

## Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

**Directions:** The following excerpt is from *Frankenstein*. The monster is telling his creator of his many lonely wanderings. Highlight or underline elements of the gothic that you observe. Remember, the gothic novel

1. is often set in a dark, dank castles, in ruins, or in a forest, generally not in England
2. has nature parallel human experience (e.g., murder occurs during a storm, tranquility returns during sunny calm); the natural setting tends to be dramatic mountains or seas
3. is dominated by horror, death, and gruesome or supernatural events
4. illustrates complex and dark motivations in its characters

After reading the passage, answer the questions following it.

"Cursed, cursed creator! Why did I live? Why, in that instant, did I not extinguish the spark of existence which you had so wantonly bestowed? I know not; despair had not yet taken possession of me; my feelings were those of rage and revenge. I could with pleasure have destroyed the cottage and its inhabitants and have glutted myself with their shrieks and misery.

"When night came I quitted my retreat and wandered in the wood; and now, no longer restrained by the fear of discovery, I gave vent to my anguish in fearful howlings. I was like a wild beast that had broken the toils, destroying the objects that obstructed me and ranging through the wood with a staglike swiftness. Oh! What a miserable night I passed! The cold stars shone in mockery, and the bare trees waved their branches above me; now and then the sweet voice of a bird burst forth amidst the universal stillness. All, save I, were at rest or in enjoyment; I, like the arch-fiend, bore a hell within me, and finding myself unsympathized with, wished to tear up the trees, spread havoc and destruction around me, and then to have sat down and enjoyed the ruin.

"But this was a luxury of sensation that could not endure; I became fatigued with excess of bodily exertion and sank on the damp grass in the sick impotence of despair. There was none among the myriads of men that existed who would pity or assist me; and should I feel kindness towards my enemies? No; from that moment I declared everlasting war against the species, and more than all, against him who had formed me and sent me forth to this insupportable misery.

"The sun rose; I heard the voices of men and knew that it was impossible to return to my retreat during that day. Accordingly I hid myself in some thick underwood, determining to devote the ensuing hours to reflection on my situation.

"The pleasant sunshine and the pure air of day, restored me to some degree of tranquillity; and when I considered what had passed at the cottage, I could not help believing that I had been too hasty in my conclusions. I had certainly acted imprudently. . . . But I did not believe my errors to be irretrievable, and after much consideration I resolved to return to the cottage, seek the old man, and by my representations win him to my party.

[The monster remembers the horror of the previous day, when cottagers first set eyes on him and were terrified into flight, and of hearing one of them tell the landlord they would never return to the cottage.]

"I continued for the remainder of the day in my hovel in a state of utter and stupid despair. My protectors had departed and had broken the only