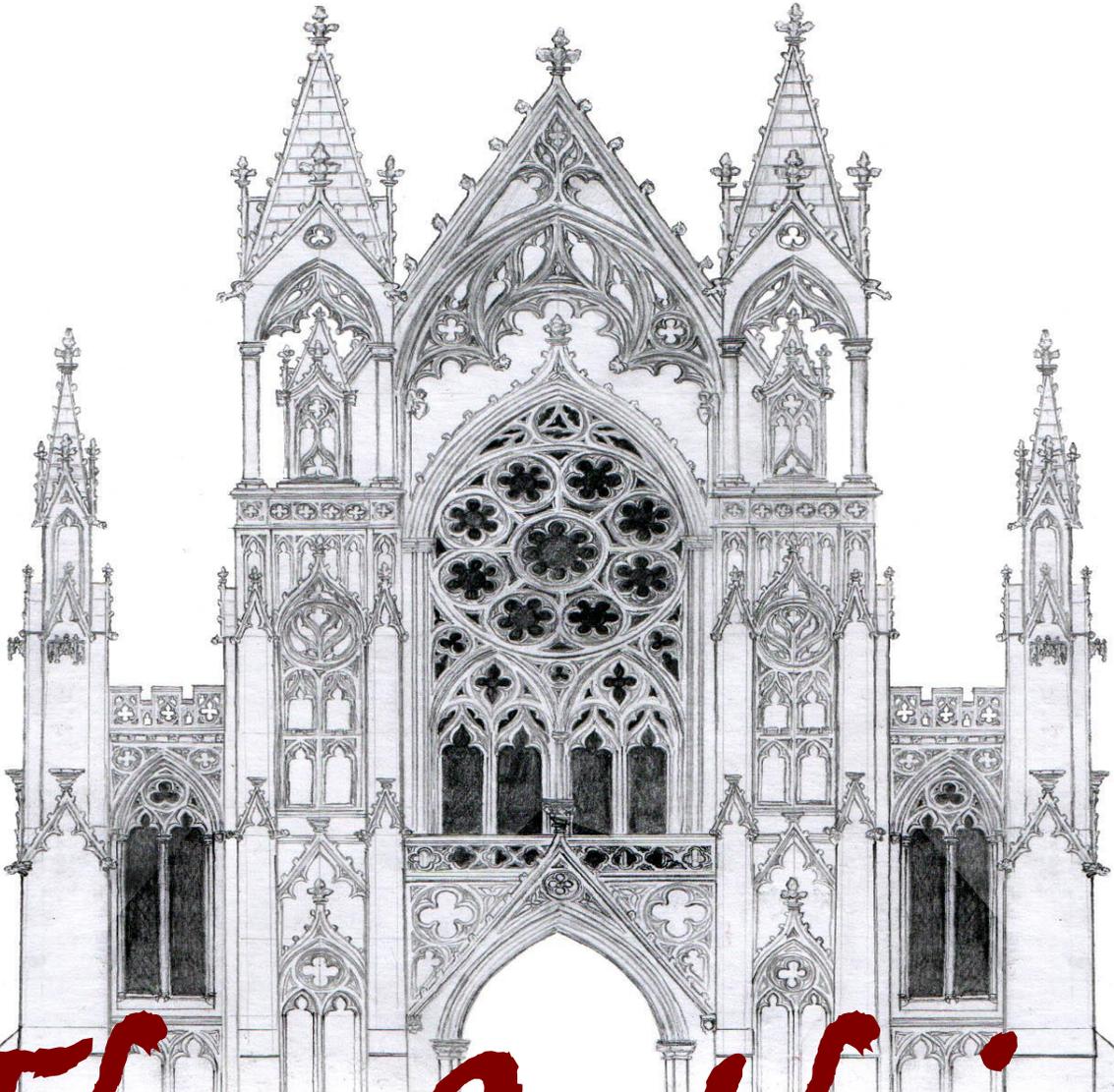


Getting Ready for A Level English Literature



The Gothic

4

Shakespeare

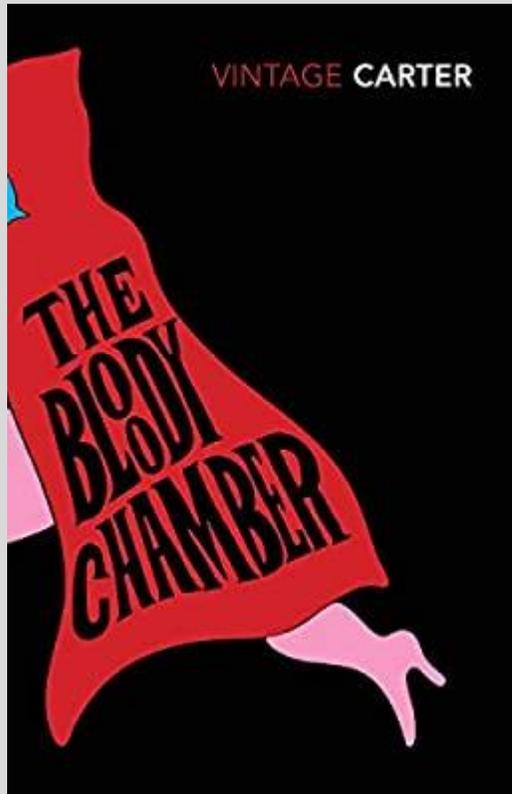
Hello! And welcome to this introduction to your English Literature A Level.

You'll be studying the OCR specification and you can find past papers and the full specification [here](#).

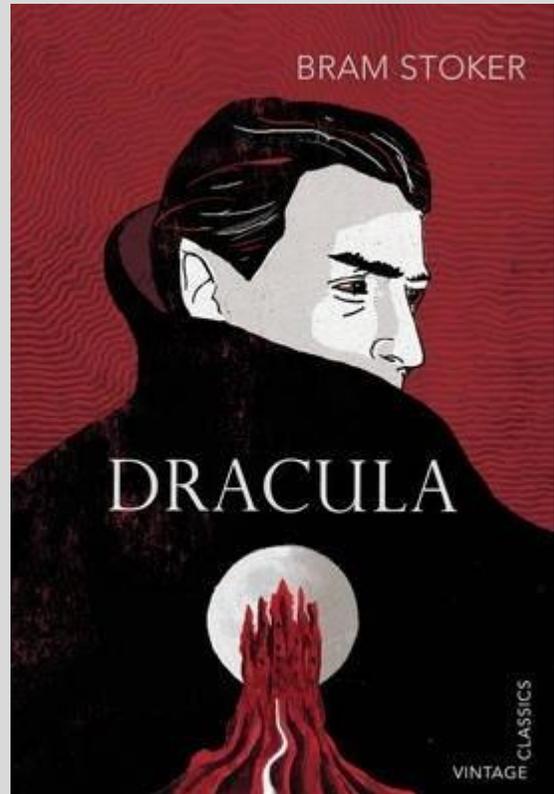
We will start Year 1 with a unit on [Gothic literature](#) – a genre you probably already know something about. At GCSE if you studied *Macbeth*, *Great Expectations* or *A Christmas Carol* then you already know a work of Gothic literature. You might also have read, or watched a film adaptation, of books like *Jane Eyre*, *Dr Jekyll & Mr Hyde*, *Wuthering Heights* or *Twilight*.

Year 1 Set Texts:

***The Bloody Chamber* by Angela Carter**



***Dracula* by Bram Stoker**



In this guide you will get an introduction to these two books, spend some time thinking about critical interpretations and also get a head start on the wider reading that is an important part of A Level. You don't need to read your set texts before September – but, of course, you are welcome to!

