

Honors British Literature  
Fall 2008  
Mr. Lister

### Essay Topics

#### Fictions of the Monstrous Self: *Frankenstein*, *Dracula* and *Moll Flanders*

Choose one of the essay questions below and compose a three to five page essay that examines the question and the chosen text in detail. The essay should be both argumentative and analytical—it should not be a report, nor should it be a compare and contrast essay. If you would prefer to devise your own essay question, then propose it in writing and get my approval, by Friday, October 17. The essay should follow MLA guidelines for **both** documentation and formatting and it will be due Friday, October 24, before midnight. I reserve the right to subtract 1/3 of a letter grade per day for late work.

**A note on paper extensions:** If the deadlines in this assignment cause you undue hardship, then please speak to me about it soon. I tend to be flexible about due dates with prior notification.

**A note on length:** You all are moving beyond the artificial constraints of the three and five paragraph essay. By imposing a length requirement instead of a paragraph requirement, I am attempting to get you to think beyond your comfort level. I am looking for a depth of argumentation that cannot be achieved in a shorter paper and I will not accept essays that are not at least three full pages long when properly formatted.

**A note on technology:** This paper should be submitted as a Google document and I should be invited to be a collaborator in this piece of writing. This process will automatically send me an email at my Google account, so you will not need to attach the paper nor will you paste it into an email. **Both** the title of the document and the subject line in the sharing message should read exactly like the following example:

Eric Lister Essay No. 1 Fictions of the Monstrous Self HBL C Block Fall 2008

**These paper topics are adapted from Melissa Colleen Stevenson's course at the University of California, Santa Barbara and from a former freshman writing course at the University of Colorado, Boulder. They are meant to give you a representative sample of what will be asked of you as a college writer:**

1. These three novels could be considered fictions of the monstrous self: Choose a character in one of these novels and discuss what constitutes the idea of the monstrous. How this classification impacts the trajectory of your chosen novel. If you choose to write on either *Dracula* or *Frankenstein*, you may not write about the character Dracula or Frankenstein's monster except to illuminate your arguments.

2. Travel is an important recurrent element in each of these fictions. Choose one novel and discuss how geography operates as a tool for furthering the narrative. We've discussed the importance of the Gothic Sublime, but not all locations operate in analogous fashions. Analyze a small portion of one character's geographical journey and relate its importance to the whole text.

3. In *Frankenstein* we briefly discussed and compared the education of the monster and his creator. I think we would agree that we could undertake the same kind of analysis in *Moll* and *Dracula*. How is education important in forming individuals and society in these texts? What theories of education are advanced? Please limit your discussion to one novel.

4. What makes someone human? Who is excluded from that definition? This may be a new way for you to think about *Moll* but we all know that it is central to the Gothic fictions we have read so far. (For example: Are women human in either *Moll* or *Frankenstein*?) In this discussion of humanity we encounter characters that are decidedly, or only ostensibly, "Other." What function does this "Other" serve in formulating what constitutes humanness?