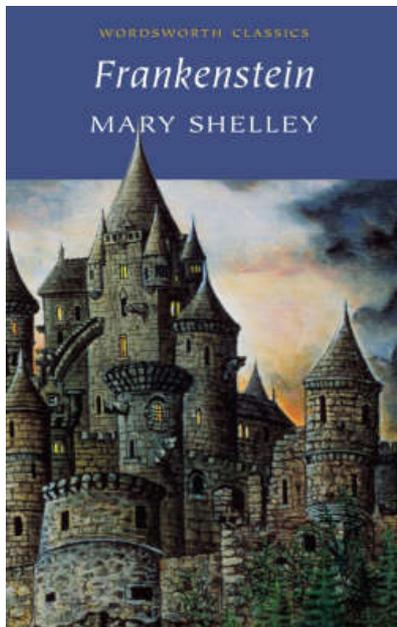

HSC English Advanced

Module A: Texts in Time (Blade
Runner and Frankenstein)

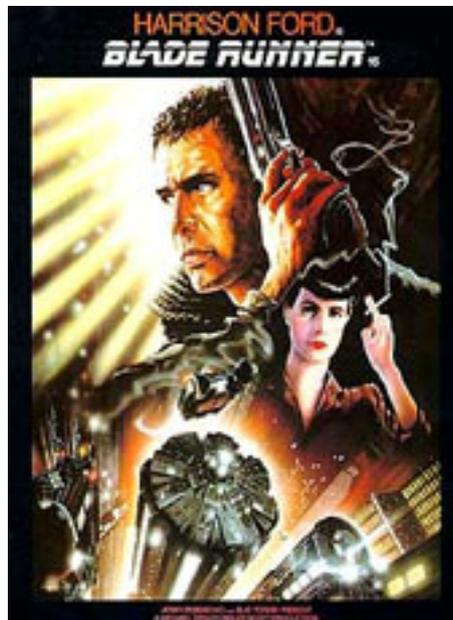
Term 1 – Week 1

TERM 1 – WEEK 1

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*



Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner*



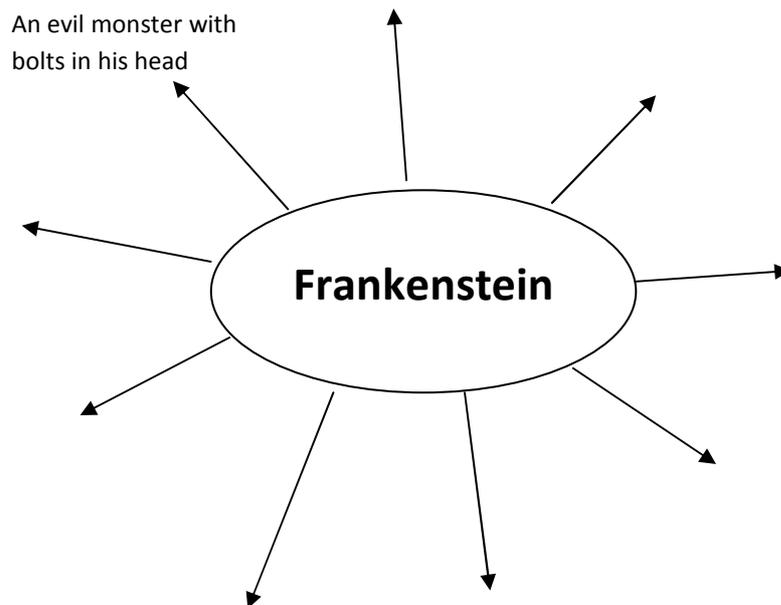
The specific elective where you will be studying the novel, *Frankenstein* and the film, *Blade Runner* (Director's Cut) is **Elective 2: Texts in Time**. It is a study that requires you to compare the texts in terms of their context, values, ideas, and language form and features.

