

What is Gothic Literature?

- Popular during the end of the 18th century to the beginning of the 19th (roughly 1800-1850)
- Portrayed fantastical tales dealing with horror, despair, and “dark” subjects
- Apparent influence of gothic architecture of the period



How is it Romantic?

- Love of imagination over logic
- Told from many different points of view
- Focused on the “weird” aspects of life
- Often a misunderstood eccentric genius (usually as the villain)
- Played upon emotions (mainly fear)

Elements of Gothic Literature

- There is a victim who is helpless against his/her torturer
- There is a villain who is associated with evil
 - Villain’s superpowers are immense or supernatural
- The setting is within impenetrable walls (heighten victim’s sense of isolation)
- Atmosphere is mysterious, dark, fearful, full of doom

- Embodies the joys of extreme emotion and the thrills of fearfulness
- Medieval buildings were associated with a dark and terrifying period
 - Characterized by harsh laws, torture, and mysterious, fantastic, and superstitious rituals

Major Ideas and Motifs

- Sublime and overt use of supernatural
- Motif of the “double”: both good and evil characteristics
- Often involve the persecution of a young woman forced apart from her true love

Major Gothic Writers

- Edgar Allan Poe
- Nathaniel Hawthorne
- Robert Louis Stevenson (Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde)
- Shirley Jackson (“The Lottery”)
- Washington Irving (“The Legend of Sleepy Hollow”)