

English 9

Paper topics: *Frankenstein*

Finished paper should be 3-4 pages in length

Topics listed on this sheet are fairly general so that you can be inspired by the ideas but develop your own ideas with specificity and checking in as appropriate.

Use the study question sheet to help you find the passages you need to support ideas; any text or ideas lifted from commercial study guides will result in a zero for this assignment, as per school policy. If you wish to reach to appropriate credible sources, you must blend and cite (and include a works cited page). Most papers will use only *Frankenstein* as their source.

Academic paper topics

1. Monstrosity. What comprises monstrosity? To what degree is Victor a monster? To what degree is the monster a monster? Define your terms and support your ideas.
2. Relationship to the myth of Prometheus. Prometheus steals fire and gives it to humans—he's then punished by the gods. How is Frankenstein the Modern Prometheus, as the book's subtitle indicates?
3. Role of setting (geographical location). Map the settings of the novel. Draw inferences from the places and directions of the novel about the meaning of the setting in relation to themes of isolation and the downfall of Victor.
4. Tragedy. To what degree is Victor an Aristotelian tragic hero? Consider his hamartia, peripeteia, and anagnorisis.
5. Theme of technology. Frequently, we fear the power of technology; we make it, but it shapes the way we live. What does *Frankenstein* say about the Industrial Revolution, the theme of human overreaching, and/or our modern society.
6. Importance of nature. What is the relationship of nature to characterization and/or theme? How does nature reflect/influence emotion?
7. Role of narration. How does the novel function as an epistolary piece? What does the layer of Walton's writing the story to his sister add to the overall effect of the novel?
8. "Frost at Midnight" or "Ode to the West Wind." *Frankenstein* and "Frost at Midnight" or "Ode to the West Wind" are both Romantic works, but their tones and themes are related but very different. Compare and contrast the two Romantic works to learn more about the versatility of Romanticism with regard to the two texts. A thesis for this paper might be constructed around a template such as: While *Frankenstein* uses nature to emphasize _____, "Frost at Midnight" uses nature to promote _____. You might use one idea, as I do here, or you may use more than one Romantic idea, such as the treatment of childhood, the common man, nature, the role of emotion, the use of the first-person narrator/speaker, etc.

Creative options on the back—>

Creative options

1. It is 1816. You are at Lake Geneva with Mary and Percy Shelley, Lord Byron, and Claire Clairmont. You decide to have a contest to write ghost stories based on some German folktales you have been reading. Write a Romantic story in the Gothic style, in language inspired by that of *Frankenstein*, that speaks to the tenets on our Romanticism handout. The story should have both narration and dialogue and should be 4–5 pages in length, featuring a beginning, a middle, and an end. Include a paragraph-long artist's statement with your story to help the reader understand what you have attempted to do in relation to the tenets of Romanticism and stylistic tropes used in a Romantic way. Stories should be set earlier than 1816.

2. Write a sequel to *Frankenstein* that is Romantic in language and attitude. Consider picking up your story where Shelley's ends, with Walton in the position of deciding what to do about the monster. As with the Lake Geneva option, you must include a paragraph-long artist's statement that makes clear the relationship of your story to the tenets of Romanticism we have discussed and to the Romantic-friendly stylistic devices the class has covered. Your story should be 4–5 pages long.