

“Mad, bad and dangerous” How accurate is this as a description of the gothic villains in the texts you have studied?

PLAN

- Introduction – define what is meant by gothic villain, and the terms MBD. Give examples in relation to text. Agree/disagree with the question then setup the debate.
- Frankenstein – Victor as being MBD in the way he carelessly seeks forbidden knowledge but doesn't fully comprehend and manage the implications.
- Wuthering Heights – Heathcliff is seen to be MBD and so is Catherine. Heathcliff is shown as bad and dangerous, and Catherine is shown to be mad but she is BD. Heathcliff is mad later in the novel. Heathcliff is only driven mad by Catherine's mistreatment of him and of his childhood. Catherine uses madness to manipulate.
- Doctor Faustus – Faustus is MBD for similar reasons to VF (forbidden knowledge). He is not the actual villain as the reader eventually sympathises with him. Mephistopheles is not M but BD in the way he is an actual demon and servant of Lucifer, deceiving Faustus in order to gain his soul. However reader can see he is a tormented soul.

Gothic literature can present the Gothic villain in numerous ways but they are normally defined by 5 key characteristics: supernatural powers, sense of evil, dualism, passion and drive, and controlling. It is not always the case that the Gothic villain possesses all of these characteristics at once; they do inhabit a few of them. As well as this, some authors tend to portray the villain to start off 'bad' then become a hero by the end, or start out as a hero then transcend into a villain. This can be related to Victor in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* who is initially seen as the hero, but the reader later learns that he is in fact a villain. In terms of being "mad, bad and dangerous" I do believe that these are present in Gothic villains, sometimes not all within one character, but rather a pair or collection of characters. However, some authors tend to portray these Gothic villains as victims since they are eventually punished for their actions, leading to the interpretation that Gothic villains are considered to be villain-heroes.

The description of Gothic villains being "mad, bad and dangerous" is accurate when considering the role of Victor in *Frankenstein*. Victor's "ardent desire" to the "acquisition of knowledge" borderlines on obsessive and his ambitions to "penetrate the secrets of nature" is what constitutes towards him being seen as mad. Victor is thought of to represent The *Modern Prometheus*, as Prometheus steals knowledge from the Gods, because his innate drive and continual feeling that it is his "fate" and "destiny" to achieve this, attributing to his madness. In regards to the contemporaneous audience of Mary Shelley's novel, to go against God was seen as madness, due to the strict religious boundaries during the 19th Century. It is due to his obsession that a number of "innocent" characters deaths, acting like a catalyst for these actions to be set into motion, showing that Victor is both "bad" and "dangerous". Victor is willing to "renew life where death had apparently devoted the body to corruption" at any cost, posing as a threat to anyone who obstructs his path or "destiny". His refusal to accept responsibility for the innocent deaths further adds to his "badness" and "dangerousness" because his own "madness" has caused him to believe that it is "fate" that is "enounced to destroy