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Please enjoy this complimentary lesson from Learning Challenge Lessons: Secondary English Language Arts by Jill and James Nottingham. In this lesson, you will enhance your students' knowledge and understanding of the novel Frankenstein by Mary Shelley, with focuses on characterisation, responsibility, and developments in science.

LEARN MORE about this title, including Features, Table of Contents and Reviews.



Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?



OVERVIEW:

The lesson will enhance your students' knowledge and understanding of the novel *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley, with focuses on characterisation, responsibility and developments in science. It is important for your students to be familiar with the novel prior to this activity.

KEY CONCEPT:

Responsibility

KEY WORDS:

Responsibility, duty, blame, crime, nature, science, morality, justice, obligation, loyalty, punishment, guilt, culpability, accountability, innocence, child, guardian, control, fear, family, deceit, revenge, pain, isolation and rejection.

LEARNING INTENTION:

To understand how responsibility is embodied in the characters in the novel *Frankenstein*.

SUCCESS CRITERIA:

We can do the following:

- Discuss and explore our understanding of responsibility.
- Examine the thoughts and behaviour of characters to discuss their role in the death of William.
- Determine the responsibility held by Victor Frankenstein and the creature.
- Reflect on and explain the significance of historical, cultural and societal context and its influence when deciding upon the allocation of responsibility.

STRATEGIES USED:

Opinion Line

Mystery

1. IDENTIFY IMPORTANT CONCEPTS

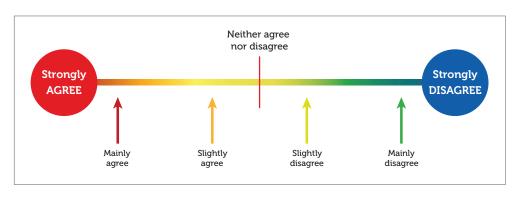
Some of the key areas to investigate within and around the concept of 'responsibility' are the following:

- Guilt
- Morality
- Family
- Society
- Science
- Blame
- Regret
- Justice
- Equality

Activity 1: Provoke the Discussion Using an Opinion Line

Encourage your students to think carefully about the statements on the **Activity 1 resource** cards (listed below) and discuss their ideas in pairs/groups.

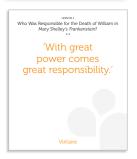
- Parents have a responsibility to teach their child, but the child is responsible for their own actions.
- Children cannot be held responsible for their actions as they are still learning and growing.
- Rich people should have more responsibility than poor people.
- 'With great power comes great responsibility.' Voltaire
- · 'The price of greatness is responsibility.' Winston Churchill
- 'You become responsible forever for what you've tamed.' Antoine de Saint-Exupery
- 'We are all members of one body. We are responsible for each other.' J.B. Priestley
- 'No snowflake in an avalanche ever feels responsible.' Stanislaw Jerzy Lec
- · 'Winners take responsibility. Losers blame others.' Brit Hume
- 'An idea isn't responsible for the people who believe in it.' Don Marquis
- 'In dreams begin responsibility.' W.B. Yeats





Download the activity cards at http://resources.corwin.com/ learningchallengelessons





After some consideration time, read out each quotation in turn, asking your students to position themselves on the line. The students should be encouraged to justify their place with reasons and there should be a whole group dialogue around each statement before moving on to another.

2. CHALLENGE STUDENTS' UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPT

Here are some examples of cognitive conflict we expect your students to experience:

Opinion	Conflicting Opinion
I am responsible for my own behaviour and the consequences of my behaviour.	My parents are responsible for me until I am 18 years old.
We are all responsible for our own actions.	Sometimes we act because we are following orders or instructions from others.
We must all be responsible for each other to help make the world a fairer place for everyone.	I can't be held responsible for the lives of others. I must focus on my own needs and the needs of my family.
Having responsibility makes me feel important.	Having responsibility makes me feel stressed.
Children cannot be trusted to be responsible.	When I was younger, I cared for and fed my guinea pigs every day to make sure they were healthy and happy.
Responsibility always falls to the eldest.	Everyone should take responsibility.

