence vs Guilt** | Shelley explores the good and bad sides of characters by showing us their bold ambitions and love for their families (Robert Walton and Victor), before their character flaws (Robert – taking risks with his sailors’ lives, and Victor – rejecting his creation). Shelley also write the creature as terrifying at first, then reveals his innocent side – someone ignorant of human language and culture, essentially innocent and neglected. In the end the reader may not like the Creature but we understand his actions and feel sympathy for him. | • ‘I am malicious because I am miserable.’ (Creature)  
• “I trod heaven in my thoughts, now exulting in my powers, now burning with the idea of their effects. From my infancy I was imbued with high hopes and a lofty ambition.” (Victor)  
• “Cursed, cursed creator! Why did I live? Why, in that instant, did I not extinguish the spark of existence which you had so wantonly bestowed?” (Creature) |
| **Revenge** | Both Victor and the Creature feel wronged and seek revenge even at the cost of their own safety, health and happiness. The Creature seeks revenge by hunting down Victor, the ‘father’ figure who he loves. Victor sacrifices his own life to kill the Creature, after his family and friends die. | • “I gazed on my victim, and my heart swelled with exultation and hellish triumph;” (Creature)  
• “If I cannot inspire love, I will cause fear.” (Creature) |