

❖ **Introduction:**

The new literary genre Novel appeared in 17th century the focus of the prose fiction writers was to portray life in different situations and experiences and gradually this form took shape and established its significance in 18th century and it's the age of prose and satire and the age of the Novel. There are various types of novels which are popular throughout the centuries and they are Epistolary, Picaresque, Autobiographical, Gothic, Historical, Romantic, Allegorical, Comic, Science etc. but Gothic novels were among the most popularly read fiction of the late 18th century. Vijay Mishra critic of the genre in his essay entitled "The Gothic Sublime" states that

"The Gothic novel is presentation of the unrepresentable"

❖ **Meaning of word 'Gothic':**

During the Renaissance, Europeans rediscovered Greco-Roman culture and began to regard a particular type of architecture, mainly those built during the Middle Ages, as "gothic" but they considered these buildings barbaric and definitely not in that Classical style they so admired. Centuries more passed before "gothic" came to describe a certain type of novels, so named because all these novels seem to take place in Gothic-styled architecture -- mainly castles, mansions, and, of course, abbeys. It could mean a particular style of art, be it in the form of novels, paintings, or architecture; it could mean "medieval" or "uncouth."

❖ **Gothic Novel:**

The early novels were based on moral virtues like 'Pamela' and on Trojan wars or heroes but later on novels are rooted in two traditions Realistic and Romantic. People questioning, or feeling confined under, this 'oppressive freedom' found voice in the newly established literary genre of the novel, challenging the norms that good literature was to be instructive and promote moral virtues. Thus, the Gothic Novel came into existence; more precisely with the advent of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764. Being accredited as the first manifestation of the genre, it marked a turning point on the literary scene.

Perhaps the earliest form of the novel calculated to let the readers escape the ordinary world is Gothic novel. It is so called because of the Medieval or Gothic setting of the type exemplified by Walpole's 'Castle of Otranto' (1765).

In Walpole's novel contemporary readers found the novel electrifyingly original and thrillingly suspenseful, with its remote setting, its use of the supernatural and its medieval trappings, all of which have been so frequently imitated that they have become stereotypes. The novel was so popular that it was quickly imitated by other novelists, thereby initiating a genre. There are nine elements which describe this genre.

❖ Gothic elements:

1. Setting in a castle. The action takes place in and around an old castle, sometimes seemingly abandoned, sometimes occupied. The castle often contains secret passages, trap doors, secret rooms, dark or hidden staircases, and possibly ruined sections. The castle may be near or connected to caves, which lend their own haunting flavor with their branchings, claustrophobia, and mystery.

2. An atmosphere of mystery and suspense. The work is pervaded by a threatening feeling, a fear enhanced by the unknown. Often the plot itself is built around a mystery, such as unknown parentage, a disappearance, or some other inexplicable event. Elements 3, 4, and 5 below contribute to this atmosphere.

3. An ancient prophecy is connected with the castle or its inhabitants (either former or present). The prophecy is usually obscure, partial, or confusing. "What could it mean?" In more watered down modern examples, this may amount to merely a legend: "It's said that the ghost of old man Krebs still wanders these halls."

4. Omens, portents, visions. A character may have a disturbing dream vision, or some phenomenon may be seen as a portent of coming events. For example, if the statue of the lord of the manor falls over, it may portend his death. In modern fiction, a character might see something (a shadowy figure stabbing another shadowy figure) and think that it was a dream. This might be thought of as an "imitation vision."

5. Supernatural or otherwise inexplicable events. Dramatic, amazing events occur, such as ghosts or giants walking, or inanimate objects (such as a suit of armor or painting) coming to life. In some works, the events are ultimately given a natural explanation, while in others the events are truly supernatural.

6. High, even overwrought emotion. The narration may be highly sentimental, and the characters are often overcome by anger, sorrow, surprise, and especially, terror. Characters suffer from raw nerves and a feeling of impending doom. Crying and emotional speeches are frequent. Breathlessness and panic are common. In the filmed gothic, screaming is common.

