**Characteristics of the gothic**

1. An atmosphere of gloom, terror, or mystery.
2. Elements of the uncanny (*unheimlich*) that challenge reality, including mysterious events that cause the protagonist to question the evidence of his or her senses and the presence of seemingly supernatural beings.
3. An exotic setting isolated in time or space from contemporary life, often a ruined mansion or castle. The building may be associated with past violence and contain contains hidden doors, subterranean secret passages, concealed staircases, and other such features.
4. Events, often violent or macabre, that cannot be hidden or rationalized despite the efforts of the narrator.
5. A disturbed or unnatural relation between the orders of things that are usually separate, such as life and death, good and evil, dream life and reality, or rationality and madness.
6. A hidden or double reality beneath the surface of what at first appears to be a single narrative. As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick explains, a primary feature of the Gothic is that the self is “massively blocked off from something to which it ought normally to have access” (12). Thus the narrative arc of the Gothic story leads to an exposure of what was once hidden, breaking down the barrier between the surface reality and the reality beneath the surface. Often a physical barrier symbolizes a barrier to the information that provides a key to the truth or explanation of the events. Sometimes the truth is revealed through an artifact that breaches the barrier between what is known and what is unknown: a document telling a family secret, a key that opens a secret room, or even a creature imprisoned behind the wall, as in Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Black Cat.” Poe represents this process symbolically in “The Fall of the House of Usher” in the violent death-embrace of Madeline and Roderick Usher. An emblem of the hidden secret, Madeline, who has escaped from the tomb where she has been buried alive, totters into the room and falls dead as she clutches her brother Roderick, who by ignoring the signs that she has been buried alive and pretending a surface normality, has refused to acknowledge his culpability in burying her.
7. An interrupted narrative form that relies on multiple methods—inserted documents, letters, dreams, fragments of the story told by several narrators—to tell the tale.