

## AP English Summer Reading

Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, *Frankenstein*

1. Use the copy of the book provided in Mrs. Simna's class. If you lose yours, contact Mr. Larson about a replacement.
2. Read the book carefully (especially the Letters section that starts on page 9). As you read, you must
  - A). Annotate obsessively (difficult passages, summaries of key paragraphs, meanings of strange words, details that relate to the other book/other passages in the same book, crucial plot events, personal reactions, etc.). You have permission to write as much as you want in these books, so take advantage of it. I'm going to check in the fall to see how well you did this.
  - B). Take thorough handwritten notes (I don't allow Chromebook notes in class, so you'd better get in the habit now). You'll need these notes for the exam in August.
3. Read and understand for yourself. Don't rely on digital crutches (i.e. Spark Notes, Cliffs Notes, etc.) which lead to lazy thinking, frequently inaccurate information, vapid and predictable responses, and will be considered academic dishonesty by me. You wouldn't be here now if you weren't good readers, so read good. If you have to wrestle with the text a bit, that's wonderful: that means you're doing something worthwhile.
4. Learn enough about the following concepts to be able to say something accurate and intelligent on command:
  - Romanticism (the *real* Romanticism...the OG European version that predated the American one)
  - Epistolary novel
  - Unreliable narrators
  - Gothic horror fiction
  - The Prometheus myth
5. In addition to being prepared for the kind of questions you'd expect on a good old-fashioned objective test (if you don't know character names, plot details, and the like, you're not helping us), prepare yourselves to answer a one-question in-class essay prompt that'll count as a test grade. The test will ask you to respond with a strong thesis statement, which you'll defend with robust quoted textual evidence. I'll even let you use your (by that time) heavily-annotated books. So what's the question? Nobody knows, but you'll be in great shape if you prepare for questions such as these....
  - For a scary monster book, this novel spends a *lot* of time talking about people and their weird family relationships. What's up with that? Do you see any *patterns*?
  - What main desire drives each of the main characters? What unfulfilled needs motivate them, and what do we think about how they try to have them fulfilled?
  - Romanticism was a reaction against overly mechanical Enlightenment thinking (tl;dr). How do you see that energy at work in this book?
  - Think about the traditional, stereotypical ways society has construed the ideas of "masculine" and "feminine." How are these woven into the fabric of the novel? Which characters seem to perform each gender role? Do any characters drift from one role to the other? Do any exhibit traits of masculinity and femininity *at the same time*?
  - Most of the time when non-literary types bring up *Frankenstein*, it's in a clumsy analogy to explain why GMO fruits or stem-cell research or cloning are evil, or whatever. You're free to indulge in thinking about those connections, but I'm not going to talk about it at all.

Do well on this, and you'll start the year in great shape. Do this half-heartedly, and you'll start the year in a smoldering crater that will take great effort to climb out of.

See you in August.