The Role of Gothic Literature in the Classroom

Amy Dole
Fall 2008

Honors Thesis
*************************
PASS WITH DISTINCTION

Advisor: Barbara Monroe
Department of English
College of Liberal Arts
TO THE UNIVERSITY HONORS COLLEGE:

As thesis advisor for Amy Dole,

I have read this paper and find it satisfactory.

[Signature]
Thesis Advisor

9/26/2008
Date
Précis

Learning does not need to be painful or dull. If it is, then there is a problem. Unfortunately, many secondary students do not enjoy taking English classes. However, it is in these secondary English classes that students acquire foundational reading and writing skills. Some students may never take another English class after completing their public school education. Taking this into consideration, secondary English teachers are faced with the challenge of luring students into literature and to stirring a general interest in reading and writing. The key to stirring this interest is to create a curriculum that is relevant and interesting to students.

The question to ask when creating an effective unit is: “What are adolescents interested in and how can their interests be incorporated into the classroom?” After observing what adolescents are interested in, it is apparent that there is a great interest in what is considered to be Goth. This interest in the Gothic does not exclude their reading materials. As I was browsing through the Young Adult literature section of a bookstore, there was an overwhelming number of books that contained the word “vampire” in the title. There were also books pertaining to magic, fairies, ghosts, and general horror stories. Adolescents find the Gothic appealing. My response to adolescents’ interest in the Gothic is to create a unit that focuses on Gothic literature and challenges students to think critically about relevant issues that appear in the texts selected.

In order to create a unit that focuses on Gothic literature, some of the background and history of Gothic literature must be examined. After researching Gothic literature and identifying defining characteristics of the genre, these findings can be used to determine which texts to use in the unit and what to teach students about the genre. After
establishing what to teach in the unit, it is time to move onto how material in the unit will be taught. The starting place for discovering the how behind teaching was to explore the psychology of learning. Additionally, successful teaching methods used by other teachers must be considered. Then, knowledge about Gothic literature, learning theory, and English education teaching methods can be applied to create a unit that focuses on Gothic literature.

Although an anticipated outcome, a unit that focuses on Gothic literature is not meant to simply intrigue or entertain students. Several very serious themes appear repeatedly throughout Gothic literature that students need to consider. Depression and hope is one such theme. A friend questioned my desire to teach Gothic literature asking, “Why would you want to teach that? Teens are already so depressed!” That is precisely the reason why I want to teach Gothic literature. Many of the characters in Gothic literature are desperate, lonely, and depressed. Gothic literature is dark and its darkness conceals heavy issues. By teaching Gothic literature, light can be shone into the darkness to help students as they think critically about important life issues, particularly depression.

Gothic literature is interesting to adolescents and, within the classroom, can stir students' interest in reading and writing. With careful application of certain teaching methods and learning theory, Gothic literature can be used as a tool to help students develop stronger literacy skills. Most importantly, using Gothic literature in the classroom provides students with an opportunity to address important issues that follow them outside of the classroom.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Précis ..................................................................................................................2

Introduction.........................................................................................................5

The Origin of Gothic Literature .........................................................................11

Selecting Gothic Literature for the Classroom ..............................................19

Texts Selected and Rationale ............................................................................28

Strategies and Methods ....................................................................................34

Gothic Literature Unit Framework ......................................................................41

Final Discussion ................................................................................................80

Works Cited .......................................................................................................83
Introduction

Within recent years, adolescents have become particularly drawn to what is considered Gothic. The books on the shelves in the Young Adult sections of bookstores reflect significant adolescent interest in the Gothic. A simple glance at the titles and cover graphics of popular Yong Adult novels reveals the Gothic content inside. Examples of such titles include: *The City of Bones, The Vampire Diaries: The Awakening and the Struggle, Ghostgirl, Wicked Lovely,* and *Kissing Coffins* ("Books"). Adolescents are drawn to Gothic literature. In *Approaches to Teaching Gothic Fiction*, Hoeveler and Heller confirm adolescent interest in Gothic literature as they describe how critics have become more interested in Gothic literature:

