

## Gothic conventions

- The first Gothic novels appeared in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century
- Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* is usually regarded as the first 'Gothic' novel
- Writers use setting and speech to build suspense
- Common subject matter includes the supernatural, family curses, mystery, madness and death
- Pathetic fallacy is where the weather creates a mood

# Gothic Literature

Keywords	Definitions	Keywords	Definitions
Respectability	Worthy of other people's respect and conforming to socially acceptable behaviour	Depraved	Immoral or morally corrupt.
Moral	To describe someone who lives up to the rules of right and wrong	Decadent	Something in a state of decline or something that is luxurious and self-indulgent.
Pious	Someone or something that is devoted to religion	Duplicious	Something sneaky or deceitful.
Opulence	Great wealth or luxuriousness	Degenerate	Someone or something that has lost their former good character or morality.
Genteel	Exaggerated politeness, refinement, and respectability	Aberration	Something that is abnormal or unexpected such as a strange action or mental state.
Unorthodox	Breaking with convention or tradition; not orthodox.	Ambiguous	Open to more than one interpretation; not having one obvious meaning.
Savage	Something wild, untamed, or primitive.	Uncanny	Strange or mysterious, especially in an unsettling way.
Supernatural	Something associated with forces we don't understand or that cannot be explained by science.	Repressed	To describe someone who stops themselves from experiencing thoughts or emotions they find uncomfortable
Dual	Something that has to do with two or two parts.	Poverty	The state of being extremely poor
Debased	To describe someone who has been lowered in character, quality, or value.	Pathetic Fallacy	Poetic practice of attributing human emotion or responses to nature, inanimate objects, or animals

## Context

- The term 'gothic' comes from the Germanic tribe 'the Goths,' who played a part in the fall of the Roman Empire. The Goths are sometimes called barbarians. They destroyed a lot of Roman architecture and replaced it with buildings in the gothic style.
- Castles with gargoyles were built to ward off evil spirits, this architecture is known as 'Gothic' e.g. Notre Dame.
- Figures from the Age of Enlightenment believed that scientific progress was the only way to advance society, and great discoveries were made in this time. They tried to rid Europe of superstition and ignorance through promoting reason and logic.
- The Gothic genre uses art and ideas from the Dark Ages, wild emotions and nature to contrast with modern ideas about science and logic.
- Gothic writing transformed into the format of the

## Typical Genre Features

- Death and darkness
- Supernatural
- Curses or prophecies
- Madness and intense emotion/ paranoia
- Mystery, terror and suspense

## Typical Characters

- Mysterious characters with high social status
- Female or feminine characters that are threatened by powerful men
- Threatening women who are monsters
- Powerful, tyrannical male figures
- Villains, vampires, ghosts, werewolves and giants

## Typical Settings

- Medieval style castles, churches or abbeys
- Gloomy, decayed and ruined environments
- Remote, uninhabited places
- Volatile and threatening weather.

## Context

**Fin-de-siècle fears** – at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were growing fears about: migration and the threats of disease; sexuality and promiscuity; moral degeneration and decadence.

**Victorian values** – from the 1850s to the turn of the century, British society outwardly displayed values of sexual restraint, low tolerance of crime, religious morality and a strict social code of conduct.

The implications of **Darwinism and evolution** haunted Victorian society. The idea that humans evolved from apes and amphibians led to worries about our lineage and about humanity's reversion to these primitive states.

**Victorian London** – the population of 1 million in 1800 to 6.7 million in 1900, with a huge numbers migrating from Europe. It became the biggest city in the world and a global capital for politics, finance and trade. The city grew wealthy.