THE GOTHIC NOVEL
It combines elements of both horror and romance.

The term gothic was a word of contempt, meaning barbaric and ugly.

It has given way to modern horror fiction.

The effect of Gothic fiction feeds on a pleasing sort of terror.

ETYMOLOGY

The Goths were a barbaric Germanic tribe that invaded the Roman Empire in the 3rd-5th c.

Established by Horace Walpole, with his 1764 novel *The Castle of Otranto*. 
• Gothic literature is intimately associated with the Gothic Revival architecture of the same era.
• Gothic novels embody a quest for *atmosphere*.
Prominent features include:

Terror (both psychological and physical), mystery, the supernatural, ghosts, haunted houses, Gothic architecture, castles, darkness, doom, death, decay, madness, secrets and hereditary curses.
**Stock characters** include: Tyrants, villains, bandits, maniacs, persecuted maidens, *femme fatales*, madwomen, magicians, vampires, werewolves, monsters, demons, angels, ghosts, skeletons and the Devil himself.
Ann Radcliffe included the explained supernatural, in which supernatural intrusion is eventually traced back to natural causes.

Horace Walpole

*The Castle of Otranto* (1764) is regarded as the first true gothic romance.

Clara Reeve

*The Old English Baron* (1778), adapted Walpole’s plot by balancing fantastic elements, including supernatural events with 18th century realism.
Parodies rose from the excesses, stereotypes, and frequent absurdities of the traditional Gothic novel.

The wind roared down the chimney as the rain beat in torrents against the windows, and every nerve-shattering sound seemed to speak the awfulness of her situation.

While the storm raged, there was an increase in tempo of other frightening sounds, more terrific even than the wind, which howled at intervals on her startled ear. In one moment the very curtains of her bed were startled into motion, and at another the lock of her door was agitated, as if by the attempt of somebody to enter. Hollow murmurs seemed to creep along the gallery and more than once her blood was chilled by the sound of a shrill, distant scream.
Parallel Romantic literary movements developed in continental Europe.
Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* (1818) and Polidori’s *The Vampyre* (1819) are examples of Gothic novel writing of the age of the Romantics.
The re-interpreter of the Gothic novel in the Victorian Age was **Edgar Allan Poe**.

The Gothic genre had a heavy influence on mainstream writers, such as **Charles Dickens**.

The Victorian Age saw the rise of Female Gothic, through the writings of **Bronte sisters**.

The 1880s, saw the revival of the Gothic as a powerful literary form.

**Robert Louis Stevenson**'s *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) was a classic Gothic work of the 1880s.
Gothic Romances became popular during the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s with some men writing under female pseudonyms.

In the twentieth century Daphne du Maurier’s work inspired a substantial body of ‘Female Gothics’.