English Y9 Term 1 – Gothic Fiction Knowledge Organiser

Week 1

Vocabulary

Gothic horror fiction – a style of writing that is characterised by elements of mystery, terror, death and the supernatural

Bildungsroman – a novel that focuses on the moral and psychological growth of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood

Convention – a way in which something is usually done

Epistolary novel – a novel written as a series of letters between fictional characters including other written documents

Settings: castles and religious buildings; isolated and abandoned places; foreign countries; frightening atmospheres.

Context: gothic is an adjective to describe a distinctive style of architecture.

Synopsis: **The Castle of Ontranto by Horace Walpole.**
The story of the novel follows Manfred, the Prince of Otranto, who is obsessed with maintaining his family's name and property. Manfred, driven by supernatural visions of losing his family's name and property, plots to marry the much younger Isabella after her intended groom (Manfred's son Conrad) is killed. Many revelations and supernatural elements help or hinder Manfred in his quest.

Week 2

Vocabulary

Satire – the use of humour to ridicule or criticise.

Symbolism – the use of an object or symbol to represent larger ideas

Personification – giving human characteristics to something not human

Pathetic fallacy – when human emotions are given to things found in nature (often the weather or environment) to create mood and tone.

Context: the first gothic horror novel was Horace Walpole's 1764 novel The Castle of Ontranto. The novel is set in a haunted gothic castle, leading Walpole to be the first to apply the term "gothic" to literature instead of buildings.

Themes: mystery and fear, omens and curses, desire, the occult, romance, power, scientific advances, dreams and awakenings

Synopsis: **Frankenstein by Mary Shelley**
Victor Frankenstein, a young scientist in Ingolstadt, succeeds in giving life to a being of his own creation. However, this is not the perfect specimen he imagines that it will be, but rather a hideous creature who is rejected by Victor and mankind in general. The Monster seeks its revenge through murder and terror.

Week 3

Vocabulary

Structural silence – using words to create a sense of silence in order to build tension

Thesis statement – a short opening statement that summarises your overall view in response to a question or topic.

Disturbed – feeling deeply uneasy or anxious about something.

Occult – mystical, supernatural or magical powers, practices or phenomenon

Context: The gothic genre has grown over time, with different writers developing the genre into different sub-divisions.

Characters: women as victims, religious leaders, supernatural beings and monsters, complex villains

Synopsis: Northanger Abbey by Jane Austen
The naïve Catherine Morland, who loves Gothic novels, is introduced to the social world of Bath and falls in love with Henry Tilney. She is invited to the Tilney family home, where her love of Gothic fiction leads her to imagine there to be more mystery and excitement in the estate than there really is.

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Week 4

Vocabulary

Omen – an event believed to tell something about the future

Psychological – relating to the mental or emotional state of a person

Desire – a strong feeling of wanting to have something or wishing for something to happen

Solitude – the state of being alone

Isolation – the state of being alone and detached from others, usually unhappily.

Context: Gothic refers to a style and genre, not eh era in which the stories were written. This was the late 18-19th centuries (Georgian and Victorian eras).

Synopsis: **The Tell-tale Heart by Edgar Allan Poe (short story)**
An unnamed narrator relates the story of how they killed an old man with whom they lived. The narrator seems to have killed the old man because they hated the look of his 'vulture' eye. The narrator cuts the old man's body up and buries him under the floor, but then becomes convinced that the sound of the old man's beating heart can be heard from beneath the floorboards.

Week 5

Vocabulary

Gothic horror fiction – a style of writing that is characterised by elements of mystery, terror, death and the supernatural

Bildungsroman – a novel that focuses on the moral and psychological growth of the protagonist from childhood to adulthood

Epistolary novel – a novel written as a series of letters between fictional characters including other written documents

Structural silence – using words to create a sense of silence in order to build tension

Thesis statement – a short opening statement that summarises your overall view in response to a question or topic.

Synopsis: **The Raven by Edgar Allan Poe (poem)**
An unnamed narrator laments the loss of his love, Lenore. One night, he is visited by a mysterious raven which torments him by repeating, "Nevermore.“

Synopsis – Jane Eyre by Charlotte Bronte
The novel follows the story of Jane, a seemingly plain and simple girl as she battles through life's struggles. Jane has many obstacles in her life - her cruel and abusive Aunt Reed, the grim conditions at Lowood school, and her love for Rochester, her kind and wealthy employer with a dark secret.

Week 6

Vocabulary

Satire – the use of humour to ridicule or criticise.

Symbolism – the use of an object or symbol to represent larger ideas

Occult – mystical, supernatural or magical powers, practices or phenomenon

Psychological – relating to the mental or emotional state of a person

Omen – an event believed to tell something about the future

Settings: castles and religious buildings; isolated and abandoned places; foreign countries; frightening atmospheres.

Themes: mystery and fear, omens and curses, desire, the occult, romance, power, scientific advances, dreams and awakenings

Synopsis – Dracula by Bram Stoker
Jonathan Harker, a lawyer, takes a business trip to stay at the castle of a Transylvanian nobleman, Count Dracula. Harker escapes the castle after discovering that Dracula is a vampire, and the Count moves to England and plagues the seaside town of Whitby.