

Year 8 English Knowledge Booklet

Term 3 - Gothic

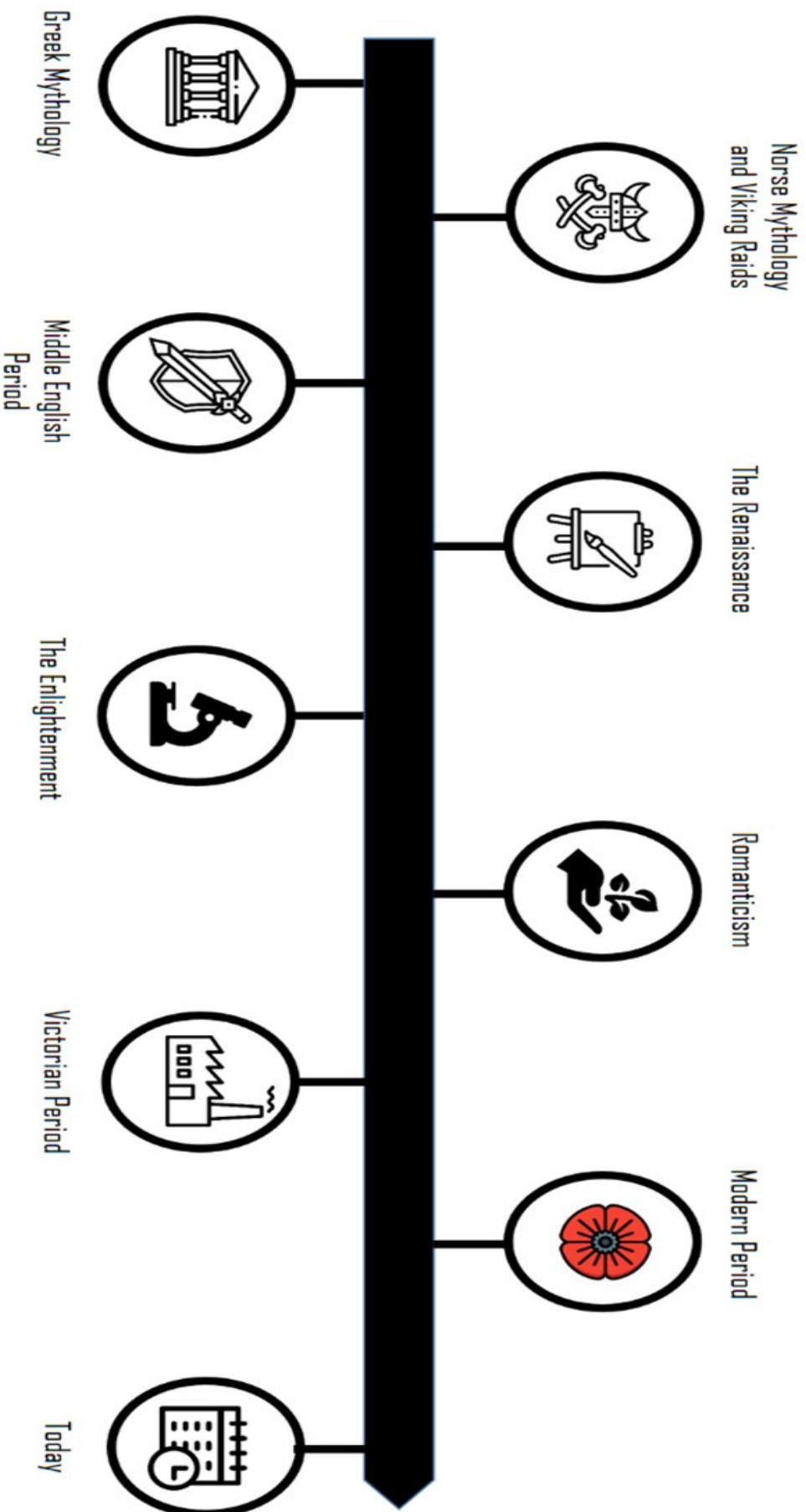


Name:

Class:

Literary Timeline:

Literary Timeline



What conventions are found in gothic literature?

