Frankenstein

A scene taken from the film version of *Frankenstein* directed by James Whale in 1931, starring Boris Karloff.
1. Mary Shelley’s life

• The daughter of Mary Wollstonecraft and William Godwin, both believers in the Enlightened power of reason.

• She eloped to France with the Romantic poet Percy B. Shelley.

• The writing of Frankenstein took place at Villa Diodati on the banks of Lake Geneva.
2. Frankenstein and its plot

- **Frankenstein**, a Swiss scientist, creates a human being by **joining parts** selected from **corpses**.

- The result of the experiment is **ugly** and **revolting**.
2. Frankenstein and its plot

- The **Monster** becomes a **murderer**.

- At the end he **destroys his creator**.

- The story is introduced by a **series of letters** written by **Walton**, a young explorer on an expedition voyage to the North Pole, to his sister, Margaret Walton Saville.
3. The influence of science

The latest scientific theories of chemistry and electricity influenced Mary Shelley.

The protagonist of *Frankenstein* is the first embodiment of the theme of science.

He creates a human being through the use of electricity and chemistry.
4. Influences: from Prometheus to Frankenstein

- **The myth of Prometheus**  Frankenstein is an example of **overreacher**.

- **Rousseau**  The Monster is a **noble savage**.

- **Locke**  The Monster’s **self-awareness** and his **education**.
4. Influences: from Prometheus to Frankenstein

- **Gothic stories** read by Mary and Percy B. Shelley.

- S. T. Coleridge’s *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* 🎨
  Both the novel and the poem are stories of a crime against nature.
5. Narrative structure: an epistolary novel

Walton’s narration to his sister Margaret Walton Saville
(chapters 1-10)

Frankenstein’s narration to Walton
(chapters 11-17)

The Monster’s narration to Frankenstein
(chapters 18-24)
6. Main characters

- Both Captain Walton and Doctor Frankenstein tried to go **beyond human limits**.

- The Monster is complementary to his creator: they both suffer from **isolation** and they both begin with a **desire to be good**.
7. Themes

- The quest for forbidden knowledge (Walton and Dr Frankenstein) is related to the theme of the overreacher.

- The double (Dr Frankenstein and the Monster).
7. Themes

- The **overcoming of natural and divine rules** → the **creation** of a human being without the participation of a **woman**.

- **Social prejudices** → the Monster as an **outcast**.

- **Education** and **experience** → the Monster’s **intellectual** and **emotional development**.
8. Frankenstein on the screen

A being created by man

Boris Karloff in *Frankenstein* by James Whale, 1931

Robert De Niro in *Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein* by Kenneth Branagh, 1994
9. Frankenstein and cloning

Cloning is the creation of an organism that is an **exact genetic copy** of another. This means that every single bit of DNA is the same between the two.

Can you consider the Monster a sort of a clone?
10. Cloning steps

The first transgenic mouse was born

Sheep Dolly was born

European Parliament voted against therapeutic cloning

Scientists discovered stem cells inside placenta and amniotic fluid able to give rise to specialized cells

First nuclear transposition of the nucleus of a frog embryo cell

‘Embryo splitting’ technique was discovered: from a single embryo, 5 identical sheep were obtained

Thomson found out embryo stem cells

The Advanced Cell Technology announced its success in cloning a human embryo

Frankenstein