

**Module 6: Examining the World to Discover Truth**  
**Topic 3 Content: Elements of Gothic Fiction**

**Introduction**




In this interactivity, click the **NEXT** button to learn more about elements that are characteristic of gothic fiction.

## Module 6: Examining the World to Discover Truth

### Topic 3 Content: Elements of Gothic Fiction

#### Ominous Settings



**Ominous Settings**

The settings of gothic fiction are usually dark and foreboding. Stories take place in such ominous locations as eerie forests or haunted castles. Gothic settings are often secluded, such as isolated mountaintops separated from civilization. Gothic architecture, like that seen in medieval monasteries or fortresses, contributes to an atmosphere of mystery and suspense. With gothic fiction, the setting of the story becomes a character in and of itself, imposing ancestral curses, revealing hidden passageways, and otherwise threatening the protagonist with danger.

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**The Gothic Hero**




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The gothic hero is a type of antihero similar to the Byronic hero in that he or she is often brooding and passionate. But the gothic protagonist is also headstrong, an obstinate rebel who follows his or her own cause and pushes the limit while ignoring ominous signs. Thus, the protagonist is often physically or emotionally isolated from others, trapped in a secluded and dangerous location or suffering from psychological torment.

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**Horror and Intense Emotion**



**Horror and Intense Emotion**

The characteristic emotion experienced by both the characters and the readers of gothic fiction is one of horror. In gothic literature, anything can happen—especially the unthinkable—and the resulting horror can leave a lasting impression. Yet the reader's reaction of horror to gothic fiction is a kind of pleasurable terror that thrills and excites, much like the scary fun of riding a roller coaster. Besides horror, gothic fiction abounds with other intense emotions, especially sadness, anger, terror, and panic.

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#### Supernatural and Inexplicable Events



**Supernatural  
and  
Inexplicable  
Events**

True to the ideals of Romanticism, fiction of the gothic genre incorporates events and elements of the supernatural. You might encounter such supernatural creatures as ghosts, vampires, demons, or other monsters. Other seemingly inexplicable events often include mysterious deaths or disappearances. Sometimes the supernatural is eventually revealed to be the degradation of the protagonist's psychological state or perhaps the result of a scientific experiment gone wrong. More often though, the supernatural turns out to be what it seems: the characters' worst nightmare come true.

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