

# Assignment Instructions: Frankenstein Application Essay

## The *Frankenstein* Application Essay

Literary works like *Frankenstein* explore the "human condition" or experiences that humans encounter. The study guides for *Frankenstein* offer several "Real Life Considerations" meant to help you critically analyze the applications of the work's themes in today's world. Now, you will choose one of these topics and explore it using secondary resources to learn more about the novel and its relevant social topics. You might find information about social issues in familiar sources such as magazines, newspapers, or social science journals. Make sure your sources are credible - you do not want a random website or an encyclopedic website such as Wikipedia.<sup>2</sup> Your sources will preferably be scholarly ones. Here are some ideas of places where you might find appropriate sources for this assignment:

- Google Scholar: <https://scholar.google.com/> (note that this is different from regular Google)
- Cornell University's arXiv (open access sources in math, biology, physics, and other fields): <http://arxiv.org/>
- Bielefeld Academic Search Engine (BASE): <https://www.base-search.net/>
- Your local library

Your thesis statement and paper must address both the literary qualities and the social issues as you evaluate the novel, *Frankenstein*. However, keep in mind, your essay does not have to answer ALL of the questions listed under each topic. Only answer the questions you feel are the most relevant to the thesis statement you choose. Develop your essay so it has a clear introduction, body, and conclusion. Ensure that each of your claims is supported with valid evidence from the novel, *Frankenstein*, and **at least three other credible external sources**.<sup>3</sup>

Using proper MLA style, insert parenthetical citations and signal phrases for all borrowed information in addition to a Works Cited page for *Frankenstein* and your chosen external sources.

You have several options for this assignment:

### **Option #1:** Can science go too far?

There is an ongoing battle between faith or spirituality and science that has been active even before the time of Mary Shelley. What are some of the dilemmas she addresses that are still important today? What are some of the ethical questions she brings up regarding the scientific definition of life and death? What does she illustrate about the

power science has to blur the line between life and death? What is a current news item that is similar to this issue?

Hint: Develop a thesis that answers a question like this one: "How and how well does Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* address ethical issues of science and/or faith for audiences, regardless of when they read the novel?"

### **Option #2: Discovery**

Both Frankenstein and Walton are trying to discover something important to them. What parts of their real lives drive them to discovery? Does that drive still exist today? While we've mapped the globe, are there still geographical places for people to explore? In science, are people still trying to discover the meaning of life, how to save life, and how to defeat death? What methods do they use? Are there better ways to accomplish these goals than others? What are some of today's motivations for discovery?

Note: Develop a thesis that answers questions like this one: "How and how well does Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* address human discovery as a theme?"

### **Option #3: World Perception and Prejudice**

Reread the paragraph where the creature describes the book from which Felix teaches Safie. It begins: "The book from which Felix instructed Safie was Volney's *Ruins of Empires...*"

What are some of the perceptions and prejudices from the book that Felix teaches Safie? How have these perceptions and prejudices changed, if they have, in today's society? What are some present-day situations and references that may claim a lack of prejudice or an open-mindedness, but, in fact, are still very prejudiced, racist, sexist, etc.? Why do you think these situations still happen? Can anything be done about it?

Hint: Develop a thesis that answers a question like this one: "How and how well does Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* address human prejudice in the world throughout time?"

### **Option #4: Personal Perception**

It could be argued that the creature did not consider itself a monster and didn't do awful things until people treated him like a monster. What are some real-world instances in which people's actions could be a reaction to abuse from others? Who do you feel is accountable in these situations? Why?

Hint: Develop a thesis that answers a question like this one: "How and how well does Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* address the effect of peer perceptions on personal development?"

### **Option #5: Death and Suicide**

At the end of the book, the creature promises to destroy himself. Is this a justifiable end for him? Could he have been redeemed? Would he have had a place in the world of Shelley's novel? How could this relate to current-day issues like suicide or the death penalty?

Hint: Develop a thesis that answers a question like this one: "How and how well does Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* address the value of an individual's life and death?"

### **Option #6: Nature vs. Nurture**

The creature argues that had someone properly guided him, he would not have been so wretched. Frankenstein<sup>4</sup> argues that the creature was evil to begin with, so it would have been useless to teach him at all. What are some current debates - especially in education - where these kinds of arguments still arise? How much of behavior of you think is based on nature (how a person IS) and how much is based on nurture (what a person LEARNS or EXPERIENCES)? What examples from the present support your opinion? What do you feel is the truth? Why?

Hint: Develop a thesis that answers a question like this one: "How and how well does Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* address existing personality traits versus how a person is taught to act?"

### **Option #7: Feminism**

The feminist perspective is often explored in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. How are the women characters treated in the novel? What perceptions of women did Shelley use and comment on? How did she handle the theme of motherhood?

Hint: Develop a thesis that answers a question like this one: "How and how well does Mary Shelley incorporate responses to feminist issues into the novel, *Frankenstein*?"

The guidelines for this assignment are as follows:

**Header:** Include a header in the upper left-hand corner of your writing assignment with the following information:

- Your first and last name
- Course Title (Composition II)
- Assignment name (*Frankenstein* Application Essay)
- Current Date

#### **Format:**

- MLA-style source documentation and Works Cited<sup>5</sup>
- Your last name and page number in the upper-right corner of each page
- Double-spacing throughout
- Standard font (Times New Roman, Calibri)

- Title, centered after heading
- 1" margins on all sides
- Save the file using one of the following extensions: .docx, .doc, .rtf, or .txt
- Length: This assignment should be at least 750 words.