- A genre of literature that became increasingly popular during the Victorian era
- A genre that plays on the fears and emotions of the era, an era that was especially fearful since their beliefs had been ripped out from under them, largely by contrasting modern science with medieval superstition and belief.
- A genre that sprung forth rather suddenly as the increasing preoccupation with individual consciousness that begins in the early 18th century collides with the unique cultural anxieties of the late 18th century. It seems to reflect a specific historical moment characterized by increasing disillusionment with Enlightenment rationality
- A genre whose characters are externalized in a radical new way; their deepest passions and fears are literalised through sometimes supernatural phenomena
- A genre that deals with the nature of fear; fear of imprisonment or entrapment, of rape and personal violation, of the triumph of evil over good and chaos over order
- A genre that places an emphasis on portraying the terrifying, a common insistence on archaic settings, a prominent use of the supernatural, the presence of highly stereotyped characters, barbarism as opposed to elegance
- A genre that subverts reality, deconstructed and dismembered it
- A genre that raises issues about boundaries and duality of self what was socially acceptable and what wasn't examining the blurring the line between man and beast, man and God
- A genre that presents the theme of madness within the novels, especially that of usually stable and rational male characters. Threats to body, mind and soul are recurrent, with extremes of optimism and pessimism during times of crisis, threatening the collapse of the characters' surrounding worlds. The male protagonists frequently demonstrate signs of hysteria and madness.
- A genre where the supernatural is key in increasing a sense of horror
- 'Gothic' came to be applied to the literary genre precisely because the genre dealt with such emotional extremes and dark themes, and because it found its most natural settings in the buildings of this style

Big Questions:

1. What is the significance of the **setting** in **gothic literature**?
2. What **themes** can be detected from specific clues in a text?
3. How does Poe create a **mysterious** character?
4. What happens in *The Tell-Tale Heart*?
5. How does Poe create **tension** for his readers?
6. What were common attitudes towards women and mental health in the late nineteenth century?
7. What can we learn about the **narrator's** relationship with her husband in the yellow-wallpaper?
8. What effect do **personification** and **dynamic verbs** have on a text?
9. To what extent is the yellow wallpaper a **gothic** novel?
10. How does the writer use **symbolism** in the text?
11. How is **conflict** presented in *The Yellow Wallpaper*?
12. To what extent is the narrator **oppressed** in *The Yellow Wallpaper*?
13. What significance do the three characters have in *The Red Room*?
14. What effect does the use of **sensory imagery** have on the reader?
15. What purpose does the **imagery** serve?
16. How can I use **imagery** effectively?
17. How does the writer create an **intriguing** opening in the Monkey's Paw?
18. How does the writer shock the reader?
19. What effect does the monkey's paw have on the characters?
20. Why do writers use **foreshadowing**?

Key Terminology:

Key term	Definition
Gothic literature	Relating to the style of fictional writing associated with the Gothic revival, emphasizing violent or macabre events in a mysterious, desolate setting.
Oppression	Prolonged cruel or unjust treatment or exercise of authority.
Setting	The place or type of surroundings where something is positioned or where an event takes place.
Foreshadowing	In literature, this can be seen through a hint, or shadow, of what will happen later in the story.
Tension	Mental, emotional, or nervous strain, usually found just before or at the climax of a plot in a story.
Theme	A recurring, unifying subject or idea; motif
Narrator	A character who recounts the events of a story from their perspective.
Mysterious	Difficult or impossible to understand, explain, or identify.
Symbolism	The use of symbols to represent ideas. For example the colour red can represent danger.
Conflict	A state of mind in which a person experiences a clash of opposing feelings or needs. A serious incompatibility between two or more opinions, principles, or interests.
Personification	Giving a human quality to something non-human (inanimate) — “The wall-paper started at me”.
Dynamic verbs	A dynamic verb is a verb that shows continued or progressive action on the part of the subject.
Sensory Imagery	Explores the five human senses: sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell.

