

Topics for paper #3

At least 7 pages, due Friday, Dec. 7

Remember to observe the guidelines specified on the assignment for exam #1. Don't forget the signed pledge. And make sure to review the several pieces of advice I gave with assignment #1.

There is a change to the syllabus: we will NOT have a quiz on *Heart of Darkness* on Tues. Dec. 11.

This essay will focus on *Frankenstein* but will also touch on *Heart of Darkness*. Since we will finish discussion the latter work on Dec. 6, your discussion of it may be brief, but it should adequately address the questions posed below.

Choose one of the following:

- 1) A literary work is not like a box with a meaning inside, and reading one is not like opening the box and taking out the meaning. On the contrary, a work of literature uses its form to put readers through a certain kind of experience in relation to the content it delivers. Form and content are intimately interrelated, and the way a work is told matters as much (or more) as what it tells about.

So: how does the structure of the narrative in *Frankenstein* (the way the narrative is organized and delivered to us) relate to the ideas with which the novel is preoccupied? What parallel can you see between the structure of *Frankenstein* and that of *Heart of Darkness*? What does it mean to regard both works as involving a “contest of voices”?

- 2) When people try to describe unprecedented experiences, they usually draw upon familiar patterns to try to make sense of them. Both *Frankenstein* and *Heart of Darkness* take us to places and types of experience far beyond the common or everyday – to say the least. What patterns derived from the literary and mythological traditions of the Western world – in other words, what kinds of prior stories – do they draw upon in seeking a template that can adequately encompass their new (and terrifying) material? How adequate are these established patterns to their new purposes?