

Thirst for Unknowledge

Frankenstein Literary Analysis Prezi Transcript*

People dislike chaos. People invite structure.

Victor Frankenstein from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is plagued throughout his life by fear of the worst and the slight chance of hope. He strives for order with the love of his family and his studies.

A Definition of "Certainty"

People attempt to establish order by planning or predicting, and then following through with logical plans given those predictions.

When considering the possibilities, a "certainty" is the knowledge and acceptance of only a single possibility. An "uncertainty" instead is "multiple certainties", or the ability to question and investigate multiple possibilities.

Certainty is the simple motivator.

There is a fundamental probability in everything. Imagining only a single option gives a close-minded direction, a simple, directed goal.

- **Refuge in Nature**

- Victor finds a heavenly retreat from the disorder in his life with "the blue lake, the snow-clad mountains — they never change, ... regulated by immutable laws" (66); "the silent working of immutable laws was ever and anon" (99).

There is a particular magnificent calm to Nature, a great unchanging and a lack of possibility.

- **Redirection**

- Acting as a reference point, returning to Nature for comfort always brings Victor away temporarily from his goals, only so that he can refocus them with a sharper direction.

Although it does not provide a direct focus, it allows Victor to re-focus on a previous motive.

- **Certainty of Failure**

- The moment when Victor creates the creature is the moment that it becomes a monster in his mind. At that moment, upon his first glance and the pivotal moment of "Great God!" (59) is the moment that the experience of science is gone and a monster is born— he is so certain that his creation is not a success, but rather a disaster.

- **The Path to Self-Recovery**

- As a result of his guilt and utter disgust, Victor quickly is able to pinpoint the source of the crisis and endeavors to return to his normal life.

- **Preliminary Goal**

* This is verbatim from the Prezi (<https://prezi.com/zg5kdzejvlg/>). However, some textual formatting (i.e., italics and bold) were not preserved from the Prezi, as well as much of the visual formatting.

- Having created "a wretch whom with such infinite pains and care [he] had endeavored to form" (58), Victor takes away from his experience a desire never again to experiment with it, to leave the life forever of dark sciences for personal greed of fame.

This promise to himself, along with Henry's encouragement, gives him the necessary strength to almost return to his former state.

- **Certainty in Death**

- After receiving the threat from the monster about their scheduled "meeting" on Victor's wedding night, he thinks at that moment only that "in that hour, I should extinguish his malice" (173), a surprisingly reasonable conclusion considering the prospect of death, which "does not move [him] to fear" (173).

Instead, it creates "the dead calmness of inaction and certainty ... and deprives the soul both of hope and fear" (93).

- **Goal**

- From the moment of his endangerment, Victor endeavors to preserve the life of his family, well convinced that he was to die. He was not afraid of his own fate anymore, so he desired to protect the lives of his uncertain companions.

- **Conflicting Certainties**

- "[The monster] was the murderer! I could not doubt it. The mere presence of the idea was an irresistible proof of the fact" (78). When Victor gives his monster a formal conviction in this manner, and being well convinced that there was no possibility of revealing the monster, he is torn apart; the "fangs of remorse tore [his] bosom apart and would not forego their hold" (86).
- Victor has no choice but to see the goals established by his certainty unfinished. He knows that the monster is the murderer, and he knows that he cannot expose the monster— two conflicting certainties— and thus he cannot act, which leaves him devastated beyond torture: "Now all was lasted: instead of that serenity of conscience which allowed me to look upon the past with self-satisfaction, and from thence to gather promise of new hopes, I was seized by remorse and the sense of guilt, which hurried me away to a hell of intense tortures, such as no language can describe" (93).

Certainty has reached the limits of its potential.

Victor is stuck in an infinite loop.

- **Acceptance**

- Victor is only aware of one possibility (such as his death), one with a greater, unknown potential (such as his family's death).

- **Goal**

- In preparation for the option in mind, Victor acts as if it were to happen (such as by protecting his family from the monster's wrath).
- **Fulfillment**
 - The anticipated moment of decision comes (such as his wedding night).
 - After the action is completed (such as the death of Henry, Elizabeth, his father), there is no more to do: he has nothing else planned, nothing else expected.
 - Victor's close-minded self tries again to focus on a different certainty (such as the comfort in nature), something else to calm his unease about the future.

