

By the end of studying **Letter 1** I need to know:

Plot: Robert Walton is writing a letter of his sister, Margaret Savile. He plans to rent a ship to get him to the North Pole.

Ideas: Robert Walton is foolish and arrogant- he is a figure of mockery.

Vocabulary	
Context (To inform interpretation)	<p>[To be explored later] Margaret Savile is the first 'voiceless' woman from the novel.</p> <p>Also ready in Letter 1, there's the conflict between Man and Nature- Walton believes he has power/ control over nature.</p> <p>Romanticism and Enlightenment- Mary Shelley is a Romantic, as such her disdain towards Walton (a figure of Enlightenment thought) is evident.</p>
Themes	<p>Power= Walton believes he has supreme power- he describes the North Pole as the 'seat of frost and desolation', creating a throne-like image upon which he wants to sit upon. Margaret's inability to respond and Walton's condescending tone towards her ('do you understand this feeling?').</p> <p>Ambition and Obsession= Walton's ambition drives him forwards, to the point of foolish arrogance. This causes his 'daydreams to become more wild and fervent' as he gets closer to the North Pole. His sentences become longer and more descriptive when he talks about the North Pole- a place he has never been.</p> <p>Class and education- Walton is from a higher class- this is important when exploring his arrogance in later letters.</p>
Deeper understanding	<p>Walton represents the foolish ideals of the Enlightenment- the North Pole is referred to as the 'land of everlasting light'; yet, his belief of the ease with which he'll make it there, and his lack of preparation, serves to undermine the values of Enlightenment thought. However, his journey to the North Pole appears spurred on by his failure as a poet (symbolic of Romantic thought)- a sense is create here of Walton ejecting the Romantic to move towards the ideologies of the Enlightenment.</p> <p>Walton recounts how his father, on his deathbed, ordered his uncle to prevent Walton from sailing. The fact that Walton rejects his father's dying wishes reveals how he has the opportunity to ignore his family's wishes. This forms the beginning of a common motif of male characters being able to reject family wishes, whilst female characters must follow family wishes.</p> <p>Walton's arrogance- Shelley deliberately opens the novel displaying the extreme arrogance of Walton. This is evident when he laments his attempts at becoming a poet where he believed that he would 'find a niche in the temple where Homer and Shakespeare are consecrated'- he believed, after spending a year as a poet- that he would reach the greatness of Shakespeare and Homer. This reflects his beliefs that he is of superior intellect. Equally, it is his failings as a poet that cause him to refocus his attempts to travel to the North Pole. Interestingly, there is a dichotomy between these two endeavours- the former being a Romantic one and the latter being an Enlightenment one. Perhaps Walton's inability to accept his failings causes him to totally reject Romantic pursuits and move towards an Enlightenment one- this is equally reflective of Victor; his failure at creating the creature causes him to reject all scientific pursuits and he returns to the ideas of Enlightenment and surrounding himself from nature. His arrogance is equally evident through his belief that his journey has already been successful- he celebrates how a 'cold northern breeze... play[s] upon [his] cheeks which braces [his] nerves and fills [him] with delight' and how he is 'already far north of London'. As a reader, we know he is grossly underprepared; his decision to go whale fishing as preparation for a voyage to the North Pole just one example of this foolishness. Finally, he describes the North Pole as the 'seat of frost and desolation'- the language choice here is interesting; it implies his belief that the North Pole is something to be conquered, or owned- sat on almost like a throne. There's a sense here that Walton believes Man can overcome nature- again reinforced through the gentle depiction of nature by Walton in this chapter.</p>

Reading:

Robert Walton- travelling to the North Pole.

Margaret Savile- Robert Walton's sister.

Read to the punctuation.

Links across the text:

Walton's failings- Walton rejects the Romantic and turns to the Enlightenment upon his failings as a poet. This parallels Victor rejecting the Enlightenment and attempting to return to the Romantic following the creation of the creature.

Man vs Nature-Walton's belief that Man is superior to Nature and can control it; by Letter 4 it becomes clear that nature is uncontrollable, unpredictable and powerful.

<p>Quotes and references</p>	<p>Whale fishing on the North Sea- Walton goes whale fishing to prepare for his journey to the North Pole, thereby reinforcing his foolishness and lack of preparation. He seems to think the Arctic sea and North Sea will be similar.</p> <p>' I imagined that I also might obtain a niche in the temple where the names of Homer and Shakespeare are consecrated'- reveals Walton's desire to be worshipped, this drives his determination to reach the North Pole- he can't succeed as a poet, so intends to do so as an explorer.</p> <p>'I feel a cold northern breeze play upon my cheeks'- here Walton is describing how the North Wind feels- the positive adjectives firstly reflect his enthusiasm, and potentially his desire to mock/ condescend his sister. However, it also reflects his limited awareness of the weather conditions he will encounter- he believes this wind gives him a 'foretaste of those icy climes'.</p>
<p>Terminology</p>	<p>Epistolary</p> <p>Proleptic Future Tense- Walton consistently writes in proleptic future tense to reinforce his certainty of what he will encounter on his journey 'shall be wafted over a calm sea'.</p> <p>Declaratives- Constant use of declaratives when describing the North Pole- 'there the sun is forever visible' reflect Walton's arrogance and belief that he will certainly succeed on his voyage.</p>