Introducing
The Gothic

Revised edition 2014, with new texts for AQA B

Acknowledgements

Contents

T E A C H E R S ' N O T E S

Much of the material in this resource is suitable for the study of the Gothic in any advanced level course. However, pages 30-56, 73-76 and 88-113 focus particularly on texts chosen for the AQA B English Literature specifications and activities take on board the need for both a close focus on a single text and comparative study of three texts.

Introducing the Gothic includes a wide range of quotations from modern critics and from the core Gothic period. In any given activity, you might want either to use all of them or select from them, according to the abilities and needs of your students. For example 'Gothic Concepts: Digging Deeper' has some challenging material that you might select from. Similarly, 'The Place of the Gothic in Society' might be particularly interesting for high ability students, those interested in pursuing English at university, or as extension work.

A note on terms used in *Introducing the Gothic*

Throughout this study guide we use the phrase 'core Gothic' to refer to those texts written in the late 18th and early 19th centuries and which critics have conventionally recognised as the first wave of literary Gothic.

We use the term 'Gothic features' to encompass images, settings, characters and so on which are regarded as typical or characteristic of the Gothic. Some critics use the term 'tropes'.

A note on the texts

Extracts from the texts set for examination in AQA B's Unit 3 'Aspects of the Gothic' paper have been checked against the following editions:

Austen, J.: *Northanger Abbey* (1817), Norton Critical edition (2004), edited by Susan Fraiman ISBN: 978-0-393978506

Brontë, E.: *Wuthering Heights* (1847), Penguin Classics edition, ed. Pauline Nestor, with preface by Lucasta Miller (1995, with revisions 2000 and new preface 2003) ISBN: 978-0-14-143955-6

Carter, A.: *The Bloody Chamber* (1979), Vintage edition (2006 with introduction by Helen Simpson) ISBN: 0-099-58811-0

Chaucer, G.: *The Pardoner's Tale* (1387?), Cambridge University Press (2000; 7th printing 2007), ed. David Kirkham and Valerie Allen ISBN: 978-0-521-66645-9

Marlowe, C.: *Dr Faustus*, New Mermaids edition, based on the A text (1968), ed. Roma Gill (A&C Black Publishers Ltd, 1987) ISBN: 978-0-7136-6790-5

Middleton, T. and William Rowley: *The Changeling* (1822), OUP Oxford edition (21 Mar 2013), edited with an introduction by Jackie Marsh) ISBN: 978-0199129782

Shakespeare, W.: *Macbeth* in *The RSC Shakespeare – Complete Works*, ed. Jonathan Bate and Eric Rasmussen (Macmillan, 2008) ISBN: 978-0-230-20095-1

Shelley, M.: *Frankenstein* (1818), Penguin Classics edition, ed. Maurice Hindle (1983; revised with updated reading 2003) ISBN: 978-0-14-143947

Webster, J.: *The White Devil*, Revels Student editions (1960) ed. John Russell Brown (Manchester University Press, 1977; 1997) ISBN: 0-7190-4355-7

Using the DVD

On the DVD, Professor David Punter discusses key aspects of the Gothic, illustrating his discussion with examples from core Gothic texts, 20th and 21st-century developments of the genre, as well as the novels, plays and poetry set by AQA B.

When watching Professor Punter's discussion on DVD, students might find it useful to have a copy of the key concepts (pages 28 to 29) and the grid (on page 33) to record brief notes.

Included here are some ideas for how you might structure students' viewing of the DVD. More specific activities on individual clips or clusters of clips are suggested on pages 79 to 82.

Watching individual clips

1. Choose an aspect that you would like to find out more about and select the clip on the DVD. Key aspects of the Gothic discussed on the DVD:

   i. An Overview

   ii. Horror and Terror

   iii. Gothic Settings

   iv. The Sublime

   v. Transgression

   vi. Forbidden Knowledge

   vii. Life and Death

   viii. Hero-villains

   ix. The Satanic

   x. The Vampire

   xi. The Past and Inheritance

   xii. Class

   xiii. Revenge

   xiv. Women

2. As students watch David Punter, they might want to make brief notes on both his argument and any ideas it sparks off, for example:

   – connections to the texts they are studying

   – questions

   – links to other aspects of the Gothic they have been exploring.

3. Ask students, in groups of three, to take responsibility for one of the texts they are studying. They should skim through their text, selecting short examples to:

   – illustrate the points David Punter makes

   – show the way in which a particular aspect of the Gothic is explored

   – highlight the role the Gothic plays in the text.