The recent explosion of criticism about the Gothic has responded to the popularity of a genre whose appeal, from its inception in the late eighteenth century, has not lessened, but if anything, accelerated, given such phenomena as the best-selling fiction of Stephen King and Anne Rice; the success of mystery, horror, and science fiction in general; and the rise of Goth music and culture among teenagers. (Hoeveler and Heller 3)

Adolescents enjoy reading Gothic literature. According to critics like Donald R. Gallo, this enjoyment is reason enough to incorporate Gothic literature into the classroom. He argues that he would like to see "the love of reading’ listed as the number one goal of the English curriculum at every grader level in all school systems" (Gallo 35). In order to foster "the love of reading," teachers must select texts that interest their students. Using Gothic literature can help students grow in their love of reading because adolescents already show such a strong interest in the Gothic.
Adolescent interest in the Gothic is not merely surface-level. There is speculation that adolescents are interested in the Gothic because it has become an escape. The idea of using the Gothic as an escape is expressed by teen interviewed in a recent article entitled, “You Just Can’t Kill It.” She says that, “to me, Goth is like an escape” (Wilson). Often, teens that appear to be part of the Goth subculture feel alienated from their peers: “It [the Gothic] remains a visual shortcut through which young persons of a certain damp emotional climate can broadcast to the other members of their tribe who they are. Goth is a look that simultaneously expresses and cures its own sense of alienation” (Wilson). There are deeper issues behind adolescents’ interest in the Gothic. Perhaps there is even a correlation between adolescent depression and adolescent interest in the Gothic.

Considering the astounding number of adolescents that struggle with depression, Gothic literature is not only something that adolescents want, but it is also something that they need. Depression, suicide, hope, loneliness, and isolation form society are recurring themes throughout gothic literature, particularly in the texts I have selected for my Gothic literature unit. These themes create a meaningful connection between the texts and the students. Depression is only becoming increasingly more common in adolescents.

According to Mental Health America Resource Center online: “Adolescent depression is increasing at an alarming rate. Recent surveys indicate that as many as one in five teens suffers form clinical depression” (“Factsheet: Depression in Teens”). Another online resource, Focus Adolescent Services, concurs that teen depression is increasing: “over the past 50 years, depression has become more common and is now recognized at increasingly younger ages” (“Teen Depression”). Adolescent depression is an issue of increasing concern.
Depression can lead to suicide, and the rate of adolescent suicide has increased dramatically: “Each year, almost 5,000 young people, ages 15 to 24, kill themselves. The rate of suicide for this age group has nearly tripled since 1960, making it the third leading cause of death in adolescents” (“Factsheet: Depression in Teens”). These facts create a sense of urgency; depression and suicide must be regarded as pressing issues and cannot go ignored. Although these issues are heavy and rarely easy to discuss, they are relevant and need to be discussed in a meaningful and applicable way. Since depression is such a dominant theme in literature, especially in Gothic literature, it only makes sense to address this issue in the English classroom. Gothic literature is dark and its characters are often depressed. This portrayal of depression makes Gothic literature relevant to students. It is my intention to discuss Gothic literature in such a way that hope is presented in contrast to the depression in the texts.

The issue of adolescent depression is of great significance to me because in high school I was among the many adolescents who struggle with depression. At one point I even became close to committing suicide. I am grateful that I got the help I needed. However, I did not feel that help was readily available. After getting help, I became very open with others about my struggle with depression and was surprised to discover that many other students my age could personally relate. Since depression is such a prevalent struggle among adolescents, students should be able to get help easily and feel confident about the resources available to them. They need to be told that seeking help does not show weakness, but instead shows strength. If discussions, readings, or written responses about depression in the English classroom push one student away from the brink of
suicide, then the unit has been successful. Sometimes teaching can be a matter of life and death.

