


## Module 6: Examining the World to Discover Truth

### Topic 3 Content: The Rise of Gothic Fiction

#### Introduction

#### The Rise of Gothic Fiction

##### Introduction



As Romanticism established itself as a literary movement in Britain, a subgenre of the novel form naturally developed alongside it and came to be known as gothic fiction. Embracing elements typical of Romantic literature, such as supernatural elements and an emphasis on emotion, gothic novels initiated a new tradition of spinning tales of thrilling horror and revealing the darker side of humanity. Horace Walpole, pictured here, is credited with writing the first gothic novel of the English language. In this interactivity, use the **NEXT** button or the numbered tabs to explore the meaning of the term *gothic* and the rise of gothic fiction. Click **NEXT** to begin.

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#### The Original Gothic

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#### The Original Gothic



The term *gothic* has an evolutionary history. Originally it referred to the Goths, or Germanic tribes from eastern Europe who began invading and conquering western parts of Europe as early as the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Eventually splitting into two branches called the Visigoths and the Ostrogoths, these Germanic peoples sacked Rome and took over the Italian peninsula. They extended their domain all the way to the Iberian peninsula in modern-day Spain, where they would later be conquered by the Moors who invaded in 711.

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#### Gothic Architecture

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#### Gothic Architecture



Because the Goths contributed to the fall of the Western Roman Empire and the emergence of the medieval period, the term *gothic* came to represent anything that was not classical Greek or Roman. For example, *gothic* was used to describe a form of architecture that prevailed during the medieval period. Whereas Greek and Roman architecture utilized columns, domes, and circular arches, Gothic architecture featured highly pointed turrets, arched doors, and ribbed vaults in the ceilings.

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#### *The Castle of Otranto*

##### The Rise of Gothic Fiction

##### The Castle of Otranto



After acquiring an association with the medieval, *gothic* came to describe literature that harkened back to settings in eastern Europe and included medieval architecture. In fact, the first gothic novel is generally considered to be *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole. Published in 1764, the story takes place during medieval times in a haunted castle and features many elements that became hallmarks of gothic fiction: a mysterious, sudden death; objects and doors that move by themselves; an ancient curse; and spooky, creaking noises.

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#### *The Mysteries of Udolpho*

##### The Rise of Gothic Fiction

##### The Mysteries of Udolpho



In 1794, British writer Ann Radcliffe published her own gothic novel called *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. Radcliffe's most popular novel, along with her earlier work *The Romance of the Forest*, preceded a plethora of female writers of the genre whose gothic fiction rivaled those of their male counterparts. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* has all the characteristics typical of gothic fiction: a secluded dark castle, ghosts, and strange noises just to name a few. However, Radcliffe added a psychological twist to explain the supernatural, blurring the line between reality and the darker side of the human mind.

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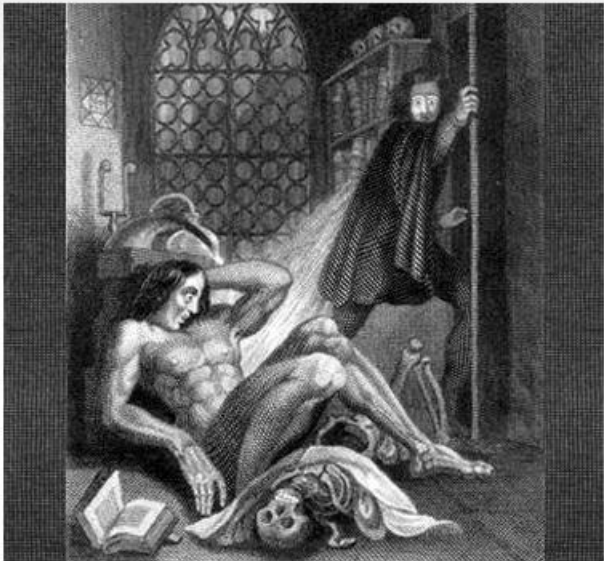
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#### *Frankenstein*

#### The Rise of Gothic Fiction

#### Frankenstein



The most famous and enduring product of British gothic fiction is nearly universally agreed to be Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. The antihero of this horror-filled story is obsessed with pushing the limits of science to create new life out of death, and the unpredictable consequences of his mad pursuit reverberate through the lives of the protagonist's acquaintances with horrific and deadly terror. Originally published in 1818, *Frankenstein* continues to remind readers today of the horror people can create when they attempt to play God.

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