

# The danger of knowledge essay



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

Frankenstein, Bride of Frankenstein, Son of Frankenstein, The Ghost of Frankenstein, Frankenstein Meets the Wolf Man, House of Frankenstein...

These films and others like it have focused much more on the monster than its creator. People see the physical hideousness of the monster but do not see the mental hideousness that its creator, Victor Frankenstein, reached in his quest to create life in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein.

Through Frankenstein's dynamic character, Shelley reveals the theme that a definite boundary exists in man's pursuit of knowledge, and once crossed, disastrous and horrific consequences can arise. In his youth, Frankenstein is a happy and innocent man whose life is filled with the love of family and friends, but his attitude changes once he begins his pursuit of knowledge. Frankenstein reflects, "No human being could have passed a happier childhood than myself" (Shelley 33).

Frankenstein feels privileged to have grown up in an environment that valued close ties between family members.

He is also blessed to have friends with whom to interact "in the bonds of the closest friendship" (Shelley 32). While vacationing with his family, Frankenstein stumbles across works by the natural philosophers Paracelsus and Agrippa and reads them "with the greatest avidity" (Shelley 35). This marks the beginning of his intellectual awakening as he views these books as "treasures known to few beside myself" (Shelley 35). He starts to believe that his pursuit of knowledge places him intellectually above others.

Frankenstein's first character change occurs when he embarks on his scientific quest, leaving behind his love for family and friends.

As he begins his academic pursuit, Frankenstein becomes withdrawn and is taken over by a feeling of intellectual superiority, but his character changes yet again when he finally achieves his goal of creating life. Looking back at the time when he worked on creating life, Frankenstein says, " The summer months passed while I was thus engaged, heart and soul, in one pursuit.

It was a most beautiful season...but my eyes were insensible to the charms of nature. And the same feelings which made me neglect the scenes around me caused me to also forget those friends who were so many miles absent, and whom I had not seen for so long a time" (Shelley 49). Frankenstein's focus on his scientific goal has made him emotionally detached from nature and society. After months of work, Frankenstein brings to life a creature but is repulsed by its hideousness when he states, " How can I describe my motions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavored to form? " (Shelley 51).

Frankenstein realizes the extent of the horror his pursuit of knowledge has created, causing an emotional downfall and a second change in character. Once Frankenstein sees what pain and misery his monster causes, he becomes an emotionally ruined man, which contributes to the theme that a definite boundary exists in man's pursuit of knowledge, and once crossed, disastrous and horrific consequences can arise.

Frankenstein's monster causes much pain to him, killing his brother William, his wife Elizabeth, and his best friend Henry Clerval. He sinks to an emotional

low as he declares, "...no creature had ever been so miserable as I was..." (Shelley 175).

Frankenstein's previous feelings of intellectual superiority and confidence have been replaced by a feeling of worthlessness. His character has undertaken a roller-coaster ride in which he first experiences enthusiasm and anticipation which are later replaced by disappointment and depression.

Frankenstein's quest to create life builds in him a sense of superiority and pride. However, his mental "high" comes crashing down once Frankenstein goes beyond the boundaries of man's role when he resurrects the dead.

Playing God has grave consequences on people around him and on him personally as seen in his dynamic character, which supports the theme that disaster strikes when man crosses certain boundaries in his pursuit of knowledge.

Shelley uses Frankenstein's dynamic character to contribute to the theme that pushing man's knowledge beyond certain limits can have a disastrous impact on society. Many feel that there should be no boundaries to science, especially in the field of genetic and biomedical engineering. Shelley's Frankenstein is a reminder of what may happen if man ignores ethical boundaries in science by playing God. Man must be careful and must always remember that only God is the true creator and giver of life.