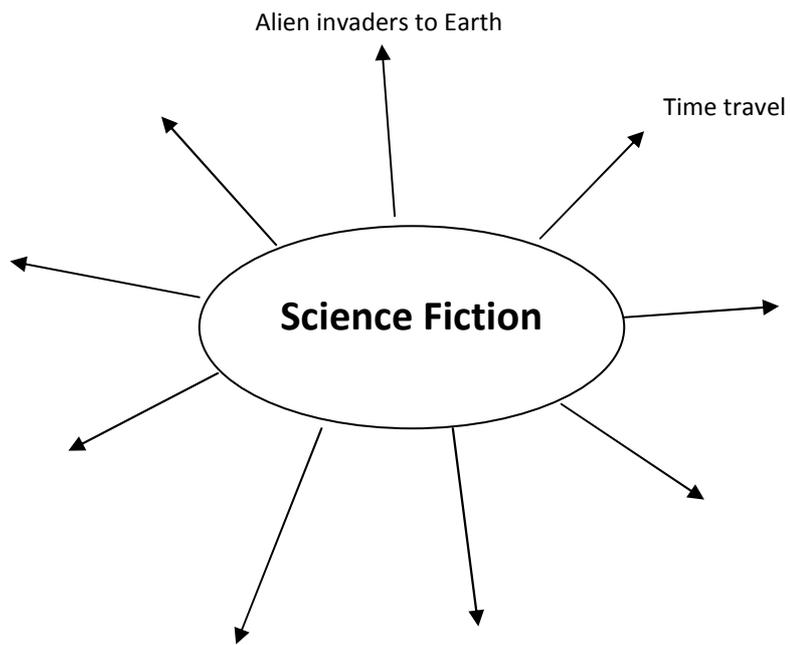
BRAINSTORM

As an introduction to this module, discuss any preconceived ideas you have on the genre of **Science Fiction** and the story of *Frankenstein*. Record some of your initial thoughts before discussing these ideas. A few ideas and images have been provided as a guide.



The monster was called Frankenstein





EXPLANATION OF THE SYLLABUS REQUIREMENTS FOR MODULE A**INTERPRETATION OF KEY TERMS**

This module requires you to **compare** texts in order to explore them in relation to their **contexts**. It develops your understanding of the effects of context and questions of **value**.

1. What are you attempting to do when **comparing** texts?

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2. What is the meaning of **context**?

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3. What is the meaning of the term **value** in relation to a text?

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You will examine ways in which **social, cultural** and **historical context** influences aspects of texts, or the ways in which **changes in context** lead to **changed values** being reflected in texts. This includes study and use of the **language** of texts, consideration of purposes and audiences, and analysis of the content, values and attitudes conveyed through a range of readings.

4. What might influence the composition of a text?

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5. How are **context** and **values** linked in the composition of a text?

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6. Give a reason why a society's **values** might change?

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7. How do texts represent **values** in their composition?

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You will develop a **range** of imaginative, interpretive and analytical compositions that relate to the comparative study of texts and context. These compositions may be realised in a variety of forms and media.

It is important to realise that the responses in the examination will not always be **essays**.

The text types you may be asked to do include:

- Interview
- Feature article
- Speech
- Letter
- Journal/Diary Entry
- Report
- Conversation between academics or composers
- Panel Discussion

In composing your responses you will need to be constantly aware of the importance of **context** and **values** in relation to the texts. You will have noted that when contexts change so do the values and these will often be reflected in the composition of texts.

Understanding the context in which a text was produced often leads to a deeper understanding of the work itself and a better means of comparison; for instance, understanding the social and economic forces in the 1980s can provide a greater insight into the “hellish” world of Ridley Scott’s Los Angeles in *Blade Runner*. It is then possible to compare the values and ideas of the texts in a far more sophisticated manner.

FOCUS FOR THE COMPARATIVE STUDY: TEXTS IN TIME

The **purpose** of the comparative study is to:

- Compare and contrast two texts that are separated in time and context, but are connected in terms of theme
- To identify the similarities and differences between the texts in order to explore the changes in context and values

The following guidelines will help achieve a thorough understanding of the module:

- i) Identify the respective contexts (literary, biographical, historical, etc) of the texts
- ii) Explore the values represented in a number of key extracts from the novel, *Frankenstein*
- iii) Explore the values represented in a number of key scenes in the film, *Blade Runner*
- iv) Identify common and disparate elements between the texts
- v) Identify and explain the changes in context and values between the texts

NOTE: The most important aspect of the study is your knowledge of the texts in terms of their **themes** and **means of production**. Your study should focus on the themes and how they are represented in the texts, which then allows you to consider the wider context that may have influenced the compositions. Markers will always look for a close analysis of the texts that illustrate your depth of understanding. In other words, avoid general statements that merely retell events or show a limited appreciation of the main ideas expressed by the composers.

CONTEXT FOR MARY SHELLEY'S *FRANKENSTEIN*

We will now consider the contexts for each text and how they may have influenced the respective compositions. We will begin with a biographical account of Mary Shelley, followed by a description of the literary and historical contexts in which she lived. The context of *Frankenstein* is a combination of scientific discovery, shifts in political and literary thought, mythology and religion.

BIOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT

Mary Shelley dedicated her first novel, *Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus* to her father, William Godwin. Godwin, a respected writer himself, was the author of two well-known books, *Political Justice* (1793) and *Caleb Williams* (1794).

Godwin's work contained controversial philosophical ideas and critiques of society. His belief in the inherent decency of human beings influenced a number of the Romantic poets of the time. In 1797, he married Mary Wollstonecraft, a distinguished writer whose *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* was published in 1792. They had been married less than a year when Wollstonecraft died after giving birth to their daughter, Mary.



Mary Shelley

After Godwin remarried, her stepmother, Mrs. Clairmont, a widow with two children of her own, raised Mary. Although Godwin had hoped to provide a stable family for his daughter, Mary had a difficult childhood, due in part to her contentious relationship with Clairmont. When Mary was 15, she moved into the home of the Baxters, who were friends of her father. It was at the Baxter's house, in May 1814, that she met Percy Bysshe Shelley, a notable young poet who was there visiting Godwin. Although Percy was already married, he and Mary fell in love. In June, they left England together to travel through Europe.

On February 22, 1815, Mary gave birth to a premature child, who died three weeks later. Another child, William, was born in January 1816. Five months later, Percy and Mary travelled to Switzerland where they rented a cottage for the summer. Their neighbours included their friend, Lord Byron, who had a home near Geneva. During a rainy spell, when the evenings were cold and damp, Mary, Percy, and Byron would gather in front of Byron's fireplace and entertain each other by reading German ghost stories. Inspired by the tales, the three friends agreed to each write a story similar to ones they had been reading. Although Percy and Byron never completed theirs, Mary went on to write a story that would eventually become the novel *Frankenstein*. The eventful year concluded in tragedy after Shelley's wife, Harriet, committed suicide, drowning herself on December 10, 1816. Percy and Mary were legally married three weeks later. Another son, Percy Florence, was born shortly after the

wedding.

Mary's novel, *Frankenstein*, was published in 1818 and its success brought Mary considerable recognition. Five months after it was published, a friend wrote from England that the book was "universally known and read." But this success would soon be overshadowed by tragedies in the author's life. Two of her three children became ill and died—Clara on September 24, 1818, and William on June 7, 1819. Then, three years later on July 8, 1822, Percy Shelley drowned with two companions when his boat was caught in a heavy squall on the Bay of Spezia in Italy.

In spite of the unhappiness in her life Mary Shelley continued to write. Her second novel, *Valperga*, was a success after it was published in 1823. Other works include *The last Man* (1826), *The Fortunes of Perkin Warbeck*, *A Romance* (1830), *Lodore* (1835), and *Falkner* (1837). An account of her European travels in the 1840s was published in two volumes under the title *Rambles in Germany* (1844). She is also the author of two dramas, *Proserpine*, *A Mythological Drama in Two Acts*, and *Midas*, both written in the late 1820s, as well as a number of short stories and poems. Shelley's only surviving child, Percy Florence, became Lord Shelley in 1844. He married a few years later and Mary lived comfortably with his family until her death, at the age of 54, on February 1, 1851.

1. What aspects of Mary's life would have influenced her to write?

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2. What particular circumstances led Shelley to compose *Frankenstein*?

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Read the following historical and literary information regarding context. Highlight any points you consider significant and complete the summary at the end of the extracts.

The French Revolution and the Rise of Industrialism

Most of the early Romantic writers strongly advocated the French Revolution, which began in 1789 with the storming of the Bastille, a prison where the French royalty kept political prisoners. The revolution signalled a throwing off of old traditions and customs of the wealthy classes, as the balance of economic power shifted toward the middle class with the rise of industrialism. As textile factories and iron mills increased production with advanced machinery and technology, the working classes grew restive and increasingly alarmed by jobs that seemed insecure because a worker could be replaced by machines. Most of England's literary thinkers welcomed revolution because it represented an opportunity to establish a harmonious social structure. Shelley's father William Godwin, in fact, strongly influenced Romantic writers when he wrote *Inquiry Concerning Political Justice* because he envisioned a society in which property would be equally distributed. Shelley's mother Mary Wollstonecraft, also an ardent supporter of the revolution, wrote *A Vindication of the Rights of Men* in response to Edmund Burke's attack on the revolution. She followed two years later with *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, supporting equality between the sexes.

