



Year 8 English - Tales of Terror



Essential knowledge

Definition of Gothic literature:

'Tales of the macabre, fantastic, and supernatural, usually set amid haunted castles, graveyards, ruins, and wild picturesque landscapes.'

Characters archetypes:

Mysterious, powerful figures (princes, counts etc.); damsels in distress; femme fatales; villainous creatures (vampires, werewolves, giants).

Values and ideas: Gothic writers believed that not everything had a scientific explanation and so were very interested in the supernatural.

They liked to challenge society's expectation about emotion and propriety and so explored themes of madness often. Female characters were often presented as more powerful than in typical literature/society.

Genre conventions

Setting: wild landscapes; medieval castles, churches or abbeys; remote and uninhabited places; dangerous weather.

Central themes: supernatural (magic, ghosts, vampires); scientific discoveries; the taboo (socially forbidden); madness; ancient curses and prophecies.

How do I 'show not tell'?

Use your nouns, verbs and adjectives to 'show' your reader what you mean.

Instead of 'The woman looked dangerous' try: 'She stalked into the room, her blood red heels matching her talons.'

Links to previous learning- The gothic genre first emerged from the Romantic movement, sharing many of the Romantic poets' ideas about nature versus science.

Key Terms

pathetic fallacy

Definition

personifying the weather in order to set the mood/tone.
E.g. 'Sinister clouds clawed their way across the sky as the wind howled angrily'

Sophisticated vocabulary

afflicted (adj.)

to be extremely affected or troubled by something harmful.

grotesque (adj.)

strange in a way that is unpleasant or offensive

macabre (adj.)

strange and unpleasant because it is connected with death and frightening things

morose (adj.)

gloomy and bad-tempered

obscure (v.)

to cover or to hide

ominous (adj.)

suggestive that something bad is going to happen in the future

pervade (v.)

to spread throughout

sublime (adj.)

of very high quality or great beauty

tangible (adj.)

something that can be clearly seen to exist

Grammar focus - varying sentence lengths

Short sentences, or even single word sentences/single sentence paragraphs can create an ominous tone and build tension.

Compare the two examples 'I looked around me, squinting in the darkness, searching for a glimmer of light in the darkness.'

VERSUS: 'I looked around me. I squinted, searching for a glimmer of light in the darkness. Only darkness.'

The first example is well-written, but an extra sense of tension is created by the pauses created by the short sentences. Try it in your work.

Narrative writing structure

- **Weather** — set the tone and atmosphere through a description of the weather.
- **Environment** — describe the setting in great detail, making sure that it creates the mood that fits your narrative.
- **Character** — describe your main character(s) in great detail. Remember to 'show not tell' important information about them.
- **Recollection** — flashback to an event that led your character to where they are now
- **Action** — return to the present and include your main action (plus dialogue if applicable)
- **Meaning/Mystery** — leave your narrative on a cliff hanger or at a point where your character or the reader will have a sudden realisation or sense of meaning.

