

# Gothic Literature



- Prepare to enter a bizarre, new, yet perhaps oddly familiar world.
- Have your pens ready to record the highlights of your journey...

# Gothic Context



- The gothic was first used as a Medieval, architectural term to describe a style of building that included gargoyles, scenes of Hell, and souls in torment.

# The Gothic

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- Thematic Elements/Plot
- Settings
- Characters





# GOTHIC THEMATIC ELEMENTS/PLOT

# Ancestral Curse

- The current generation suffers for evil deeds of ancestors.
- Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher"



# Body-Snatching



- Grave-Robbing.
- Stealing corpses from graves, tombs, or morgues.
- Illicit trade in cadavers.
- Violation of religious space.
- Commercially motivated by science.
- King's *Pet Semetary*.

# Dreaming/Nightmares

- Dredge up strong emotions, such as ecstasy, terror, joy.
- Reveal urges, impulses, desires, even truths about oneself one tries to hide.
- Reveal the future; premonitions.
- i.e. Freddy Krueger





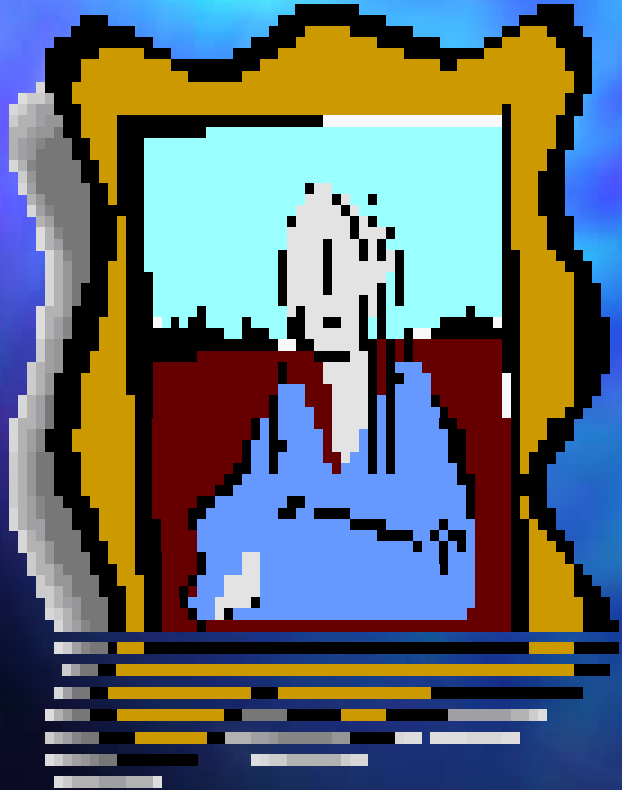
# Entrapment/Imprisonment

- Being confined or trapped, as shackled to a floor or hidden away in a dark cell.
- Heightens the psychology of feeling there's "no way out."
- *Saw* series





# Gothic Gadgets



- Physical elements allowing supernatural powers to display uncanny presence and abilities.
- “Supernatural props”: vocal and mobile portraits; animated statues and skeletons; doors, gates, portals, hatchways which open and close independently; secret passageways; secret messages and manuscripts; forbidden chambers and sealed compartments; casket lids seen to rise, etc.

# Gothic Counterfeit

- Playful fakery of authenticity.
- The text is presented as a discovery or recovery by the editor, sometimes of an ancient or forgotten text.
- Cloaks the real writer's authorship.
- Complicates the point of view (making things more fun and intriguing).

Eric's Diary, page 4

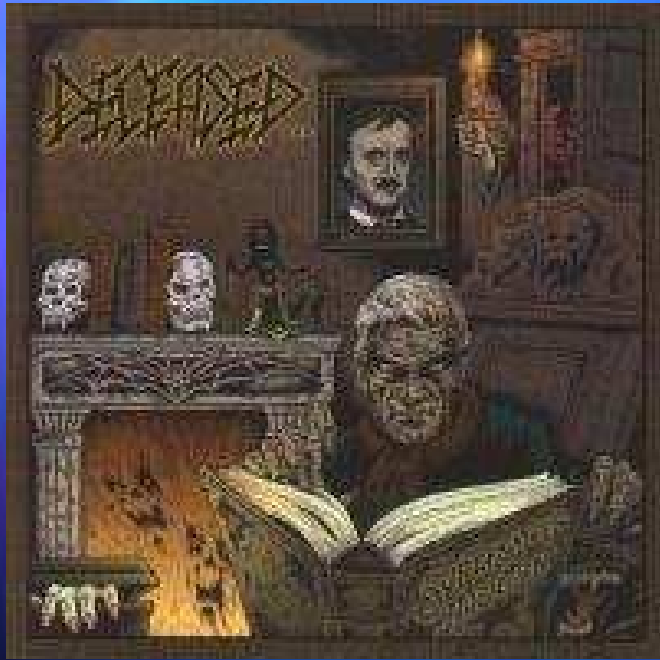
When we got to school Mr. Pro rang the bell and all the students filled in and "made their manners" to Mr. Pro. The boys bowed and the girls curtsied. I saw my sister as she curtsied to the teacher. I was glad we were not late because if you were you had to stay outside until recess even in winter when it's cold,

9:00 A.M.