The bloody "September Massacres" in which French revolutionaries executed nearly 1200 priests, royalists, aristocrats, and common criminals, occurred in 1792. This event and the "Reign of Terror," during which the revolutionary government imprisoned over 300,000 "suspects," made English sympathizers lose their fervour. With the rise of Napoleon, who was crowned emperor in 1804, England itself was drawn into war against France during this time. After the war ended in 1815, the English turned their attention to economic and social problems plaguing their own country. Much of the reason why England did not regulate the economic shift from a farming-based society to an industrialized society stemmed from a hands-off philosophy of non-governmental interference with private business. This philosophy had profound effects, leading to extremely low wages and terrible working conditions for employees who were prevented by law from unionising.

Science and Technology

Eventually, the working class protested their conditions with violent measures. Around 1811, a period of unemployment, low wages, and high prices led to the Luddite Movement. This movement encouraged people to sabotage the technology and machinery that took jobs away from workers. Because the new machines produced an unparalleled production rate, competition for jobs was fierce, and employers used the low employment rate against their workers by not providing decent wages or working conditions. In addition to technological advances and new machines such as the steam engine, scientific advancements influenced the Romantic period. The most significant scientist was Erasmus Darwin, a noted physician, poet, and scholar whose ideas concerning biological evolution prefigured those of his more famous grandson, Charles Darwin. Both Mary and Percy were very familiar with his description of biological evolution, which became one of the central topics at the poet Lord Byron's home when Shelley conceived her idea for *Frankenstein*. Percy and Mary also attended a lecture by Andrew Crosse, a British scientist whose experiments with electricity bore some resemblance to Frankenstein's fascinations. Crosse discussed galvanism, or the study of electricity and its applications. This lecture no doubt fuelled Shelley's imagination enough for her to suggest Victor Frankenstein's step-by-step invention of the creature in her novel. During Shelley's time, science had already established itself as separate from literature and art, embracing logic, reason and the rational over the Romantic. *Frankenstein* appears to take on the form of an instructive tale, warning against the forces of science. Shelley utilises the element of horror as part of the Gothic genre *Frankenstein* is

written in, this is most evident when describing some of Victor Frankenstein's scientific procedures, through imagery, metaphor and personification.

Arctic Exploration

The late 1700s also marked the beginnings of a new era of ocean exploration. England's Royal Academy, which promoted the first voyage to the South Seas, appealed to scientists and travellers alike. Explorers eventually wanted to find a trade route through the Arctic that would connect the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. In 1818, the year that Shelley published *Frankenstein*, a Scottish explorer named John Ross went searching for the Northwest passage and discovered an eight mile expanse of red-coloured snow cliffs overlooking Baffin Bay, between Greenland and Canada. His journey reflected Walton's quest to the North Pole and the era of discovery in which Shelley lived.

LITERARY CONTEXT

Read the following literary information, highlighting key points and completing the summary at the end.

Romantic and Gothic Literature

The language and style of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* are both deeply rooted in the literary traditions of the Romantic period, and yet Victor Frankenstein's scientific experimentation, and eventual success in creating life from inanimate matter, certainly makes *Frankenstein* an early forerunner of the science fiction genre.

Romanticism as a literary movement lasted from about 1789 to 1832 and marked a time when rigid ideas about the structure and purpose of society and the universe were breaking down. During this period, emphasis shifted to the importance of the individual's experience in the world and his or her interpretation of that experience, rather than interpretations handed down by the church or tradition. In many ways, it was a direct reaction to the Augustan Age as derived from classical theory that espoused a rational and comprehensible moral order in the universe, demonstrating God's providential design. Romanticism represented a rebellion against this thinking, replacing reason with feeling and vision. After shaking off old traditions and customs, writers experienced the newfound freedom of turning inward, rather than outward to the external world, to reflect on issues of the heart and the imagination. In addition, writers like English poet William Wordsworth suddenly challenged his predecessors by writing about natural scenes and rustic, commonplace lifestyles. English poet Samuel Coleridge explored elements of the supernatural in his poetry. Mary Shelley combined the ethical concerns of her parents with the Romantic sensibilities of Percy Shelley's poetic inclinations. Her father's concern for the underprivileged influenced her description of the poverty-stricken De Lacey family. Her appeals to the imagination, isolation, and nature represented typical scenes and themes explored in some of Percy Shelley's poetry. But Mary's choice of a Gothic novel made her unique in her family and secured her authorial place in the Romantic period.

Several features characterised romantic literature. It emphasized the dream, or inner, world of the individual. The use of visionary, fantastic, or drug-induced imagery was prevalent. There was a growing suspicion of the established church, and a turn toward pantheism (the belief that God is a part of the universe rather than separate from it). Romantic literature emphasized the individual self and the value of the individual's experience. The concept of "the sublime" (a thrilling emotional experience that combines awe, magnificence, and horror) was introduced. Feeling and emotion were viewed as superior to logic and analysis.

