

Ina Lipkowitz
Reading Fiction

Essay 3 - due in Ses #15 (4 pages)

Choose one of the following and write a four page essay in which you do your best to build your argument from the **specific** words, speeches, and scenes from one of the works we've been discussing. Don't, in other words, use the work to prove a generalization, truism, or long-held belief of yours. Distinguish between summary and argument; do your best to interest your reader; strive for a clear logical arrangement of paragraphs. Read out loud and listen to your sentences. Give your essay a thoughtful title, number your pages, observe proper citation format, and proofread very carefully. Also remember that you do not have to answer each and every question below; the questions are designed to make you think.

As always, if you would like to explore a different topic, talk to me ahead of time.

1. Do you think that the dream Frankenstein has after bringing the Monster to life is more nightmare or wish fulfillment? In order to formulate your response, you will want to consider Shelley's use of the feminine in *Frankenstein*—both of female characters and of personified nature. Be sure to refer to specific moments in the novel as you formulate your response. Be sure, too, that your essay doesn't fall into two insufficiently connected sections.
2. If Mary Shelley intended *Frankenstein* as a warning against the over-ambitious pursuit of knowledge, why did she subtitle her novel "The Modern Prometheus"? You will probably want to consider the myth(s) of Prometheus and, perhaps, a few of the changes Shelley introduced into the 1831 edition of her novel.
3. Why might Shelley have created such an elaborate frame for her novel *Frankenstein*? Compare Walton's quest to discover the North Pole with Frankenstein's quest to create life. What motivates them? On what real scientists/discoverers are they based, however loosely? Do they succeed? Why or why not?
4. Tommo's mysterious leg ailment has long intrigued readers of *Typee*. Trace its progress throughout the work: when does it begin?, when does it heal?, when does it flare up again? Why? What do you think the leg injury might suggest?
5. "Polynesia could have been the Arctic circle or the Belgian Congo. *Typee* is the story of a man's discovery of his relationship to the world," wrote Milton Stern of Melville's first published work. Do you agree that *Typee* is more *Bildungsroman* than anthropological study?