STM Knowledge Organiser

Year: 9 Subject: English Unit: Gothic Literature

Core Knowledge (Approaching the Texts)

- There are numerous books that have used this genre. In this unit will be studying several texts.
- The writers were influenced by the life and times in which they were working. There were also differing experiences of male and female writers.
- There are set conventions and key terms associated with Gothic literature.

Core Knowledge (Social and Historical Context)

- Gothic literature is a genre that emerged in the mid 1700s as a part of the larger Romantic Movement.
- It is characterised by the use of supernatural elements, curses or prophecies, heroes / heroines and intense emotions such as terror. The locations are often dark and picturesque.
- Gothic literature was extremely popular in Victorian times as it linked to people's fascination with ghosts and spiritualism, as well as the changes in society with technological inventions such as electricity and photography.
- Two of the key texts written in the Gothic style are *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley and *The Red Room* by H.G. Wells.
- Other writers have incorporated some elements of Gothic literature in their work. These include Charlotte Bronte (*Jane Eyre*) and Charles Dickens (*Great Expectations*).
- Some modern writers still use this genre. A good example is *The Woman in Black* by Susan Hill.

Core Knowledge (Conventions)

There are conventions (ingredients, ways of doing things) that link all pieces of Gothic literature together.

The main character (protagonist) often finds themselves in an isolated location such as a large, old house. In this location there appear to be hidden and malevolent forces at work. The main character is often the focus of these forces and the action revolves around whether they are able to escape, or be saved, from certain injury or death.

Core Knowledge (The importance of setting)

Writers of Gothic literature will use vivid and descriptive language to emphasis the danger the protagonist is in. This will often involve making the environment itself hostile, as if it too wishes the character harm. This can be through techniques such as pathetic fallacy and personification.

Key Vocabulary

Pathetic fallacy	*The attribution of human feelings and responses to inanimate objects of nature e.g. the weather reflecting mood.*
Imagery	*Visually descriptive language.*
Pastiche	*An artistic work that imitates another artist or period.*
Foreshadowing	*A warning or hint of a future event.*
Subversive	*Seeking or intending to subvert 9Overthrow or undermine) an established system.*
Protagonist	*Leading character.*
Plot	*Main events of a play, novel or film.*
Conspiracy of silence	*An agreement to say nothing about an issue that should be generally known.*
Context	*The time in which a text is written.*
Personification	*Giving human characteristics to something non-human.*
Convention	*The way something is normally done.*
Malevolent	*Wishing to do harm.*