

Frankenstein: The Modern Prometheus

Mary Shelley, 1818

Frankenstein was published at the height of the Industrial Revolution, a time of many new scientific discoveries. In the book, a scientist tries to create a creature out of old body parts. Frankenstein was not only scary because it was about a monster, but because it reflected peoples' fears that science might one day go too far.

It was on a dreary night of November that I beheld my accomplishment. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I infused the first spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open. It breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or describe the wretch I spent so much time and care making? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features to be beautiful. But great God! His yellow skin barely covered the muscles and arteries beneath. His hair was a lustrous black, and his teeth were of a pearly whiteness, but these things only formed a horrid contrast with his watery eyes, his shriveled skin and straight black lips.

I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. I had deprived myself of rest and health. I had desired it with a passion that far exceeded anything else. Now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the sight of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room.

How does the narrator feel at the beginning of the passage?

How does he feel at the end?

Why does the narrator feel the way he does at the end?

Draw a picture based on the description of the monster.

