

It can be argued that the role of the mother in fiction is to nurture. How does the absence of his mother affect Frankenstein?

The absence of Victor's mother early on in the text taints his otherwise idyllic upbringing. "My family is one of the most distinguished of the republic", one of the opening lines of the novel, implements a credible and prestigious ancestry through the use of the adjective "distinguished", implying that Frankenstein's family stems from honour and rank. Furthermore, Victor declares that "no human being could have possessed a happier childhood than myself" due to the attention lavished onto him by his parents who "were possessed by the very spirit of kindness and indulgence". The lexical choices of "kindness" and "indulgence" show a reader just how doting Frankenstein's parents were; it seems that they would do anything for him, making this serene upbringing the peak of his character arc. This enormous ego is supported as Frankenstein addresses himself as his parents' child "bestowed on them by heaven", possibly foreshadowing Victor's representation of himself as a God-like being, as well as later Genesis connotations. This also shows that his parents were bound to fulfil his every whim and treat him accordingly, as if he was from "heaven". So, for Frankenstein's mother of a "benevolent disposition" to pass away when Victor was just an adolescent could've struck as the first major tragedy in his life, supported as he states "the first misfortune of my life occurred". It can be inferred that the death of Victor's mother translates to Shelley's own experiences of loss as her own mother, Mary Wollstonecraft, died when she was just an infant. The characterisation of Victor's mother is replenished in her final moments as "the consequences of this imprudence were fatal to her preservation", suggesting that, ironically, the care and support Victor's mother gave to Elizabeth resulted in her own demise. Through this consistently nurturing characterisation, it can be implied that Victor feels it unfair that such a good soul could succumb to death so soon. Moreover, the absence of a mother and death resonate as typical Gothic conventions prevalent in other Gothic texts such as Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, in which Jane is orphaned. Nevertheless, Victor's mother vows to "resign [herself] cheerfully to death", with the lexical choice of "cheerfully" juxtaposing the occurring "death", insinuating that she will endeavour to face death with bravery and acceptance. Rather ironically, Victor reacts to the death in the opposite manner – with bitterness and resentment, acknowledging that he is "now alone". From this, a turning point in the narrative arc is presented as Victor attempts to move forward with his life, but declines exponentially throughout the rest of the novel. The emphasis on him being "alone" connotes his vulnerability now that he doesn't have his mother to dedicate her life to him. Thus, from his beloved mother's death, it can be inferred that Victor seeks to create life as a form of vengeance if a precious life is able to be taken from him.