Teaching a unit that focuses on Gothic literature can be successful because Gothic literature is both interesting and relevant to students. The success of Gothic literature in the classroom is reinforced by Hoeveler and Heller in *Approaches to Teaching Gothic Fiction*: “Instructors will be rewarded, we think, with teaching works that excite, engage, and provoke students to ask...What is the meaning of life? And how can we understand and accept death?” (Hoeveler and Heller 38). Although these questions about the meaning of life and the acceptance of death do not match the issues I seek to discuss in my unit, they reinforce the idea that Gothic literature can fulfill multiple purposes. Literacy development is a crucial objective in the English classroom, but effective teaching also challenges students in a way that reaches beyond the realm of academia. Gothic literature can intrigue students and be a valuable tool to improve reading and writing skills. However, it fulfills the even greater purpose of provoking students to think critically about real life issues, promoting personal growth and development.

Creative Challenge

Based on the defining characteristics of Gothic literature, create an effective teaching unit focusing on Gothic literature that contains short stories by Edgar Allan Poe and Mary Shelley’s novel *Frankenstein*. The unit should not only examine these challenging texts, but also address issues relevant to students that appear in Gothic literature.
Methodology

In the first segment of my research, I examined literary history and criticism in order to gain an understanding of the origin and development of Gothic literature. Much of my research on Gothic literature was conducted through the critical reading of primary material. I read original works by Horace Walpole, Mary Shelley, Edgar Allan Poe, and a collection of German ghost stories in order to obtain information firsthand about these works and their authors. I analyzed the similarities between these works in order to form a general definition of Gothic literature. I also examined the differences between these works to identify differences that reveal how Gothic literature has changed over time. I then conducted secondary research, consulting literary scholars to confirm my findings about the characteristics of Gothic literature. Often times the credibility of these scholars was confirmed in the way they reiterated the same ideas about Gothic literature, or even referenced each other. These methods are typical for research in English studies.

It is difficult to develop a concrete definition of an entire genre of literature without devoting years of research to the study. As a result, I synthesized my findings about Gothic literature by simply focusing on several key characteristics portrayed throughout the genre, using the first Gothic novel as a guide.

Shifting from Gothic literature to actually teaching Gothic literature, I applied a different research tactic, one consistently used in the field of Education. Trained in that field, I have developed my own theoretically informed pedagogy, which is reflected in the unit that I have created here. My aim for this project was to create a unit focusing on Gothic literature that I could actually teach someday. I could have focused my research on what other teachers have done when teaching Edgar Allan Poe’s works or
Frankenstein. However, I already had themes and ideas in mind for the unit that I thought would challenge students to think critically, rather than just perform literary analysis for its own sake. I did not want to base my unit on someone else’s. I simply wanted to learn what kinds of methods and philosophies I could apply to my unit on Gothic literature that would make it effective in the classroom.

As a result of my desire to create an original and effective unit, I researched the how behind teaching rather than the what. I wanted to be sure that this unit would be successful, so I studied research on learning from the field of educational and cognitive psychology. Based on my findings about how students learn, I explored methods, activities, and philosophies that were the most consistent with those currently advocated in the field of English Education and applied them to my unit. The ultimate result of my research was a thirty day unit that focuses on Gothic literature in a way that interests students and challenges them both academically and beyond the realm of academia.
Gothic literature is often associated with ghastly images of vampires, skeletons, death, gory violence, and utter terror. There is validity in this association. However, it represents what Gothic literature has become, not necessarily what it started out as. Therefore, it is important to study the origination of Gothic literature in order to attain a clear understanding of it. Most literary experts credit Horace Walpole as “the father of the genre” when he wrote The Castle of Otranto, which “can reasonably be called the first Gothic novel” (Spector 83 and Haggerty 4).