Questions for Challenge

- · What is responsibility?
- How do we know what responsibility is?
- What makes someone responsible?
- Who decides if we are responsible or not?
- Is it possible for responsibility to be given to someone?
- How can responsibility be earned?
- · Does being responsible always mean we are in control?
- · How can we demonstrate responsibility?
- When is responsibility a choice?
- Is it irresponsible to refuse responsibility given to us?
- Can we stop being responsible for something or someone if we choose to?
- To what degree do we have to learn how to be responsible?
- · Who decides what responsibility is?
- Should we always be held responsible for our actions?
- Can we ever be held responsible for something we didn't do?

- When might you be guilty of a crime but not be responsible?
- Should parents always be held responsible for the actions of their children?
- Are adults always more responsible than children?
- When is it irresponsible to take responsibility?
- What is the difference between taking responsibility and taking the blame?
- Should blame always fall on those who are responsible?
- When is responsibility the same as taking control of your actions?
- How responsible are we if someone else is controlling our actions?
- Can responsibility be taken away from you?
- · Why did Winston Churchill say, 'The price of greatness is responsibility'?
- Why do some people have more responsibility?
- Should people with more knowledge and talent have more responsibility than others? Is this fair?
- Do you need to be human to be responsible?
- An experiment is a scientific procedure undertaken to make a discovery. Can we hold scientists responsible if these experiments go wrong?

3. CONSTRUCT UNDERSTANDING

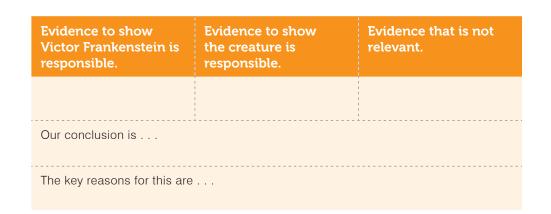
Activity 2: Mystery

In groups of 3 or 4, students are presented with the **Activity 2 resource cards** and are encouraged to use the information on the cards to answer the following key question:

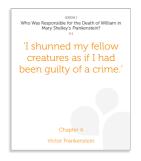
Who was responsible for the death of William?

Encourage your students to explore what the language/devices reveal about the author's view.

It is often useful to support your students when they are sorting through the information in front of them. This can help them to interpret and handle the information more easily and reconstruct their thinking to reach an understanding. In the table below, students can record their ideas on who they believe is responsible for the death of William.









Questions to Promote Further Dialogue

- Who was responsible for William?
- · Who was responsible for the creature?
- Can we be responsible for something we cannot control?
- Can we judge the creature by the same rules as we judge humans?
- Does the creature understand the concept of 'responsibility'?
- Do you need to understand the concept of 'responsibility' to be held responsible for your actions?
- · How did the creature learn about rules and morality in society?
- If the creature is a scientific experiment, can it be held responsible for its own actions?
- Does the creature's appearance affect our view of its responsibility?
- If we create something, are we always responsible for it?
- Should Victor Frankenstein be held responsible for the creation and behaviour of the creature?
- Was Victor Frankenstein legally and/or morally responsible for the creature? How do you know this?
- · Who made Victor Frankenstein responsible for the creature?
- Did Victor Frankenstein choose to take responsibility for the creature?
- Can you be wholly responsible for the actions of another?
- Was Victor Frankenstein irresponsible rather than responsible for the death of his brother?
- If we blame Victor Frankenstein for the actions of the creature, is this the same as saying he is responsible?
- Can you be held responsible for something you are afraid of?
- To what degree is society's rejection of the creature responsible for the events that followed?
- · What is your interpretation of Mary Shelley's views on responsibility?
- At the end of the text, the creature states, 'Polluted by crimes and torn by the bitterest remorse, where can I find rest but in death?' What does this reveal about the creature's feelings of responsibility?
- Does the creature's regret suggest his responsibility?
- Did Victor Frankenstein know that the creature would kill William? Does this matter?
- · Did the creature plan to kill William?
- Has Victor Frankenstein influenced the morals and behaviour of the creature?
- Who was responsible for the death of Justine?
- Why did Victor Frankenstein conduct his experiments in secret?
- Can we blame Victor Frankenstein for the results of his scientific experiment?
 Could he have predicted later events?
- In the 19th century, scientists were challenging and testing the boundaries between life and death, discovering new and improved methods of diagnosis and