4. Students should then re-form into new groups of three, so that each of the texts is represented and take it in turns to introduce their quotations.

After watching several clips

1. Once students have watched several of the DVD segments, allocate different aspects to each group.

2. Each group creates a display for the wall on their concept, highlighting the connections (both similarities and differences) between the concept and the texts they are studying.

3. In class feedback, encourage students to explore how the different aspects of the Gothic work together, for example, how does the setting contribute to the sublime? How do notions of transgression help create a sense of terror? And so on.

An annotated copy of The Nightmare

A creature with some human features but also strange, supernatural, 'other'

Horrible, ugly and threatening creature

Woman in sexual pose? Or dead? Awake or asleep?

White v. dark – purity and innocence v. threat

A horrible dream? An actual night 'mare'?

Mysterious, eerie image – unsettling for the viewer

Gloom and darkness – sense of threat

Oppositions – human/not human; living/dead; male/female; awake/sleep

An image that raises questions rather than giving answers

What is the Gothic?

1.   What do you understand by the term 'Gothic'? Share your ideas and impressions and the images it conjures up for you.

2.   Next time you have access to the internet, type 'Gothic' into a search engine. Skimming through the first two or three pages of results only, make a note of the range of different ways in which the term Gothic is being used.

In *emagazine* 29 (September 2005), Professor David Punter from Bristol University, said:

> What is the Gothic? You might initially think of 'Goth culture' – black robes, black lips, vampire fixations, a certain type of music. Or perhaps Gothic films, which have a long history from Hammer horror through to far more recent remakes of Gothic texts like *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*. But the Gothic, in fact, has an even longer history and a broader cultural spread. Asking the questions when, where, what and why might help pin down this fascinating and long-lived cultural phenomenon.

Entries for the word Gothic from several dictionaries are printed below.

3.   Read the definitions and talk about the differences and similarities in the way it is used.

4.   In pairs, write your own definition of the term 'Gothic'. As you learn more about the literary Gothic, add to or amend your definition.

> Of, pertaining to, or concerned with the Goths or their language.
>
> Formerly used in extended sense, now expressed by Teutonic or Germanic.
>
> Belonging to, or characteristic of, the Middle Ages; mediæval, 'romantic', as opposed to classical. In early use chiefly with reprobation. Belonging to the 'dark ages'.
>
> A term for the style of architecture prevalent in Western Europe from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, of which the chief characteristic is the pointed arch. Applied also to buildings, architectural details, and ornamentation.
>
> Barbarous, rude, uncouth, unpolished, in bad taste. Of temper: Savage.
>
> *Oxford English Dictionary*

> **Adjective**
> 1. of a style of architecture used in Western Europe from the 12th to the 16th centuries, characterized by pointed arches, ribbed vaults, and flying buttresses
>
> 2. of a literary style featuring stories of gloom, horror, and the supernatural, popular in the late 18th century
>
> 3. of or in a heavy ornate script typeface
>
> **Noun**
> 1. Gothic architecture or art
>
> *Collins Essential English Dictionary (2nd Edition 2006)*

> The combination Gothic romance represents a union of two of the major influences in the development of European culture, the Roman Empire and the Germanic tribes that invaded it. The Roman origins of romance must be sought in the etymology of that word, but we can see clearly that Gothic is related to the name Goth used for one of those invading Germanic tribes. The word Gothic, first recorded in 1611 in a reference to the language of the Goths, was extended in sense in several ways, meaning 'Germanic', 'medieval, not classical', 'barbarous', and also an architectural style that was not Greek or Roman. Horace Walpole applied the word Gothic to his novel *The Castle of Otranto, a Gothic Story* (1765) in the sense 'medieval, not classical'. From this novel filled with scenes of terror and gloom in a medieval setting descended a literary genre still popular today; from its subtitle descended the name for it.
>
> *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (4th edition ©2000, 2009)*

A Gothic Montage

Some short quotations from literary texts and criticism are printed below. A selection of images is reproduced on pages 10 to 16. The images are also available on the DVD as both a separate PDF and as a slideshow.

1. Look through all the quotations and images.

2. In pairs, talk about any connections you notice between the textual fragments and images. Annotate these with your ideas and the impressions you are building up of the Gothic as it might be applied to literature and art (for example, any common features or images).

3. Drawing on everything you have looked at (the fragments and images, the dictionary definition, your internet search and your own ideas), put together a Gothic montage. Date your montage so that you can see how your understanding changes and develops as you study the topic and your texts.

