

Slide 1: Overview of Frankenstein

Frankenstein is a novel originally written in 1816 by Mary Shelley. It was part of a game several of those she had been travelling with decided to play, who could write the best ghost story.

Frankenstein was written in the context of gothic literature and architecture, influenced by the ideas of horror within the 1800s. Frankenstein is primarily a semi horror with gothic themes strongly showing, with heavy descriptions of gothic architecture also running throughout. The eerie use of setting and description of things such as chiaroscuro, leads to a highly immersive and suspenseful form of fiction, with no real dull moments.

Plot Summary:

The book starts off with a series of letters, Robert Walton, the captain of a ship heading for the arctic describing his difficult journey. Not far into the trip their progress is halted by impassable ice, the ship becomes trapped. Not long after becoming trapped the crew encounters Victor Frankenstein, he had been travelling by dog sled. Walton, concerned for his health takes him aboard the ship and tries to nurse him back to health.

Victor begins to recount the tale of how he came to be here, and his monster. He began his life in Geneva, and eventually gained entry to the university of Ingolstadt, where he became consumed by his work towards discovering the secret of life, and after several years he became convinced he had found it. This is where the story proper begins, with us launching from the scene between Victor and Walton, it's also where we begin to observe our archetypal theory in the form of our characters beginning their Journey's, and the universe being established. We can especially see the importance of nature and beliefs beginning to be demonstrated here. We have Victor's context set up from here, the beginning of his journey, and we will soon have the Monster's beginning too. The setting and ambience of the gothic literature is solidified here as well, reinforcing the setting for the rest of the novel. This early part of Victor's story can be seen as the "birth phase" to quote Frye, everything is calm and peaceful, and there is nothing inherently wrong.

Victor then spends months collecting all the necessary human body parts, and using his newfound knowledge, brings it to life. Victor becomes terrified by the sight before him and ends up fleeing from the monster. Victor falls ill from remorse and receiving a letter from his father that his brother had been murdered he hurries home. Catching a glimpse of the monster on the way home he becomes convinced it was the monster's doing. However, a young woman is accused, tried and executed for the crime. This is where the novel has fully entered the "autumn and death phase", Victor, the hero, or even antihero has become isolated and the tragedy has begun. As is typical for gothic literature and similar tragedy stories, death is a constant, and makes for an interesting story due to unconscious thinking. It is something we all encounter, and these forms of literature use it to create an immersive and capturing experience.

Victor ventures into the mountains to deal with his grief where he is encountered by the monster, it admits to the murder but begs for understanding, demanding Victor create him a mate to serve as his companion. After reluctantly beginning work on a female monster, Victor becomes once again horrified by the concept, destroying the creation and enraging the first monster, who swears he will be with Victor on his wedding night. After returning home to Geneva Victor marries Elizabeth, fearing the monster's vow he sends Elizabeth away, while he plans to encounter the monster he hears Elizabeth's scream, realizing it had come for her and not him. Victor returns home and his own father dies out of grief a short time later. This marks the beginning of the "winter and dissolution phase" and quite appropriately the story enters literal winter terrain. This is the peak of archetypal tragedy, and marks the beginning of the end for the hero or antihero. Enraged, Victor vows to destroy the monster. He chases the monster northward, where he finally encounters Walton, at this point the narrative catches up to the beginning of the story, Victor, already weak falls ill and dies. Several days later Walton finds the monster weeping over Victor's body, saying now his cruel creator had perished he may now too, and departs for the northernmost ice to, presumably, die. Frankenstein strays from the ideas of the hero's journey and the monomyth through the fact it is based in gothic literature, and takes a tragedy form. The "hero" was never going to win, however if we look harder we can see that it still applies. Both Victor and the monster can be seen undergoing difficulties, adapting, and then coming to the end of their "quest". For Victor it was the realization his ways were wrong, and it killed everyone he loved, and now him. For the monster it was the final victory over his creator, revenge for his heinous mistreatment.

Slide 2: Overview of Blade Runner

Blade runner takes a considerable amount of inspiration from Frankenstein, with differences stemming from the genre and somewhat from the context of the time and author. Blade runner was written in the context of Reaganism, the growth of cooperate, private and capitalistic power and a general decline of state-based power. Ronald Reagan a rather strict conservative view in a time where advancement in political and technology was rapid. One topic that was a point of great contention was the beginning of genetic modification, with many pushing back and claiming it "playing god". Even the context of Blade Runner is heavily related to nature and cultural understanding, or there the lack of them in the Blade Runner universe.

