

GOTHIC LITERATURE

Gothic literature is a genre of novel that was popular in the late 18th and 19th century and is 'characterized by an atmosphere of mystery and horror, and with a pseudo-medieval setting.' (Oxford Encyclopaedic Dictionary)

Gothic literature has its own distinctive style of **narration, language, characters, settings and events.**

Some of the features of gothic literature are:

- **settings:** wild, bleak and remote, with old castles or Gothic mansions, dungeons, caves, cemeteries, churchyards, monasteries, forbidden chambers, secret passageways, gloomy forests,
- **the supernatural:** ghosts, monsters, dreams, nightmares, superstition, omens, danger and death
- **atmosphere:** claustrophobic and sinister, with turbulent or gloomy weather, often dusk or night or foggy or misty, mysterious, full of suspense
- **mood:** fear of imprisonment, strong emotions, psychological torment
- **plot:** mystery, uncertainty, ancient curses/prophecies, romance, uncertainty of love, tension between true love & maiden's father, separation of lovers, illicit love/lust & revenge.
- **characters:** maidens in distress, heroes, tyrant, villains, villain-heroes, doppelgangers, unreliable narrators, older foolish woman, stupid servants, incompetent or evil priests/monks.



For your conclusions, please refer to the text above about the features of Gothic literature.

1. Basic questions:

- a. where and when does the scene take place ?
- b. What is happening?
- c. how does the narrator react? (*expression de la manière*)
➡ *sum up the passage in a few sentences*

2. Pick up the words and expression relating to the narrator's state of mind.

➡ What conclusions can you draw?

3. Pick up the words referring to the senses and divide them in two categories: relating to the narrator or the intruders.

➡ What conclusions can you draw?

Is this scene real or not? Is the narrator reliable or not? Why?

⇒ **as a director, you have to stage the scene : explain it to the actors (what happens, what the characters feel, what they do...) and rehearse!**

EXTRACT TWO: *THE GREY WOMAN* BY ELIZABETH GASKELL 1861

1 In mortal terror of people forcing an entrance at such an hour, and in such
2 a manner as to leave no doubt of their purpose, I would have turned to fly
3 when I first heard the noise, only that I feared by any quick motion to catch
4 their attention, as I also ran the danger of doing by opening the door, which
5 was all but closed, and to whose handlings I was unaccustomed. Again,
6 quick as lightning, I bethought me of the hiding-place between the locked
7 door to my husband's dressing-room and the portiere which covered it; but
8 I gave that up, I felt as if I could not reach it without screaming or fainting.
9 So I sank down softly, and crept under the table, hidden, as I hoped, by the
10 great, deep, table-cover, with its heavy fringe. I had not recovered my
11 swooning senses fully, was trying to reassure myself as to my being in a
12 place of comparative safety, for, above all things, I dreaded the betrayal of
13 fainting, and struggled hard for such courage as I might attain by deadening
14 myself to the danger I was in by inflicting intense pain on myself. You have
15 often asked me for the reason of that mark on my hand; it was where, in
16 my agony, I bit out a piece of flesh with my relentless teeth, thankful for
17 the pain, which helped to numb my terror. I say, I was but just concealed
18 when I heard the window lifted, and one after another stepped over the sill,
19 and stood by me so close that I could have touched their feet. Then they
20 laughed and whispered; my brain swam so that I could not tell the meaning
21 of their words, but I heard my husband's laughter among the rest – low,
22 hissing, scornful – as he kicked something heavy that they had dragged in
23 over the floor, and which lay near me; so near, that my husband's kick, in
24 touching it, touched me too. I don't know why – I can't tell how – but
25 some feeling, and not curiosity, prompted me to put out my hand, ever so
26 softly, ever so little, and feel in the darkness for what lay spurned beside
27 me. I stole my groping palm upon the clenched and chilly hand of a corpse!