The root of Walpole’s inspiration is surprisingly very physical. Prior to writing the first Gothic novel, Walpole preoccupied his time with an obsession for Gothic architecture. In 1749, Horace Walpole bought a small farm along the Thames River called Strawberry Hill and transformed it into a medieval castle. He did so by acquiring as many “Gothic fragments” or medieval artifacts as he could (Bleiler viii). The Strawberry Hill castle enchanted the public, and many wrote to Walpole, asking if they could visit. According to E.F. Bleiler in Three Gothic Novels,

The significance of Strawberry Hill and its furnishings is that it marks the first important occasion that anyone had waxed enthusiastic over the life and artifacts of the Middle Ages. Before Walpole the word “gothic” was almost always a synonym for rudeness, barbarousness, crudity, coarseness and lack of taste. After Walpole, the word assumed two new major meanings: first, vigorous, bold, heroic and ancient, and second, quaint, charming, romantic (Bleiler ix).
In short, before even writing the first Gothic novel, Walpole changed the connotation of
the word “Gothic” and stirred the public's interest in it. This newfound interest paved the
way for the first Gothic novel.

A dream, in addition to Strawberry Hill, was another source of inspiration for
Walpole’s novel. In their criticisms of Walpole, both Bleiler and Frank cite a letter that
Walpole wrote to William Cole in 1765. In this letter, Walpole retells a dream in which
he found himself in a castle (perhaps even Strawberry Hill), and

on the uppermost banister of a great staircase I saw a gigantic hand in armour. In
the evening I sat down, and began to write .... The work grew in my hands, and I
grew fond of it....In short, I was so engrossed with my Tale, which I completed in
less than two months. (qtd. in Bleiler xi; Frank ed. Douglas 439)

The product of this inspiration was *The Castle of Otranto*. The gigantic armor
from Walpole's dream appears almost immediately in the novel. The story begins at a
wedding ceremony, but the groom is killed before even reaching the wedding party. He is
crushed to death by a gigantic helmet as discovered by his father Manfred: “He beheld
his child dashed to pieces and almost buried under an enormous helmet, a hundred times
more large than any casque ever made for human being, and shaded with a
proportionable quantity of black feathers” (Walpole ed. Bleiler 28).

The complicated story that follows takes place in a castle much like Strawberry
Hill and is filled with romance, the unveiling of true identity, revenge, and prophecy.
Manfred, the father of the belated groom, is instantly identified as the villain. He seeks to
further his family line by divorcing his wife and taking his son’s betrothed as his new
one. Isabella, the would-be bride, flees with the help of a mysterious young peasant when
she discovers Manfred’s intentions and takes refuge in a nearby church. The peasant is
found by Manfred who had earlier accused him of magically killing the groom with the
helmet. He sentences the peasant to death when he discovers that the peasant helped
Isabella escape. The peasant asks to see a priest before he dies, and the priest is found to
be his father and a noble count. As the peasant is about to be executed, an unknown
knight and his men approach the castle. The knight demands Isabella be given over and
claims that he is the representative of her rightful guardian. He also accuses Manfred of
acquiring the castle of Otranto through foul means, demanding that the castle and the title
of lordship be handed over to the closest in kin to Alfonso. In a twist of events, a vision
reveals that the peasant is the rightful heir of Alfonso. Evidently, Manfred’s grandfather
had poisoned Alfonso and drafted a fake will in order to attain the castle of Otranto and
the title of lordship over it. A saint had discovered this fraud, and prophesied that one
day, when the line of Manfred had no male heir, the rightful heir of Alfonso would come
to avenge this wrong and reclaim the castle.

_The Castle of Otranto_ was very different from other novels of its time. Walpole
was well-aware of this and did not even claim authorship of the novel when it was first
published. In his preface to the novel, he claims that the novel was found in the library of
an ancient Catholic family and that he translated it from “the purest Italian” into English
(Walpole ed. Bleiler 17). He then goes on to apologize for the author due to the emphasis
on the supernatural throughout the novel:

Miracles, visions, necromancy, dreams, and other preternatural events are
exploded now even from romances. That was not the case when our author wrote;
much less when the story itself is supposed to have happened. Belief in every kind
of prodigy was so established in those dark ages, that an author would not be faithful to the manners of the times, who should omit all mention of them

(Walpole ed. Bleiler 18).

Walpole apologizes to readers because the supernatural is such a dominant feature in the novel, but reasons that this is consistent with the time in which he claims the novel was written. It would simply not be right to omit the supernatural.

