

# Frankenfest!



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*In this assignment, you will turn from writing a painstaking argumentative research paper to a much more loosely-structured and meditative form of composition: a reflection. In this context, “reflection” means thought. Basically, in a reflective essay you think back over something you participated in or observed, mull over what it means to you, and pass on insights about yourself and the world around you evoked by this experience. (You have been writing short reflections exploring your personal experiences with each of your major projects—now, you will be digging deeper, as well as choosing your own particular focus.)*



## Reflections Convey a Personal Outlook

The very same event can evoke very different responses in those who experience it. What strikes me as terrifying may strike you as tame; what prompts me to think about my early childhood may cause you to think about breaking headlines. Furthermore, just to make the situation even more complex, reflections often incorporate elements of different genres within them. In your essay, for example, you may well report on an event or activity as well as reflecting on it, or you might spend time evaluating a piece of literature you read as part of pondering its significance. But the main focus in a reflection should always be exploring your own insights and conveying **your own personal outlook**.

## Frankenfest: An Immersion Experience

In this segment of the course, which I like to call “Frankenfest,” you will be spending several weeks immersed in experiences that relate to “the Frankenstein monster”—a character first developed in Mary Shelley’s famous 1818 novel—and to exploring the uneasy interface in our culture between the realms of science, film, and literature. Over the course of Frankenfest, you will be visiting the Birck Nanotechnology Center to hear about cutting-edge research that borders on sci-fi, reading selected chapters of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and arguing over the moral issues about science—and human nature—that they raise, and watching the classic horror movie *Bride of Frankenstein* and participating in an in-class debate about whether or not Victor Frankenstein’s creation truly deserves a mate. In other group classroom activities, you will design your own superhero/villain with a science-related origin story, write a “monster story blog” based on the Celery Bog Man of West Lafayette, and pitch a script for a *Frankenstein* reboot. However you ultimately come to view him—as monster, victim, or cultural icon—I can guarantee that you will never see Shelley’s mythic creation quite the same way again.

## Finding a Focus

Obviously, you can't cover all of this diverse material in a thought-provoking way in a several-page essay, so your first step in approaching your paper should be **to find a particular slant or focus**. Is there a common theme cutting across these experiences that tugs at your attention? Did one particular event or experience affect you especially strongly because of your personal background, your membership in a particular discourse community, or some earlier life experience? Is there a certain issue or problem raised by the readings or class discussion that you find yourself coming back to again and again? When the time comes to start writing, spend some time mulling over your reactions, talk to your classmates and friends, and try to come up with a shaping theme or focus that will pull in your audience and give your essay force and coherence.

## Don't Forget the Power of Description

As you begin to compose your reflection, please don't forget the lessons we learned earlier this semester about how including passages of concrete description can draw in readers and increase the impact of your message. You will be encountering—through books, films, tours, and group discussions—some fascinating, funny, and frightening material: make sure you **not only reflect on the impact of your experiences but bring them to vivid life for your readers**.

## Rhetorical Framework

In terms of **genre**, you are writing a reflection (sometimes known as an impression paper). Your main **purpose** is to reflect on your three-week experience of being immersed in all manner of Frankenstein-related activities (although you may, of course, describe, analyze, report, etc. along the way). Your **audience** for this assignment is a general one; in other words, you should write this essay as though it were intended for a fairly wide readership (not just your classmates and me). In terms of **media/design**, this is a standard printed essay. **Stance** is entirely up to you.

### Required Prewriting Component: In-Class Survey or Interview

One good way to find a focus and crystallize your thinking is to talk to and engage with the views of others. As a special prewriting component for this paper, you will be doing an **in-class survey or interview** of one or more classmates. You are NOT required to use or quote from your survey or interview in the paper itself, but you must submit it as a prewriting component of the final project.

## Length and Formatting

Your final draft should be (at least!) 2½ pages; 3-4 is preferable. Formatting is in MLA style. If you cite or quote any outside material in your paper, including a personal interview or survey, you will naturally need to add a Works Cited page.

## Due Dates (you will be working on composing your drafts as we plunge into the PSA project):

- First draft due **Monday, 11/16**
  - Bring 2 hard copies to class for peer review.
  - Submit 1 copy electronically on the course website by 5pm.
- Final draft due **Wednesday, 12/2**
  - Submit 1 hard copy along with your process materials—peer review sheet and interview sheet—in class. *Make sure to staple your draft and secure these materials together with a binder clip!*
  - Submit 1 copy of your final draft electronically on the course website.