treatments. Can scientists be wholly responsible for the consequences of their experiments?

- In a court of law, would the creature have been found guilty/responsible for the murder of William?
- Can Victor be responsible for and be a victim of the same crime?
- · Are we shocked by the actions of the creature when it kills William?
- Does Mary Shelley present the creature as dangerous?
- Victor Frankenstein never gave his creation a name; does this change our view of its culpability?
- Did Victor Frankenstein have a moral and social responsibility to inform people about his creation? Would this have kept William alive?
- Did Victor Frankenstein have a responsibility to the world of science to experiment and advance the knowledge of man?
- Are there any sections in the novel where Victor Frankenstein does behave responsibly? Does this matter?
- If Felix had shown compassion and care towards the creature, would this have prevented the murder of William?
- Could responsibility for William's death lie elsewhere?

Adaptation

You could select a smaller range of cards for your students to consider in the Mystery activity or offer them more adult support.

Extension

Ask students to find their own evidence to determine who is responsible for the death of William.

Ask your students to consider how science may be responsible for the death of William. They could conduct detailed research into the developments of science during this time, and the unrestricted and illegal practices in medical research. Your students could structure their findings using a Thought Map. Once your students have conducted their research, ask them to search for evidence in the novel that would help them ascertain if science was responsible for the death of William. A Venn Diagram could be used to sort and classify their ideas and research.

Mary Shelley uses the subtitle 'The Modern Prometheus' for Frankenstein. Your students could discuss and explore the meanings and motivation behind this subtitle.

Challenge students to create a Fortune Line with the x-axis being time and the y-axis 'level of responsibility' (zero responsibility to absolute responsibility). Ask your students to look through the cards from the Mystery activity and position these on the graph, annotating the graph with their ideas at each stage.

Transform the Mystery activity into a drama performance of the trial for William's murder. Students could use the Mystery cards as evidence for and against the prosecution of the creature/Victor Frankenstein. Challenge the students to find more evidence from the book and from other areas such as religion and the developments in science during this period. This activity could be used to create a newspaper article and/or an essay.

4. CONSIDER THE LEARNING JOURNEY

At the end of the activity it is usual to encourage your students to review their learning journey and the thinking process they have engaged in throughout the session.

This can include reflection on the thinking that has taken place to this point, and a summary and conclusion of the new understanding reached.

Explicit reference to Learning Intentions and Success Criteria is a good starting point for this reflection.

To encourage the students to review their learning journey and their thinking progress, students should provide an argument and reasoning in response to the key question:

Who was responsible for the death of William?

In pairs/groups, students decide on who they believe is responsible for the death of William. They must provide three key reasons using evidence from the text.

Activities from the extension section could be useful for this stage such as the newspaper front page and/or the criminal trial for Victor Frankenstein/creature. The students could act as jurors and decide who they would convict, resulting in a short speech to the class. If your students have identified other agents who should be held responsible, then adapt the activity accordingly.

Possible questions to review the learning journey are as follows:

- Has anyone changed their mind about what it means to be responsible or to have responsibility?
- What do you know now that you didn't know before?
- Which idea really made you think?
- · What skills have you used throughout the lesson?
- · Is it important to agree on definitions together?
- What questions are you still thinking about?