7. Women in distress. As an appeal to the pathos and sympathy of the reader, the female characters often face events that leave them fainting, terrified, screaming, and/or sobbing. A lonely, pensive, and oppressed heroine is often the central figure of the novel, so her sufferings are even more pronounced and the focus of attention.

8. Women threatened by a powerful, impulsive, tyrannical male. One or more male characters has the power, as king, lord of the manor, father, or guardian, to demand that one or more of the female characters do something intolerable. The woman may be commanded to marry someone she does not love (it may even be the powerful male himself), or commit a crime.

9. The metonymy of gloom and horror. Metonymy is a subtype of metaphor, in which something (like rain) is used to stand for something else (like sorrow). For example, the film industry likes to use metonymy as quick shorthand, so we often notice that it is raining in funeral scenes. Note that the following metonymies for "doom and gloom" all suggest some element of mystery, danger, or the supernatural.

The stock characters of Gothic fiction include tyrants, villains, Byronic heroes, madwomen, magicians, vampires, monsters, demons, ghosts, skeletons etc.

Thus, Gothic fiction places heavy emphasis on *atmosphere*, using setting and diction to build suspense and a sense of unease in the reader. Common subject matter includes the supernatural, family curses, mystery, and madness. Gothic fiction may also feature a romantic plot or subplot, particularly in later incarnations in the Victorian era and the 20th century.

❖ **Gothic Fiction in the 18th century:**

After the Walpole the first great practitioner of the Gothic novel, as well the most popular and best paid novelist of the eighteenth England was Ann Radcliffe. She added suspense, painted evocative landscapes and moods or atmosphere, portrayed increasingly complex. Her best works are – A Sicilian Romance (1790), The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794) and The Italian (1797).

Matthew Lewis who was inspired by her wrote 'The Monk' (1796) novel of horror Gothic. In 1818, Mary Shelley's Frankenstein introduces the theme of the dangers of science. Charles Maturin's Melmoth The Wanderer is the last classical Gothic novel marking the end of the true Gothic novel.

❖ **Gothic Fiction in the 19th century:**

Gothic fiction has continued to the present time; though it has undergone great changes, the theme and conventions of the earliest Gothic novels are alive and well, appearing in novels, movies, TV and cartoons and computer games because the Gothic stream became so broad and took so many branching and turnings. Some of the later works of fiction which match the gloom and mystery of Gothic novel are Henry James' 'The Turn of The Screw' (1894) and Bram Stoker's 'Dracula' (1897)

❖ **Gothic Fiction in the 20th century:**

The horror tale experienced an upsurge in popularity at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was the way of expressing the horrors of World War I and the revolution at its devastation. Several new variants of Gothic fiction arose in this age. Modern Gothic or mass Gothic novel is particularly written for women by women.

Elements of the Gothic novel have also made their way into mainstream writings. They are found in sir Walter Scott's novels, Charlotte Bronte's Jane Eyre, Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights, Herman Melville's Moby -Dick, Charles Dickens's Great Expectations and Joseph Conrad's Heart Darkness.

❖ **The vocabulary of the Gothic:**

- **Mystery:** ghost, magic, omens, secret, spirit vision
- **Fear, Terror or Sorrow:** agony, anguish, concern, despair, dismal, dread, fearing, panic, tears, terrible.
- **Surprise:** alarm, shocking, wonder
- **Haste:** anxious, hastily, impatient, sudden
- **Anger:** furious, rage, temper, wrath
- **Largeness:** enormous, gigantic, giant, large, vast, tremendous

❖ **Conclusion:**

The Gothic novel is genre of fiction that became popular in England in the late 18th century. The novelists of such novels present gloomy foreboding place and thus such novels thrill and excite readers by creating a sense of terror from supernatural or seemingly supernatural events. Gothic novels are also noted for their awe inspiring descriptions of the wild power of nature. George Haggerty correctly stated in Gothic fiction that

“The Gothic novel is a liberating phenomenon, which expands the range of possibilities for novelistic expression.”

❖ **Bibliography:**

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- Jay Ranpura