# Frankenstein – Learning Resources

## Analysing theatre craft in Frankenstein (up to 60 mins)

This learning resource is designed to help students understand how the different elements of a theatre production come together to create meaning, and to encourage creative thinking about alternative ways to stage a scene.

# Who is it for?

This resource is designed for GCSE and A-Level students of English Literature and Drama. It is not necessary for groups taking part to be familiar with the story of *Frankenstein*, though it may be of particular interest to those who are.

There are two different sets of activities at the conclusion of this resource, which you can choose between, depending on the needs of your class. Alternatively, you can try both.

This resource will be particularly useful for students of Drama and Theatre at any level, in enabling them to both examine and apply theatrical skills, and make connections between dramatic theory and practice. They, and students of Literature at higher levels, will also be able to explore the ways in which different production choices inform interpretations of texts.

## Learning outcomes

#### Learners will:

- Closely examine a scene from the National Theatre's production of *Frankenstein*, adapted from Mary Shelley's novel by Nick Dear, and directed by Danny Boyle.
- Explore how different theatrical elements contribute to the scene's effect.
- Come up with alternative ways for staging the same scene.
- Either make a presentation to the class, or write a short essay responding to the activity.

# You will need

- A copy of the novel Frankenstein
- Access to the clip 'The Creature discovers nature' in the 'On Demand' player.
- Access to the film Directing 'Frankenstein' in the 'On Demand' player.

# Activities

1.

Show the film *Directing 'Frankenstein'* using the 'On Demand' player. The film features director Danny Boyle discussing the production choices he made in bringing the script to the stage.

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## 2.

**Give out copies of the extract below,** and invite members of the class to read it aloud. The extract is taken from the Creature's description of his time in the forest, and is the basis for one of the key sequences at the beginning of Danny Boyle's production.

## 3.

**Lead a short discussion about the key themes in this extract**. Ask the class to brainstorm suggestions for themes and collect these together on the board – for example, darkness and light, religious imagery, nature, language and communication, innocence and so on.

## 4.

**Split the class into groups**, and assign each of them an element of theatre craft. These should be things like music, lighting, set, costume, make-up, physical performance, and vocal performance – these can be adjusted depending on the interests of your group.

## 5.

Show the clip 'The Creature discovers nature' using the 'On Demand' player. The clip is a dramatisation of the extract the students have just read. It shows the Creature experiencing nature for the first time while alone in the forest. Ask the class to pay close attention to their assigned element of theatre craft as they watch the clip – how is it used on stage? How does it make them feel as they watch it?

## 6.

**Ask each group to share their observations**, and suggest how the techniques they have watched may have suggested the themes they brainstormed earlier.

### **EITHER:**

### 7.

Ask the groups to think of ways they might stage this scene differently. They should pay close attention to only two or three of the elements of theatre craft which they have just observed, rather than the whole scene. You can assign these elements to them if you prefer.

### 8.

Ask the groups to present their production choices to the rest of the class, explaining how they will use their chosen elements of theatre craft to show certain themes in a different way to the production they have just seen.

### OR:

## 7.

Ask each student to write a short essay focused on one element of theatre craft, and how they would use it to indicate the novel's themes in a full production.



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## Extract from Frankenstein - Volume Two, Chapter III

No distinct ideas occupied my mind; all was confused. I felt light, and hunger, and thirst, and darkness; innumerable sounds rang in my ears, and on all sides various scents saluted me: the only object that I could distinguish was the bright moon, and I fixed my eyes on that with pleasure.

Several changes of day and night passed, and the orb of night had greatly lessened, when I began to distinguish my sensations from each other. I gradually saw plainly the clear stream that supplied me with drink, and the trees that shaded me with their foliage. I was delighted when I first discovered that a pleasant sound, which often saluted my ears, proceeded from the throats of the little winged animals who had often intercepted the light from my eyes. I also began to observe, with greater accuracy, the forms that surrounded me, and to perceive the boundaries of the radiant roof of light which canopied me. Sometimes I tried to imitate the pleasant song of the birds, but was unable. Sometimes I wished to express my sensations in my own mode, but the uncouth and inarticulate sounds which broke from me frightened me into silence again.

The moon had disappeared from the night, and again, with a lessened form, showed itself, while I still remained in the forest. My sensations had by this time become distinct, and my mind received every day additional ideas. My eyes became accustomed to the light and to perceive objects in their right forms; I distinguished the insect from the herb, and by degrees, one herb from another. I found that the sparrow uttered nothing but harsh notes, whilst those of the blackbird and thrush were sweet and enticing.