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GOthic LITERATURE

An Introduction to the Horror Genre



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“

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We make up horrors to help us cope with the real ones.”

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-Stephen King



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**WHAT ARE
SCARY STORIES
USUALLY ABOUT?**

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HORROR CATEGORIES AND ELEMENTS:

- ▶ The Unnatural
- ▶ The Undead
- ▶ Zombies
- ▶ Mummies
- ▶ Monsters
- ▶ Aliens
- ▶ Spiders
- ▶ Clowns
- ▶ Vampires
- ▶ Witches and Warlocks
- ▶ Demons
- ▶ Haunted Houses
- ▶ Devil/Satan
- ▶ Psychopaths or Killers
- ▶ Apocalypse
- ▶ Paranormal
- ▶ Ghosts
- ▶ Deadly Animals
- ▶ Invisible Man
- ▶ Werewolves

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**WHAT CLICHÉS CAN
YOU NAME THAT ARE
OFTEN IN HORROR
STORIES?**

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MOTIFS IN GOTHIC LITERATURE:

- ▶ Darkness
- ▶ Home alone/isolation
- ▶ Experiment gone wrong
- ▶ Bad weather/storms
- ▶ The woods
- ▶ Contacting the dead
- ▶ Bad omen or warning
- ▶ Nightmares
- ▶ Mirrors/Reflections
- ▶ No phone signal
- ▶ The villain is invincible
- ▶ Spooky basements
- ▶ Strange places
- ▶ Plot twists
- ▶ Doppelgängers
- ▶ Screaming
- ▶ Curses
- ▶ Dungeons
- ▶ Magic and spells
- ▶ Cold
- ▶ Prophecy
- ▶ Sacrifice
- ▶ Blood
- ▶ Pride
- ▶ Deformity
- ▶ Mistaken identity

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BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GENRE:

- Gothic literature was legitimized in 1764 when *The Castle of Otranto* was published by Horace Walpole. It is considered the first ever gothic novel.
- Gothic literature is a classification of literature which embodies feelings of horror, uneasiness, and fear.
- In 1818, Mary Shelley introduced science fiction as part of gothic literature with the classic novel *Frankenstein*.
- In 1819, John William Polidori established vampires as part of the genre with his story "The Vampyre."
- 1827, Edgar Allan Poe writes and prints his first book. Poe was known for writing dozens of stories and poems that were horrifying, descriptive, and mysterious. Among Poe's most beloved stories is "The Tell-Tale Heart," published in 1843.
- In 1897, Bram Stoker wrote *Dracula*. It is still one of the most popular and well-known vampire novels to date.

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**IN GOTHIC
LITERATURE, AUTHORS
USE 5 TECHNIQUES TO
ACCOMPLISH A SCARY
STORY**

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- ▶ Suspense
- ▶ Irony
- ▶ Foreshadowing
- ▶ Imagery
- ▶ Mood



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SUSPENSE

- ▶ **Suspense** is the feeling of nervousness or anxiousness because you're unsure what will happen next
- ▶ Authors use suspense so that the readers are fearful of what might happen to the characters in the story
- ▶ Suspense is built up by teasing the reader into knowing something bad might happen, but not revealing exactly what it will be

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IRONY

- ▶ Another way authors accomplish *suspense* is through dramatic irony
- ▶ **Dramatic irony** is when the reader or viewer knows something that the characters in the story do not (think about when you know the killer is hiding behind the door, but the girl running toward that room has no idea)
- ▶ Dramatic irony can really make a story... *dramatic*. It makes the reader worry and sometimes yell at the characters, "TURN AROUND!"

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FORESHADOWING

- ▶ Speaking of playing games with their audience, authors love to use foreshadowing in horror stories
- ▶ **Foreshadowing** is a warning or hint about something that will occur later in the story
- ▶ Foreshadowing keeps the audience guessing that they know the fate of the characters in the story; these hints can really give readers that eerie feeling!

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IMAGERY

- ▶ **Imagery** is the language authors use to appeal to your five human senses, so you can easily visualize the scenes in your mind
- ▶ Imagery is extremely important in literature because it's not like the movies where you can simply rely on creepy music and a spooky stage design to let you know things are getting weird
- ▶ While reading, you have to set the scene for yourself, so it helps if the author can create that image in your mind for you

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MOOD

- ▶ Another reason that *imagery* is essential to gothic literature is because it sets the mood of the story
- ▶ **Mood** is the feeling that the reader experiences while reading a text; it is the atmosphere of the story
- ▶ What types of moods do you think authors want to establish in gothic literature?

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AS WE READ SEVERAL GOTHIC STORIES IN THIS
UNIT, YOU WILL ANALYZE THE LITERARY
TECHNIQUES USED BY AUTHORS



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REFLECT:

- ▶ Which of the 5 literary techniques (Suspense, Irony, Foreshadowing, Mood, or Imagery) has the biggest impact on a horror story? Why?
- ▶ What type of gothic literature is the SCARIEST, in your opinion? Monsters? Serial killers? Clowns? Explain your answer.
- ▶ How have characteristics of the gothic genre changed over the years?

**Hint: Think Dracula vs. Twilight*



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