Ideas for Transfer

Students consider who has responsibility for key historical events such as the outbreak of the First World War and the Second World War. They could examine and evaluate primary and secondary resources.

Your students could produce an article for their school magazine that explores the importance of taking responsibility for your actions.

Ask your students to create a podcast that challenges different individuals and authorities on their responsibility for climate change, poverty or knife crime.



WWW - What Worked Well	
EBI – Even Better If	

ACTIVITY 1: OPINION LINE

LESSON 1 LESSON 1 LESSON 1 Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein? Mary Shelley's Frankenstein? Mary Shelley's Frankenstein? Children cannot be Parents have a Rich people held responsible for responsibility to teach should have more their actions as they their child, but the responsibility than are still learning child is responsible for poor people. and growing. their own actions. LESSON 1 Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein? Mary Shelley's Frankenstein? Mary Shelley's Frankenstein? 'The price of greatness 'You become 'With great responsible forever for is responsibility." power comes great responsibility." what you've tamed.' Winston Churchill Voltaire Antoine de Saint-Exupery LESSON 1 LESSON 1 LESSON 1 Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein? Mary Shelley's Frankenstein? Mary Shelley's Frankenstein? 'Winners take 'We are all members 'No snowflake in an avalanche ever of one body. We are responsibility. Losers responsible for blame others." feels responsible." each other.' J.B. Priestley Brit Hume Stanislaw Jerzy Lec

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

'An idea isn't responsible for the people who believe in it.' LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

'In dreams begin responsibility.'

Don Marquis

W.B. Yeats

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

'I shunned my fellow creatures as if I had been guilty of a crime.'

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

'Child, what is the meaning of this? I do not intend to hurt you; listen to me.'

Chapter 16

creature

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

'Your threats cannot move me to do an act of wickedness; but they confirm me in a determination of not creating you a companion in vice.'

Chapter 20

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein?

'His soul is as hellish as his form, full of treachery and fiendlike malice.'

Chapter 24

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

'I grasped his throat to silence him, and in a moment he lay dead at my feet.'

Chapter 16

creature

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

'Thanks to the lessons of Felix and the sanguinary laws of man, I had learned now to work mischief.'

Chapter 16

creature

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein?

'If, therefore, I could seize him, and educate him as my companion and friend, I should not be so desolate in this peopled earth.'

Chapter 16

creature

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein?

'I gazed on my victim, and my heart swelled with exultation and hellish triumph.'

Chapter 16

creature

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

'As yet I looked upon crime as a distant evil; benevolence and generosity were ever present before me.'

Chapter 15

creature

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

'He dashed me to the ground and struck me violently with a stick. I could have torn him limb from limb, as the lion rends the antelope . . . I refrained.'

Chapter 15

creature

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-13

'I listened to this discourse with the extremest agony. I, not in deed, but in effect, was the true murderer.'

Chapter 9

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein?

'I learned that there was but one means to overcome the sensation of pain, and that was death – a state which I feared yet did not understand.'

Chapter 13

creature

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

'I tenderly love these friends.'

Chapter 15

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-14

'Unfeeling, heartless creator! You had endowed me with perceptions and passions, and then cast me abroad an object for the scorn and horror of mankind.'

Chapter 16

creature

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-17

'No father had watched my infant days, no mother had blessed me with smiles and caresses.'

Chapter 13

creature

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

'I wandered like an evil spirit, for I had committed deeds of mischief beyond description.'

Chapter 9

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-15

'While I improved in speech, I also learned the science of letters, as it was taught to the stranger; and this opened before me a wide field for wonder and delight.'

Chapter 13

creature

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-18

'I was more agile than they, and could subsist upon coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs.'

Chapter 13

creature

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-19

'I have murdered the lovely and the helpless.'

Chapter 24

creature

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-22

'My duties towards the beings of my own species had greater claims to my attention because they included a greater proportion of happiness or misery.'

Chapter 24

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein?

