# Frankenstein – Learning Resources

## Is the Creature a monster? (up to 120 mins)

This learning resource is designed to help students question what is meant by the term 'monster', and to explore the Creature's humanity through physical performance.

## Who is it for?

This resource is designed for GCSE students of English Literature who are studying the story of Frankenstein, and for Drama students exploring physical performance.

These activities will enable students of Drama and Theatre, in particular, to apply theatrical skills in performance in order to communicate meaning, as well as considering how drama is developed. They, and students of Literature, will also explore different interpretations of the text. For GCSE English students, this resource provides a way in to considering different views on the text and engage interest through active learning.

## Learning outcomes

#### Learners will:

- Explore different portrayals of monsters in folklore and other cultures.
- Apply these stories to their understanding of the novel.
- Take part in classroom discussion.
- Create an alternative reimagining of the Creature.

## You will need

- Access to the film Man-made creatures in the 'On Demand' player.
- Access to the film The Creature: A character study in the 'On Demand' player.
- Access to the clip 'The Creature discovers nature'

## Activities

1.

Show the film The Creature: A character study using the 'On Demand' player. The film features members of the cast and crew of the National Theatre's production of *Frankenstein* discussing the character of the Creature.

2.

Divide the class into three groups. Assign each group a different 'monster': zombie, automaton, or golem.

## National Theatre

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### 3.

Show the film *Man-made creatures* using the 'On Demand' player. The film introduces three different kinds of conventional monster – the zombie, the automaton, and the golem. Ask the class to make notes while they watch on how they feel the Creature is similar to or different from the kind of monster they've been assigned.

## 4.

For groups less familiar with the story of *Frankenstein*, you may choose to distribute copies of the synopsis of the novel which can be found below.

#### 5.

**Ask each group to share their observations** of how the Creature does and doesn't fit into these categories, and collect these together on the board. Encourage the class to name other kinds of monster with which the Creature shares characteristics.

### 6.

**Lead a discussion about the extent to which the Creature could be called a monster.** What do we mean by monster? How does the Creature challenge this idea? Are there parts of the story where the Creature shows kindness and humanity? Do humans in the story act like monsters? If the Creature is a monster, does that mean he isn't human?

### 7.

Show the clip 'The Creature discovers nature' using the 'On Demand' player. The clip shows the Creature discovering nature while alone in the forest. Ask the class to make notes about the physical characteristics of the Creature, and the differences from and similarities to the zombie, golem, automaton and other kinds of monster they have suggested.

#### 8.

Breaking out into a suitable space, **ask the class to find ways of physically representing a zombie**, taking part in a specific task, like digging a hole or playing a musical instrument. Then ask them to do the same for the automaton and the golem.

#### 9.

Taking inspiration from one of these three types of performance, ask the class to find a way of physically performing the Creature, as he discovers and takes delight in the world around him. Their performances should take into account what they know about the Creature.

### 10.

**Ask small groups to perform their interpretations** to the rest of the class, inviting those watching to comment on what the performances communicate about the character of the Creature.



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## Frankenstein: Plot synopsis of the novel

Robert Walton, the captain of a ship headed to the North Pole, is writing letters back to his sister in England. When the ship is trapped in ice, Walton discovers Victor Frankenstein, travelling by dog-drawn sled and very weak from the cold. As Walton tries to nurse him back to health, Frankenstein tells him the story of how he came to be there.

Victor spent a happy childhood in Geneva with his cousin Elizabeth and his friend Henry. When he was older, Victor went to university in Ingolstadt to study chemistry and natural philosophy. He became obsessed with discovering the secret to life itself.

Over several months in his apartment, Victor secretly worked to make a creature out of dead bodies. One night, he succeeded in bringing it to life. But when he looked at his Creature, he found it hideous, and fled. Returning later with his friend Henry, he found the Creature had gone.

Victor returned home to Geneva, sick at the thought of what he'd done. He learnt his younger brother, William, had been murdered. In the woods where the boy was strangled, Victor saw the Creature, and became convinced that it was guilty of William's death. However, he said nothing when a kind servant, Justine, is tried for the murder, and hanged for it.

Travelling to the mountains to ease his grief, Victor was confronted by the Creature, who admitted to murdering William and framing Justine, but begs forgiveness. The Creature told him his version of the story from the night Victor abandoned him – how he was cruelly treated, and made an outcast by society because of the way he looked. Hiding in the woodshed of a family in the country, the Creature learnt to read and speak. From Victor's journal, he discovered the story of his creation, and killed William to enact revenge on Victor for abandoning him.

The Creature promised to leave Victor alone if he made a new female Creature to be his mate. Victor reluctantly agreed, and left for to a remote island to start work. Though he made some progress on the female creature, he was overcome by doubt and fear, eventually destroying her. Enraged, the Creature vowed revenge.

The next day, Victor was arrested for the murder of Henry – who the Creature had now killed. Eventually he was released, and returned to Geneva to marry Elizabeth. Wary that the Creature would come for him too, he sent Elizabeth away to wait for him – but realised too late that she would be killed next. Victor confessed everything to his father, who died of grief. Having lost everything, Victor decided to hunt down the Creature and destroy him.

Victor pursued the Creature towards the North Pole, where he was overcome by the cold and found by Captain Walton.

Eventually, Victor dies from sickness, and Walton finds the Creature weeping over his body. He tells Walton of his loneliness, suffering, hatred and remorse. With nothing left, he disappears onto the ice, ready to die.