

***Burnt Norton.** English country house in Ebrington, that T. S. Eliot once visited. His 178-line philosophical poem about the nature of reality and time begins and ends with references to the house's gardens. The speaker suggests an edenic world of innocence and timelessness when he imagines walking through the door that opens into the rose garden, following the elusive voices of the hiding/playing children echoing in memory there, and following tentatively those sounds. But this "first world" is hardly a lush verdant place teeming with life and simple beauty; rather, the speaker takes readers into an empty alley, to look down into a "drained pool." The dry concrete pool, stands for the illusiveness of time and meaning. In fact, the lack of extensive specific description of place in the poem is a deliberate teasing about the tangible boundaries of the physical world, underscored by the haunting suggestion that humans cannot bear much reality.

***East Coker.** English village in Somersetshire where Eliot's ancestors originated and where Eliot himself is buried. Again, the specific place is valued only because it stands for a general, universal process of dying and regeneration. This poem is about the idea of origin and destination and ironic redemption. A key to understanding Eliot's detachment from actual place is seeing the essentially paradoxical nature of place: "where you are is where you are not." For Eliot, setting is essentially metaphysical, a part of a moral endeavor. That moral process values the dissociation from place; he favors union not with place but with state of being. Eliot's inclination is to escape the world's increasing strangeness through love. Time and place decline in importance so love can increase.

***Dry Salvages.** Group of rocks, with a beacon, off the coast of Cape Anne, Massachusetts. This third part of *Four Quartets* relies on water symbolism and the play between relative stability of rock or earth and changeability of sea as they relate to the themes of variation and timelessness. The only American place in the "Quartets," the Dry Salvages is paradoxically both a place symbolic of guidance and a place of wreckage, a place of concealment and of revelation. As with the other places mentioned in *Four Quartets*, the Dry Salvages is important as a metaphoric backdrop for a philosophical or moral process: the ways time and experience wash over human beings, the ways moments or occurrences guide people by being monuments or beacons. The refrain of the poem, "fare forward voyagers," suggests the sea as the place for travel; however, the course covered by travel is not as important to Eliot as the process itself of faring. Similarly, the experience of place is valuable only as a prompt toward meaning.

***Little Gidding.** Religious community established in England's Huntingdonshire by Nicholas Ferrar in 1625. This culminating quartet implies the value of creating a religious community in times of political and religious upheaval. Like the other quartets, it is essentially a call for exploration: Besides exploring time and place, this poem suggests that the power of immediate love for one's own fields develops into the extended love of country. Despite this attachment to field and land, for Eliot all spirits are "unappeased and peregrin"; human beings are all between oppositional worlds, worlds that can be variously conceived as time and place, immediacy and generality, or earth and heaven.

—Scott Samuelson

Frankenstein

Author: Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley (1797–1851)

First published: 1818

Type of work: Novel

Type of plot: Gothic

Time of plot: Eighteenth century

This novel tells the story of a brilliant scientist, Victor Frankenstein, who blends alchemy with modern science to bring to life a creature made from dead body parts. Repelled by what he has done, he rejects his creation and then commences a long journey to escape its angry revenge.

***Arctic Circle.** *Frankenstein* is told at a great distance, both physically and psychologically. The epistolary novel opens with letters from Robert Walton to his sister in England. Walton is on an exploring expedition to the far north, and his letters are dated from locations farther and farther north, starting with St. Petersburg, Russia, then Archangel, then unspecified locations, as Walton passes into unexplored territory. When his ship is surrounded by fog and ice floes, his crew sees Victor Frankenstein crossing the ice with a dog sled. They rescue him; Frankenstein tells his story. Before he does so, however, Frankenstein indicates that the desire to find the North Pole is as dangerous as his inquiry into unknown scientific regions, asking Walton, "Unhappy man! Do you share my madness?" When Frankenstein's story is complete, he dies. His monstrous creation, after finally forgiving him, flees across the polar sea and out of human knowledge.