Plot summary:

In the beginning of the film it is explained that a Blade Runner, a replicant killing detective is killed by Leon, one of 4 escaped replicants (human like androids). The four are searching for their creator; Dr Eldon Tyrell, they know they are nearing their expiration dates and will soon die. This is where the LAPD enlists retired blade runner Rick Deckard, who subsequently falls in love with Dr Tyrell's latest replicant, who is unaware they are a replicant at first. This complicates things for Deckard, making him question killing the replicants. Deckard then tracks down one of the 4 and kills them in the street, only for Rachael, the replicant Deckard fell in love with to kill Leon as he attacks Deckard. Not long after Deckard finds Pris, the third replicant and just barely wins a duel between them, in the meantime Roy, the leader of the 4 encounters Dr Tyrell, murdering him when he refuses to change the expiration date. Roy dies of his expiration that very same night. Deckard then reunites with Rachael, where they decide to run away and lead a life together, we don't know what happens to them, but it is implied that Deckard may have been a replicant himself all along.

Throughout Blade Runner the use of scenery and imagery is crucial to how we perceive the universe. Nature is a luxury in the blade runner universe, with the only scenes we see including the ever raining LA, the concrete towers and the "hades" landscape. This lends to our cultural understanding of the universe, showing us that it is a very different place, especially in China Town.

Blade Runner observes the monomyth pretty accurately, with Deckard's recruitment, his first ventures, complications, trials and finally the resolution where he has changed as a person. The film makes the changes in Deckard even more literal than we realize at first, with the implication that Deckard is actually a replicant by the end.

Slide 3: Links to the Rubric

Frankenstein is a text that has resonated with audiences throughout time due to its revolutionary central themes such as Life, sentience, and existence, and what it means to be human. These questions of humanity first seen in Frankenstein continue to be explored in movies such as 'Blade Runner'. This exploration of humanity is a direct reflection and questioning of unconscious thinking. Both Blade Runner and Frankenstein are explorations of the unconscious thinking surrounding the morals and ethics we should consider when dealing with the unusual, and what really constitutes being human.

Frankenstein introduced the ideas and questioning of humanity, ethics, morals and philosophy to general audiences. Presenting hard questions and topics to those who are either not educated in such things, or not particularly interested in such things. Frankenstein popularized the idea of science fiction, even though that was not her main objective in writing the story. Rather it is a story based on the idea that just because something is wrong or unacceptable does not mean it is ethically or morally acceptable to shun it. Frankenstein is based around the ideas of acceptance, and the ability to be accepting even when your own values and ideas are compromised. Frankenstein managed this by an extremely complex usage of the archetypal quest to deliver a difficult message to a very conservative audience. By making it difficult to define either Victor or the Monster as a "hero" or "villain" it encourages the audience to question them by their character, not by their mere descriptions.

Slide 4: Context and how it influenced included ideas: Frankenstein

Frankenstein is just as much a product of Mary Shelley as it was of the times. Mary was quite young when she eloped with Shelley, and as an educated woman who came from radically thinking parents she was familiar with the concepts of not being considered equal and being strange due to her upbringing and intellectual ability. Mary also experienced a large amount of personal drama within her life, which would have influenced her works considerably. For example, her mother died just 11 days after Mary's birth, and all 3 of Mary's children died in childbirth or early childhood. This presence of death in her life was only amplified by Percy Shelley's wife committing suicide due to their eloping and Percy's own eventual death by drowning. We can see that this heavy presence of death lends itself to her writing, especially in the effectiveness of the gothic style, creating a very macabre reading.

Slide 5: Language forms and features and how they shaped meaning:

Frankenstein is a novel of the genre Gothic fiction. Gothic fiction is a form of romantic genre, resulting in a much darker tone, and if written well will bring a sense of macabre to the reader. Shelley achieved the successful use of the Gothic genre with effective use of setting and description; descriptions of dark weather, dim and dark places and a general atmosphere of mystery and constant suspense all lend itself to your mental image. As well as the setting the gothic genre places females in danger and often gives descriptions of their deaths, for the time this would've been a very exciting read due to the context of the time.

Shelley chose to use a structure of text called an embedded narrative for Frankenstein. Initially we are presented with a framing narrative, Walton's personal telling of the story. Then we see the first layer of embedding with Victor's story being told through Walton's letters. And finally, we have the monster's own view point and story. This is an extremely complicated way of structuring the novel and is a testament to Mary's writing ability. This use of structure proves extremely effective at slowly introducing the reader to the central ideas of the novel, with an audience that may have simply dismissed these ideas as ridiculous.

