

Transition Work – English Literature

Exam board = OCR.

There are two papers in the exams at the end of year 13. The second paper is focused on the gothic. Although in KS5 you will study two key gothic texts (Dracula and The Bloody Chamber) you are also assessed on your wider, contextual knowledge of the gothic.

The subject specific controlled assessment at the start of the year 12 course will have two elements. The first will be a close critical analysis of a gothic text (The Monk by Matthew Lewis) and the second will be a question about how gothic villains are presented in two gothic texts (The Monk and a text of your choice.)

Your transition work:

1. Begin by getting an overview of the gothic genre and its origins. Please read the following articles / watch the following videos on the British Library website. These are perfectly designed for A Level students
<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gothic-motifs> (Article)
<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/videos/the-gothic> (Video)
<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-origins-of-the-gothic> (Article.)
As you read / watch these, make notes on how the gothic originated and the key features of the genre.
2. The first assessment you will do when we return to school will be an assessment based on a critical analysis of a passage from the Monk by Matthew Lewis. This will be a bit like the extract analysis part of the GCSE where you have to consider the effect of key quotations. However, in this case you will need to consider how the passage links to the typical features of the gothic.

To this end, you will need to get hold of a copy of the Monk to read. You can download this book for free on Project Gutenberg (<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/601/601-h/601-h.htm>) However, it might make things easier to get a copy of the book from Amazon or Ebay.(I saw quite a lot of cheap copies available.) **You do not need to revise the book / learn key quotations etc for this element of the assessment. You will be given the passage to analyse in the assessment. All you will need to do is explain how that passage links to the gothic. Imagine it is like answering a passage in the Macbeth GCSE where you have to make links to the supernatural.**

At the end of this instruction sheet are two things that will help you with this. One is a brief summary of *The Monk*. The other is a passage from *The Monk* for you to practise writing a critical analysis. The question is the same as the one you will get in the assessment but the passage will be a different one. You should write a response to this and bring it on the first day of year 12.

3. Your English Literature course will require you to have a broad knowledge of the gothic. With this in mind, you need to select **one** of the gothic texts below. They are ordered chronologically so you may feel that you want to read something more modern after experiencing *The Monk*. Read and 'enjoy' the text. As you are reading it, try to decide who the gothic villain is in the text. Some of these texts have much more obvious 'villains' than others. Research what was happening in society at the time that your text was written/set and consider how the gothic writer might have written the text to reflect some of society's concerns.

William Beckford: *Vathek*

Ann Radcliffe: *The Italian*

Mary Shelley: *Frankenstein*

Oscar Wilde: *The Picture of Dorian Gray*

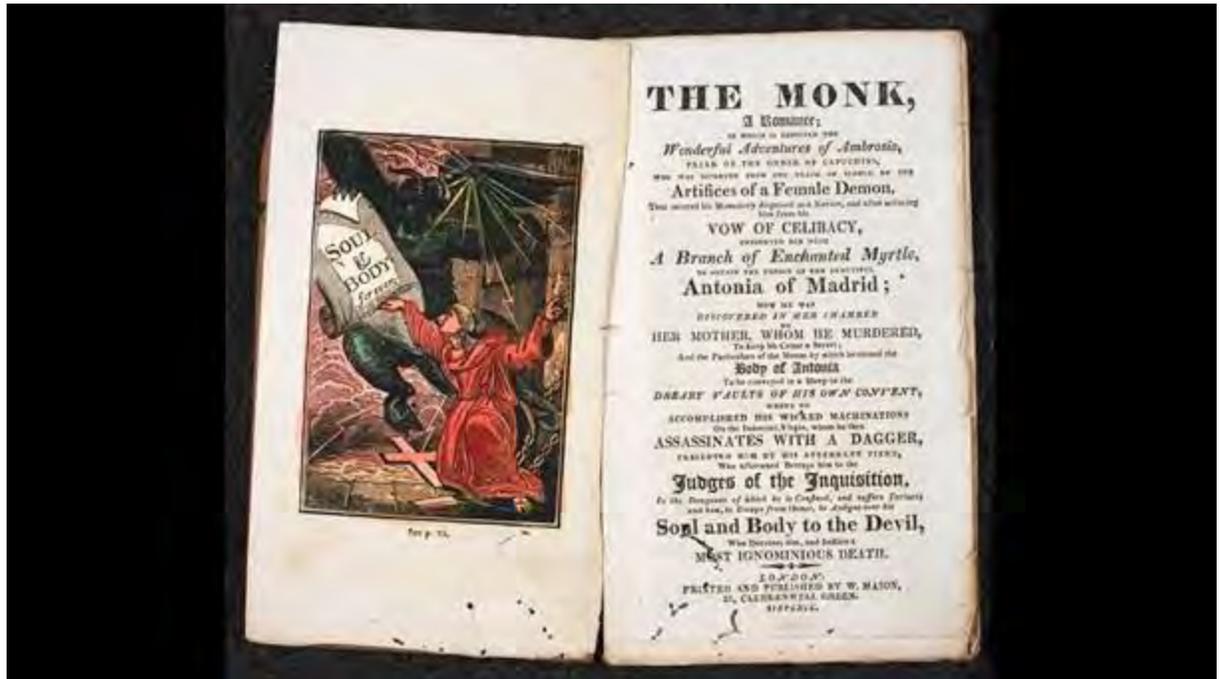
William Faulkner: *Light in August*

Cormac McCarthy: *Outer Dark*

Iain Banks: *The Wasp Factory*

Toni Morrison: *Beloved*

Resource 1 - A guide to *The Monk* – by Matthew Lewis



Matthew Lewis's novel *The Monk* (1796) marked a turning point in the history of Gothic literature. With its emphasis firmly on the horrific and the shocking, the book moved Gothic away from the gentle terrors of earlier authors such as Horace Walpole and, instead, confronted readers with an onslaught of horror in the form of spectral bleeding nuns, mob violence, murder, sorcery and incest. Unsurprisingly the book met with outrage and condemnation from critics. Equally unsurprisingly it was hugely popular with the public.

With its twin themes of erotic obsession and the corrupting influence of power, *The Monk* deals with important issues and contains moments of impressive psychological insight. At heart, however, it remains a morality tale about one man's fall from grace through greed, pride and lust. The edition shown here is a heavily abbreviated version of the novel published sometime around 1818. On the left Ambrosio, the monk of the title, signs his Faustian pact with the devil while, on the right, the entire plot of the book is summarised in lurid headings such as 'Artifices of a Female Demon'; 'Her Mother Whom He Murdered'; 'Assassinates with a Dagger' and, finally, 'Most Ignominious Death'.

Early reviews

The Monk first became widely available in an edition published by Joseph Bell in 1796. The title-page only carried Lewis's initials, rather than his full name, but the first reviews were – somewhat surprisingly given the content – favourable. Encouraged, Lewis announced his authorship in the second edition, adding for good measure his new title of Member of Parliament. Unfortunately, with his name now firmly associated with the book (so much so that he was known as 'Monk' Lewis for the rest of his life) the novel became the subject of critical condemnation and accusations of blasphemy. The poet [Samuel Taylor Coleridge](#) attacked the book in the *Critical Review* of February 1797 arguing that its scenes of lust and depravity were likely to corrupt readers. Coleridge observed further that *The Monk* was a novel 'which if a parent saw in the hands of a son or daughter he might reasonably turn pale'. Worse was to follow when the writer Thomas James Mathias argued that certain passages in the book, especially those containing comments on the Bible, were open to legal action on the grounds

that they were sacrilegious. Chastened by the intense criticism, Lewis removed several controversial passages from the book and from the fourth edition onwards the novel appeared in a somewhat subdued form. *The Monk*, however, never lost its popularity with readers keen to test their morality against its allegedly depraved content.

Resource 2 – The Monk Critical Analysis – This will be the same style as the first assessment you do in year 12. You should write a response to the question at the bottom of this and bring on the first day.

The Monk by Matthew Lewis (1796)

Written in the 1790s gothic heyday, and phenomenally successful, The Monk was so popular that it seemed to create an epoch in our literature (Sir Walter Scott.) In this extract, the 'hero' Lorenzo dreams of his beloved Antonia.

The night was now fast advancing. The Lamps were not yet lighted. The faint beams of the rising Moon scarcely could pierce through the gothic obscurity of the Church. Lorenzo found himself unable to quit the Spot. The void left in his bosom by Antonia's absence, and his Sister's sacrifice which Don Christoval had just recalled to his imagination, created that melancholy of mind which accorded but too well with the religious gloom surrounding him. He was still leaning against the seventh column from the Pulpit. A soft and cooling air breathed along the solitary Aisles: The Moonbeams darting into the Church through painted windows tinged the fretted roofs and massy pillars with a thousand various tints of light and colours:

Universal silence prevailed around, only interrupted by the occasional closing of Doors in the adjoining Abbey.

The calm of the hour and solitude of the place contributed to nourish Lorenzo's disposition to melancholy. He threw himself upon a seat which stood near him, and abandoned himself to the delusions of his fancy. He thought of his union with Antonia; He thought of the obstacles which might oppose his wishes; and a thousand changing visions floated before his fancy, sad 'tis true, but not unpleasing. Sleep insensibly stole over him, and the tranquil solemnity of his mind when awake for a while continued to influence his slumbers.

He still fancied himself to be in the Church of the Capuchins; but it was no longer dark and solitary. Multitudes of silver Lamps shed splendour from the vaulted Roof; Accompanied by the captivating chaunt of distant choristers, the Organ's melody swelled through the Church; The Altar seemed decorated as for some distinguished feast; It was surrounded by a brilliant Company; and near it stood Antonia arrayed in bridal white, and blushing with all the charms of Virgin Modesty.

Half hoping, half fearing, Lorenzo gazed upon the scene before him. Sudden the door leading to the Abbey unclosed, and He saw, attended by a long train of Monks, the Preacher advance to whom He had just listened with so much admiration. He drew near Antonia.

'And where is the Bridegroom?' said the imaginary Friar.

Write a critical appreciation of the passage, relating your reading to the discussion of the gothic. (30)

Hints - Think about key gothic motifs (E.g. night time, extreme emotions, setting.) Also, it is useful to think about how gothic texts often reflected the concerns of society at the time. In the late eighteenth century when the novel was written, England was a Protestant country. Catholicism was marginalized to support the burgeoning Church of England and there was a great deal of suspicion of the Catholic church.