Although not received well by all, *The Castle of Otranto* was a success with the general public. This made Walpole bolder and he reveals his authorship in the second publication of the novel. Walpole knew that this novel was written in a style very different from that of his peers. In fact, that was his intention. In the preface to the second publication of *The Castle of Otranto*, Walpole describes the novel as “an attempt to blend two kinds of romance, the ancient and the modern.” He goes on to explain that the ancient romance was made up entirely of “imagination and improbability,” while the modern was a “strict adherence to common life.” Walpole sought to reconcile the two kinds of romance by conducting “the moral agents in his drama according to the rules of probability; in short, to make them think, speak, and act, as it might be supposed mere men and women would do in extraordinary positions” (Walpole ed. Bleiler 21). Walpole wanted to depict average characters in supernatural circumstances. He concludes the preface by emphasizing the originality of his work: “I might have pleaded that, having created a new species of romance, I was at liberty to lay down what rules I thought fit for the conduct of it” (Walpole ed. Bleiler 25). In this statement, Walpole depicts himself as a literary pioneer and challenges anyone who criticizes his work.
There were indeed criticisms. According to Spector, Walpole’s novel was well-received by the public, but found repulsive by the “official guardians of taste” (Spector 9). In a mid-eighteenth century criticism from the Monthly Catalogue of the Critical Review, the reviewer writes, “The publication of any work, at this time, in England composed of such rotten materials is a phenomenon we cannot account for.” The reviewer proceeds to rail against the Gothic supernaturalism present in the novel (qtd. in Spector 91). After the second publication of The Castle of Otranto, a critic in another journal entitled the Monthly Review, balked at Walpole: “It is, indeed, more than strange, that an Author, of a refined and polished genius, should be an advocate for re-establishing the barbarous superstitions of Gothic devilism” (qtd. in Spector 10). The novel was not as popular as Walpole had hoped it would be.

The Castle of Otranto is not regarded as a literary masterpiece. Rather, it is noted as a work of experimentation that created a new genre. Works of higher quality within the genre were yet to come. The Castle of Otranto gave birth to something great, but was not great itself. It did create a foundation for the genre of Gothic literature and set a standard of defining characteristics that are portrayed throughout the genre. All texts in the genre portray at least one of the defining characteristics present in The Castle of Otranto.

Walpole’s novel is considered to be fragmented, contradictory, and the events unlikely. Critic Robert Kiely concurs and, as quoted in Gothic Manners and the Classic English Novel, argues that “The Castle of Otranto is therefore filled with ‘unnatural acts performed by improbable characters in unlikely places’” (qtd. in Wiesenfarth 4). Kiely reasons that a possible explanation for the element of confusion in Gothic literature is that “it was written from confusion” (qtd. in Wiesenfarth 4).
However, this fragmentation is not necessarily a negative thing. One criticism in *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form* addresses this aspect when pointing out the challenge Walpole faced when attempting to "blend two kinds of romance": "What matter of prose narrative most effectively embodies a nightmare vision? The difficulty in answering this question is evident in all Gothic novels—one critic says they exhibit 'an almost continuous display of divisive tension, paradox, and uncertain focus'" (Haggerty 3).

What was considered a flaw in Walpole's novel has become one of Gothic literature's defining characteristics. Gothic literature is quite often confusing, fragmented, and unrealistic. Haggerty also quotes critic Kristeva who describes "flashes, enigmas, short cuts, incompletion, tangles and cuts" as characteristic to Gothic literature (Haggerty 44). Robert Hume, quoted in *Gothic Manners and the Classic English Novel*, argues that this intentional confusion has a greater purpose: "The reason for this confusion may be that the Gothic novel is 'one kind of treatment of the psychological problem of evil'" (qtd. in Wiesenfarth 4). The fragmentation of characters, plot, and emotion has become a defining characteristic of Gothic literature.

