

# Theme of beauty in shelley's frankenstein

Literature



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Throughout the course of Frankenstein by Mary Shelley the theme of beauty influencing one's actions, thoughts, and character both promote and incriminate certain characters in the book. The beauty or lack of beauty in scenes shift characters to act differently than they normally would. However in characters of the book, particularly Elizabeth and the monster, the ability to be beautiful affected their entire lives. Before going into what happens when there is an absence of beauty one first has to determine what is beautiful. In the novel, Elizabeth was seen as paragon of beauty.

On page 20, she is described by Frankenstein as a being who " possessed an attractive softness" (Shelley). Throughout the story Elizabeth is praised for her beauty and is thought to be good and innocent because of it. Being beauty was a gift for her allowing her to integrate with society. Elizabeth was able to get formal learning, gain popularity, and even fall in love all due to her beauty. Elizabeth life would be considered to be an ideal princess dream little girls dream of prior to the monster's birth. Even in death she was still seen as beautiful as shown when Victor Frankenstein saved her head for the monster's bride.

On the other hand, the monster that was ideally beautiful because Frankenstein " had selected his features as beautiful" ended up being ugly and suffered for his ugliness (Shelley 35). The absence of beauty for the monster ended up affecting his entire life because he wasn't accepted like the beautiful Elizabeth was. Even if he had been human the monster would had still suffered complications assimilating into a village. Melissa Bissonette explains that when teaching Frankenstein to a class the monster is placed

into “ one of two categories: the Monster is a victimized child, mistreated and misunderstood, or the Monster is evil.

The “ evil” is seen more by villagers because the monster was “ endowed with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome”. The monster even applied the village criticisms to his own when he refers to himself simply as “ a blot upon the earth” despite his strength and intelligence (Shelley 83). Although he could succeed in doing things such as saving a little drowning girl his appearance gave his character a hard life because in the eyes of villagers beautiful things did good and ugly things did evil.

On page 100, the monster tried reaching out to someone and explained that “ he did not intend to hurt [them]” yet they “ struggled violently” (Shelley). The monster's character was affected by the amount of beauty he lacked in this way. Much like children in a schoolyard the villagers did not accept him because he was not like them. For each character the amount of beauty they had paralleled with the how much they were liked by people. Ultimately, beauty for Elizabeth and the monster determined if they were to be liked and thought of as a good or bad person. In this period of romanticism the idea of beauty was clearly reflected in the novel.

Beauty in nature mirrors and affects the state of one's mind, spirit, and body while beauty in people was used to determine rank or status in society. These two elements were conveyed through nature's affect on the characters and the way characters were treated based on their beauty. However this theme should also teach readers that beauty is subjective to the one perceiving and should be used objectively when judging one's character. Had the villagers given the monster the chance to prove himself

many deaths may had been avoided which leads the underlying message to be a classic saying of " don't judge a book by its cover. "