

Mechanical assembly: *Frankenstein*

■ The process

In the manufacturing and industrial context, mechanical assembly is the process used to put component parts together to make a complete product: as a product travels down the assembly line, a part is added at each workstation. The **conveyor** may stop at each station or move continuously. At each workstation, a worker or an industrial robot performs a task that contributes to the assembly of the completed product.

■ Engineering techniques

Mechanical assembly requires special engineering techniques to ensure cost-effective and on-time assembly of products. To design products for mechanical assembly, engineers must essentially build the product in the design and then disassemble it to decide the steps necessary to build the product in a logical order using assembly line technology. This careful engineering is important because, if the steps are taken in the wrong order, it could result in missing components.

■ Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin Shelley

Mary Shelley was born on August 30, 1797 in London; both her parents were famous writers in the 1800s*, so it was at home that Mary developed into a person of letters. She married Percy Bysshe Shelley, an important Romantic poet. In 1822, her husband drowned at sea off the coast of Livorno, Italy. By now, her life was connected to tragedy, with the deaths of three children, her mother, her husband, and the suicides of Percy's former wife and Mary's half-sister. She spent the rest of her life writing original works and **tending** to the works of her husband. On February 1, 1851 Mary died in London.



Her father was philosopher William Godwin and her mother feminist Mary Wollstonecraft.



■ *Frankenstein, or the Modern Prometheus*

In the summer of 1816, while in Switzerland, Mary, her husband and her **stepsister** rented a house near another great British writer, Lord Byron. The summer proved **unseasonable**, so Byron suggested the group should write ghost stories to pass the time. Mary's story, the best of the group, was so frightening that Byron ran "shrieking in horror" from the room.

Frankenstein is the story of the gifted scientist Victor Frankenstein who succeeds in giving life to a "human" being by assembling different body parts of dead people. However, this creature is not what he expected, but rather a hideous creature who is then rejected by him and mankind in general. The monster's rejection from society pushes it to commit murder against its creator's family. The monster represents a sort of Romantic hero because of the rejection it must **bear** from normal society. Shelley was showing readers how many people in conventional society reject those who live on the borders of it.

to bear: *sopportare*
conveyor: *nastro trasportatore*
countenance: *espressione del viso*
to endure: *sopportare*
to shun: *ripudiare*
stepsister: *sorellastra*

to stitch: *unire con dei punti*
to tend to: *prendersi cura*
to traverse: *andare su e giù*
unseasonable: *non appropriato alla stagione*

1 Read the extract and answer the questions.

"I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. For this I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to **endure** the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room and continued a long time **traversing**

my bed-chamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep. (...) Oh! No mortal could support the horror of that **countenance**. A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch. I had gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then, but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived."

Frankenstein, chapter 5

1. Why had Dr Frankenstein worked hard for two years?
2. Once finished, why did the Doctor feel horror and disgust?
3. Why did he rush out of the room?
4. Why does the author make a reference to Dante?

2 Read the text and fill in the gaps with the words given below.

arrogance • corpses • death • God • humankind • inanimate • intervention • knowledge • redemption • repulsed

Why did Dr Frankenstein Create his Monster?

The short answer to the question might be this: although Victor Frankenstein claimed to be creating his monster for the betterment of **1.**, it's more likely that he did so out of **2.**, or out of a desire to become like God. As a young man, Victor's interests lie in science, chemistry, and of the balance and contrasts between life and **3.** While a university student, Victor becomes obsessed with the idea of creating life out of **4.** objects and starts considering how to do so. Victor thought he was doing a service to humanity by creating a "new human".

Of course, after **stitching** together various parts

of human **5.** to create his new being, Victor succeeds in reanimating the dead, but is immediately **6.** by his creation and its "ugliness". Victor falls into a deep depression and **shuns** his creation, perhaps because now that he's conquered death, his replacement as **7.** is complete. Victor is similar to Goethe's Faust character who went on a quest for **8.**, made a deal with the devil, and is rescued by God. Unfortunately, Victor does not have the benefit of divine **9.**: unlike Faust, Victor knows he will not be saved and instead will perish without **10.**

Adapted from: <https://www.cliffsnotes.com/cliffsnotes/subjects/literature/why-did-dr-frankenstein-create-his-monster>

3 **GROUP WORK** Go online and find the description Mary Shelley writes of the monstrous creature. Read it and comment on it together.

4 **GROUP WORK** Read the text and answer the question.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* conveyed important aspects of Romanticism to science, in particular the manipulation of nature: she stressed the role and responsibility of society regarding science, and through the moral of her story supported the Romantic viewpoint that science could easily go wrong unless man took more care to appreciate nature rather than control it. When you join different materials, such as metals or plastics, you create an inanimate, lifeless object, while Victor Frankenstein tried to give life by joining human organs and failed. What lessons can modern man learn from this novel?