Walpole, as the father of Gothic literature, lays the foundation for other defining characteristics of the genre, the most important characteristic being the presence of the supernatural. Throughout Gothic literature, from Walpole to modern works, the supernatural is an essential characteristic. *The Castle of Otranto* is filled with supernatural elements including: ghosts, portraits of ancestors coming to life, fulfillment of prophecy, reference to magic and enchantment, a giant appearing in a vision, and a dead hermit existing in the form of a skeleton. No wonder Walpole apologizes for the excessive presence of the supernatural in his first preface to the novel!
Another important characteristic found in *The Castle of Otranto* and throughout the genre is the aesthetic of the setting. Certain aesthetics of the setting remain consistent throughout Gothic literature, even though the location of the settings varies. The setting has a mysterious darkness and is more than simply the scene or location a story takes place. Rather, it communicates an important message about the characters and plot and also has a certain emotional effect on the reader. Haggerty in *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form* reinforces this idea by referring to a particular scene in *The Castle of Otranto*. In it, Isabella is frantically trying to flee from Manfred. Haggerty says that Walpole uses the techniques of "darkness, confusion, silence, and fear—to construct a simple Gothic scene" (Haggerty 17). Walpole’s depiction of this scene is especially unique to his contemporaries because “Walpole does not have to insist on the intensity of Isabella’s emotions; he has depicted them by means of his depiction of setting” (Haggerty 17). This aesthetic of the setting is another ground-breaking characteristic in *The Castle of Otranto* that continues to be a key element throughout the rest of Gothic literature.

According to Haggerty, the surface or physical aspects of the setting are overshadowed by the reader’s emotional response “Walpole has begun to answer the challenge he set for Gothic fiction by structuring a scene so as to make response primary and meaning subjective” (Haggerty 18). Therefore, the Gothic setting plays a different role than the setting does in other genres. It not only establishes the location of the story, but reveals more about characters and events while also generating an emotional response from the reader. Unique to Gothic literature, the setting creates dark undertones. These undertones create a subliminal emotional response form the reader since the dark setting evokes a heaviness or sense of mystery. The setting of this novel is a dark and sinister
castle. Based on this prototype, such settings are depicted in subsequent Gothic works in order to create dark undertones that are characteristic of Gothic literature.

Initiated by Walpole, the emotional response generated through the Gothic setting has evolved throughout the genre so that the intended emotional response to Gothic literature has become one of horror. Mary Shelley indicates her desire to create this response in the introduction to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*:

I busied myself *to think of a story*—a story to rival those which had excited us to this task. One which would speak to the mysterious fears of our nature and awaken thrilling horror—one to make the reader dread to look round, to curdle the blood, and quicken the beatings of the heart. If I did not accomplish these things, my ghost story would be unworthy of its name (Shelley ed. Karbiener 4).

Shelley would not be satisfied unless she created a story that would strike utter terror into her readers. The aspect of horror, rooted in Walpole’s original attempt to generate an emotional response in readers, has become a defining characteristic of Gothic literature.

*The Castle of Otranto*, as the first Gothic novel, created certain standards for Gothic literature. The characteristics from this novel that became essential to Gothic literature are: fragmentation, the supernatural, Gothic setting, and an emotional response from the readers (usually horror). Many times, the first of something is not noted for its greatness. The true greatness is in the experimentation itself. Walpole sought to create a new kind of romance by blending the old and the new. The short term product was a less than great novel, but the long-term result was an entire genre of literature that continues to captivate readers more than two hundred years later!
Selecting Gothic Literature for the Classroom

There are several contrasting views among English teachers about which texts are appropriate to teach, specifically about whether or not to teach classic literature. This argument is relevant to the subject of Gothic literature in the classroom because earlier texts in the genre are regarded as classics. Such texts that appear in my teaching unit include *Frankenstein* and short stories by Edgar Allan Poe. There is a certain elite connotation associated with classic literature. It is considered to be high quality and superior to all other texts. A traditionalist who clings to the classics even claims that, “Without the Canon [collection of classic literature], we cease to think” (Bloom qtd. in Pike 355). Others argue in opposition to the classics, believing that forcing students to read them can cause students to loathe reading and writing into adulthood. Still, another group falls somewhere in the middle. These educators view both classic literature and young adult literature as valuable. They seek to teach both in such a way that the two kinds of literature complement each other, keeping students interested but challenged.

