YEAR 10
ENGLISH
GENRE AND ROMANTICISM
LESSON 2: GOTHIC FICTION
This unit has been designed to meet the syllabus requirements of the Australian National Curriculum. In this lesson the following criteria are addressed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EN5-1A</th>
<th>Responds to and composes increasingly sophisticated and sustained texts for understanding, interpretation, critical analysis, imaginative expression and pleasure</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EN5-2A</td>
<td>Effectively uses and critically assesses a wide range of processes, skills, strategies and knowledge for responding to and composing a wide range of texts in different media and technologies</td>
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<tr>
<td>EN5-3B</td>
<td>Selects and uses language forms, features and structures of texts appropriate to a range of purposes, audiences and contexts, describing and explaining their effects on meaning</td>
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<td>EN5-4B</td>
<td>Effectively transfers knowledge, skills and understanding of language concepts into new and different contexts</td>
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<tr>
<td>EN5-5C</td>
<td>Thinks imaginatively, creatively, interpretively and critically about information and increasingly complex ideas and arguments to respond to and compose texts in a range of contexts.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EN5-9E</td>
<td>Purposefully reflects on, assesses and adapts their individual and collaborative skills with increasing independence and effectiveness</td>
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1. LESSON TWO VOCABULARY

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VOCABULARY</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
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<tr>
<td>Supernatural</td>
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<td>Prophecy</td>
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<td>Overwrought</td>
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<td>Metonymy</td>
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<td>Repletion</td>
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Write a short passage using as many of the vocabulary words as possible (you may change the grammatical form of the word if you need to i.e. contemplate/contemplated).
2. **INTRODUCTION TO GOTHIC FICTION**

In the previous lesson we explored ideas surrounding genre in our contemporary context. In this lesson, we consider the development of Gothicism, a genre that developed during the 18th and 19th centuries. Gothic fiction thrives on extremity of emotion (such as love or terror), and revels in the pleasure of horror.

Gothic fiction was established with the publication of *The Castle of Otranto* by Horace Walpole in 1764, which had the subtitle “A Gothic Story”. “Gothic” here referred to the architectural style of the medieval building (the castle) where the story took place. Gothic fiction, however, did not really take off until the 1790s. The height of Gothic fiction continued until the 1830s, and so historically the genre coincides with the Romantic movement (which we will study next lesson).

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**Note to Students: Gothic Architecture**

A classic example of gothic architecture is Reims Cathedral (also known as Notre Dame de Reims). Construction began in 1211 and was completed in 1275.

Gothic architecture originated in the 12th century and continued to be produced in the 16th century. Key features of gothic architecture are pointed arches (as seen in the picture), a ribbed internal vault and flying buttresses.

*Painting: Die Kathedral von Reims, Domenico Quaglio*
3. **CONVENTIONS OF GOTHIC FICTION**

A Gothic tale is often defined by the **SETTING** of the story. Common settings of Gothic include: a castle, a foreign palace, an abbey, a prison, a subterranean crypt, a graveyard, or a large old house or theatre (often haunted). Setting is crucial for Gothic fiction, as much tension is derived from the space. The setting may feel claustrophobic for the characters and be characterised by darkness and shadow. The building or location often holds secrets of the past that psychologically or physically haunt the human characters.

Other important characteristics of Gothic fiction are explored below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GOTHIC CHARACTERISTIC</th>
<th>EXAMPLE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>An atmosphere of mystery and suspense.</td>
<td><em>The Strange Case Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</em> – Robert Louis Stevenson (1886), is based on the mystery about the connection between Dr Henry Jekyll and Edward Hyde.</td>
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<tr>
<td>An ancient prophecy is connected with the castle or its inhabitants (either former or present).</td>
<td><em>The Castle of Otranto</em> – Horace Walpole (1764), is, in part, based on the prophecy that the lordship of Otranto castle will pass from the current line of rulers.</td>
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1 Source: [http://www.virtualsalt.com/gothic.htm](http://www.virtualsalt.com/gothic.htm)
### Dreams, 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.