First we had roll call, everyone was present and on time. Then we said the Lords Prayer and read from the Bible, this was done every day, learning to read the Bible helped us to be better Christians. Our school was a one room school built by some of the people in the town, so, while Mr. Pro did reading with one grade, I did written work. I practiced my penmanship. When he called our grade all fourth graders went up to read. We were reading the story Rumpelstiltskin. We were almost finished, I got to read first, I was good in this subject, so I did well. Then Mr. Pro called on Harry then Melissa.

Now we took our recess break, I played on stilts, Harry brought an acrobat so we played with that, we sat and watched it do flips in the air. Mr. Pro rang the bell and filled us back in. We had arithmetic class next, in fourth grade we were working on triple digit multiplication. We took turns doing problems on the board in our heads.

# The Grotesque



- Mutations, often deformities.
- A mix of two separate modes, such as comedy and tragedy, creating a disturbing fiction, in which comic circumstances often preclude horrific tragedy and vice-versa.
- i.e. The Hunchback of Notre Dame



# Mystery

- An event or situation that appears to overwhelm understanding.
- i.e. Sherlock Holmes



# Necromancy



- The dark art of communicating with the dead.
- i.e. Ouija Boards  
"Bloody Mary" myth  
Séances

# Revenge



- The act of repaying someone for a harm caused.
- Revenge can be enacted upon a loved one, a family member, a friend, an object or area.
- Poe's "Cask of Amontillado".
- The Princess Bride (Inigo Montoya)



# Somnambulism



- Sleepwalking
- Hidden sources of stress may be revealed or acts of guilt replayed.

# Superstition

- Variously considered as a belief in the supernatural or the mystical, and as valuing rituals and miracles.
- i.e. Garlic/wooden stakes for vampires  
spreading salt for witches



# The Supernatural



- Events or phenomena that defy the rules of natural law.
- More often, and more intriguingly, uncanny events that could be explained or dismissed (however ambiguously) by the laws of everyday reality.



# Transformation/Metamorphosis

- A striking change in appearance; a change in the form or function of an organism by a natural or unnatural process.
- Stevenson's *Mr. Hyde*,  
King's *It*,  
Count Dracula



# GOTHIC CHARACTERS

The background features a vertical gradient from light blue to dark purple. A grid pattern is visible on the left side, and a horizontal line with a grid pattern extends from the left edge across the middle of the page.

# Devil

- A spirit of incarnate evil.
- Ranges from:
  - tragic villain-hero
  - punisher of sinners
  - tempter and deceiver
  - pure evil.





# Doppelgänger

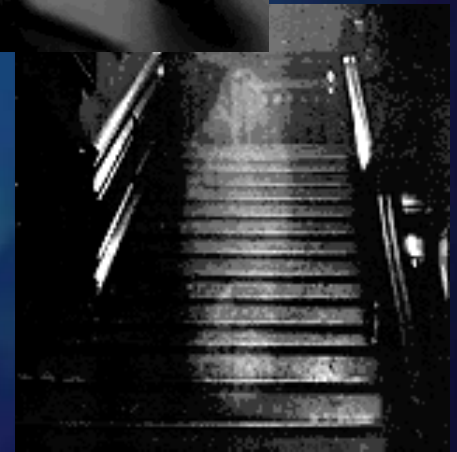


- German: doublegoer.
- Ghostly counterpart of another person.
- Body double, alter ego, identical other person.
- Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.



# Ghosts, Werewolves, Vampires, Witches

- Assorted supernatural (usually malignant) beings, bogies, and baddies.



# The Pursued Protagonist

- A force that relentlessly, terminally and unavoidably pursues, persecutes or chastises another for some real or imagined wrong.
- A crime and retribution cycle, but also...
- A hero-villain can be both the pursued and the pursuer
- i.e. Anne Rice's *Vampire* series



