**Example Essays**

* **Prompt: Select an important character in Frankenstein or Beowulf who is a villain. Then, in a well-organized essay, analyze the nature of the character’s villainy and show how it enhances the meaning of the work. Do not summarize.**

Example Essay 1

Score:

A person who is victimized as a villain for their action is essentially propelled by an outside force causing them to act in such a manner. It can be peer pressure from friends and family, it can be a young person naiveness or even neglect from the people around him. In Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein, the monster from the day he was brought to life by Victor Frankenstein was neglected by the one person who should be the one to love the monster since he created it but was quickly to abandon him, thus beginning the villainization process for the monster.

The “villain” and “monstrous” nature of the monster himself begins to grow inside after he attempts to smile at his creator and approach him in an unharmful way. Frankenstein then freaks out and the monster runs away. Because of this neglect the monster pursues Frankensteins brother and kills him and frames Justine for his murderous actions. This situation gives the reader of the story a somewhat sympathetic feeling towards the monster and an anger towards Frankenstein for the way he has rejected his own creation.

Another murderous situation at the end of the story represents the monster’s villain-like nature when the monster kills Frankensteins wife on their honeymoon for not giving the monster its own companion. This accident again makes the story portray the monster as a murderous villain even though he warned Frankenstein he would do it and propelled to do so by the rejection from Frankenstein. At this point in the story it has fulfilled the villainous title that has been forced upon him by Victor Frankenstein and the family he watched for two years when they finally saw him moved away instantly because of his outward appearance.

The villainy and the outward rejection of the monster significantly enhances Mary Shelley’s book because it allows the reader to connect with the scenarios and situations throughout the book. The audience understands the murders and other monsterous actions the monster commits because they feel the neglect and hate inflicted upon the monster since the beginning of its life, and can be sympathetic to why the monster is committing the actions he is even though they may not be right. The monster is a product of its environment and his actions prove that even though it is not entirely his fault. The character’s villainy is more portrayed on victor and the other family for the way they rejected and treated the monster, thus making the reader feel more empathetic to the monster instead of the people he has harmed.

Strengths?

Weaknesses?

Identify the Thesis Statement. How well does it identify the three most important aspects of a thesis: 1) the title and author, 2) the theme/meaning of the work overall, and 3) the AP prompt focus that will be discussed in the essay? What is good and what can be improved?

Example Essay 2:

Score:

As extra credit on a test, a Civics teacher asked his students if they knew the answer to his favorite riddle: what is the deadliest mammal in Africa? In actuality, the correct answer is the hippopotamus, but the teacher also awarded bonus points to the startingly high amount of students who answered “humans.” In both reality and literature, the stereotypical “villain” or “evil” character is often one who is malicious, like Voldemort in “Harry Potter” or not human, like werewolves and vampires. In Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, however, the villain is in fact very much human: Victor Frankenstein. Through Frankenstein’s rejection of his creation, lack of empathy, and desire to prevent the captain from making the same mistakes he did, Victor Frankenstein becomes a complex villain that showcases the importance of proper nurturing, as well as the fact that the line between “good’ and “evil” is quite blurred.

Victor Frankenstein appears to have no malicious intent when creating his monster, but it is his actions once this being is alive that reveal his true villainous nature. The creation enters the world naïve and lost, turning to Frankenstein as his soul guardian. In his first contact with his creator, the monster attempts to grin, but the only reply he receives is the hysteric screams of the doctor. Readers at first may view this as a natural reaction to seeing a horrendous being, but the evil of and harm caused by Victor’s rejection of the monster persists to the point of being villainous. The monster must teach himself the ways of the world and the only guidance Frankenstein grants him takes the form of hate. He ostracizes the very being which he created. Hate is not innate, it is learned, and the professor of this course is none other than Victor Frankenstein. His villainy and large role in turning the monster violent through his rejection reveals to readers that proper nurturing is essential to making someone “good,” and that, when determining who is good or bad, there are more factors to consider than just their actions. The monster may have committed murder, but Frankenstein enabled him.

