

Gothic Novel

Gothic novel takes its origin from what was the idea of sublime. It is usually set in ancient times and in isolated places like castles or ruins. Terror and horror are the fundamental elements in Gothic novel. Another fundamental element is darkness. Furthermore, the characters described are exaggerated, they communicate their feelings in an exaggerated manner and there is usually a heroine, a young woman, who is always threatened by a villain and she always runs away from this villain. There is also a hero that attempts to defend the heroine. This hero is a sensitive man. Another important characteristic is the presence of ghosts, monsters, supernatural beings and vampires. The most important Gothic novels are *The Castle of Otranto*, *The Monk*, *Frankenstein* that are developed in an epistolary style.

Characteristics of the Gothic Novel

- It has a castle where the main action takes place. It may be ruined or intact, haunted or not.

- The settings include dungeons, underground passages, labyrinths, dark corridors, winding stairs, extreme landscapes like thick forests or icy wastes and extreme mountain.
- The plot involves omens and ancestral curses.
- There are elements of magic, supernatural manifestations or the suggestion of the supernatural.
- The Gothic novel has a passion- driven wilful villain- hero or villain whose true identity is revealed by the end of the novel.
- It has a curious heroine with a tendency to faint and need to be rescued.

We have got some names the major Gothic novelists of the Romantic Era.

The first Gothic novel was Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1765). After Walpole the second exponent of the form was Ann Radcliff, who produced a half dozen works, of which the best known is *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794). Other examples are Matthew Lewis' *The Monk* (1796), Marry Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Polidori's *Vampyre* (1819).

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