

The Gothic: A Very Short Introduction

By Nick Groom

Questions for Thought and Discussion

- Have there been any recent news stories that have defined the Gothic or Goths in contemporary society and politics?
- Do you think that the Gothic tribes really presented an alternative to the classical world and its values, or were they simply barbarians who destroyed civilization?
- We all know about Henry VIII, but how important is the Reformation in understanding the Gothic?
- The Gothic used to be political and associated with Protestantism, parliamentarianism, and progress. Do any elements of this Gothicism survive in politics today?
- What is the connection between the Gothic and the Middle Ages?
- What Gothic Revival (i.e. nineteenth-century) buildings do you know? Do these buildings evoke feelings or inspire values today?
- Gothic novels and films are supposed to be able to explore social taboos and trauma: what sort of taboos and traumas?
- Why are so many Gothic novels and films characterized by the 'undead'? What does this suggest about contemporary attitudes to death and dying?
- What recent novels or films could be characterized as Gothic and why? Are they really 'mock Gothic' or do they avoid irony despite using well-worn clichés?
- Is Gothic a particularly English style? How does American Gothic differ from English (or British) Gothic?
- Is horror essentially different from the Gothic in fiction and film?
- Vampires are everywhere today – what is their attraction? (And would you like to be one...?)
- Does the Gothic have any future as a style, or in films or novels, or has it been exhausted?

Other books by Nick Groom

The Union Jack: The Story of the British Flag (Atlantic, 2006)

The Forger's Shadow: How Forgery Changed the Course of Literature (Picador, 2002)

Introducing Shakespeare (Icon, 2001)

The Making of Percy's Reliques (Clarendon Press, 1999)

Hallowe'en and Valentine: The Culture of Saints' Days in the English-Speaking World (Oxford University Press - forthcoming)

Further Reading

Natasha Scharf, *Worldwide Gothic: A Chronicle of a Tribe* (Independent Music Press, 2011)

Richard Marks and Paul Williamson (eds), *Gothic: Art for England, 1440-1547* (V&A Publications, 2003)

Chris Brooks, *The Gothic Revival* (Phaidon, 1999)

Richard Davenport-Hines, *Gothic: 400 Years of Excess, Horror, Evil and Ruin* (Fourth Estate, 1998)

Teresa A. Goddu, *Gothic America: Narrative, History, and Nation* (Columbia University Press, 1997)

Peter Heather, *The Goths* (Blackwell, 1996)

Christopher Frayling, *Vampyres: Lord Byron to Count Dracula* (Faber and Faber, 1991)

Recommended Music

Nick Cave and the Bad Seeds, *Murder Ballads* (Mute, 1996)

Daughters of Elvin, *Galdrbok: Medieval Songs of Love and Enchantment* (n.p., n.d.)

Fields of the Nephilim, *Elizium* (Beggars Banquet, 1990)