'Avoid ambition, even if it be only the apparently innocent one of distinguishing yourself in science and discoveries.'

Chapter 24

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-20

'Am I to be thought the only criminal, when all humankind sinned against me?'

Chapter 24

creature

Cicataic

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-23

'A grin was on the face of the monster; he seemed to jeer, as with his fiendish finger he pointed towards the corpse of my wife.'

Chapter 23

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-26

'Scoffing devil! Again do I vow vengeance; again do I devote thee, miserable fiend, to torture and death.'

Chapter 24

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-21

'In a fit of enthusiastic madness I created a rational creature and was bound towards him to assure, as far as was in my power, his happiness and well-being.'

Chapter 24

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-24

'I must pursue and destroy the being to whom I gave existence; then my lot on earth will be fulfilled and I may die.'

Chapter 24

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-27

'Swear to me, Walton, that he shall not escape, that you will seek him and satisfy my vengeance in his death.'

Chapter 24

Victor Frankenstein

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-28

'I, who irretrievably destroyed thee by destroying all thou lovedst.'

Chapter 24

creature

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein?

2-31

'During my first experiment, a kind of enthusiastic frenzy had blinded me to the horror of my employment.'

Chapter 19

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein?

'A thousand times rather would I have confessed myself guilty of the crime ascribed to Justine, but I was absent when it was committed.'

Chapter 8

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-29

'My heart was fashioned to be susceptible of love and sympathy.'

Chapter 24

creature

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-32

'The wretch saw
me destroy the
creature on whose
future existence
he depended
for happiness.'

Chapter 20

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-35

'O God! I have murdered my darling child!'

Chapter 7

Elizabeth

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-30

'I, the miserable and the abandoned, am an abortion, to be spurned at, and kicked, and trampled on.'

Chapter 24

creature

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-33

'In my joy I thrust my hand into the live embers, but quickly drew it out again with a cry of pain.'

Chapter 11

creature

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-36

'Nothing in human shape could have destroyed the fair child.'

Chapter 7

Victor Frankenstein

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein?

2-37

'I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body.'

Chapter 5

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein?

2-40

'Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room.'

Chapter 5

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein?

'Then I spurred on my animal, striving so to forget the world, my fears, and more than all, myself – or, in a more desperate fashion, I alighted and threw myself on the grass, weighed down by horror and despair.'

Chapter 9

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-38

'I resolved, contrary to my first intention, to make the being of a gigantic stature, that is to say, about eight feet in height, and proportionably large.'

Chapter 4

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-41

'A new species would bless me as its creator and source; many happy and excellent natures would owe their being to me.'

Chapter 4

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-44

'The cottagers arose the next morning before the sun. The young woman arranged the cottage and prepared the food, and the youth departed after the first meal.'

Chapter 12

creature

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-39

'No father could claim the gratitude of his child so completely as I should deserve theirs.'

Chapter 4

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein?

2-42

'I will pioneer a new way, explore unknown powers, and unfold to the world the deepest mysteries of creation.'

Chapter 3

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-45

'Spring advanced rapidly; the weather became fine and the skies cloudless.'

Chapter 13

creature

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-46

'My agony was still superior to thine, for the bitter sting of remorse will not cease to rankle in my wounds until death shall close them forever.'

Chapter 24

creature

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-47

'We had agreed to descend the Rhine in a boat from Strasbourg to Rotterdam, whence we might take shipping for London.'

Chapter 18

Victor Frankenstein

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*?

2-48

'The government of France were greatly enraged at the escape of their victim and spared no pains to detect and punish his deliverer.'

Chapter 14

creature

LESSON 1

Who Was Responsible for the Death of William in Mary Shelley's Frankenstein?

2-49

'My dearest Cousin,

You have been ill, very ill, and even the constant letters of dear kind Henry are not sufficient to reassure me on your account.'

Chapter 6

Letter from Elizabeth to Victor Frankenstein