

Non-chronological report

CHARACTERS IN GOTHIC LITERATURE

WHY IS IT CALLED GOTHIC LITERATURE?

Gothic literature is a genre of writing that originated in the late 18th century. The tales feature dark, mysterious and sometimes supernatural themes; they often combine horror, romance and suspense and are typically set in castles, ruins, mansions or remote landscapes.

The popularity of Gothic literature continued into the nineteenth century, captivating the terror-loving Victorians. During this period, countless nail-biting novels and petrifying poems were written, many of which are recognised as classic works of British literature.

COMPREHENSION
CRUSHER

Gothic fiction describes characters facing strange and supernatural events; consequently, the reader experiences the spooky adventure alongside them.

Certain writing techniques frequently appear in Gothic literature to create suspense:

- exaggerated description
- foreshadowing (giving hints or clues about future events)
- stormy or dangerous weather
- delaying the terrifying climax

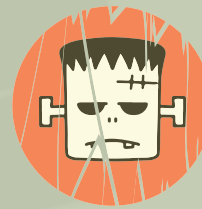
DELAYING THE TERRIFYING CLIMAX

In Gothic stories, writers often hold back the scariest part of the narrative. This technique excites readers and keeps them on the edge of their seats; they become desperate to find out what will happen next, even as more frightening events are unfolding. Many Gothic stories feature a mysterious or evil-looking character who behaves strangely and becomes the main source of fear. Therefore, the reader wants to know whether they will be defeated.

COMMON 'CREATURES' OF GOTHIC LITERATURE:



GHOSTS



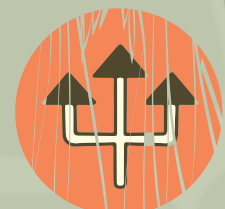
MONSTERS



WITCHES

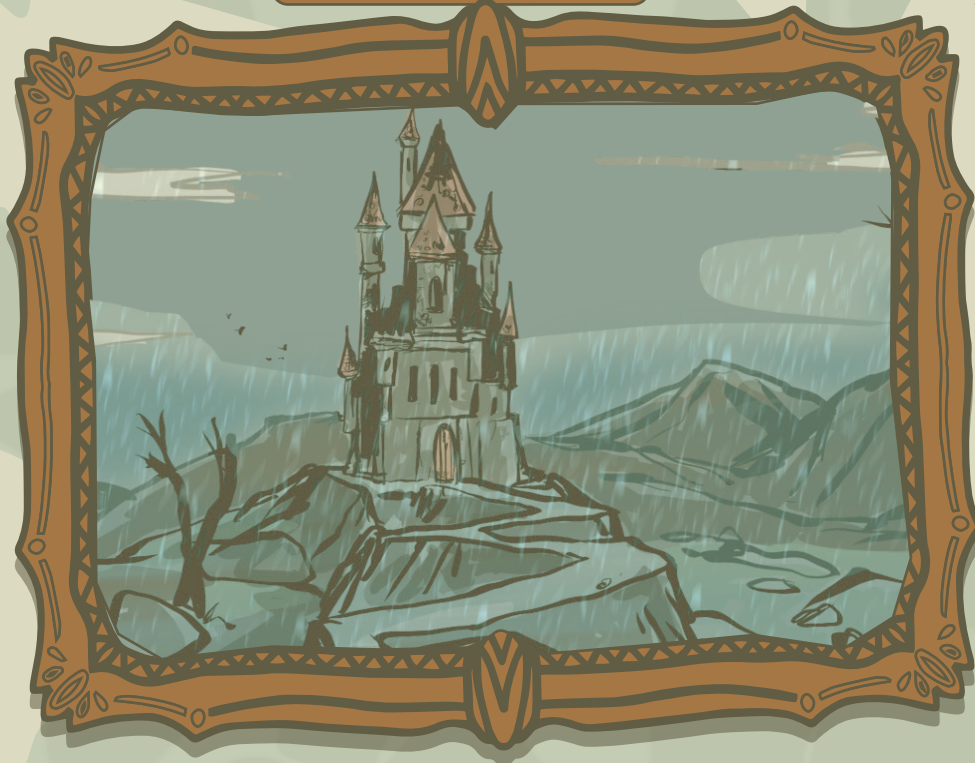


VAMPIRES



DEVILS





Timeline of top gothic horrors:



Dare you read any of these?

WHY DID GOTHIC LITERATURE BECOME POPULAR?

The Victorians worked long hours and their jobs were often physically demanding. The 19th century brought rapid changes in science and technology, which many found overwhelming. Gothic literature offered a welcome break from reality. In addition, many Gothic stories were set in foreign lands – ‘Count Dracula’, for example. Furthermore, ordinary people had probably never left their town, so reading about faraway places was exciting.





COUNT DRACULA

Dracula is the most famous vampire of all time. This evil, undead creature uses mysterious powers, shapeshifting and supernatural speed to frighten his victims before feeding on their blood. Dracula is immortal and has the strength of twenty men. However, he has weaknesses: holy symbols, garlic and sunlight. He lies in his coffin within a darkened room between dawn and dusk. Like other vampires, Dracula has sharp fangs, which he uses to pierce the victim's skin – usually at the neck – before draining their blood (yuck!).

Spooky creature: Vampire



Author: Bram Stoker

Date written: 1897

Setting: Transylvania (modern day Romania) and England

'THE CREATURE' IN FRANKENSTEIN

Frankenstein tells the story of Victor Frankenstein, a young scientist who creates a living being from parts of dead human bodies. The result is an eight-foot-tall, hideous creature that terrified Victor. Overcome with fear, Victor flees, abandoning his creation. At first, the lonely creature is kind and gentle. He learns to speak and even teaches himself to read, but he is rejected by everyone he meets because of his monstrous appearance. Hurt and alone, the creature becomes angry and seeks revenge. Many readers believe that Victor is the real monster in Mary Shelley's Gothic novel because he created life but then refused to take responsibility or grant the creature the one thing it longed for: a friend.

Spooky creature: Monster



Author: Mary Shelley

Date written: 1818

Setting: Switzerland, Bavaria and England





THE EVIL MR HYDE IN THE STRANGE CASE OF DR JEKYLL AND MR HYDE

The influential tale of two personalities – one morally good and one evil – existing in one body shocked Victorian England. While Dr. Jekyll apparently has good intentions, the monstrous Mr. Hyde seeks murder and chaos. Inspired by scientific developments, Stevenson created the idea of a mysterious potion that could temporarily transform Dr. Jekyll into a new man, who was younger, smaller and more cruel. With a new body, he had the opportunity to act out his secret evil urges and then disappear, without shame or consequences. But what happens when he loses control? This book is known as the best example of Gothic horror.

Author: Robert Louis Stevenson

Date written: 1886

Setting: London, England

WEREWOLVES AND HOUNDS

Demonic hounds have appeared in folklore from many parts of the world. Even the earliest recorded story – The Epic of Gilgamesh – and the myths of ancient Greece tell of humans capable of shapeshifting into wolves. Long before the 19th century, the terrifying figure of the werewolf haunted tales and fuelled superstitions. It was only natural that such a creature prowled its way into Gothic literature. Famous examples include 'The Story of a Weir-Wolf', 'Dracula's Guest' (also written by Bram Stoker) and 'The Man-Wolf'. If a character were to tackle a werewolf, they would need a silver bullet (the most effective weapon for defeating this Gothic creature).

