

**OLYMPIADS SCHOOL/GRADE 9 ENGLISH/HOMEWORK 1****NAME (FIRST AND LAST):**\_\_\_\_\_ **GRADE:**\_\_\_\_\_

**Read the following Spark Notes summaries of the preface and four letters in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*.**

**Summary: Preface**

*Frankenstein* opens with a preface, signed by Mary Shelley but commonly supposed to have been written by her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley. It states that the novel was begun during a summer vacation in the Swiss Alps, when unseasonably rainy weather and nights spent reading German ghost stories inspired the author and her literary companions to engage in a ghost story writing contest, of which this work is the only completed product.

**Summary: Letter 1**

The novel itself begins with a series of letters from the explorer Robert Walton to his sister, Margaret Saville. Walton, a well-to-do Englishman with a passion for seafaring, is the captain of a ship headed on a dangerous voyage to the North Pole. In the first letter, he tells his sister of the preparations leading up to his departure and of the desire burning in him to accomplish “some great purpose”—discovering a northern passage to the Pacific, revealing the source of the Earth’s magnetism, or simply setting foot on undiscovered territory.

**Summary: Letters 2–3**

In the second letter, Walton bemoans his lack of friends. He feels lonely and isolated, too sophisticated to find comfort in his shipmates and too uneducated to find a sensitive soul with whom to share his dreams. He shows himself a Romantic, with his “love for the marvellous, a belief in the marvellous,” which pushes him along the perilous, lonely pathway he has chosen. In the brief third letter, Walton tells his sister that his ship has set sail and that he has full confidence that he will achieve his aim.

**Summary: Letter 4**

In the fourth letter, the ship stalls between huge sheets of ice, and Walton and his men spot a sledge guided by a gigantic creature about half a mile away. The next morning, they encounter another sledge stranded on an ice floe. All but one of the dogs drawing the sledge is dead, and the man on the sledge—not the man seen the night before—is emaciated, weak, and starving. Despite his condition, the man refuses to board the ship until Walton tells him that it is heading north. The stranger spends two days recovering, nursed by the crew, before he can speak. The crew is burning with curiosity, but Walton, aware of the man’s still-fragile state, prevents his men from burdening the stranger with questions. As time passes, Walton and the stranger become friends, and the stranger eventually consents to tell Walton his story. At the end of the fourth letter, Walton states that the visitor will commence his narrative the next day; Walton’s framing narrative ends and the stranger’s begins.

**Short Answers**

1. To whom is Robert Walton writing letters in the opening letters?  
a) his brother    b) Victor Frankenstein    c) his sister    d) a cousin
2. From where is Walton writing his first letter in the opening letters?  
a) Russia    b) New York    c) Geneva    d) Ingolstadt
3. How does Walton come to meet Victor Frankenstein?  
a) They went to school together.  
b) They were childhood companions.  
c) Walton is Elizabeth's long lost brother.  
d) Walton and his ship's crew rescue Victor from an ice flow.
4. What delays Walton's trip to the North Pole?  
a) weather    b) illness    c) a lack of money    d) ship's captains
5. Where did Walton hire the ship and crew for his trip?  
a) St. Petersburg    b) Moscow    c) Archangel    d) Dubai
6. What does Walton tell Walton that he feels a slave of?  
a) his creature    b) his passions    c) his wife    d) his profession

**Short Answers**

1. Why is Walton in Russia, and what does he plan to do there?

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2. Why is Walton pleased when Victor Frankenstein is brought aboard ship?

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3. Why does Walton decide to write down Victor Frankenstein's story for his sister?

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## READING COMPREHENSION

Read the reading selections and answer the questions that follow.

### From Letter 2 in *Frankenstein*

But I have one want which I have never yet been able to satisfy, and the absence of the object of which I now feel as a most severe evil, I have no friend, Margaret: when I am glowing with the enthusiasm of success, there will be none to participate my joy; if I am assailed by disappointment, no one will endeavour to sustain me in dejection. I shall commit my thoughts to paper, it is true; but that is a poor medium for the communication of feeling. I desire the company of a man who could sympathize with me, whose eyes would reply to mine. You may deem me romantic, my dear sister, but I bitterly feel the want of a friend. I have no one near me, gentle yet courageous, possessed of a cultivated as well as of a capacious mind, whose tastes are like my own, to approve or amend my plans. How would such a friend repair the faults of your poor brother! I am too ardent in execution and too impatient of difficulties.