Literary quotations

I felt in my heart a wicked, burning desire	And found no end, in wandring mazes lost.	Every suggestion that horror could inspire rushed into her mind.
a foul thing is it, by my feith,/ To seye this word, and fouler is the dede	Only to wonder at unlawful things:	suggested even more terrors than her reason could justify.
for the first time in my innocent and confined life, I sensed in myself a potentiality for corruption	and I foresaw obscurely that I was destined to become the most wretched of human beings.	she stood for some moments waiting a returning gleam, but the obscurity continued
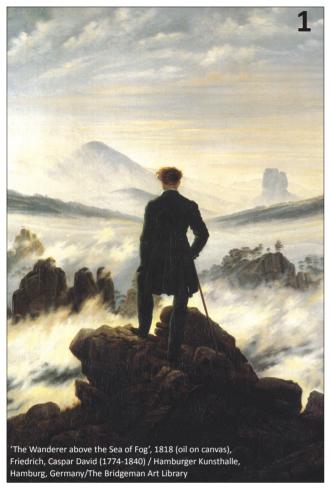
Critical quotations

The genre is about excess [...] excessive imagery, excessive rhetoric, excessive narrative, and excessive affect.	the wild landscapes, the ruined castles and abbeys, the dark, dank labyrinths, the marvellous, supernatural events, distant times and customs	its plots still remain exorbitant, piling incident upon incident for its own sake, and its settings are still overcharged with a fearsome and brooding atmosphere
this basic function of the genre, which is to scare its readers and viewers in enjoyable ways	the literary Gothic has been concerned with uncertainties of character positioning and instabilities of knowledge.	Terror [...] awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; [Horror] contracts, freezes and nearly annihilates them
thus ghosts and hauntings are figures arising from our psychological past, figures of fear that we thought we had banished but which continue to live on inside us.	Where the classical was well ordered, the Gothic was chaotic; [...] where the classics offered a world of clear rules and limits, Gothic represented excess and exaggeration	a popular rather than a 'high' genre; [...] a popular genre, the first developed for a modern mass-market; its authors and readers are more likely to be women than men.

'The Wanderer above the Sea of Fog', 1818 (oil on canvas), Friedrich, Caspar David (1774-1840) / Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany/The Bridgeman Art Library

Winona Ryder/ Gary Oldman in Bram Stoker's Dracula d. Francis Ford Coppola, 1992, Credit: Zoetrope/Columbia Tri-Star/The Kobal Collection

Paradise Lost, illustrated by Gustave Dore

5

Fido Film Ab/The Kobal Collection for Lina
Leandersson in Lat Den Rätte Komma In d. Thomas
Alfredson, 2008

6

Turn of the Screw

7

Image.net for
Twilight

8

from Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (d. Kenneth Branagh, 1994)
courtesy of image.net

9

from Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (d. Kenneth Branagh, 1994) courtesy of image.net

10

from Mary Shelley's Frankenstein (d. Kenneth Branagh, 1994) courtesy of image.net

11

'Three Witches' by Fuseli, Henry (Fussli, Johann Heinrich) (1741-1825) Collection of the Royal Shakespeare Theatre/The Bridgeman Art Library Swiss/out of copyright

12

Image.net for Shaun of the Dead

Introducing Some Core Gothic Texts

This section explores extracts from novels written between 1764 and about 1820, the period in which the term Gothic was first used to refer to literary texts. In this study guide, for ease of reference, we call these texts 'core Gothic'. Texts written after this period – and even some written before it – may include features that we think of as characteristic of the genre. Later writers may deliberately extend or challenge the generic conventions by playing with the features and concerns of the Gothic. To understand what later writers are doing or how earlier writers anticipated what was to come, it helps to have a sense of what the first Gothic novels were doing.
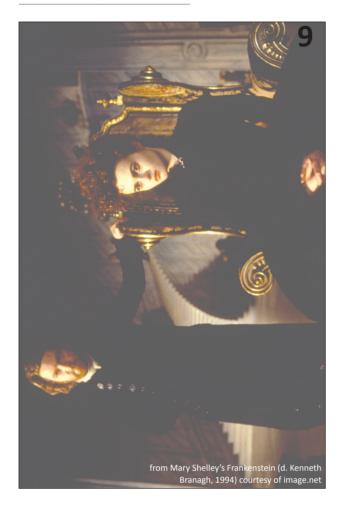
Gothic features

There are six extracts from core Gothic texts on pages 19 to 24. Working in pairs or threes, you are going to explore one extract. Make sure all the texts are being read by at least one group.