# Unreliable Narrator

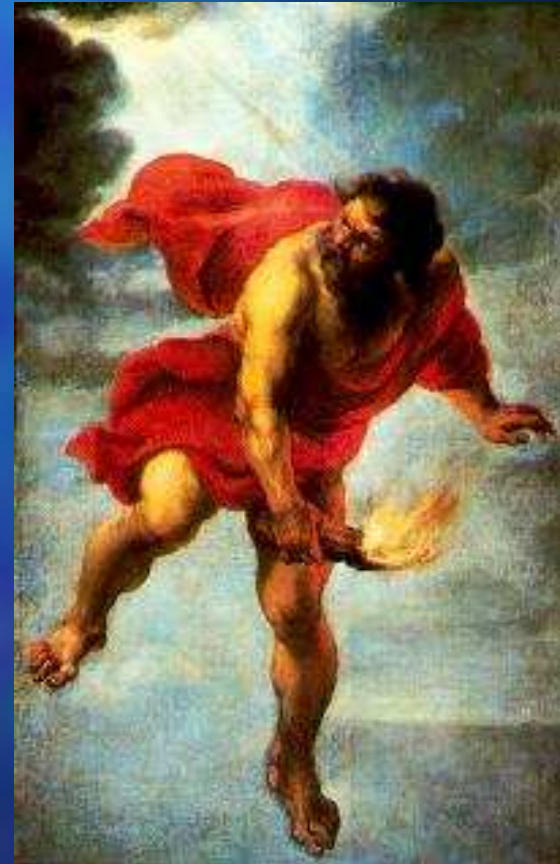


- The narrator's ability to accurately relate events is suspect.
- The narrator makes incorrect assumptions or conclusions, or misunderstands situations or other characters.
- Poe's *Tell-Tale Heart*



# Villain-Hero

- The villain poses as a hero at the beginning of the story, or...
- The villain possesses enough heroic qualities to be seen as more than just a bad guy
- i.e. *Dexter*





# The Pursued Heroine



- A virtuous, idealistic, and usually poetic young woman is pursued by a wicked, older, potent aristocrat.
- The pursuit threatens the young lady's morals and ideals (and often her virginity).
- She usually responds with passive courage.
- Modified: *Twilight* series

# Revenant

- The return of the dead upon the living.
- A ghostly being who returns to life.



# GOTHIC SETTINGS

The image features a dark blue and purple gradient background. On the left side, there is a vertical strip with a light blue grid pattern. A horizontal line with a similar grid pattern extends from the left edge across the middle of the page, positioned below the title text.



# Cemetery



- A place for the burial of the dead.
- Caves, temples, mounds, catacombs, churchyards, crypts.
- Crosses cultures and ages.

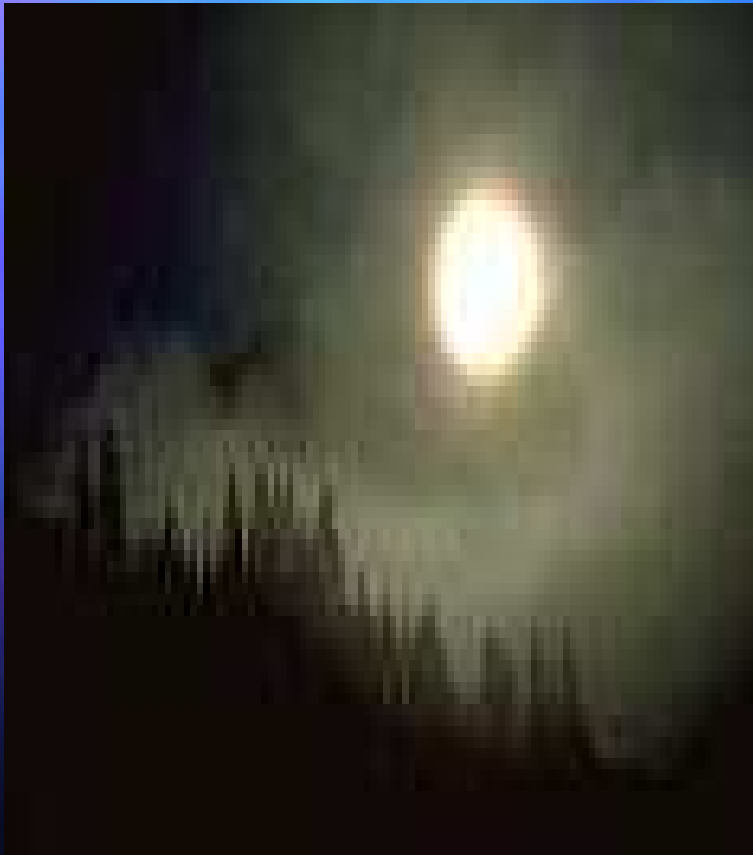


# Haunted House, Castle, or Estate

- A dwelling inhabited or regularly visited by a ghost or supposedly supernatural being.



# Presence of Mist/Fog



- A grouping of water particles due to a change in atmospheric conditions.
- Literary convention used to obscure objects, reduce visibility, or preclude the insertion of something terrifying.

# Acknowledgement

- Most material gathered from "A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms" on the web at [www2.gasou.edu/facstaff/dougth/goth](http://www2.gasou.edu/facstaff/dougth/goth).
- Site maintained by Douglas H. Thomson of the Department of Literature and Philosophy at Georgia Southern University.
- Presentation created by Paul Reiff of the English Department at Vernon Hills High School, District 128, Illinois.