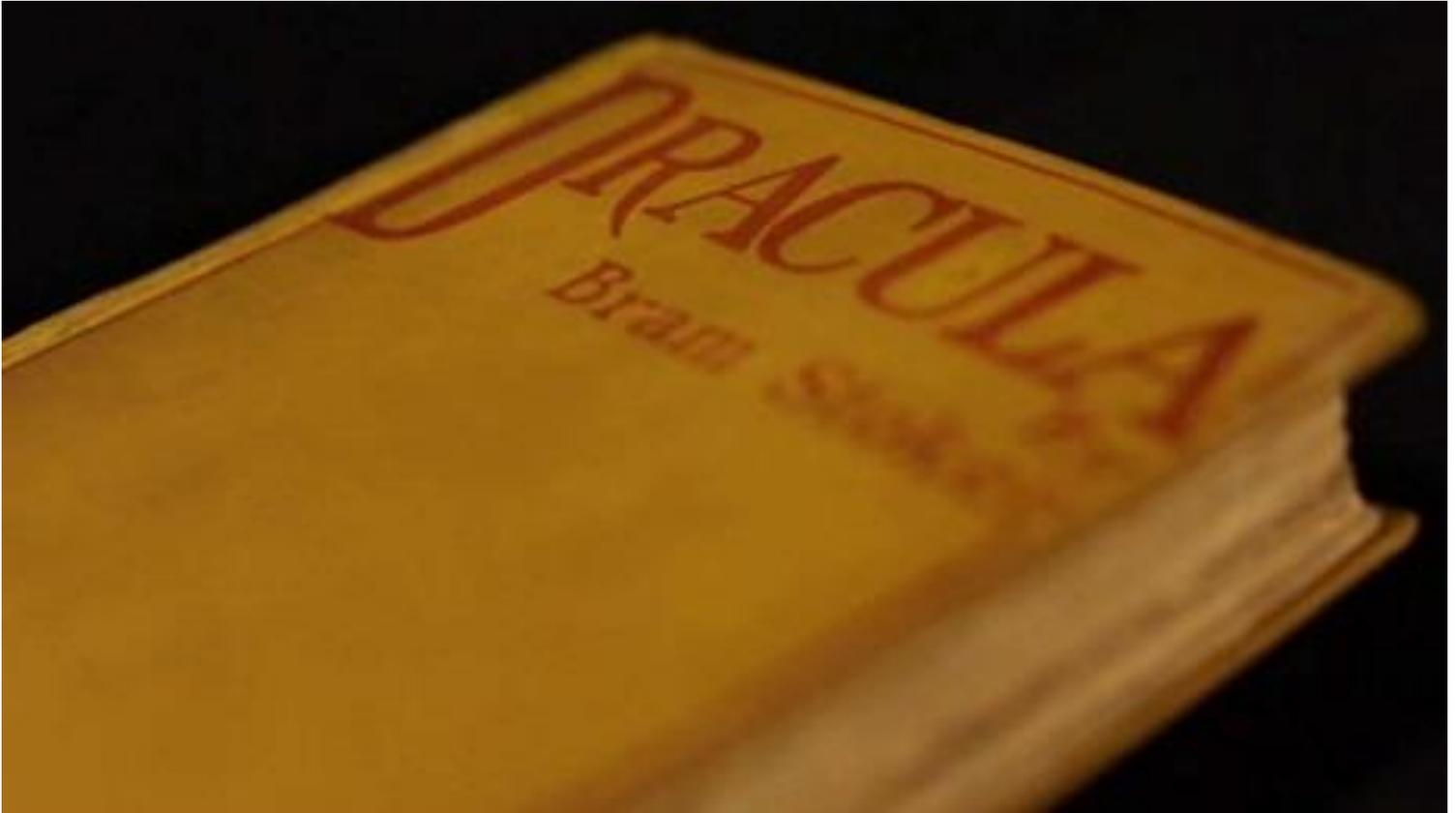
Wider reading is assessed at A Level so this summer is a great time to make a start on building up your knowledge of the wider Gothic genre.

You'll find links to Gothic novels on Audible and discussions in the videos and podcasts of a wide range of Gothic books and writers that you can follow-up and chose what you want to read over the next few months.

Later in the year we will move on to study Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and there are some resources at the end of this guide to get you off to a great start with your Shakespeare studies.

We hope you enjoy getting to know a little more about this subject and look forward to meeting you next term!

Watch this introduction to Gothic Literature by Professor John Bowen with a focus on our set text *Dracula*



Questions:

- Who was Horace Walpole and what did he write?
- What kinds of location are typical in Gothic fiction?
- What is the uncanny and what examples are given?
- What is the sublime and what examples are given?
- What is significant about the times in history when Gothic fiction has been most popular?

Watch this discussion of Jane Eyre as a Gothic novel (and read or listen to the novel over the summer break – it is often referred to in our study of Angela Carter's *The Bloody Chamber*)



Questions:

- What does Jane Eyre have in common with the Bluebeard Fairy-tale?
- What is meant by the term 'New Gothic' in this video and what are the main features?
- How is the idea of identity used in strange ways in the Gothic?

A 'Gytrash' is a spirit appearing as a horse or a dog that haunts lonely roads (longer definition and discussion [here](#)).

