

Year 8 – Frankenstein – English Knowledge Organiser

Expectations and content

What is this unit about and why do we teach it?

This unit offers students the opportunity to explore one of the best novels ever written. Students gain valuable insight into not only the craft and social intentions of Shelley but also the birth of a new genre of novels: science fiction. The genre's features and tropes are taught with reference to mature concepts such as ethics in science as well as pastiche and parody of conventions. The unit studies the effects of language, theme and symbolism, encouraging understanding through guided practice. It also teaches tier two vocabulary explicitly and tests students' ability to retain and use this in the future through repeated exposure and testing. The unit also focuses on our school values, by challenging students to consider the role of the monster and reflecting on consequences of humanity.

Key vocabulary taught:

- Compunction
- Imposing
- Demoniactal
- Eloquent
- Spurn
- Abhor
- Retaliation
- Wrath
- Distaught

Key terminology taught:

- Structure
- Symbolism
- Effect
- Theme

If your child needs support

Suggested activities to help:

- There are abridged versions of Frankenstein available, including comic strip and graphic novels. These can be excellent for understanding the complex narrative.
- Your child could create a small vocabulary guide to keep in their planner, with definitions and examples of the words in. They would be encouraged to use this without fear of 'cheating' – on the contrary, it is a very good idea!
- As Frankenstein is a world famous novel, there are lots of YouTube clips, summaries and interesting ideas available to watch.
- Create a fact file on science fiction as a genre as a family. What patterns does your child spot? Are there any similarities to modern TV programmes and films?
- Practise using the key vocabulary of this unit in conversation. The more times your child hears it in context the more they will begin to understand and use it themselves.
- There are several films about Mary Shelley's life that are very interesting.

If your child needs extension

Questions to discuss with your child:

- Is the exploration of science something to encourage or be cautious of?
- Do you think humanity should have limits or should we always strive to beat nature?
- Was Mary Shelley a visionary in some ways?

Challenging activities to complete:

- Read more about Mary Shelley's life and her literary parents.
- Read about the holiday in which Shelleys, Polidori and Byron held their horror stories competition.
- Watch classic adaptations of Frankenstein and write a review of how well you think the productions have captured the essence of the story and its message.

Suggested further reading:

The Frankenstein Archive: Essays on the Monster, the Myth, the Movies, and More – a collection of essays exploring the impact of Frankenstein in popular culture.

The Island of Doctor Moreau by H.G. Wells –

The text of the novel is the narration of Edward Prendick, a shipwrecked man rescued by a passing boat who is left on the island home of Doctor Moreau, a mad scientist who creates human-like hybrid beings from animals via vivisection.