

THE GOTHIC NOVEL



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When did it become popular?



- Later 18th Century
- Started with a Gothic Revival -- mid-1700s
- Visible in gardens
- Seen in architecture (gargoyles) of the Middle Ages
- 1740s - Horace Walpole - Strawberry Hill estate near London
- Published *The Castle of Otranto*, a Gothic Story - 1764



STRAWBERRY HILL ESTATE

DEFINITION



In the most general terms, Gothic literature can be defined as writing that employs dark and picturesque scenery, startling and melodramatic narrative devices, and an overall atmosphere of exoticism, mystery, fear, and dread. Often, a Gothic novel or story will revolve around a large, ancient house that conceals a terrible secret or serves as the refuge of an especially frightening and threatening character.

ELEMENTS OF GOTHIC LITERATURE



Mystery and Fear
Omens and Curses
Atmosphere and Setting
Supernatural and Paranormal Activity
Romance
Villains
Emotional Distress
Nightmares
Anti-Hero
Damsel in Distress

Mystery and Fear

One of the crucial components of a captivating Gothic story evokes feelings of suspense and fear. Anything that is beyond scientific understanding lends way to mystery, and Gothic atmospheres leverage this principle.

- threatening feeling
- fear enhanced by the unknown.
- plot itself is built around a mystery, such as unknown parentage, a disappearance, or some other inexplicable event.
- wind, especially howling
- rain, especially blowing
- doors grating on rusty hinges
- sighs, moans, howls, eerie sounds
- footsteps approaching
- clanking chains
- lights in abandoned rooms
- gusts of wind blowing out lights
- characters trapped in a room
- doors suddenly slamming shut
- ruins of buildings
- baying of distant dogs (or wolves)
- thunder and lightning
- crazed laughter

Omens and Curses



Foreshadowing, a literary device used to hint at events to come, occurs in the form of visions, omens, and curses throughout many narratives in Gothic literature.

- *A character may have a disturbing dream or vision.*
- *Phenomenon may be seen as a portent (hint) of coming events. For example, if the statue of the lord of the manor falls over, it may portend his death.*
- *Character may sleepwalk or talk in his/her sleep.*

Atmosphere and Setting



Gothic novelists set the tone by carefully choosing the physical location of a scene, as the atmosphere and environment of a Gothic novel directly contributed to the feeling of fear and uneasiness.

Authors often used settings like **dark forests, unnerving mountain regions, ominous climatic conditions, and threatening storms.** Castles, romanticized in the Medieval period, played a large role in early Gothic writings.

Supernatural and Paranormal Activity



Much of Gothic literature's allure comes from the genre's suggestion of supernatural or inexplicable events, such as inanimate objects coming to life, ghosts, spirits, and vampires like that of Bram Stoker's 1897 [Gothic fantasy, *Dracula*](#).

Romance



As it's widely believed Gothic literature stemmed from Romantic literature, the two genres share overlapping characteristics.

Many Gothic novels are plagued by a passionate romance that often leads to sorrow and tragedy. The works of Charles Dickens centered on a Romantic-style love affair, but also featured horrific villains and Gothic settings.

Villains



Much like that of various literary genres, villains play a pivotal role in Gothic literature.

In traditional Gothic novels, villains took the form of autocratic, male characters, often in authoritative positions like that of priests or kings.

They're complex, and initially sympathetic as to fool the reader of their deceptive nature.

Emotional Distress



Often, Gothic writers use melodrama or “high emotion” to convey a thought. This exaggerated, impassioned language helps convey the panic and terror inherent in many characters.

- Narration may be full of feelings
- Characters are often overcome by anger, sorrow, surprise, and especially terror
- Characters suffer from raw nerves
- A feeling of impending doom
- Crying and emotional speeches are frequent
- Breathlessness and panic are common

Nightmares



Nightmares serve as a particularly important omen within Gothic literature. Nightmares have an ancient association with the act of foretelling and were used to exacerbate the haunting aspects of a novel's plot.

The dreams allow authors to better demonstrate the emotions of their characters in a more immediate and frightening state.

Anti-Hero



More often than not, the protagonist takes the form of the *anti-hero*, a flawed protagonist with monstrous elements popularized by this genre of writing. Originally, protagonists were males as well, but as the feminist movement emerged, English novelists like Clara Reeve began introducing female protagonists into their works.

Protagonists tend to hold a high social rank and strong physical presence. Their doom is foreshadowed, and they are burdened by sorrow or a horrific tragedy. Often, they're easily influenced, driven much by passion.

Damsel in Distress



Gothic works often include a woman who suffers at the expense of a villain.

They carry feelings of sadness, oppression, and loneliness, and many were depicted as virginal in early Gothic pieces.

Female characters often face events that leave them fainting, terrified, screaming, and/or sobbing.

The damsel's character is often held captive in a castle, terrorized by a nobleman, and rendered powerless.

The Vocabulary of the Gothic





Mystery: diabolical, enchantment, ghost, goblins, haunted, infernal, magic, magician, miracle, necromancer, omens, ominous, portent, preternatural, prodigy, prophecy, secret, sorcerer, specter, spirits, strangeness, talisman, vision

Fear: Terror Sorrow afflicted, affliction, agony, anguish, apprehensions, apprehensive, commiseration, concern, despair, dismal, dismay, dread, dreaded, dreading, fearing, frantic, fright, frightened, grief, hopeless, horrid, horror, lamentable, melancholy, miserable, mournfully, panic, sadly, scared, shrieks, sorrow, sympathy, tears, terrible, terrified, terror, unhappy, wretched

Surprise: alarm, amazement, astonished, astonishment, shocking, staring, surprise, surprised, thunderstruck, wonder

Haste: anxious, breathless, flight, frantic, hastened, hastily, impatience, impatient, impatiently, impetuosity, precipitately, running, sudden, suddenly

Anger: angrily, cholera, enraged, furious, fury, incense, incensed, provoked, rage, raving, resentment, temper, wrath, wrathful, wrathfully

Largeness: enormous, gigantic, giant, large, tremendous, vast



Gothic Traits in *Frankenstein*



- *Frankenstein* is set in continental Europe, specifically Switzerland and Germany, where many of Shelley's readers had not been. Further, the incorporation of the chase scenes through the Arctic regions takes us even further from England into regions unexplored by most readers.
- Victor's laboratory is the perfect place to create a new type of human being. Laboratories and scientific experiments were not known to the average reader, thus this was an added element of mystery and gloom.
- The thought of raising the dead would have made the average reader wince in disbelief and terror. Imagining Victor wandering the streets of Ingolstadt after dark on a search for body parts adds to the sense of revulsion purposefully designed to evoke from the reader a feeling of dread for the characters involved in the story.
- In the Gothic novel, the characters seem to bridge the mortal world and the supernatural world.



- Frankenstein's monster seems to have some sort of communication between himself and his creator, because the monster appears wherever Victor goes.
- The monster also moves with amazing superhuman speed with Victor matching him in the chase towards the North Pole.



THE END