

The Gothic Novel

The Gothic novel is a relative newcomer in the long history of literature. But it has thrived over the last couple of centuries since the first one appeared. Apparently, dark mysterious residences, premonitions of doom, vengeful spirits and ghosts, strange deaths, and horror, haven't stopped appealing to our imaginations.

The original Gothic story, *The Castle of Otranto*, by the English politician, Horace Walpole, was published in 1764. The genre took off, and Gothic novels have proliferated through the remaining centuries, and remain popular today.

It's hard to decide on the few books that a course today can encompass, when there are so many written by some of our greatest writers. The works we'll read in this class were chosen in large part because the castle or mansion in each is essentially a participant, central to the events that occur, and has a strong influence on the characters (to put it mildly).

Here are the works I have chosen, and the order in which we'll read them:

Class 1: First two chapters of *The Castle of Otranto*.

Class 2 and 3: *Dracula* by Bram Stoker

Class 4 and 5: *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen, a spoof of the genre

Class 6 and 7: *Rebecca* by Daphne du Maurier

Class 8: *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* by Shirley Jackson

Literature classes, especially discussion classes like this one, always work most smoothly when everyone has the same edition. I'll send everyone who enrolls the editions I would like you to have. I'm searching for the least expensive paperbacks of each.

Leader: Betty Lies taught for many years at Stuart Country Day School, and was poet in the schools for the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, which named her a Distinguished Teaching Artist.

Thursdays: 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., 8 weeks: February 28 through April 18

Location: PSRC