
BBC LEARNING ENGLISH

Frankenstein

1: A passion for science



NB: This is not a word-for-word transcript

Language point: Present perfect & ever / never

TODAY - IN THE ARCTIC

Viktor Frankenstein

Hello I'm Viktor Frankenstein. I'm a scientist from Switzerland. You might ask how I arrived here, in the Arctic Circle. Yes, it's far from home. I came this far upon the ice. But it's very cold and I almost died. I was rescued by an explorer's boat. Captain Walton is a kind man but he's... He's ready to do anything to push the limits of science. He's a fool! And so are you if you try to fight Nature! Pardon me... I'm sick. It's freezing here. But I had to come and find the monster I've created! Did I ever think I would feel this way about a Creature I gave life to? No, I did not! Never! **I created life and all my Creature has ever caused is death!** How did I give life to the Creature? My love of science started early. I remember one morning when I was on holiday in France with my father...

IN THE PAST - IN A FRENCH HOTEL

Viktor Frankenstein (13 years old)

Look dad! Look!

Viktor Frankenstein's Father

Reading a book? That's good my boy. It's been raining for hours. Staying indoors isn't good for a thirteen year old but it's lucky - you found an interesting book here at the hotel.

Viktor Frankenstein (13 years old)

Yes. I'm not bored anymore. **Actually, I've never read anything so good.** This book is fantastic!

Viktor Frankenstein's Father

What's it about? Let me see... Cornelius Agrippa! Oh, my dear Viktor, don't waste your time with this book. It's full of foolish ideas. Find another one.

TODAY - IN THE ARCTIC

Viktor Frankenstein

I had in my hands a book by an alchemist who lived in the 1500s. My father didn't explain to me that Agrippa's ideas were old and had no place in modern science. So I went on to read books by other alchemists. I thought about the power of magic all the time. I wanted to find the elixir of life! Could I ever end diseases and control death? These were my thoughts when I went to the University of Ingolstadt, in Germany. But when I arrived there I didn't expect my professors to laugh at me.

IN THE PAST - AT UNIVERSITY

Professor Krempe

Have you really wasted your time studying these foolish ideas, young Frankenstein? Good God!

Viktor Frankenstein (17 years old)

But Professor Krempe... I...

Professor Krempe

Has nobody ever told you these ideas are old and silly?

Viktor Frankenstein (17 years old)

Well, no... **It's never been explained to me why.** I... I...

Professor Krempe

All is not lost, my dear sir. You must start again and study real science!

TODAY - IN THE ARCTIC

Viktor Frankenstein

I didn't like Professor Krempe at all! And modern science wasn't as exciting to me as the science of the old alchemists. Those men wanted to discover things about power and how to live forever. Perhaps their ideas didn't work but they were fantastic! I was disappointed... but not for long. What got me excited again was one particular class. Professor Waldman didn't laugh at the old alchemists I loved so much. I felt he understood me. Later, I paid him a visit. He opened my eyes to other subjects. I remember his words well...

IN THE PAST - AT UNIVERSITY

Professor Waldman

If your wish is to become a real man of science, you must study everything, including chemistry and mathematics.

TODAY - IN THE ARCTIC

Viktor Frankenstein

I built my own laboratory in the room at the top of my house. And I studied hard. At the end of two years I even made some discoveries in chemistry. The other professors at the university were pleased. My father wrote me letters. He sent news about my young brothers and my childhood love Elizabeth but... I didn't give them much thought. I started to study anatomy and all I could think about was creating life! And I succeeded - unfortunately! And I'll tell you about how I gave life to the Creature next time.

Vocabulary

fool

a stupid person

monster

a living thing that is frightening and not human

creature

a living thing that is not human

alchemist

a kind of scientist in the middle ages who tried to change metals into gold and find a cure for all illnesses

power

strength or ability to do something special

elixir of life

a liquid with magical powers which could give someone eternal life

chemistry

a kind of science which studies substances and what happens when they are mixed together

laboratory

a room with scientific equipment which is used for experiments

anatomy

study of the human body