

The first sighting of Frankenstein

Compare the way Walton describes the sighting of the creature with the sighting of Frankenstein

‘In the morning, however, as soon as it was light, I went upon deck and found all the sailors busy on one side of the vessel, apparently talking to some one in the sea. It was, in fact, a sledge, like that we had seen before, which had drifted towards us in the night on a large fragment of ice. Only one dog remained alive; but there was a human being within it, whom the sailors were persuading to enter the vessel. He was not as the other traveller seemed to be, a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island, but an European. When I appeared on deck, the master said, ‘Here is our captain, and he will not allow you to perish on the open sea.’”

‘... When my guest was a little recovered, I had great trouble to keep off the men, who wished to ask him a thousand questions; but I would not allow him to be tormented by their idle curiosity, in a state of body and mind whose restoration evidently depended upon entire repose.’

‘... The stranger has gradually improved in health, but is very silent, and appears uneasy when anyone except myself enters the cabin. Yet his manners are so conciliating and gentle, that the sailors are all interested in him, although they have had very little communication with him. For my own part, I begin to love him as a brother; and his constant and deep grief fills me with sympathy and compassion. He must have been a noble creature in his better days, being even now in wreck so attractive and amiable.’

What's the difference between
this description and the one of
the creature?

Look at the following quotations and think about
what they show us:

1. 'In the morning, however, as soon as it was light'
2. '... found all the sailors busy on one side of the vessel, apparently talking to some one in the sea.'
3. '... a sledge, like that we had seen before, which had drifted towards us in the night on a large fragment of ice'
4. '... there was a human being within it, whom the sailors were persuading to enter the vessel'
5. 'He was not as the other traveller seemed to be, a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island, but an European'
6. '... the master said, 'Here is our captain, and he will not allow you to perish on the open sea.'"

This is not a terrifying time – everything seems safer in the daytime; first light often symbolises a new beginning.

1. 'In the morning, however, as soon as it was light'

Nobody is afraid of Frankenstein – they are all keen to speak to him.

2. '... found all the sailors busy on one side of the vessel, apparently talking to some one in the sea.'

Now look again at the other quotations and discuss what they show us about the sailors' reaction to Frankenstein and the contrast with their reaction to the creature.

What do you think Shelley is trying to show us, the readers, by having the sailors react in such different ways to two strange events?

3. '... a sledge, like that we had seen before, which had drifted towards us in the night on a large fragment of ice'
4. '... there was a human being within it, whom the sailors were persuading to enter the vessel'
5. 'He was not as the other traveller seemed to be, a savage inhabitant of some undiscovered island, but an European'
6. '... the master said, 'Here is our captain, and he will not allow you to perish on the open sea.'"

Now remind yourself of the rest of the extract and pick out any quotations which show how differently the men treat the arrival of Frankenstein with their sighting of the creature. Look in particular at Captain Walton's comments about Frankenstein.

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