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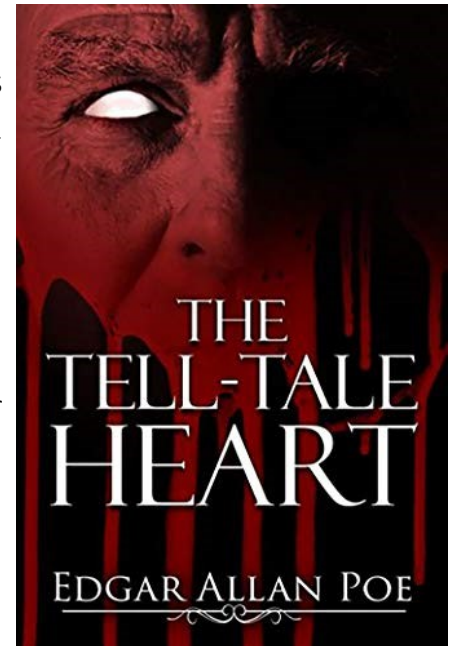
Homework:

	Task
1 Due date:	<p>Use the website, http://www.online-literature.com/poe/ to answer the following questions:</p> <p><u>The Life of Edgar Allan Poe</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When was Poe born? 2. Where was Poe born? 3. What jobs did he do before becoming a famous writer? 4. Name 5 pieces of writing by Poe. 5. What genre of writing was he famous for? 6. What was the name of his only completed novel? 7. When and how did he die? <p>You will be quizzed on your responses/answers in class.</p>
3 Due date:	<p>Use the website, http://www.online-literature.com/shelley_mary/ to answer the following questions:</p> <p><u>Mary Shelley:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. When was Mary Shelley born? 2. Which three languages did Shelly learn? 3. Who was Mary Shelley's husband? 4. Which famous novel did she write? 5. Which country was Shelley visiting when she wrote her famous novel? 6. What sad event happened to her husband? 7. When did Mary Shelley die? <p>You will be quizzed on your responses/answers in class.</p>
5 Due date:	<p>Learn the spellings and definitions to the following key terms:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Foreshadowing 2. Pathetic Fallacy 3. Sensory Image 4. Oppression 5. Theme 6. Symbolism 7. Tension 8. Personification 9. Mysterious 10. Dynamic verbs <p>You will be quizzed on your homework in class.</p>

Information on the texts covered across the unit:

The Tell Tale Heart—Edgar Allen Poe

Even though this is one of Poe's shortest stories, it is nevertheless a profound and, at times, ambiguous investigation of a man's paranoia. The story gains its intensity by the manner in which it portrays how the narrator stalks his victim — as though he were a beast of prey; yet, at the same time, elevated by human intelligence to a higher level of human endeavour, Poe's "murderer" is created into a type of grotesque anomaly. In a sense, the narrator is worse than a beast; only a human being could so completely terrorize his victim before finally killing it, as, for example, the narrator deliberately terrorizes the old man before killing him. And as noted in the introduction to this section, this story shows the narrator's attempt to rationalize his irrational behaviour.

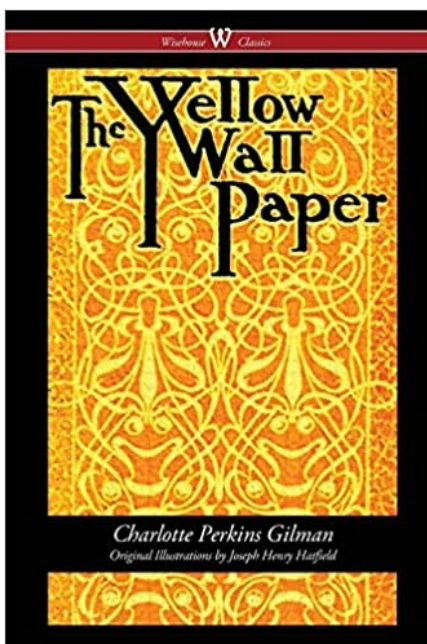


The Yellow Wallpaper—Charlotte Perkins Gilman

"The Yellow Wallpaper" (original title: "The Yellow Wall-paper. A Story") is a short story by American writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman, first published in January 1892 in *The New England Magazine*. It is regarded as an important early work of American feminist literature,

due to its illustration of the attitudes towards mental and physical health of women in the 19th century.

