

# Reading Journals

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You will have 4 reading journals due for this class. Three will be devoted to our central text, *Frankenstein*, while the fourth will cover *Where the Wild Things Are* and two scholarly articles associated with it. Keeping a reading journal will read as writers. These notes will be invaluable when you move on to writing essays and will help you prepare for reading discussions during class.

Reading journals must be submitted to the Catalyst Dropbox by 10AM on the day indicated on the syllabus (e.g. Reading Journal #1 will be due April 11th, at 10AM). Journals should be a minimum of 250 words each and the completion of each journal will count toward your participation grade. I will read the journals but I will not comment on them, nor will you receive a grade for them. You should think of these assignments as a non-critical space to flesh out your reactions to the text.

## Journal Structure:

You want to record two things in your journal:

- 1) the passage you are reacting to (don't forget to include page numbers!)
- 2) your reactions (notes, comments and questions)

You can organize your journal as you see fit. Some examples include:

- Noting passages on the left side of the page and writing comments on the right side.

"A new species would bless me as its creator" (p.58)

Frankenstein seems to be playing God here. What drives him to this pursuit? Is this a critique of ambition?

- Noting passages and then indenting underneath with comments

"A new species would bless me as its creator" (p.58)

Frankenstein seems to be playing God here. What drives him to this pursuit? Is this a critique of ambition?

- Or you can opt for more stream-of-conscious note-taking

When Frankenstein is at his work he really seems to think himself a god (p 58). I wonder if there is anything in the description of his past that led him to behave this way. Was he born to be ambitious and is this a critique of that?

## **Some questions to help guide your responses**

**Plot:** What is the main conflict? What are the minor conflicts? How are all the conflicts related? What causes the conflicts? Where does the climax occur, if there is one? Why? How is the main conflict resolved? Which conflicts go unresolved?

**Narrative Structure:** How does the story move? What kind of narrative device is employed to move the plot? That is, are the characters on a journey through geographic space? Does the narrative move chronologically? etc. How does this structure seem to reflect or comment on other elements (i.e. characters and themes) in the text?

**Point of view:** Who tells the story? Can you trust the narrator to tell you the truth about events, characters, and settings of the story? Why has the author chosen this point of view? What effects does it have on other elements of the story?

**Characterization:** How are the characters portrayed? Are they flat, round, dynamic, static? Do they change? How and why do they change? What do they learn? What problems do they have? Do they have traits that contradict one another and therefore cause internal conflicts? Do they experience epiphanies? How or what? How do they relate to each other? Etc.

**Setting:** Where does the action take place? (Think not only about geographic location but also physical space: indoors, outdoors, small rooms, palatial homes, etc.) What does it look like, sound like, feel like? What relationship does place have to characterization, the plot, themes, and the narrative structure? At what period in history does the action take place?