**List of Common Gothic Elements**

•**1. Dark, Abandoned, or Decaying Setting (often a castle).** The action takes place in and around an old castle, sometimes seemingly abandoned, sometimes occupied. The castle often contains secret passages, trap doors, secret rooms, dark or hidden staircases, and possibly ruined sections. The castle may be near or connected to caves, which lend their own haunting flavor with their branching, claustrophobia, and mystery. Dead bodies hidden inside claustrophobic interiors is another favorite Gothic device. The outside setting complements these ideas, with stormy, grave weather, thunder and lightning, or a general dark, eerie night setting the scene of most Gothic stories.

•**2. An atmosphere of mystery and suspense.** A gothic work is pervaded by a threatening feeling, and a fear enhanced by the unknown. Often the plot itself is built around a mystery, such as unknown parentage, a disappearance, or some other inexplicable event.

•**3. An ancient prophecy** is connected with the castle and its inhabitants (either former or present), or a journey. The prophecy is usually obscure, partial, or confusing. "What could it mean?" In more watered down modern examples, this may amount to merely a legend.

•**4. Omens, portents, visions.** A character may have a disturbing dream vision, or some phenomenon may be seen as a portent of coming events. For example, if the statue of the lord of the manor falls over, it may portend his death. In modern fiction, a character might see something (a shadowy figure stabbing another shadowy figure) and think that it was a dream. This might be thought of as an "imitation vision.”

•**5. Supernatural or otherwise inexplicable events.** Dramatic, amazing events occur, such as ghosts or giants walking, or inanimate objects (such as a suit of armor or painting) coming to life. In some works, the events are ultimately given a natural explanation, while in others the events are truly supernatural.

•**6. High, even overwrought emotion.** The narration may be highly sentimental, and the characters are often overcome by anger, sorrow, surprise, and especially, terror. Characters suffer from raw nerves and a feeling of impending doom. Crying and emotional speeches are frequent. Breathlessness and panic are common. In the filmed gothic, screaming is common.

•**7. Women in distress or Women threatened by a powerful, impulsive or tyrannical male.** The female characters often face events that leave them fainting, terrified, screaming, and/or sobbing. A lonely, pensive, and oppressed heroine is often the central figure of the novel, so her sufferings are even more pronounced and the focus of attention. The women suffer all the more because they are often abandoned, left alone (either on purpose or by accident), and have no protector at times**.** Male characters have the power, as king, lord of the manor, father, or guardian, to demand that one or more of the female characters do something intolerable.

### 9. Explorations of Romance and Sexuality.

During uptight Victorian times, Gothic literature allowed readers and authors to explore the areas of romance and sexuality. Transgressive thoughts, impulses, and desires were there but in a fairly heteronormative way. Sexuality in Gothic literature is in repressed form. Women are expected to be submissive and helpless. Women were expected to be chaste, and men are predatory. Society was patriarchal, men considered as superior, and every action made by them needs to be followed by women.

### 10. Anti-Heroes

Gothic literature hero is portrayed as a flawed character. He is an isolated, outcast and lonesome figure. The protagonist has to make efforts to overcome the obstacles to make an image in society.