The Romantics revered the natural world and many of the poets of the time such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley and Keats were also known as 'nature poets'. The appeal to the senses that it offered was thought to be a means of allowing mankind to reach a more exalted state. The emerging world of urbanisation and industrialisation were considered repressive and so the elements of nature were favoured in its place. This appreciation of the natural world is evident in *Frankenstein* where Shelley places her characters in wild, untamed landscapes.

Gothic literature, a movement that focused on ruin, decay, death, terror, and chaos, and privileged irrationality and passion over rationality and reason, grew in response to the historical, sociological, psychological, and political contexts of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Although Horace Walpole is credited with producing the first Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto*, in 1764, his work was built on a foundation of several elements. First, Walpole tapped a growing fascination with all things medieval; and medieval romance provided a generic framework for his novel. In addition, Edmund Burke's 1757 treatise, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Sublime and Beautiful*, offered a philosophical foundation. Finally, the Graveyard School of poetry, so called because of the attention poets gave to ruins, graveyards, death, and human mortality, flourished in the mid-eighteenth century and provided a thematic and literary context for the Gothic.

Walpole's novel was widely popular and introduced most of the stock conventions of the genre: an intricate plot; stock characters; subterranean labyrinths; ruined castles; and supernatural occurrences. *The Castle of Otranto* was soon followed by William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786); Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797); Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* (1796); Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1797); Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818); and Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820).

The effect of Gothic fiction feeds on a pleasing sort of terror, an extension of Romantic literary pleasures that were relatively new at the time of Walpole's novel. Melodrama and parody (including self-parody) were other long-standing features of the Gothic initiated by Walpole.

Gothic literature is intimately associated with the Gothic Revival architecture of the same era. In a way similar to the gothic revivalists' rejection of the clarity and rationalism of the neoclassical style of the Enlightened Establishment, the literary Gothic embodies an appreciation of the joys of extreme emotion, the thrills of fearfulness and awe inherent in the sublime, and a quest for *atmosphere*. The ruins of gothic buildings gave rise to multiple linked emotions by representing the inevitable decay and collapse of human creations—thus the urge to add fake ruins as eyecatchers in English landscape parks. English Gothic writers often associated medieval buildings with what they saw as a dark and terrifying period, characterized by harsh laws enforced by torture, and with mysterious, fantastic, and superstitious rituals. In literature such Anti-Catholicism had a European dimension featuring Roman Catholic excesses such as the Inquisition (in southern European countries such as Italy and Spain).

Prominent features of Gothic fiction include terror (both psychological and physical), mystery, the supernatural, ghosts, haunted houses and Gothic architecture, castles, darkness, death, decay, doubles, madness, secrets, and hereditary curses. Plots in Gothic fiction often involve a damsel in distress who, separated from her normal station of protection such as her family or male hero, is pursued by the villain. Unable to protect herself, she requires a hero to save her. This reflects a patriarchal system where females are powerless and confined.

Frankenstein has elements that are both Gothic and Romantic. The creation of the creature from dead body parts is clearly Gothic in its inspiration and the natural setting of the Arctic wastes of the North provide a typically desolate and bleak landscape. The gothic genre developed as a harsh reaction to the predominant Neo-classic ideals of the time; the emphasis shifted from the whole to the solitary, and from society to nature. The "Graveyard Poets," one of whom is Thomas Gray, are attributed with having ushered in the new philosophy and are often termed "Pre-Romantics." Gray's "Elegy Written

in a Country Churchyard" has all the elements of the gothic: graves, overtones of death, a rural setting, and a desire for return to a more simplistic, natural time. Simultaneously, Jean-Jacques Rousseau preached a similar creed, which presented society as evil, and called for a "natural state of man." Shelley was schooled in both writers, and took their words to heart. In 1776 and 1789 Revolutions swept America and France, indicating that the Neo-classic ideals were not as stable as was previously thought. News of these revolutions infected the English with fears about similar occurrences in their own country, and much of this trepidation is manifested through devices such as the senseless mob violence in *Frankenstein*.

Plots in Gothic fiction often involve a damsel in distress who, separated from her normal station of protection such as her family or male hero, is pursued by the villain. Unable to protect herself, she requires a hero to save her. This reflects a patriarchal system where females are powerless, confined.