**Dracula** – Bram Stoker (1897), opens with Jonathan Barker recalling strange dreams involving a howling dog, which foreshadows the later action where he encounters dangerous dogs during his travels.

### Supernatural or otherwise inexplicable events.

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

**Wuthering Heights** – Emily Brontë (1847), is alive with apparitions. Mr Lockwood has a nightmare where he sees a ghostly figure trying to enter his bedroom window. Mr Lockwood awakens convinced that what he has seen was real.

### 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.

**Dracula** – Bram Stoker (1897):

“Monster, give me my child!”

She threw herself on her knees, and raising up her hands, cried the same words in tones which wrung my heart. Then she tore her hair and beat her breast, and abandoned herself to all the violences of extravagant emotion.”
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. The women suffer all the more because they are often abandoned, left alone (either on purpose or by accident), and have no protector at times.

Frankenstein – Mary Shelley (1818):

“Elizabeth observed my agitation for some time in timid and fearful silence, but there was something in my glance which communicated terror to her, and trembling, she asked, "What is it that agitates you, my dear Victor? What is it you fear?"

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.

The Vampyre – John Polidori (1819):

“The guardians hastened to protect Miss Aubrey; but when they arrived, it was too late. Lord Ruthven had disappeared, and Aubrey's sister had glutted the thirst of a VAMPIRE!”

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 a 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.

Ligeia – Edgar Allan Poe (1838):

“The wind was rushing hurriedly behind the tapestries, and I wished to show her...that those almost inarticulate breathings, and those very gentle variations of the figures upon the wall, were but the natural effects of that customary rushing of the wind.”

Here the wind is a metonym for the ghostly presence of the narrator's dead wife, Ligeia.
4. FEATURES OF GOTHIC WRITING

Read through the following extract from the literary critic, Robert D. Hume:


[A] distinctive feature of the early Gothic novel is its attempt to involve the reader in a new way. In the sentimental literature of the age one is invited to admire fine feelings; in Gothic writing the reader is held in suspense with the characters, and increasingly there is an effort to shock, alarm, and otherwise rouse him. Inducing a powerful emotional response in the reader (rather than a moral or intellectual one) was the prime object of these novelists. In this endeavour they prepared the way for the romantic poets who followed them.

...

The distinguishing mark of the early Gothic novel is its atmosphere and the use to which that atmosphere is put. The involvement of the reader's imagination is central to the Gothic endeavour …originally its purpose was to arouse and sensitishe the reader's imagination, giving it further play than it ordinarily enjoyed, and the use of the supernatural was clearly meant to contribute to this imaginative stimulus.

...

[T]he Gothic novel offers no conclusions. In its fully developed form it attempts to involve the reader in a special world in whose atmosphere of evil man is presented under trying circumstances. It emphasises psychological reaction to evil and leads into a tangle of moral ambiguity for which no meaningful answers can be found.
FOCUS QUESTION:

1. Explain in your own words the THREE features of Gothic fiction that Hume points out in his article.
5. DRACULA BY BRAM STOKER (1897)

Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1897) is a Gothic novel written in an EPISTOLARY FORM. This means that the novel is written as a series of documents – letters, diary entries, logs, telegrams and newspaper clippings all make up the bulk of the text. The novel starts with Jonathan Harker, an English solicitor, travelling to meet Count Dracula in order to offer legal advice on a real estate transaction. After a harrowing trip to the count’s castle residence, it becomes clear that Dracula, who appears to have supernatural powers, has trapped Harker in the castle. Harker narrowly escapes, but Dracula has already left for England and now pursues Harker’s fiancée, Mina, and her friend, Lucy.

Lucy becomes ill, and Dr. Van Helsing, who examines her, identifies that she is under the influence of a vampire. She is later attacked by a wolf in the night and dies. Lucy returns as an undead vampire and Dr. Van Helsing stakes Lucy through the heart. Mina and Harker join Helsing and the suitors in order to destroy Dracula, but Mina also falls under Dracula’s influence. They eventually find Dracula, and Harker slits his throat at the same time that Quincy, one of Lucy’s suitors, stabs him in the heart. Dracula crumbles into dust. Mina returns to full health and later has a child with Harker.

