

# GOthic LITERATURE

Gothic literature is a genre of novel that was popular in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> 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.



## EXTRACT ONE: *WUTHERING HEIGHTS* BY EMILY BRONTE: 1847

The intense horror of nightmare came over me; I tried to draw back my arm, but, the hand clung to it, and a most melancholy voice sobbed,

"Let me in – let me in!"

"Who are you?" I asked, struggling, meanwhile, to disengage myself.

"Catherine Linton," it replied, shiveringly (why did I think of *Linton*? I had read *Earnshaw* twenty times for Linton). "I'm come home, I'd lost my way on the moor!"

As it spoke, I discerned, obscurely, a child's face looking through the window – Terror made me cruel; and, finding it useless to attempt shaking the creature off, I pulled its wrist on to the broken pane, and rubbed it to and fro till the blood ran down and soaked the bed-clothes: still it wailed, "Let me in!" and maintained its tenacious grip, almost maddening me with fear.

**For your conclusions, please refer to the text about the features of Gothic literature on the left.**

1. Pick up all the words or expressions which refer to Catherine Linton.

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➡What can you conclude?

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2. Pick up the words referring to fear.

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➡What can you conclude?

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3. Now pick up the words that prove that everything (movements, emotions) is exacerbated.

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4. Is the child real or not? Why do you think it appeared to the narrator?

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⇒ 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!