What does Walton suffer from, and why does he suffer from it? Paraphrase his words.

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### From Letter 2 in *Frankenstein*

I cannot describe to you my sensations on the near prospect of my undertaking. It is impossible to communicate to you a conception of the trembling sensation, half pleasurable and half fearful, with which I am preparing to depart. I am going to unexplored regions, to "the land of mist and snow," but I shall kill no albatross; therefore do not be alarmed for my safety or if I should come back to you as worn and woeful as the "Ancient Mariner." You will smile at my allusion, but I will disclose a secret. I have often attributed my attachment to, my passionate enthusiasm for, the dangerous mysteries of ocean to that production of the most imaginative of modern poets. There is something at work in my soul which I do not understand. I am practically industrious—painstaking, a workman to execute with perseverance and labour—but besides this there is a love for the marvellous, a belief in the marvellous, intertwined in all my projects, which hurries me out of the common pathways of men, even to the wild sea and unvisited regions I am about to explore.

## A summary of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner".

(Adapted from <http://www.studentpulse.com/articles/144/brief-review-the-rime-of-the-ancient-mariner>)

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" is about a man on a voyage by ship, who in one impulsive and heinous act, changes the course of his life – and death. The Mariner faces an inner struggle over the crime he has committed, and must understand his actions and perform his penance. He must also learn to abandon his negative views and openly accept all of Gods' creatures. The voyage now becomes a journey of learning important lessons in accountability, acceptance, forgiveness, and repentance.

After the Mariner kills the Albatross (which is the crime committed), it is hung around his neck so he can understand the seriousness of his act, but he is incapable of realizing the full implications at this time. The bird was of no danger to the Mariner or the men on the ship, and in fact, was a spiritual guide to safeguard the crew on their excursion. The murder was committed on a whim, with no forethought about the act or the repercussions. The Mariner gives no explanation to the Wedding Guest as to why he killed the bird because he has none.

The ship and its crew face difficulties as it comes to a halt on the sea. The Mariner is angry at his fate instead of remorseful for his crime, and he curses the sea and the creatures in it. He has not learned to cherish all of Gods' creations and he will pay a price for this. A ship approaches and he is dumbfounded to come face to face with Death and Life-In-Death. With a roll of the dice, Death wins the lives of the crew and, Life-In-Death wins the life of the Mariner. One by one the men on the ship die, leaving the Mariner alone and frightened. He grieves only for himself, at first, saying "Alone on a wide sea! And never a saint took pity on My soul in agony" (245).

For seven days and seven nights he is forced to spend time in solitary, reflecting on the events that have occurred, the eyes of the dead sailors fixed on him with blame. He states "But oh! More horrible than that Is the curse in a dead man's eye!" indicating he has begun to understand and accept his responsibility for their deaths (245). Once this acceptance begins, his solitude is no longer a punishment, but an opportunity for him to realize the exquisiteness of the universe. As he watches the water snakes he begins to perceive them differently, and suddenly their beauty becomes apparent to him for the first time. They are no longer beastly creatures to be condemned, but are creatures of God's universe to be appreciated and loved. This new insight releases him from his invisible chains and he is able to offer a blessing for the water snakes. The albatross falls from his neck, into the sea, and "He is on the verge of learning that mysterious and omnipotent spirits govern his destiny" (Buchan 98).

The Mariner has begun to broaden his views and acknowledge the spiritual wonder and joys of the universe. He has learned to release his negative views, and by doing so, has set free the spirits of his dead shipmates. Their spirits rise, aiding the Mariner in his journey home, and guiding him to the Hermit. Even though the albatross is no

longer hung from his neck, and the ship is back on course home, the Mariner has not found absolution. The Polar Spirits confirm this when they remark “The man hath penance done, And penance more will do” (249). The Mariner has learned another lesson, forgiveness must be asked for, and it must also be earned.

It is the Hermit that he seeks in order to ask exculpation for his transgressions. Though the Albatross is no longer hung around his neck, the Mariner still has the image of its blood in his mind. He pursues the Hermit because “He’ll shrieve my soul, he’ll wash away The Albatross’s blood” (251). He feels that if he can have the opportunity to ask for exoneration, he can be released from the inner turmoil he is experiencing. The Hermit asks the Mariner “What manner of man art thou?,” (253) giving him the opportunity to admit his sins and ask for his penance. Once he spills his story to the Hermit, a feeling of freedom overcomes him. It is this feeling he will spend endless days and nights seeking. He is forced to spend eternity repeating his story, searching for the person capable of forgiving his sins, though no one can.

The question then is “has the Mariner found redemption?” The answer would be no, he has not. Redemption brings peace and the Mariner has not found this peace. The crime was senseless, which makes it much more difficult for anyone to understand or forgive, even the Hermit. He has been given a permanent penance to perform, wandering the earth and telling his story. While he may experience a brief period of serenity after each story telling, the guilt inevitably returns and he must go through the cycle again. Lessons have been learned, but the Mariner will pay the price of his sin for eternity.

- i. Based on the summary of Coleridge’s “Ancient Mariner,” what is a major theme (a big idea) represented by the poem? Explain your answer by using evidence from the summary (or from the long poem, if you have read it before).

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- ii. In Letter 2 of *Frankenstein*, Walton alludes to “Ancient Mariner.” What is an allusion, and why does he allude to Coleridge’s poem? (How might Walton’s seafaring reveal to him similarly important lessons about life?)

Definition of allusion: \_\_\_\_\_

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#### From Letter 4

About two o'clock the mist cleared away, and we beheld, stretched out in every direction, vast and irregular plains of ice, which seemed to have no end. Some of my comrades groaned, and my own mind began to grow watchful with anxious thoughts, when a strange sight suddenly attracted our attention and diverted our solicitude from our own situation. We perceived a low carriage, fixed on a sledge and drawn by dogs, pass on towards the north, at the distance of half a mile; a being which had the shape of a man, but apparently of gigantic stature, sat in the sledge and guided the dogs. We watched the rapid progress of the traveller with our telescopes until he was lost among the distant inequalities of the ice. This appearance excited our unqualified wonder. We were, as we believed, many hundred miles from any land; but this apparition seemed to denote that it was not, in reality, so distant as we had supposed. Shut in, however, by ice, it was impossible to follow his track, which we had observed with the greatest attention. About two hours after this occurrence we heard the ground sea, and before night the ice broke and freed our ship. We, however, lay to until the morning, fearing to encounter in the dark those large loose masses which float about after the breaking up of the ice. I profited of this time to rest for a few hours.

What does Walton claim the crew of his ship saw the day before picking up Victor?  
What is unusual about this sighting?

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**From Letter 4**

Yesterday the stranger said to me, "You may easily perceive, Captain Walton, that I have suffered great and unparalleled misfortunes. I had determined at one time that the memory of these evils should die with me, but you have won me to alter my determination. You seek for knowledge and wisdom, as I once did; and I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you, as mine has been. I do not know that the relation of my disasters will be useful to you; yet, when I reflect that you are pursuing the same course, exposing yourself to the same dangers which have rendered me what I am, I imagine that you may deduce an apt moral from my tale, one that may direct you if you succeed in your undertaking and console you in case of failure. Prepare to hear of occurrences which are usually deemed marvellous. Were we among the tamer scenes of nature I might fear to encounter your unbelief, perhaps your ridicule; but many things will appear possible in these wild and mysterious regions which would provoke the laughter of those unacquainted with the ever-varied powers of nature; nor can I doubt but that my tale conveys in its series internal evidence of the truth of the events of which it is composed."

The stranger (who is Victor Frankenstein, creator of the "monster") describes knowledge in a cautionary way: "I ardently hope that the gratification of your wishes may not be a serpent to sting you, as mine has been." Based on your prior knowledge about *Frankenstein* or on speculation, how may the acquisition of knowledge be dangerous?

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## GRAMMAR

### EXPANDING SENTENCES

- Sentences can be **expanded** by adding details to make them clearer and more interesting. Example: The horse galloped. The **wild grey** horse galloped **around the field, nostrils flaring**.
- Details added to sentences may answer these questions: When? Where? How? How often? To what degree? What kind? Which? How many?

A. Expand each sentence below by adding details to answer the questions shown in parentheses. Write the expanded sentence on the line.

1. The team was ready to play. (Which? When?)

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2. The cat purred. (What kind? Why?)

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3. The wind roared. (Which? How?)

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4. The scientist studied the ozone layer. (How many? Where? Why?)

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Write three clear and interesting sentences about what you have read from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* so far.

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2. \_\_\_\_\_

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3. \_\_\_\_\_

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**THE END**