LITERARY ALLUSIONS

Shelley alludes to Christian imagery in her references to Milton's *Paradise Lost* and the Bible. In *Frankenstein*, the Creature finds a copy of *Paradise Lost* and educates himself in Christian philosophy and uses this to present his case to his creator. His references to Adam and Satan are a declaration of his intrinsic goodness, while he asserts his evil actions are a result of being cast out and a lack of companionship. The Creature also reads Plutarch's *Lives* and Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* as his literary guides. *Lives* is a series of pairs of biographies of Greek and Roman figures that illustrate moral truths, while *The Sorrows of Young Werther* follows the story of Werther who falls in love with the married Charlotte and later commits suicide.

THE PROMETHEAN MYTH

The subtitle of Shelley's novel is *The Modern Prometheus*. The character of Prometheus comes from Greek mythology who took it upon himself to introduce mankind to fire. He stole fire from the gods on Mount Olympus, but in overstepping mortal boundaries, he was punished with eternal suffering by Zeus. Bound to rock for all eternity, an eagle descends to eat his liver, which re-grows each night so it can be eaten again the next day. In metaphorical terms, Prometheus represents someone who defies and challenges the natural order of things without recognition of the consequences. Shelley has obviously drawn from this mythology in crafting her character of Victor Frankenstein, a scientist who defies the natural order and God by creating life. Subsequently, he is punished with continual guilt, self-admonishment and vengeance from his creation.

ACTIVITY

- **Summarise** the historical and literary contexts that would have influenced Mary Shelley's writing. Also consider the predominant values that she would have been influenced by at this time.

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Literary:

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Values:

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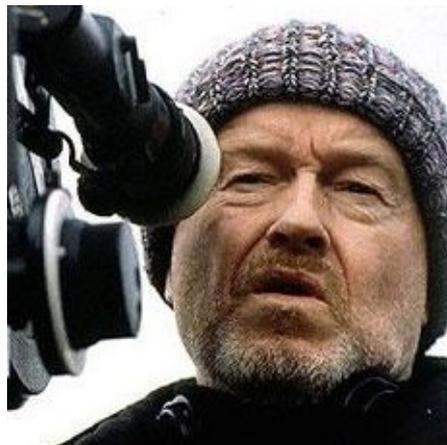
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CONTEXT FOR RIDLEY SCOTT'S *BLADE RUNNER*

Ridley Scott was born in Tyne and Wear, England, in 1937. He has produced and directed well renowned films such as the science-fiction/horror classic *Alien* and the more recent blockbuster *Gladiator*. His films have been noted for their visual impact and distinctive styles that allow the film to flow with few cuts. This is a legacy of his earlier work in television and set design. Scott is also credited for establishing the idea of 'Director's Cuts' so he could show the audience the film that he originally envisioned. This is particularly important in terms of *Blade Runner*, which was originally made in 1982, but reworked in 1991 and called the 'director's cut'. It differs from the original version in a number of respects, including the omission of Deckard's voiceover narration and the 'uplifting' finale.



Ridley Scott

Most intriguing was a newly included unicorn vision that suggests Deckard may be a humanoid. This version you are studying is far more widely acclaimed than the original version.

CONTEXT

The context of *Blade Runner* includes a combination of science fiction, *film noir*, and social, cultural and political issues.

SCIENCE FICTION

Blade Runner by Ridley Scott is an influential 1982 speculative science-fiction film. It was based on the Phillip K. Dick novel *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* that was composed in 1969. The original studio version was released in 1982, but the Director's Cut set for study was released in 1992. This is Scott's original vision of the film. It depicts a 'post industrial urban wasteland' showing that in attempting to advance society, humanity had lost its way. Based in Los Angeles in 2019 the text presents us with a frightening outlook on what the future may have in store for us if society continues on the way that it is going. His film encapsulates many fears of the 1980's such as overpopulation, urbanization, population explosions, consumerism, technological and scientific advancements, nuclear annihilation, and the destruction of the environment. Scott presents the audience with a dystopic landscape (fictional 'hellish' place that is opposite to utopia) epitomised by the dominance of the cityscape at the expense of nature.

Blade Runner is also an example of Cyberpunk, a science-fiction sub-genre. Typically, the plot is characterised by the advancement of technology and the subsequent breakdown of social order. These stories are generally set in the near future and involve conflict between corporations and individuals. The name is a blend of *cybernetics* and *punk* and was originally coined by Bruce Bethke as the title of his short story "Cyberpunk", published in 1983. It features advanced science, such as

information technology and cybernetics, coupled with a degree of breakdown or radical change in the social order.

