



Activity: Short Story Workshop: Gothic Fiction
Intended Grade/Audience: 6th-8th

<p>Overview of the Activity: This <i>short story workshop</i> focuses on introducing the Gothic genre to students. Students will identify elements of the gothic genre within Edgar Allan Poe’s works. Then, using what they know about the genre and story writing, they will create their own piece of gothic literature.</p>	<p>Student Objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Students will be introduced to Edgar Allan Poe to create a lasting interest and appreciation for his literature. 2. Students will strengthen their reading comprehension. 3. Students will strengthen their creative writing skills. 4. Students will understand the elements of Gothic literature. 5. Students will expand their knowledge and understanding of literary devices and elements of a story. 	<p>Activity Time: 45 minutes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Introduction to Gothic fiction (5 min) ● Masque of the Red Death reading (10 min) ● Fall of the House of Usher reading (10 min) ● Writing (20 min) ● Conclusion/present (5 min)
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Virginia SOLs addressed and/or met:

For 6th grade:

- **Reading – 6.5** The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of fictional texts, literary nonfiction, and poetry.
- **Writing - 6.7** The student will write in a variety of forms to include narrative, expository, persuasive, and reflective with an emphasis on narrative and reflective writing.
- **Writing - 6.8** The student will self- and peer-edit writing for capitalization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, paragraphing, and Standard English.

For 7th grade:

- **Reading - 7.5** The student will read and demonstrate comprehension of a variety of fictional texts, literary nonfiction, and poetry.
- **Writing - 7.7** The student will write in a variety of forms to include narrative, expository, persuasive, and reflective with an emphasis on expository and persuasive writing.
- **Writing - 7.8** The student will self- and peer-edit writing for capitalization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, paragraphing, and Standard English.

For 8th grade:

- **Reading - 8.5** - The student will read and analyze a variety of fictional texts, literary nonfiction, poetry, and drama.
- **Writing - 8.7** The student will write in a variety of forms to include narrative, expository, persuasive, and reflective with an emphasis on expository and persuasive writing.

- **Writing - 8.8** The student will self- and peer-edit writing for capitalization, punctuation, spelling, sentence structure, paragraphing, and Standard English.

Introduction to Gothic Fiction

Gothic fiction is a literary genre categorized by several unifying themes, such as darkness and fear. A story does not need to have all of these themes to be considered gothic, but it should have at least one. Gothic literature is often associated with stories such as *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley or *Dracula* by Bram Stoker. However, modern literature/media, such as *Goosebumps* by R.L. Stine or *The Exorcist* written by William Peter Blatty and directed by William Friedkin, are also part of the gothic genre.

Gothic themes:

- Dark, eerie, decayed setting
- Atmosphere of mystery and suspense; plot is often built around some type of mystery or unknown factor
- Ancient prophecy
- Strange omens and/or visions
- Supernatural events or occurrences
- Dramatic, overwrought emotions; characters are often overwhelmed by intense feelings of fear, sadness, anger, etc.
- Women in distress
- Women threatened by a powerful, even tyrannical male
- The metonymy of gloom and horror; type of metaphor in which oftentimes the weather or sounds are used to communicate a mood (ex: pouring rain at a funeral, howling wind, chains dragging across a stone floor)

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) is an American writer and poet, dubbed the “Master of the Macabre,” for his horror/gothic stories such as “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “Cask of Amontillado,” “The Pit and the Pendulum,” “Masque of the Red Death,” and “The Fall of the House of Usher.” While Poe did not invent the genre, he revolutionized it by depicting psychological horror—emphasizing the evils which lie within the human mind.

Poe used several fears in his stories inspired by life in the early 19th century. Many of Poe’s real-life experiences, such as the death of his mother and wife due to tuberculosis, influenced these fears. Poe also witnessed the rise of mass media sensationalizing darker topics like premature burials and murders.

Fears Poe used in his stories:

- Being buried alive
- Disease
- Torture
- Reanimation
- Murder

Directions: Before you write your own gothic story, read two excerpts from Poe’s stories. First, read the following excerpt from “The Masque of the Red Death” (1842). Identify the elements of a story as they

3. What fears does Poe highlight?

4. What literary devices are present in the story? Provide examples from the text.

Directions: Read the following excerpt from “The Fall of the House of Usher” (1839). Identify the elements of a story as they are present in this section (setting, characters, conflict, plot, and theme). Additionally, identify gothic themes, fears, and figurative language present in the story.

“During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country, and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was—but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit... I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain—upon the bleak walls—upon the vacant eye-like windows—upon a few rank sedges—and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation... There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart—an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. What was it—I paused to think—what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher?”

1. What are the elements of the story?

a. Setting:

b. Character(s):

c. Conflict:

d. Plot:

e. Theme:

2. What gothic theme(s) is present in the story? Provide examples from the text.

3. What fears does Poe highlight?

4. What literary devices are present in the story? Provide examples from the text.

Writing Workshop 1: Historical Gothic Fiction

Directions: Using what you know about gothic themes, elements of a story, literary devices, and fears, you will now create your own gothic story. Using what you know about Poe's life and life in the 19th century, write your story using gothic elements and fears from the past. Plan your story by listing the gothic themes, story elements, and literary devices you will use in your story below.

1. What are the elements of the story?
 - a. Setting:

 - b. Character(s):

 - c. Conflict:

 - d. Plot:

 - e. Theme:

2. What gothic themes will you include?

3. What fears will you include?

4. What literary devices will you include? Choose at least three.
 - a.

 - b.

 - c.

Write: Write your story in the space below.

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