Narrated in the first person, the story is a collection of journal entries written by a woman whose physician husband (John) has rented an old mansion for the summer. Forgoing other rooms in the house, the couple moves into the upstairs nursery. As a form of treatment, the unnamed woman is forbidden from working, and is encouraged to eat well and get plenty of air, so she can recuperate from what he calls a "temporary nervous depression – a slight hysterical tendency", a diagnosis common to women

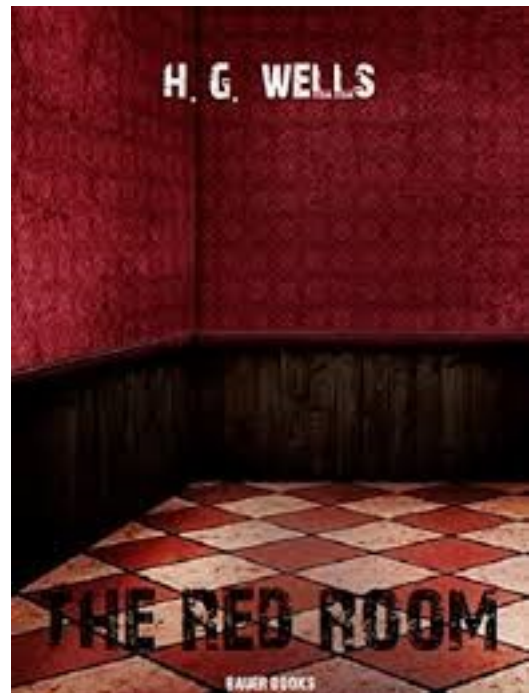


Information on the texts covered in this unit:

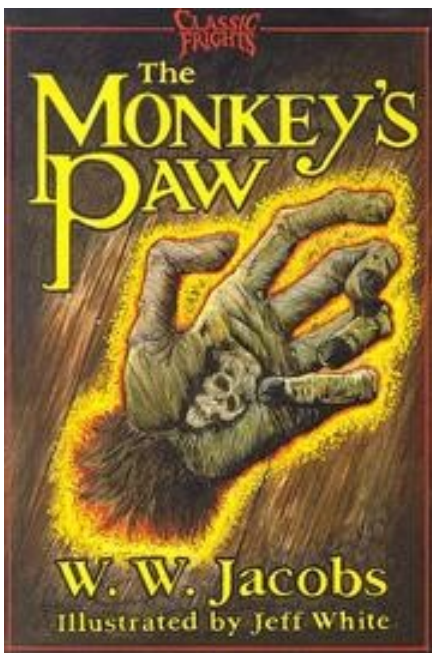
The Red Room - H.G. Wells

"The Red Room" is a short Gothic story written by H. G. Wells in 1894. It was first published in the March 1896 edition of *The Idler* magazine.

An unnamed protagonist chooses to spend the night in an allegedly haunted room, coloured bright red in Lorraine Castle. He intends to disprove the legends surrounding it. Despite vague warnings from the three infirm custodians who reside in the castle, the narrator ascends to "the Red Room" to begin his night's vigil.



The Monkey's Paw—W.W. Jacobs



"The Monkey's Paw" is a supernatural short story by author W. W. Jacobs, first published in England in the collection *The Lady of the Barge* in 1902. In the story, three wishes are granted to the owner of *The Monkey's Paw*, but the wishes come with an enormous price for interfering with fate.

Assessment Example:

The light tapping started again. This time, it sounded like it was closer. My heart started to match the rhythm of the sharp, piercing percussion coming from the other side of the wall and I could feel the panic slowly rising in my chest. If I could just stay here, still, would it find me?

Earlier that evening, I had been out with my friends; it was the summer holidays and we were free from rules, responsibilities and reason. We didn't need a purpose, or a well-thought out plan: we just let our impulses lead us. That's where we went wrong... In a matter of hours, I lost three of the best friends I have ever had.