Cyberpunk plots often centre on a conflict among hackers, artificial intelligences, and megacorporations, and tend to be set in a near-future Earth, rather than the far-future settings or galactic vistas found in novels such as Isaac Asimov's *Foundation* or Frank Herbert's *Dune*. The settings are usually post-industrial dystopias but tend to be marked by extraordinary cultural ferment and the use of technology in ways never anticipated by its creators. Much of the genre's atmosphere echoes film noir, and written works in the genre often use techniques from detective fiction. Classic cyberpunk characters are marginalized, alienated loners who live on the edge of society in generally dystopic futures where daily life is impacted by rapid technological change, an ubiquitous datasphere of computerized information, and invasive modification of the human body.

FILM NOIR

Film noir is a cinematic term used primarily to describe stylish Hollywood crime dramas, particularly those that emphasize cynical attitudes and sexual motivations. Hollywood's classic film noir period is generally regarded as stretching from the early 1940s to the late 1950s. Film noir of this era is associated with a low-key black-and-white visual style that has roots in German Expressionist cinematography. Many of the prototypical stories and much of the attitude of classic noir derive from the hardboiled school of crime fiction that emerged in the United States during the Depression.

The term film noir (French for "black film"), first applied to Hollywood movies by French critic Nino Frank in 1946, was unknown to most American film industry professionals of the classic era. Cinema historians and critics defined the noir canon in retrospect; before the notion was widely adopted in the 1970s, many of the classic film noirs were referred to as melodramas. The question of whether film noir qualifies as a distinct genre is a matter of ongoing debate among scholars.

Crime, usually murder, is an element of almost all film noirs; in addition to standard-issue greed, jealousy is frequently the criminal motivation. A crime investigation—by a private eye, a police detective (sometimes acting alone), or a concerned amateur—is the most prevalent, but far from dominant, basic plot. Film noirs tend to revolve around heroes who are more flawed and morally questionable than the norm, often fall guys of one sort or another. The characteristic protagonists of noir are described by many critics as alienated or filled with existential bitterness. Certain archetypal characters appear in many film noir such as hardboiled detectives, femme fatales, corrupt policemen, and jealous husbands. *Blade Runner* has a number of these elements and is clearly an example of film noir set in the future.

SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXTS IN THE 1980S THAT ARE REFLECTED IN BLADE RUNNER

Blade Runner is an extension of many of the pessimistic views and issues that were prevalent in the 1980s. These include:

- Anxiety over **globalisation**, immigration; fears of foreign threats to an “American way of life;” led to a notion that mainstream American culture would be lost amidst foreign influence.
- Fears of social disorder particularly based in the working classes: that central government would eventually become impotent in exerting control over urban centres.
- **Global warming and deforestation** were key issues. Scott has used dark colours in the opening scene along with fire and a lack or presence of nature to give a sense of ‘hell on earth’. He presents his audience with a world of decay.
- In the 1970s and 1980s there was a great fear of advances in technology such as biomechanics and genetic modification. Many in society feared the redefinition of the notion of being a human. They feared that with scientists tampering with nature there would have to be consequences.
- The 1980s saw a **revival of capitalism** and laissez-faire economics. Consumers became more sophisticated in their tastes (a trend begun in the '70s), and things such as European cars and designer clothing became fashionable in the US. Advertising was becoming pervasive and multi-national corporations began to assert their dominance on global consumerism. The gap between rich and poor increased.
- The financial world and the stock market were glamourised in a way they had not been since the 1920s, and figures like Donald Trump and Michael Milken were widely seen as symbols of the decade. Widespread fear of Japanese economic strength would grip the United States in the '80s.



HOMEWORK-CONTEXT/READING & WRITING**INTRODUCTION TO FRANKENSTEIN**

Read the following extract from Shelley's 'Introduction to *Frankenstein*'¹ written in 1831 that displays the Romantic and Gothic influences and explores the origins of her novel. Highlight any sections that you feel are important or in need of explanation. Complete the questions that follow the extract.

'We will each write a ghost story,' said Lord Byron; and his proposition was acceded to. There were four of us². The noble author began a tale, a fragment of which he printed at the end of his poem of Mazeppa. Shelley, more apt to embody ideas and sentiments in the radiance of brilliant imagery, and in the music of the most melodious verse that adorns our language, than to invent the machinery of a story, commenced one founded on the experiences of his early life. Poor Polidori had some terrible idea about a skull-headed lady, who was so punished for peeping through a key-hole -- to see what I forget -- something very shocking and wrong of course; but when she was reduced to a worse condition than the renowned Tom of Coventry, he did not know what to do with her, and was obliged to despatch her to the tomb of the Capulets, the only place for which she was fitted. The illustrious poets also, annoyed the platitude of prose, speedily relinquished their uncongenial task.

