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Big question:

Bernard O'Keefe (2011) argues that 'the tension between claims of verisimilitude and the presentation of the fantastic can be found in much Gothic fiction, creating in the reader a sense of uncertainty just as unsettling as the more obvious feelings of terror, horror, and fear'. **How does this statement apply to each of the four novel openings (including 'Frankenstein')**?

Questions:

Is it significant that Walton writes to his **sister**? (Consider the idea of gender, but also the significance of bachelorhood/ the family unit.

Why does Shelley choose this Antarctic setting?

How does the setting enable Shelley to explore both Romantic and Enlightenment ideas?

Does Walton's blind optimism foreshadow Frankenstein's in a scientific context?

How does Shelley help us to consider to motives behind exploration?

Notes:

Letter 1- 'Frankenstein'

'There, Margaret, the **sun** is for ever visible, its broad disk just skirting the horizon and diffusing a **perpetual splendour**. There—for with your leave, my sister, I will put some trust in preceding navigators—there **snow and frost are banished**; and, sailing over a **calm sea**, we may be wafted to a land surpassing in **wonders and in beauty** every region hitherto discovered on the habitable globe.'

Walton repeatedly addresses his sister by name or as 'my dear sister' – it seems important that the letters are written to her.

Walton repeatedly refers to the idea of light and beauty, which could be a metaphor for truth and scientific advancement (**the Enlightenment?**) – That said, words such as '**wonders**' might also make the reader think of **the sublime**. The Antarctic as a place of beauty, but also danger/ terror. **This links to the sense of 'uncertainty' described by O'Keefe, as the landscape inspires his sense of awe- fear and admiration.**

'Wafted' and 'calm sea' also suggest that he has an idealised view of the journey ahead and hasn't

'I try in vain to be persuaded that the pole is the seat of **frost and desolation**; it ever presents itself to my imagination as the region of **beauty and delight**'. Walton is reluctant to consider the potentially negative consequences of exploration/ discoveries that he might make.

'I shall **sate my ardent curiosity** with the sight of a part of the world never before visited, and may tread a land never before imprinted by the foot of man'. Curiosity links to the idea of **original sin**- this quotation also suggests that there is a degree of arrogance or selfishness to discovery (**exploration is not necessarily noble**) - the pronouns 'I' and 'my' seem possessive.

Summary:

**Remember not to fill in the summary section for the essential study task!**

Use the model above to help you write detailed and useful notes:

- Make sure that comments are rooted in textual evidence (such as a quotation)
- Link regularly back to the big question.
- Make sure that your questions are open and will stimulate discussions (not questions such as 'Who is Walton writing to?', but 'Is it significant that Walton writes to his **sister**?'). You may well have thought of a possible answer to your own question, but someone else might be able to suggest an alternative viewpoint in class discussion.
- Use your existing knowledge of context and wider reading to explore different ideas. Don't be afraid to do extra research and look things up! Follow your intellectual curiosity.
- Remember to make links between the different texts within your notes and questions.