Shelley's use of Motifs throughout Frankenstein also lends to the believability of the world and reinforcing the gothic – romantic tones. The moon is a constant throughout the novel, appearing shortly before the monster in several occasions. We first learn that the moon and the monster are connected through symbolism when we read: *'soon a gentle light stole over the heavens and gave me a sensation of pleasure. I started up and beheld a radiant form rise from among the trees. I gazed with a kind of wonder. It moved slowly, but it enlightened my path'*. In the moment of its rejection it sees something incredible and provides it with hope. This is a typical trope of the archetypal quest, in a character, especially the hero's weakest moment there is some saving grace or piece of symbolism that gives them hope or "enlightens their path".

Slide 6: Context and how it influenced included ideas: Blade Runner

Blade runner was produced in the context of Reaganism, The Cold War, Globalization, Thatcherism and great technological innovation. Blade runner's plot runs in a free and somewhat prosperous society, with the ideas of capitalism and corporatism being prevalent. This can be seen as a reflection of the time's anti-communist values, in the time of the Cold War, Reaganism and Thatcherism we saw an extremely large surge in neoconservatism with both Reagan and Thatcher being aggressively pro capitalist. The biggest link between Blade Runner and Reaganism and Thatcherism was the overall outcome of Deregulation, with governments relinquishing their control over private corporations, resulting in both economic booms and a major hand over of power from the state to the private elite. Much like the Tyrell Corporation, which seems to be borderline exempt from law. Lastly the influence of technological leaps can be quite clearly seen in Blade Runner, with the beginning of the information era being clearly reflected through the technologies we can observe. Not only the access to information, but the views on replicants being so material. Even if they have emotions and are only mildly differentiable from humans they are still treated as property, and without basic sentient rights.

Slide 7: Language forms and features and how they shaped meaning:

Blade Runner, like many science fiction stories, creates its own terminology and realistic vernaculars. This serves to create a believable and immersive world. In the beginning of the film we see what has become something of a trope in both science fiction and Noir films, a scrolling wall of expositional text, setting the scene and introducing the audience to the unique vernacular. This text serves for more than just preparation however, we are introduced to replicants being referred to as slaves, already seeing them as little more than machines. We are then told that they are "retired", rather than executed. This use of euphemism gives us a window into the common attitude toward replicants and allows us to start building sympathy towards them.

The strongest motif in Blade Runner is that of eyes, throughout the film we see eyes everywhere, using the associated concepts of "window to the soul". In the beginning of the film we see it used to reflect the fire, lights and combined darkness of Los Angeles. It is literally a reflection of what the world has become, and who the people in it have become. One important part of the eye motif is that of Dr Tyrell, the creator of the monster, Victor Frankenstein. His eyes are weak, just as his body is. Not only is he physically ill, but the damage and evil he has done via the creation and inhumane treatment of replicants has damaged him as a person. Just as it did Frankenstein, and in the end, it kills the both of them.

Slide 8: Similarities and Differences

The differences between Frankenstein and Blade runner are almost entirely contextual and products of their genre. Differences easily seen such as technological differences, cultural and literary are simply products of their context, both culturally, and personally. However, its similarities are far stronger. We see both Victor and Dr Tyrell as direct parallels in character, both are heavy inflicted by their wrongdoings and end up dying as a result. The replicants and Frankenstein share just about everything, they are seen as lesser and dangerous by society, but as the reader we can observe they are so much more. The replicants are stronger, smarter and without many of the "lacking" qualities humans share, while also deserving the rights of any emotionally sentient beings. Frankenstein's monster is the same, he is shunned by society and hated. Yet he is the most intelligent character in the story, with even the text itself reflecting that, showing us that his speech is far beyond that of any other character. Both texts show us quite strongly that just because something is different doesn't mean it is wrong and makes us empathize with the "different".

Considering how fundamentally similar these texts are the differences they have in relation to the archetypal quest is rather extensive. Both texts challenge nature, basic beliefs and unconscious thinking between characters and the audience. However while Blade Runner conforms to the structure of the monomyth, Frankenstein does not. The use of embedded narrative and framing narrative alongside the undefined boundaries of both Victor and the Monster's characters leads to a far more complex version of the archetypal quest, and in this regard makes us think who the hero is? Victor? Or the Monster? Both follow the structure of new beginnings, complications, trials and a final challenge in which it changes them. For Victor it is too little too late, for the monster it is seemingly irrelevant that the same standards of morals and ethics which destroyed Victor, was the completion of his journey.

