



Frankenstein, by Mary Shelley (1818) Foldering

Debatable Issue: Does Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* sympathize more with Victor or more with the monster?

In supporting your position on the interpretive question above, you will make multiple arguments, as you do in most instances of academic argumentation. It’s only in small assignments, typically, that you make a single argument to express your view or interpretation or conclusion. In organizing your thinking about and analysis of the text, you can put your ideas and evidence into separate categories or “folders,” related to the separate kinds of arguments you might make. We call this portion of the argument building and preparation process “foldering.” The metaphor – and it is often a metaphor, though it can also be done literally – comes from the process of separating information or documents into folders, on Google Drive, for instance, or on one’s computer or even (as was the norm in the past) in file folders inside a filing cabinet. To make a close comparison, Document-Based Questions in history and social science often use the term “bucketing” for organizing the categories or types of evidence that can be gleaned from documents pertaining to a historical or social issue.

The metaphor of the foldering should help you think of the process of putting like or similar evidence and ideas together – of grouping or combining them – as you organize your thinking and process the textual backing you find for your overall interpretive position. Folders are not themselves argumentative claims, though they help move you along toward formulating finished claims that are directly supported by the best of your textual evidence in each one that you choose to use.



For the debate that we will be having, and for the argument essay that you will be writing subsequent to the debate, you will have these folders to choose from in building and making your arguments.

If you are arguing that the novel sympathizes more with Victor, you must choose two folders from which to build and make your two arguments:



Pursuit of scientific knowledge



Ambition to become extra-ordinary, transcendent



Individualism



The emotional wounding of lost love or crushing disappointment



Moral autonomy (the monster has moral responsibility for his own actions)

If you are arguing that the novel sympathizes more with the monster, you must choose two folders from which to build and make your two arguments:



Intense emotion/passion



Nature as a spiritual force



The mystery and allure of the gothic



Rebellion against unfairness or oppression



The romanticism of isolation