

# BARTON

## LIBRARY

*Dare to Know*

### Gothic Fiction

*Fiction that depicts gloomy and antiquated settings, characters that are haunted by secrets and unresolved conflicts, psychological and physical terror, and elements of the supernatural.*

Emerging alongside late eighteenth century Romanticism, this genre is characterized by an atmosphere of mystery, dread, and suspense, and often features the fall of the aristocracy, spirits or hauntings, madness, and supernatural or macabre elements. The setting is typically a dreary, eerie, or decaying environment such as castle ruins, mansions with a storied history, or remote landscapes. The dark aesthetic is aimed at imparting a sense of menace or “the uncanny.” The varying locations tend to be symbolic of the mental and emotional facets of their occupants. Gothic fiction explores themes of horror, death, and romance, and the dark side of human nature, often creating a sense of dread and foreboding. The protagonist is often helpless before the antagonist, who holds a supernatural or psychological advantage that can be used to torment victims. Horace Walpole *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) was the first work to be called Gothic. Anne Radcliffe’s *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), Matthew Gregory Lewis’s *The Monk* (1796), E. T. A. Hoffman’s *The Devil’s Elixirs* (1815), Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818), Jane Austen’s *Northanger Abbey* (1818), Walter Scott’s *The Bride of Lammermoor* (1819), Charles Maturin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839), James Malcolm Rymer and Thomas Peckett Prest’s *Varney the Vampire* (1847), Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851), Charles Brockden Brown’s *Ormond; or, The Secret Witness* (1887), Oscar Wilde’s *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891), Henry Farrell’s *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?* (1960), and Dorothy Eden’s *The Vines of Yarrabee* (1969) are influential works of the genre. Southern Gothic is a more contemporary version that refers to Gothic novels set in the American South. Frances Parkinson Keyes’s *Crescent Carnival* (1942) is an example.

### Common Elements

Family secrets
Insanity
Incest
Enigmas hidden within the home
Sinister past events

Endangered heroines
Haunted castles
Ruins
Tombs
Graveyards
Ghosts

Monsters
Wild and intimidating landscape
Dark love stories

### Benefits of Reading

Provides readers with a safe dose of fright
Allows readers to question as the story twists reality
Permits readers to explore a different world full of possibilities

Facilitates readers in increasing their thinking and imagination
Provides readers with critical commentary on social issues
Assists readers in understanding human

emotions and the author's deeper message
Educates readers on life in the depicted

time period
-------------

### Modern Literary Examples

<i>Affinity</i> (1999) by Sarah Walters
<i>Bluebeard's Castle</i> (2023) by Anna Biller
<i>Boys in the Valley</i> (2023) by Philip Fracassi
<i>Curse of Penryth Hall</i> (2023) by Jess Armstrong
<i>Dark Memory</i> (2023) by Christie Feehan
<i>Daughters of the Wild</i> (2020) by Nataalka Burian
<i>The Death of Jane Lawrence</i> (2021) by Caitlin Starling
<i>Edith Holler</i> (2023) by Edward Carey
<i>House of Dust</i> (2021) by Noah Broyles
<i>The House on Octavia Street</i> (1984) by Jacqueline La Tourrette

<i>House of Secrets</i> (2018) by V. C. Andrews
<i>The Invisible World</i> (2023) by Nora Fussner
<i>Mexican Gothic</i> (2020) by Silvia Moreno-Garcia
<i>Plain Bad Heroines</i> (2020) by Emily M. Danforth
<i>Sphinx</i> (2023) by Henrique Coeiho Netto
<i>Ties That Bind</i> (2021) by Kellie Butler
<i>Two Twisted Crowns</i> (2023) by Rachel Gillig
<i>Vampires of El Norte</i> (2023) by Isabel Cañas
<i>Vanishing Falls</i> (2020) by Poppy Gee