1.   After sharing your first response with your partner, pick out three or four features which you think are characteristic of the Gothic. Some of the things you might look out for include:

–   typical characters or settings

–   lexical clusters (for example words to do with darkness)

–   style (for example is there anything distinctive about the sentence lengths and structure, or the use of punctuation?).

The following comments by reviewers and critics from both the early 18th century and the late 20th century give you some idea of the sort of thing you might identify:

[I have constructed] a scheme, which was to serve for all romances a priori – only varying the proportions – A Baron or Baroness ignorant of their Birth, and in some dependent situation – Castle – on a Rock – a Sepulchre – at some distance from the Rock – Deserted Rooms – Underground Passages – Pictures – A ghost, so believed – or – a written record – blood on it! – A wonderful Cut throat – etc etc etc.

Coleridge in a letter to William Wordsworth (written early in October 1810)

The persons introduced – and here also the correspondence holds betwixt the melo-drame and the romantic novel – bear the features, not of individuals, but of the class to which they belong. A dark and tyrannical count; an aged crone of a housekeeper; the depository of many a family legend; a garrulous waiting-maid; a gay and light-hearted valet; a villain or two of all work; and a heroine, fulfilled with all perfections, and subjected to all manner of hazards, form the stock-in-trade of a romancer or melo-dramatist; and if these personages be dressed in proper costume, and converse in language sufficiently appropriate to their stations and qualities, it is not expected that the audience shall shake their sides at the humour of the dialogue, or weep over its pathos.

Sir Walter Scott (1827)

haunted castles, supernatural occurrences (sometimes with natural explanations), secret panels and stairways, time-yellowed manuscripts, and poorly lighted midnight scenes.

Robert Hume (1969)

the priesthood and monastic institutions; sleeplike and deathlike states; subterranean spaces and live burial; doubles; the discovery of obscured family ties; affinities between narrative and pictorial art; possibilities of incest; unnatural echoes or silences, unintelligible writings, and the unspeakable; garrulous retainers; the poisonous effects of guilt and shame; nocturnal landscapes and dreams; apparitions from the past; Faust- and Wandering Jew-like figures; civil insurrections and fires; the charnel house and the madhouse. The chief incidents of a Gothic novel never go far beyond illustrating these few themes.

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1986)

2. Choose a short passage which gives a good flavour of the Gothic qualities in your extract. Briefly note down your reasons for choosing this passage.

3. Re-form into sharing groups so that a range of the core Gothic texts is represented in each group.

4. Begin by taking it in turns to read out the short passages you selected, one after another. Does anything immediately strike you about connections, similarities and differences between these passages? Next, introduce your extracts in a little bit more detail, highlighting the features which, for you, identify it as a Gothic text.

5. Share your joint list of features, in whole class discussion, then have a look at the list of typical features of the Gothic on page 25. This is a detailed list (although you will probably still be able to spot things that have been left out!). Look again at your extract to see if you can recognise any features that you had not previously identified as characteristically 'Gothic'.

Summing up – the Gothic recipe

You're now going to take a step back from the detail of the particular passages to draw out some generalisations about the Gothic as a literary genre.

7. In pairs, read this early piece of Gothic criticism, published under the title 'Terrorist Writing', in which the anonymous critic gives his 'recipe' for a Gothic novel.

> Every absurdity has an end, and as I observe that almost all novels are of the terrific cast, I hope the insipid repetition of the same bugbears will at length work a cure. In the mean time, should any of your female readers be desirous of catching the season of terrors, she may compose two or three very pretty volumes from the following.
>
> Take: An old castle, half of it ruinous
>
>   A long gallery, with a great many doors, some secret ones
>
>   Three murdered bodies, quite fresh
>
>   As many skeletons in chests and presses
>
>   An old woman, hanging by the neck; with her throat cut
>
>   Assassins and desperados
>
>   'Quaint stuff'
>
>   Noise, whispers and groans, threescore at least
>
> Mix them together, in the form of three volumes to be taken at any of the watering places before going to bed.
>
> *Anon: Walker's Hibernian Magazine (January 1798)*

8. Now write your own recipe for a possible Gothic novel, focusing on the elements you would be most keen to include.

9. Take it in turns to read out your recipes and compare the different 'ingredients' you have foregrounded. As you study the Gothic, consider how far the texts you are studying follow (or vary) your recipe.