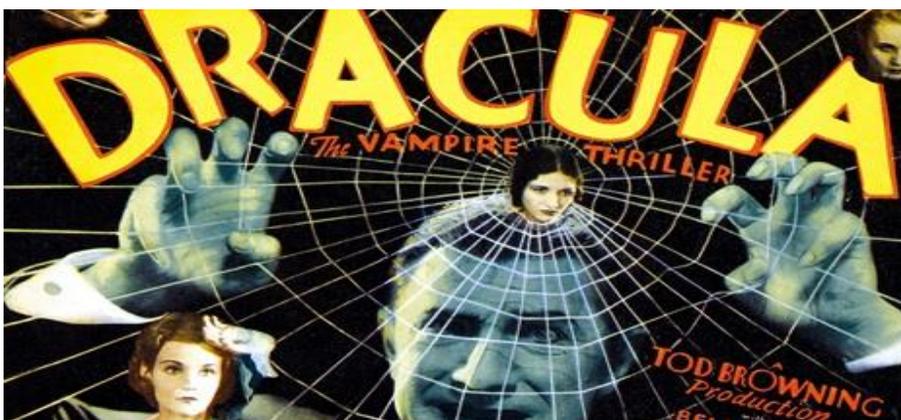
You can read 'Bluebeard' [here](#) - it is a major influence on your set text ***The Bloody Chamber***.

Click on the images below to read these articles introducing you to Gothic fiction and some of the ways that we will be interpreting it during your studies.



Gothic Motifs

What does it mean to say a text is Gothic? Professor John Bowen considers some of the best-known Gothic novels of the late 18th and 19th centuries, exploring the features they have in common, including marginal places, transitional time periods and the use of fear and manipulation.



Dracula: vampires, pervisity and Victorian Anxieties

The vampire is a complicated creature: caught between life and death, at once alluring and horrifying. Greg Buzwell considers the way the novel reflects the fears that haunted late 19th-century society.



The imperial Gothic

Mysticism, degeneracy, irrationality, barbarism: these are the qualities that came to define the non-western 'other' in 19th-century Britain. Here Professor Suzanne Daly explores the 'Imperial Gothic', examining the ways in which 'otherness' and Empire were depicted in Gothic novels such as *Jane Eyre*, *The Moonstone* and *Dracula*.



The origins of the Gothic

Professor John Mullan examines the origins of the Gothic, explaining how the genre became one of the most popular of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, and the subsequent integration of Gothic elements into mainstream Victorian fiction.

Listen to a Classic Gothic Novel



PENGUIN CLASSICS

OSCAR WILDE
The Picture of Dorian Gray



PENGUIN CLASSICS

CHARLOTTE BRONTË
Jane Eyre



PENGUIN CLASSICS

MARY SHELLEY
Frankenstein



PENGUIN CLASSICS

EMILY BRONTË
Wuthering Heights

Angela Carter – Re-Writing The Fairy Tale



Click on the image above for an introduction to Angela Carter and the ways in which she re-wrote traditional fairy-tales for a modern audience, in a profoundly more Gothic way and with her own take on feminist politics.

On the next page you can read one of the short stories from *The Bloody Chamber*.

- How has Carter changed the original version of 'Little Red Riding Hood' ?
- What has she left out and what has she invented?
- How has she changed the original version's heroes and villains? Who is the victim and who is the villain in her version?

'The Werewolf' by Angela Carter

It is a northern country; they have cold weather, they have cold hearts.

Cold; tempest; wild beasts in the forest. It is a hard life. Their houses are built of logs, dark and smoky within. There will be a crude icon of the virgin behind a guttering candle, the leg of a pig hung up to cure, a string of drying mushrooms. A bed, a stool, a table. Harsh, brief, poor lives.

To these upland woodsmen, the Devil is as real as you or I. More so; they have not seen us nor even know that we exist, but the Devil they glimpse often in the graveyards, those bleak and touching townships of the dead where the graves are marked with portraits of the deceased in the naïf style and there are no flowers to put in front of them, no flowers grow there, so they put out small votive offerings, little loaves, sometimes a cake that the bears come lumbering from the margins of the forests to snatch away. At midnight the Devil holds picnics in the graveyards and invites the witches; then they dig up fresh corpses, and eat them. Anyone will tell you that.

Wreaths of garlic on the doors keep out the vampires. A blue-eyed child born feet first on the night of St. John's Eve will have second sight. When they discover a witch - some old woman whose cheeses ripen when her neighbours' do not, another old woman whose black cat, oh, sinister! follows her about all the time, they strip the crone, search for her marks, for the supernumerary nipple her familiar sucks. They soon find it. Then they stone her to death.

Winter and cold weather.

Go and visit grandmother, who has been sick. Take her the oatcakes I've baked for her on the hearthstone and a little pot of butter.

The good child does as her mother bids - five miles' trudge through the forest; do not leave the path because of the bears, the wild boar, the starving wolves. Here, take your father's hunting knife; you know how to use it.

