

Key Question #37

#1 – Comparing Macbeth to Victor Frankenstein

Macbeth and Frankenstein are two classical and highly known stories in English. Macbeth is a good man that has taken the wrong path. He is highly influenced by those around him and eventually turns into a monster himself. Victor Frankenstein is a knowledge hungry man who lusts for any new information in the world of sciences. Both characters make an error which causes severe consequences. In addition, both characters also make these errors without thinking of the consequences properly and thoroughly. With this combination, one would think that they brought this upon themselves. However, for both stories this is not the case. The reader can feel sympathetic and empathetic at the same time for these characters.

In a way, both characters are insatiable. In Macbeth, upon being told by the three witches that he will become King of Scotland, he becomes crazed over the idea. He desperately wants to be King of Scotland that he even dreams of it. As well as being under the strong influence of his wife, Lady Macbeth, the audience can feel sympathetic to this because Lady Macbeth is irrational about the situation. She is completely behind the idea of Macbeth being King that she plans his death and then belittles Macbeth for not being able to process it. Clearly Macbeth is not ready to kill a King whom he is friends with. In Frankenstein, Victor is a very intelligent scientist. His unquenchable thirst for the spark of life has never seemed to end. He wants to know everything there possibly is to know, which is far too much for a normal person. He uses this thirst to create a life

himself, which he absolutely repulses after creating it. The reader could feel sympathetic to this because Victor wasn't doing anything completely wrong by wanting to obtain more knowledge and the audience can recognize this by recounting the beginning of the story where Victor just wants to study alchemy and sciences. In reality, it is a big stepping stone in the field of science but it was completely blasphemous and un-natural. In both cases the reader could feel empathetic at the lack of thought that any of these characters put into their decisions.

Also, both characters are disloyal. In Macbeth, King Duncan is killed because of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth. Lady Macbeth, in a sense, hypnotized Macbeth into going along with the plan by making him feel like less of a man if he didn't. In doing so (killing Duncan), Macbeth would be killing a dear friend and a trusted ally, who was nothing but nice to him. This shows how much of a monster he has become; not letting anyone get in his way. The audience, at this point, would feel empathetic towards Macbeth because this is the point where he is starting to become an evil person. Similarly in Frankenstein, Victor betrays the very life that he created. He spends so much time and effort into creating the creature but at first glance, is repulsed by it. He abandons the creature. Consequently the creature becomes angry and violent. The creature, at this point, is forced into a life of rejection. The audience would feel empathetic towards Victor, because he committed an act of blasphemy, followed by an act of complete selfishness. The audience definitely feels pity towards both characters.

Both characters display qualities of inability to understand human life and feelings. They seem to forget about the value and worth of a life. In Macbeth, he becomes so power-thirsty that he lets nothing stop his plans and get in his way. He doesn't value a life the way it should be. He takes lives for his own purposes and decisions, killing innocent people. He does this only to keep his power asserted so that no one could even challenge him. In Frankenstein, a human himself, forgets all about human emotions and value of a life. He abandons his creation, forgetting that it has a conscious. He abandons it as if it were a pile of metal, like a robot, and not as if it were made the same way as Victor, just a little different and uglier. In both cases the reader could feel either empathetic or sympathetic depending on how their relationship with the characters is since the start of the book.

In conclusion, I would say generally the reader would feel sympathetic for both these protagonists. With all the understanding of circumstances that the reader undergoes, along with the characters, they would be able to understand exactly why and how these characters made their decisions. For example, in Macbeth, the protagonist is severely influenced by Lady Macbeth who, ultimately, decides his future for him. Similarly in Frankenstein, Mr. Waldman helps cultivate his ambition to study the sciences. If these events never occurred to both characters, the end results of the stories wouldn't be the same and probably less tragic. This is the factor which I believe makes the reader feel sympathetic.