This gray area between hero and villain is furthered by how Frankenstein chooses to address damage control. After seeing the pain that his creation can cause, Victor vows to kill the creature. This raises the question of whether or not such a killing would be justified. Frankenstein believes he would be a hero, committing one sin to take out an even greater evil. It is apparent to both readers and the monster, however, that things are not so cut and dry. Frankenstein did, as the monster notes, bring this creation into the world and show him no empathy. He gave little thought to kindness. Empathy and attempting to remain civil barely crossed his mind, while the creation itself tried to create a compromise. His decision to kill his own creation, who is trying to explain why he has done such evil deeds adds a level of complexity to Frankenstein’s villainy and the novel as a whole. Readers are left unsure where good stops and evil begins, and Victor’s lack of empathy towards the monster reveals that being human is not the same as being humane.

Such a blur within the idea of good vs. evil is solidified in Victor’s dying wish. He shares his entire story with the captain of a ship, urging the man to not follow in his horrific footsteps. At this point in the piece, readers are fairly sure that the “evil” character in the piece is the doctor, but a sliver of goodness within him is revealed to cast doubt. It is an act uncharacteristic of a villain to attempt to lead those around him down a better path, but Victor does it all the same. His final act of selflessness proves that good and evil are not mutually exclusive. Frankenstein is a villain, but he also commits good deeds. The line between good and evil is quite blurred by his villainy, but it remains clear that he did not show the same guidance to his creation as he did the captain, and this flaw in nurturing can be fatal.

Strengths?

Weaknesses?

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Score:

Example Essay 3:

Good and evil is a tricky concept. Does one action automatically make you a villain or a hero? You have to take into consideration the person or creature as a whole and analyze their actions. Dr. Victor Frankenstein in Mary Shelley’s Frankenstein shows villainy traits throughout the novel. Victor, however, is not the typical stereotypical villain we tend to think of that aims for world domination but his actions still put him in the villain category.

Victor’s obsession with science leads to his creation of the monster. He worked so diligently and devoted much time and effort into his creation, yet from the moment the creation was “born”, Victor viewed it with such disgust and repulsion. He cannot look past his horrendous appearance to see the good within his newfound creation, rejecting him moments into his life. This is one of the traits that make him a villain. This automatic denial of this creation that he of all people brought into the world is outrageous as well as selfish. His ostracizing of his creation was evil and led to its violent acts out of spite of Frankenstein’s refusal to accept him, as well as what he put him through. Bringing a new life into the world then leaving it to fend for itself is in essence the most evil thing he could have done.

Not only did Victor reject his creation, but he refused to tell people about it, even if it could have saved lives. The monster killed William out of range and Justine was convicted and tried guilty for his murder resulting in her death. Victor knew the truth, yet refused to say anything in an effort to protect himself. His reckless behavior caused not only their deaths, but countless others including his own wife’s. If he had not been so self-centered, he could have prevented some of their deaths. However, he knew the truth and continued to withhold it, putting more people in harms way. This lack of compassion when in comparison with himself is what gives him yet another villainy trait.

His wife whom he loved and cared for died because of his actions. He feared that if she knew what he had done, she would be repulsed and not want to marry him. To prevent this, he told her he had a large secret but could only tell her once they were married. This act alone can be viewed as evil. He essentially misled her into the relationship so that he would only tell her when it was convenient to him. In planning on telling her after the wedding, not only is he being untruthful, but is sacrificing her safety in the process. She is eventually murdered by the monster soon after they are married making Victor the bad guy. He could have been truthful and upfront about what he had done but he chose to be deceitful to her which eventually resulted in her unfortunate demise. He forfeited her safety for the sake of his feelings and had little regard for hers, making him a villain.

Victor has always put himself first, no matter what the case was. He has little regard for other’s well-being because he is so caught up in himself he can’t see that his monster can hurt others besides himself. For me, that is the definition of a villain always being concerned about your needs and hurting people in the process yet continuing your ways. Victor quickly realized the monster had the capability of hurting those he cared about; yet he kept on his way causing more destruction as he went. This novel clearly sheds light on the meaning of a villain and does so in a non-conventional way that causes the reader to stop and think about who the real monster is.

Strengths?

Weaknesses?

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