The child had a scabby coat of sheepskin to keep out the cold, she knew the forest too well to fear it but she must always be on her guard. When she heard that freezing howl of a wolf, she dropped her gifts, seized her knife, and turned on the beast.

It was a huge one, with red eyes and running, grizzled chops; any but a mountaineer's child would have died of fright at the sight of it. It went for her throat, as wolves do, but she made a great swipe at it with her father's knife and slashed off its right forepaw.

The wolf let out a gulp, almost a sob, when it saw what had happened to it; wolves are less brave than they seem. It went lolloping off disconsolately between the trees as well as it could on three legs, leaving a trail of blood behind it. The child wiped the blade of her knife clean on her apron, wrapped up the wolf's paw in the cloth in which her mother had packed the oatcakes and went on towards her grandmother's house. Soon it came on to snow so thickly that the path and any footsteps, track or spoor that might have been upon it were obscured.

She found her grandmother was so sick she had taken to her bed and fallen into a fretful sleep, moaning and shaking so that the child guessed she had a fever. She felt the forehead, it burned. She shook out the cloth from her basket, to use it to make the old woman a cold compress, and the wolf's paw fell to the floor.

But it was no longer a wolf's paw. It was a hand, chopped off at the wrist, a hand toughened with work and freckled with old age. There was a wedding ring on the third finger and a wart in the index finger. By the wart, she knew it for her grandmother's hand.

She pulled back the sheet but the old woman woke up, at that, and began to struggle, squawking and shrieking like a thing possessed. But the child was strong, and armed with her father's hunting knife; she managed to hold her grandmother down long enough to see the cause of her fever. There was a bloody stump where her right hand should have been, festering already.

The child crossed herself and cried out so loud the neighbours heard her and come rushing in. They know the wart on the hand at once for a witch's nipple; they drove the old woman, in her shift as she was, out into the snow with sticks, beating her old carcass as far as the edge of the forest, and pelted her with stones until she fell dead.

Now the child lived in her grandmother's house; she prospered.

Shakespeare's *Hamlet*

Much later in the year we will be moving on to Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. These resources are just to give you a lot of advance notice about what we will be doing. The RSC Production of *Hamlet* below is currently on BBC iPlayer as part of their 'Culture in Quarantine' season so now might be your only chance to watch it!



Listen to this 15 minute discussion on The Art of Story Telling in Shakespeare's plays by Professor Emma Smith

Watch Kenneth Branagh's version of the famous 'To be or not to be' soliloquy

Watch *Hamlet* by The Royal Shakespeare Company on BBC iPlayer



Links to all the resources in this booklet

OCR Past Papers - <https://www.ocr.org.uk/qualifications/as-and-a-level/english-literature-h072-h472-from-2015/>

Gothic Literature - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gothic_fiction

Angela Carter's The Bloody Chamber - https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bloody_Chamber

Bram Stoker's Dracula - <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dracula>

Video: Introduction to the Gothic - <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/videos/the-gothic>

Video: Jane Eyre: Fairytale and realism - <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/videos/jane-eyre-fairytale-and-realism>

Bluebeard by Charles Perrault - <https://www.pitt.edu/~dash/perrault03.html>

Article: Gothic Motifs - <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/gothic-motifs>

Article: Dracula: vampires, perversity and Victorian anxieties - <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/dracula>

Article: The Imperial Gothic - <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-imperial-gothic>
<https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-imperial-gothic>

Article: The Origins of the Gothic - <https://www.bl.uk/romantics-and-victorians/articles/the-origins-of-the-gothic>

Audible: The Picture of Dorian Gray - https://stories.audible.com/pdp/B002VAEOY0?ref=adbl_ent_anon_ds_pdp_pc_pg-1-cntr-0-17

Audible: Jane Eyre - https://stories.audible.com/pdp/B01COOZ5C2?ref=adbl_ent_anon_ds_pdp_pc_pg-1-cntr-0-2

Audible: Frankenstein - https://stories.audible.com/pdp/B00FQRCM9O?ref=adbl_ent_anon_ds_pdp_pc_pg-1-cntr-0-4

Audible: Wuthering Heights - https://stories.audible.com/pdp/B002V07ZY6?ref=adbl_ent_anon_ds_pdp_pc_pg-1-cntr-0-16

Introduction to The Bloody Chamber - <https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/an-introduction-to-the-bloody-chamber-and-other-stories>

Podcast: Story telling in Shakespeare -

Video: 'To be or not to be' Soliloquy - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rLB9qQyZ5IE>

Video: Hamlet - <https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer>