

[...]There is another reason why physician-readers should revisit *Frankenstein*: as literary critic Catherine Bell has noted, the book is the first “study of the ethics of biomedical experimentation”. Although popular versions of the story focus on the monster, in the novel it becomes clear that the doctor, Victor Frankenstein, is the true villain.

Shelley's story has been used many times since its publication to express fears about new technologies and the risks of scientific overreach—fears that were later often recognised as unfounded. *Frankenstein* was evoked with regard to organ transplantation in the mid-20th century, in-vitro fertilisation in the 1970s, and genetically engineered “Frankenfoods” and animal cloning in the 1990s. Today, the gene editing technology CRISPR has aroused concerns in some quarters about the effects of tampering with human genomes.

10 These anxieties resonate with Shelley's account of Dr Frankenstein's choices. He was unethical not simply because he used technology to create life out of dead matter, but also because, as Belling points out, he did not "match his extraordinary technical success with attention to the most fundamental ethical tenet, the duty to be responsible for the subjects and outcomes of his work". Appalled by the creature he brought to life, Frankenstein abandoned him. Although the monster began his life with a capacity for love
15 and kindness, when he was rejected by his creator and society, he became angry and vengeful instead.

Even in 1818, Shelley saw that new technology alone was not a threat, but that ethical problems could arise when humans use technology for wealth, status, or sheer ambition without thinking carefully about the possible dangers of their work. If we become indifferent to consequences and unwilling to take responsibility for our actions, we, like Dr Frankenstein, risk becoming monstrous.

“From literature to medicine, Dr Frankenstein’s bioethical experiment,”
by Ann Jurecic and Daniel Marchalik, *thelancet.com*, June 24th, 2017

Find the English equivalents for:

un médecin : chez certains :
un scélérat : manipuler / altérer :
les excès de la science : un principe :

- 1 – Read the article to explain what makes Dr Frankenstein's behavior unethical.
- 2 – Identify what Shelley wanted to warn against according to the author.
- 3 – React: do you see any other reason why Dr Frankenstein's actions were wrong?

Linguistic Help: Expressing interdiction and moral condemnation

> Among the following, which sentences clearly forbid an action? Which express blame?

- 1 - *You had no right to tamper with forces you did not understand.*
- 2 - *What you did must never be repeated.*
- 3 - *Your actions are morally indefensible.*
- 4 - *You deliberately ignored every ethical boundary.*
- 5 - *No human being should ever claim the power of a god.*
- 6 - *By abandoning your creation, you committed an unforgivable act.*
- 7 - *We cannot allow such reckless ambition to go unpunished.*
- 8 - *You should have foreseen the consequences of your experiment.*