In the following extract, which takes place in the middle of the night, Harker rides in a horse and carriage up to Dracula’s castle. Read through the passage carefully and answer the questions that follow:

Stoker, B. 1897. Dracula – Extract 1

The carriage went at a hard pace straight along, then we made a complete turn and went along another straight road. It seemed to me that we were simply going over and over the same ground again, and so I took note of some salient point, and found that this was so. I would have liked to have asked the driver what this all meant, but I really feared to do so, for I thought that, placed as I was, any protest would have had no effect in case there had been an intention to delay.

By-and-by, however, as I was curious to know how time was passing, I struck a match, and by its flame looked at my watch. It was within a few minutes of midnight. This gave me a sort of shock, for I suppose the general superstition about midnight was increased by my recent experiences. I waited with a sick feeling of suspense.

Then a dog began to howl somewhere in a farmhouse far down the road, a long, agonised wailing, as if from fear. The sound was taken up by another dog, and then another and
another, till, borne on the wind which now sighed softly through the Pass, a wild howling began, which seemed to come from all over the country, as far as the imagination could grasp it through the gloom of the night.

At the first howl the horses began to strain and rear, but the driver spoke to them soothingly, and they quieted down, but shivered and sweated as though after a runaway from sudden fright. Then, far off in the distance, from the mountains on each side of us began a louder and a sharper howling, that of wolves, which affected both the horses and myself in the same way. For I was minded to jump from the caleche and run, whilst they reared again and plunged madly, so that the driver had to use all his great strength to keep them from bolting. In a few minutes, however, my own ears got accustomed to the sound, and the horses so far became quiet that the driver was able to descend and to stand before them.

...

Soon we were hemmed in with trees, which in places arched right over the roadway till we passed as through a tunnel. And again great frowning rocks guarded us boldly on either side. Though we were in shelter, we could hear the rising wind, for it moaned and whistled through the rocks, and the branches of the trees crashed together as we swept along. It grew colder and colder still, and fine, powdery snow began to fall, so that soon we and all around us were covered with a white blanket. The keen wind still carried the howling of the dogs, though this grew fainter as we went on our way. The baying of the wolves sounded nearer and nearer, as though they were closing round on us from every side. I grew dreadfully afraid, and the horses shared my fear. The driver, however, was not in the least disturbed. He kept turning his head to left and right, but I could not see anything through the darkness.
FOCUS QUESTIONS:

1. “Then a dog began to howl somewhere in a farmhouse far down the road, a long, agonised wailing, as if from fear.” What form of IMAGERY is being employed here? What effect does it have?

2. How does Stoker build suspense in the extract? Give evidence from the text.

3. Provide examples of the THEME of darkness in the extract. How does it create a feeling of fear for Harker?
Within, stood a tall old man, clean shaven save for a long white moustache, and clad in black from head to foot, without a single speck of colour about him anywhere. He held in his hand an antique silver lamp, in which the flame burned without a chimney or globe of any kind, throwing long quivering shadows as it flickered in the draught of the open door. The old man motioned me in with his right hand with a courtly gesture, saying in excellent English, but with a strange intonation.

"Welcome to my house! Enter freely and of your own free will!" He made no motion of stepping to meet me, but stood like a statue, as though his gesture of welcome had fixed him into stone. The instant, however, that I had stepped over the threshold, he moved impulsively forward, and holding out his hand grasped mine with a strength which made me wince, an effect which was not lessened by the fact that it seemed cold as ice, more like the hand of a dead than a living man.

... His face was a strong, a very strong, aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils, with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth. These protruded over the lips, whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale, and at the tops extremely pointed. The chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor.

4. What impression of Dracula do you have after reading this passage?
5. Identify one use of **SIMILE** and explain its emotional effect.