Billy was the leader of the pack; a strong, confident boy with enviable floppy hair. He was our God. We followed him wherever he went and never questioned or undermined his authority, not because we feared him but because we worshipped him. He had the most daring ideas, with just the right mix of ingredients: a cup of courage, a dollop of adventure and just a teaspoonful of mischief. Today, he'd come up with the brilliant idea of exploring the abandoned castle on the edge of town. The medieval structure had recently been closed to tourists due to reported safety concerns, but there had been rumours at school that the staff had fled the premises after being attacked by a horrifying spectre. We had gone to investigate.

As we bounced, jumped and skidded our way towards the castle on our bikes, we were all excited to break into the forbidden building; we weren't troublemakers, but we all enjoyed the thrill of pushing the boundaries. As we neared the castle, the previously cloudless day began to turn slowly and darkness loomed overhead. The full, slate-grey sky threatened rain, but we didn't care: skin's waterproof, as my dad always says. Pulling aside the police tape and stepping into the gloomy atrium, I felt the temperature drop and could taste sourness in the stale air.

We then split up: our next mistake. Billy ran straight for the grand ballroom, Aaron hurried to the basement and I decided to take my chances upstairs. I crept slowly, stealthily, like a lion tracking its prey; I was conscious that my Doc Martins creaked as I tiptoed on the faded carpet.... What was that?

"Billy?"

There was no answer. It wasn't him. I tried again, "Aaron, was that you?"

Nothing. I was certain that I had heard a whisper right behind me. Had I imagined it? I tentatively pressed on, pretending that I was as confident as before, just in case one of my friends was toying with me. However, after only a few more steps, I heard another noise. This was different – a kind of... tapping? I couldn't be sure, so I held my breath and waited... There it was again! Suddenly, I heard a blood-curdling shriek!

"Billy!"

I hurtled down the stairs towards the scream and arrived, breathless and sweating, in the ballroom. A drip of crimson blood told me to look up: I was stood directly underneath his torn, lifeless body swinging from the chandelier. I couldn't move. I just kept watching.

However, when the hairs on my neck began to rise, I knew I wasn't alone. I hid quickly in a small side-room and waited...

Tap tap! I jumped.

"Come on, quick!" With a sigh of relief I realised it was Aaron. I opened the door quickly to let him in, but he grabbed hold of my arm and pulled me out, hurrying me along as fast as my jellied legs would let me. In seconds we were out of the castle and we paused to catch our breath. One glance at each other was all it took for both of us to know we would never, ever speak of this again.

This is a strong piece of writing.

The story is carefully structured and paragraphed.

Tension is used effectively and built carefully.

A range of punctuation is used accurately and for effect.

Critical Reading 1:

A Masterclass in the Gothic

Definitions

How might one define the Gothic? For one contributor, 'aside from people with black, crimped hair and stripey tights,' the Gothic, 'makes me think that the text will be 'disturbing', whether describing actual events or psychological ones. It conjures up ideas of things buried, or hidden. It hints at everything that we can't quite grasp, everything that's beyond our reason'.

Drs. Wright and Townshend agreed that Gothic texts are often disturbing on a number of levels, but especially in terms of psychology. As a literature of transgression and excess, 'The Gothic' unsettles literary conventions and decorum. Gothic texts also often explore 'the return of the repressed'. Generally we think of ourselves as becoming over time more civilized and rational, and less superstitious; the Gothic reminds us that we haven't necessarily escaped the fears of our past, fears that continue to haunt us.

Perhaps 'The Gothic' can be seen as the disturbed twin or twisted offspring of Romantic literature, suggested one member. Think, for instance, of Frankenstein as a character. In many ways he is similar to a Romantic hero, but his quest for knowledge tips him over into Gothic obsession, transgression and over-reaching. For some critics Frankenstein is a portrait of a specific Romantic hero.

Dr. Townshend suggested that while the Gothic is notoriously difficult to pin down as a term, Gothic Literature always has 'a concern with unsettling, incarcerating space; psychological horror and terror; something that disturbs; and the supernatural.'