But Victor realizes that an acceptance is wrong. He does not get peace of mind from a certainty if he discovers it to be false, nor does he feel just when two opposing certainties and two different goals tear him apart.

Illusion of Truth

The "truths," the "certainties" that Victor believes he knew for sure are torn apart. To him, the reality beckons to him: it is not reasonable to fix the mind on a single goal based on an untrue truth.

Certainty is inadequate.

Transition to Uncertainty

Haste, rashness, a hate for his own ignoble closed-mindsets give rise to Victor's uncertain state.

Causes

- **Dream of Discovery**
 - Victor is "deeply smitten with the thirst for knowledge" (38), an indispensable trait that allows him to pursue scientific glory with his studious toils.
But for those arduous two years, he felt his "enthusiasm was checked by [his] anxiety" (57), and he was always cautious and unsure.
Victor never set his mind to either success or failure, and thus gives him a form of "checked motivation," fear and hope both in moderation.
 - **Dream of Discovery Revisited**
 - Walton has a very similar goal with similar forebodings and hopes. He "dare[s] not expect such success, yet [he] cannot bear to look on the reverse of the picture" (22). Although he is optimistic, he is well-aware of the opposite, the failure—and this motivates as well.
- **Dream of Family**
 - Victor knows that his family will provide him the utmost happiness, but it is endangered by his fiend's malice.
Therefore, his happiness with Henry, Elizabeth, and the rest of his family is uncertain, resting on the monster's actions.
Thus, Victor cherishes his family even more than if he had never encountered this endangering factor.
- **Dream of Revenge**

- Although "cold, want, and fatigue were the least pains which [Victor] was destined to endure ... cursed by some devil [which] carried about with [him] [his] eternal hell" (207), Victor continues to search for the monster because of the improbable possibility that he should prevail. There was "still a spirit of good follow[ing]" (207) him.
- **Dream of Life**
 - Explaining the tortures of his pursuit of the monster, Victor exclaims, "How mutable are our feelings, and how strange is that clinging love we have to life even in the excess of misery!" (177).
He struggles between "love" and "misery" of life, again opposites that fuel the wondrous fight for life.
"A weight of despair and remorse pushed on my heart, which nothing could remove ... Yet my heart overflowed with kindness, and the love of virtue" (93)
Victor is extremely torn by the fact that he lives both with an evil shadow and a benevolent intent; it seems that the two could not coexist, but they balance each other out.

Juxtaposed Motives (of Uncertainty)

Opening up the mind to just one more option gives an immense increase in meaning and possibility because of an added awareness and motivation.

One Side, One Possibility, One "Certainty"

- Life
- Hope
- Family

Another Perspective, Another "Certainty"

- Death
- Fear
- Fiend

A New Meaning, A Combination, An "Uncertainty"

- Experience
- Motivation
- Love

Juxtaposing two simple "certainties" to create an "uncertainty" creates a much more complex idea: it creates a spectrum, a range of wider possibility. And these more complex ideas, such as emotions or thought, give another dimension to a one-sided idea that gives more meaning to a human being.

More Correct Truth

- Nothing is one-sided. Every event is a multifaceted bundle, and preparation for it should be multidimensional as well.
When there is an alternative possibility, then it shows that Victor is questioning.

Questioning the possibilities. Finding multiple sides.

And when Victor considers a second motive, it increases his ambition, being able to be motivated in multiple ways.

But what about infinite possibility?

- Completely opening up to uncertainty— to dive into a task with no anticipation of the outcome— leads to chaos and a lack of direction. The extra possibilities are counterproductive.
- **Example**
 - When Victor thinks "with a sensation of madness, ... trembling with passion" (171) to destroy the monster, he opens himself up to infinite possibility, which had consequences that further ruins his life.
Without any prediction, any possibilities or outcomes he imagines, he impulsively angers an enraged and sentient being. There is no certainty at all in his action. As a result, he is catastrophically misled.

Thesis

Although it gives a better sense of direction, being certain of a single possibility is often lacking in truth. Instead, what leads to the goals that provide the greatest motivation and satisfaction is an uncertainty of two possibilities, especially contrasting ones that combine to give a more complete perspective.