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Stoker, B. 1897. Dracula – Extract 3

I only slept a few hours when I went to bed, and feeling that I could not sleep any more, got up. I had hung my shaving glass by the window, and was just beginning to shave. Suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder, and heard the Count's voice saying to me, "Good morning." I started, for it amazed me that I had not seen him, since the reflection of the glass covered the whole room behind me. In starting I had cut myself slightly, but did not notice it at the moment. Having answered the Count's salutation, I turned to the glass again to see how I had been mistaken. This time there could be no error, for the man was close to me, and I could see him over my shoulder. But there was no reflection of him in the mirror! The whole room behind me was displayed, but there was no sign of a man in it, except myself.

This was startling, and coming on the top of so many strange things, was beginning to increase that vague feeling of uneasiness which I always have when the Count is near. But at the instant I saw the cut had bled a little, and the blood was trickling over my chin. I laid down the razor, turning as I did so half round to look for some sticking plaster. When the Count saw my face, his eyes blazed with a sort of demoniac fury, and he suddenly made a grab at my throat. I drew away and his hand touched the string of beads which held the crucifix. It made an instant change in him, for the fury passed so quickly that I could hardly believe that it was ever there.
6. What could Dracula’s absence from the mirror be **SYMBOLIC** of?

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7. What does the **CONTRAST** between the count’s ‘demoniac fury’ and the crucifix suggest about who or what Dracula might be?

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WRITING ACTIVITY:

Below is a list of common elements (or conventions) of Gothic fiction. For each convention, write a possible premise for a Gothic short story or novel.

1. An ancient prophecy:

2. A vision:

3. A supernatural or otherwise inexplicable event:

4. A metonymy of gloom and horror:
6. **LESSON TWO HOMEWORK**

**YEAR 10 CREATIVE WRITING MARKING CRITERIA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Band 5-6 13-15 marks</th>
<th>Band 4-5 9-12 marks</th>
<th>Band 2-3 6-8 marks</th>
<th>Band 1-2 1-5 marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language use</strong></td>
<td>4 Sophisticated and varied use of language techniques. Writes with flair and subtlety.</td>
<td>3 Varied use of language techniques. May lack subtlety or contain cliché.</td>
<td>2 Some evidence of language techniques, but may resort to telling rather than showing.</td>
<td>1 Little evidence of language techniques. English expression may be flawed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Originality &amp; sophistication of ideas</strong></td>
<td>3 Story is unique and engaging. Provides an original response to the stimulus.</td>
<td>2 Story strives for originality in response to the stimulus but may rely on some cliché.</td>
<td>1 Story is connected to the stimulus but its conceptualisation of the stimulus requires development.</td>
<td>0 Story may have no discernible connection to the stimulus. Ideas are very limited.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>** Appropriateness to audience, purpose, context and form**</td>
<td>4 Story has been crafted with a clear consideration of the audience, as reflected in purpose, context and form.</td>
<td>3 Story is appropriate but may require development in any area relating to audience, purpose, context or form.</td>
<td>2 Story shows a developing understanding of the role of audience, purpose, context and form.</td>
<td>1 Story does not satisfy appropriateness to audience, purpose, context or form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plot and characterisation</strong></td>
<td>4 Plot and characterisation are highly developed and enhance the sophistication of the story.</td>
<td>3 Plot and characterisation are developed although there may be inconsistencies in either.</td>
<td>2 Plot and characterisation are present, but may be simplistic.</td>
<td>1 Plot and characterisation are underdeveloped.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Note to Students: How to Submit Homework
Submit your homework online through Matrix LMS!

Accepted file types for online submission:
.docx .doc
.one (onenote) .txt

CREATIVE WRITING

Write a creative piece based on one of the ideas for a Gothic short story or novel that you brainstormed in class. Aim for 500 words.

You must base your story on ONE of the conventions of Gothic fiction that you were given. These conventions are:

1. An ancient prophecy
2. A vision
3. A supernatural or otherwise inexplicable event
4. A metonymy of gloom and horror