Dr. Wright added that Gothic texts reflect the fears and desires of a culture, express its dreams and nightmares, often through supernaturalising these repressed feelings: 'Although 'The Gothic' is full of ghosts, terrors, psychological horrors and nightmares, there is also a firm grounding for in the contemporary anxieties of its time. One of my favourite and first-read critical explanations of 'The Gothic', from David Punter's *The Literature of Terror*, argued that:

"... the Gothic is revealed as not an escape from the real but a deconstruction and dismemberment of it." (David Punter, 1996)

Who were the Goths?

To understand what Horace Walpole meant when he used the term 'Gothic' Dr. Townshend suggested we need to go back even further in history to explore the origin of the term and its developing significance:

'The Goths were held responsible for the sacking of the Roman Empire, the height of 'civilisation'. So Gothic means, in part, that which resists/defies/shatters Roman (and Greek) ideals ... which meant balance, proportion, rhythm, and unity of time and space. Gothic, aesthetically, was a mode that resisted these principles...the aesthetic style of the Gothic was seen, in part, as barbaric. The term took on its dark associations as a marker of the barbaric past during the renaissance, when renaissance historians wrote off the medieval past as 'Gothic'. Here, gothic means 'dark, uncivilised, benighted...'

Critical Reading 1:

Monsters

The discussion ended with a consideration of Shelley's depiction of Frankenstein's creature and of the nature of monstrosity. Monsters identified as being present in the novel included fathers, science itself, the human body, the masculine quest for knowledge, science itself and even Shelley's own husband, the Romantic poet Percy Bysshe Shelley!

Dr. Townshend felt that, 'the novel expresses rage against all forms of paternity, including Shelley's own.' He argued that *Frankenstein* differed from early Gothic texts in its identification of monstrosity: 'One of the reasons why *Frankenstein* is not, immediately, Gothic is because the role of the supernatural has been occupied by SCIENCE!'

Article Written By: Neil Bowen.

This article first appeared in emagplus 58, December 2012.

Critical Reading 2:

Transgressing the Boundaries—An introduction to the Gothic

Transgressing normality

Gothic texts tend to be about transgression, overstepping boundaries and entering a realm of the unknown. In this realm the ordinary is displaced by the extraordinary, the normal becomes the paranormal and the unconscious is as vivid, vital and valid as the conscious.

In this environment it becomes difficult to orientate one's self: it is often a dark world where winding passages lead deeper and deeper into an uncanny and uncertain world. Forests, wildernesses, extremes of nature predominate. The rational world is left far behind, reason no longer rules. The improbable is entirely possible and the impossible becomes ever more probable. Often the protagonist is presented with a baffling series of choices with no clear sense of what the right one might be.

Journeying into the unknown

So, the narrative of the text often involves journeys into the unknown and this is a metaphorical enactment of the act of 'reading' text itself. The texts themselves are often forbidden; beyond the bounds of acceptable literature. The boundaries of logic and sense were breached and, instead, the sensational and the sensual were celebrated. The heroes are those who seek to overturn authority and establish the freedom to develop their individuality.

The consequences of transgression

Gothic literature also lent itself to those who wished to warn society against the effects of breaking with the natural order: the protagonists who strayed off the path of reason, order or decorum often came face-to-face with the consequences of their actions rendered all the more terrible in the lurid world of the Gothic text. Darkly attractive strangers who tempt the innocent and naive are transformed into demonic villains who are only just defeated by some force of righteousness, a personification of conventional morality, and the weeping victim is led back to safety a wiser and better person.

Over the threshold

There is usually a defined threshold over which the protagonist and the reader must step. It may be represented as a physical boundary - the dividing line between the civilised and the natural world. It might be a social line - the girl breaks free from the constraints of her family's expectations and rushes into the arms of some dubious stranger with an altogether 'other' agenda. It might be a moral line where the protagonist breaks a moral law - perhaps he has the temerity to imitate his Maker and breathe life into the inanimate.

. Sometimes their situation was made worse by the fact that their violation seemed to be legitimised by the laws of the land.

Article Written By: Robert Kidd.