I busied myself to *think of a story*, -- a story to rival those which had excited us to this task. One which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature, and awaken thrilling horror -- one to make the reader dread to look round, to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart. If I did not accomplish these things, my ghost story would be unworthy of its name. I thought and pondered -- vainly. I felt that blank incapability of invention which is the greatest misery of authorship, when dull Nothing replies to our anxious invocations. *Have you thought of a story?* I was asked each morning, and each morning I was forced to reply with a mortifying negative.

Every thing must have a beginning, to speak in Sanchean³ phrase; and that beginning must be linked to something that went before. The Hindoos give the world an elephant to support it, but they make the elephant stand upon a tortoise. Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of the void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded: it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself. In all matters of discovery and invention, even of those that appertain to the imagination, we are continually reminded of the story of Columbus and his egg. Invention consists in the capacity of seizing on the capabilities of a subject, and in the power of moulding and fashioning ideas suggested to it.

Many and long were the conversations between Lord Byron and Shelley, to which I was a devout but nearly silent listener. During one of these, various philosophical doctrines were discussed, and among others the nature of the principle of life, and whether there was any probability of its ever being discovered and communicated. They talked of the experiments of Dr. Darwin, (I speak not of what the Doctor really did, or said that he did, but, as more to my purpose, of what was then spoken of as having been done by him,) who preserved a piece of vermicelli in a glass case, till by some

¹ Extract from The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Volume 2, pp 882-887.

² Byron, Shelley, Mary Shelley, and John William Polidori.

³ Sancho Panza was the literal-minded squire in Cervantes' novel, *Don Quixote* (1605).

extraordinary means it began to move with voluntary motion. Not thus, after all, would life be given. Perhaps a corpse would be re-animated; galvanism⁴ had given token of such things: perhaps the component parts of a creature might be manufactured, brought together, and endured with vital warmth.

Night waned upon this talk, and even the witching hour had gone by, before we retired to rest. When I place my head on my pillow, I did not sleep, nor could I be said to think. My imagination, unbidden, possessed and guided me, gifting the successive images that arose in my mind with a vividness far beyond the usual bounds of reverie. I saw -- with shut eyes, but acute mental vision, -- I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half vital motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world. His success would terrify the artist; he would rush away from his odious handywork, horror-stricken. He would hope that, left to itself, the slight spark of life which he had communicated would fade; that this thing, which had received such imperfect animation, would subside into dead matter; and he might sleep in the belief that the silence of the grave would quench for ever the transient existence of the hideous corpse which he had looked upon as the cradle of life. He sleeps; but he is awakened; he opens his eyes; behold the horrid thing stands at his bedside, opening his curtains, and looking on him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes.

I opened mine in terror. The idea so possessed my mind, that a thrill of fear ran through me, and I wished to exchange the ghastly image of my fancy for the realities around. I see them still; the very room, the dark *parquet*, the closed shutters, with the moonlight struggling through, and the sense I had that the glassy lake and white high Alps were beyond. I could not so easily get rid of my hideous phantom; still it haunted me. I must try to think of something else. I recurred to my ghost story, -- my tiresome unlucky ghost story! O! if I could only contrive one which would frighten my reader as I myself had been frightened that night!

Swift as light and as cheering was the idea that broke in upon me. 'I have found it! What terrified me will terrify others; and I need only describe the spectre which had haunted my midnight pillow.' On the morrow I announced that I had *thought of a story*. I began that day with the words, *It was on a dreary night of November*, making only a transcript of the grim terrors of my waking dream.

At first I thought but of a few pages -- of a short tale; but Shelley urged me to develop the idea at greater length. I certainly did not owe the suggestion of one incident, nor scarcely one train of feeling, to my husband, and yet but for his incitement, it would never have taken the form in which it was presented to the world. From this declaration I must except the preface. As far as I can recollect, it was entirely written by him.

And now, once again, I bid my hideous progeny go forth and prosper. I have an affection for it, for it was the offspring of happy days, when death and grief were but words, which found no true echo in my heart. Its several pages speak of many a walk, many a drive, and many a conversation, when I was not alone; and my companion was one who, in this world, I shall never see more. But this is for myself; my readers have nothing to do with these associations.

⁴ The use of electric current to induce muscle twitches in dead tissue.

QUESTIONS

1. What was the catalyst for Mary Shelley's narrative?

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2. What aspects of the extract represent Romantic notions or ideas?

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3. Explain how Shelley's storyline emerged?

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4. What aspects of the extract are Gothic in nature?

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5. What did Shelley mean by '*my hideous progeny*'?

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End of homework