***Geneva.** City in western Switzerland that is home to Victor Frankenstein, who describes it lovingly, speaking of its "majestic and wondrous scenes" and the "sublime shapes of the mountains." The countryside is described more fully than the city, but enough details are given to indicate that Shelley

knew Geneva well. While Shelley was staying near Lake Geneva with her husband, Percy Bysshe Shelley, and Lord Byron, and other friends, they had a competition for the best ghost story. Shelley said the core idea for *Frankenstein* came to her then, in a dream. Visiting or leaving Geneva has powerful consequences for the characters in the novel. After they met, Frankenstein's father and mother moved to Geneva. When Victor was five, his father went to Milan, and returned with Elizabeth, the lifetime friend and nearly sister to Victor whom he marries.

When Victor returns to Geneva, everything seems to be different. His creation's presence transforms his home, which earlier seemed to be a paradise, into a place of pain and chaos. Victor's brother William is killed, and a life-long family servant is sentenced to death. Late in the novel, Victor returns to Geneva for the last time to marry Elizabeth. When his creation kills Elizabeth on their wedding night, the transformation of Geneva into a hell on earth is complete.

***Ingolstadt.** City in Bavaria, Germany, where Victor Frankenstein entered the University of Ingolstadt when he was seventeen and to which he returns in later years. The university had a great deal of autonomy during the seventeenth century, and was known for its support of Enlightenment rationality. Few specifics are given about Ingolstadt itself. Frankenstein studies there and escapes the stabilizing influence of his family but connects only with his professors, not with a community or place. There he learns modern chemistry from his professor Monsieur Waldman, which he blends with his earlier knowledge of alchemy to create life. Once he does, Ingolstadt becomes essentially haunted; Victor wanders its streets, afraid of his creature. Only the arrival of Henry Clerval, his old friend from Geneva, calms him.

***Mont Blanc.** Highest mountain in the Alps, to which Victor retreats when he is upset by the thought that his creation has caused the deaths of William and Justine. While gazing upon the awful beauty of Mont Blanc, he speaks aloud to the spirit of the place, which seems so pure. His creation answers, indicating that no place is free of the taint Frankenstein has created. The mountain's glacier becomes a courtroom of natural philosophy as the creature accuses Victor of defaulting on his responsibilities as creator.

Cottage. Home of a poor family in which the creature observes human interaction. When the creature tells the story of his life since his creation, the cottage where he observes a family, is central to it. He learns to speak by listening to the cottage's inhabitants, and from them he learns about the possibility of love. Before this time, he is ignorant as an animal,

but now, he becomes a tortured soul. Observing the small society in the cottage brings him close enough to humanity to realize what he is denied.

***London.** Capital of Great Britain to which Victor Frankenstein goes to investigate another scientist's discoveries before he can meet the creature's demand that he make him a woman to be his companion. In London, Victor establishes a lab, and begins work, but he and Clerval also travel throughout England and Scotland. Their travels are idyllic, but everywhere they go, Victor is sure the creature follows him.

***Scotland.** Country to which Victor goes to continue his work because it is farther from civilization. There he works on a mate for the creature then reconsiders and destroys it. The creature appears at that moment, confirming Victor's fears that he has been followed. When Victor tries to sail home, he gets lost at sea and almost dies, symbolizing the danger inherent in his unchecked scientific explorations.

***Ireland.** Country in which Victor is arrested for the murder of his friend Clerval, whom the monster has killed, after he lands there and goes ashore to ask for directions. While he is jailed in Ireland, he falls into a guilty fever for months. His imprisonment in this remote land confirms his growing fear that there is no place to which he can go to escape responsibility for his actions.

—Greg Beatty

Franny and Zooey

Author: J. D. Salinger (1919–2010)

First published: "Franny," 1955; "Zooey," 1957; novel, 1961

Type of work: Novel

Type of plot: Domestic realism

Time of plot: November, 1955

This novel is actually two shorter stories involving Franny and Zooey Glass, two members of a family still dealing with the death of their sibling, Seymour Glass, seven years earlier.

***Manhattan.** Borough of New York City that seems to be a place where much is offered. In reality, however, this is not the case. Wintertime has traditionally reflected death, and in the Glass house it has been winter for seven years; Seymour's death haunts the other characters, who have not yet recovered from his passing. J. D. Salinger knows Manhattan well, having lived there through most of his early publishing life. The fact that he does not go into detail about the city the way he

**Asterisk denotes entries on real places.*

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