This article was first published in emagazine 47 (February 2010)

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Violation

At the heart of the Gothic text is the tension provided by the possible violation of innocence - the concept of 'virtue in distress'. In the first flowering of the Gothic as a genre the innocent victim was almost exclusively female. They were the object of the villain's desire and the novel's landscapes and imagery often provided an obvious objective. Swords were raised, arrows let loose, doors forced and defences breached. Victims found themselves pursued down tortuous passages with no clear sight of an escape route: they were trapped in impossible situations - and, as the genre developed, these were often of their own making.

Critical Reading 3:

The House at the End of the Road – Gothic Places in *Beloved*, *Dracula* and *The Wasp Factory*

Teacher Mark Roberts uncovers the darkness and isolation in the dwellings in three texts, showing how each is used as a familiar Gothic trope.

From its beginnings, Gothic literature has featured distinctive and disturbing buildings. Terry Castle, in her overview of Gothic fiction, writes of the genre's 'relentlessly architectural obsessions'. Horace Walpole – author of *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), widely acknowledged as the original Gothic novel – took this obsession to the extreme, constructing Strawberry Hill, a neo-Gothic house designed as a visual representation of his unorthodox personality. For Walpole, this (literal) Gothic architecture acted as a break from the tradition of classical buildings, a celebration of liberty and artistic freedom.

Seclusion and Entrapment

Yet, unlike Strawberry Hill, fictional Gothic buildings are conventionally used to evoke ideas of confinement. Grand Gothic edifices, in the form of impenetrable castles, derelict abbeys, or manor houses with locked rooms, invariably provide the opportunity for the imprisonment of physically and psychologically victimised characters. By locating these spaces of incarceration in secluded areas, Gothic writers assemble buildings that offer little chance of escape.

Castle *Dracula*

In *Dracula* by Bram Stoker (1897), Jonathan Harker's journal narrates his eastward journey to Castle Dracula. It's an increasingly harrowing and disorientating experience – including superstitious locals and howling wolves – that drags Harker away from 'civilised' England to the 'wildest and least known portions of Europe'. Such is the castle's remoteness, no map gives its 'exact locality'. The surrounding landscape moves from pastoral and picturesque, to sublime and overwhelming 'jagged' mountain peaks.

The Wasp Factory

In *The Wasp Factory* (1984), Iain Banks also provokes deep readerly unease. Like a warped, modern day Prospero, 16-year-old protagonist Frank views the secluded Scottish island as his domain, an ideal location for explosions, ritualistic animal sacrifice and casual murder. In reality, the 'island' is no such thing: it is separated from the mainland by a small body of water, easily traversed by a solid bridge. Yet the sense of separateness – both in terms of geographical location and the aberrant behaviour of the dysfunctional Cauldhames – is still palpable. Banks' choice of name signals how the family's otherness is intrinsically linked to the house they live in. In Scottish dialect 'cauld' is cold and 'hame' means home. The house is a place that has always been bereft of emotional warmth: Frank relates how his absent mother.

Article Written By: Mark Roberts.

This article was first published in emagazine 84, April 2019.

Wider Reading:



Other stories by Edgar Allan Poe

The Masque of the Red Death – The story follows Prince Prospero's attempts to avoid a dangerous plague, known as the Red Death, by hiding in his abbey.

The Cask of Amontillado – The story, set in an unnamed Italian city at carnival time in an unspecified year, is about a man taking fatal revenge on a friend who, he believes, has insulted him.

Other Gothic novels

Breathe by Cliff McNish—An evil presence lurks in the 200-year-old farmhouse that Jack moves into with his mother. Jack can communicate with ghosts (an ability he recognized after his father's death), and on his first day in the house, he senses that it harbours many secrets.

Frankenstein by Mary Shelley- The story of Victor Frankenstein, a young scientist who creates a grotesque but sapient creature in an unorthodox scientific experiment.

Film adaptations

(be careful of plot changes!)

Rebecca (dir. Alfred Hitchcock) 1940

The Curse of Frankenstein (dir. Jacques Tourneur) 1957

The Woman in Black (dir. James Watkins) 1989 or 2012