In an article entitled “The Canon in the Classroom: Students’ Experiences of Texts from Other Times,” Mark Pike emphasizes the importance of classic literature. He identifies the arguments presented against the classics and then illustrates that some negative aspects of the classics could actually strengthen students. One argument against the classics is that modern society is alienated from the problems and lifestyles of the characters in these texts (Pike 357). Pike argues that this alienation is actually helpful to readers. Readers are forced to change the way they think about a text when the text was written many years ago in an unfamiliar context. Pike says that, “When people speak of canonical authors and the literary heritage, they are usually referring to writers who inhabited a very different world from their own. To read such writers is to read diachronically across time”
Therefore, students must think critically when reading the classics, which supports the argument that the classics are a vital component in the English classroom.

Additionally, reading works from an unfamiliar context can broaden students’ views of the world. Wolfgang Iser is quoted about this very idea in Pike’s article: “it [classic literature] is able to transcend the restrictions of time and written word and to give to people of all ages and backgrounds the chance to enter other worlds . . .” (Iser qtd. in Pike 358). Pike even argues that modern literature, including young adult literature, containing problems and addressing relatable issues can even be harmful to students (357). Hans Robert Jauss, as quoted in the article, echoes this idea that modern texts, hinting at young adult literature, do not adequately challenge students: “It is because literary texts are indeterminate that they invite personal involvement. Works that force no horizontal change entertain rather than educate, because ‘no turn toward the horizon of yet-unknown experience is demanded’” (Jauss qtd. in Pike 360). Perhaps this is what traditionalist Bloom meant when making the statement, “Without the Canon, we cease to think” (Bloom qtd. in Pike 355). Incorporating the classics in English curricula is important because these texts challenge students to critically think about the unfamiliar.

However, there are educators who disagree. They believe that classic literature can cause more harm than good in the classroom. Of this belief, Donald R. Gallo argues against classic literature in his appropriately titled article “How Classics Create an Alliterate Society.” He even poses the idea he heard from a student that “a classic is a book that ‘requires a teacher to figure out a glimmer of what it says’” (Gallo 33). Gallo thinks back to when he was a student in public school and was required to read classics, recalling the success of his classmates. His friends “Richard and Tony and others like them, badly burned by their experiences, shriveled up and swore never to read another
book in their lives" (Gallo 34). These students, among others, were hurt by classic literature, rather than strengthened by it.

Gallo argues that an emphasis on teaching the classics has created an alliterate society. There are a lot of students like Richard and Tony who no longer want to read because they were forced “during their teenage words to read literary works that most of them dislike so much that they have no desire whatsoever to continue those experiences into adulthood” (Gallo 34). It is amazing to think students’ experiences with the classics could be so awful that they no longer want to read at all! One argument against the classics is that secondary students are not ready for them yet. As Gallo remembers, “I was still a typical teenager interested in teenage things. The classics are not about TEENAGE concerns! They are about ADULT issues” (Gallo 34). Therefore, classics are not appropriate to teach because they are irrelevant to students.

This opposition to classic literature leads to the other side of Gallo’s argument. He asserts that young adult literature should replace the classics in school because students actually enjoy reading them. Critics Susan P. Santoli and Mary Elaine Wagner concur in an article entitled “Promoting Young Adult Literature: The Other ‘Real’ Literature.” They argue:

Many teachers continue to assign only classic literature because of the belief in timelessness. There is evidence that the use of young adult literature in the secondary classroom can increase the chances that students will participate in satisfying literature experiences, read more, and become lifelong readers.

(Santoli and Wagner 65).
Unlike the classics, young adult literature contains characters and problems that students can relate to. He justifies replacing the classics with young adult literature by arguing that the primary objective of teachers should be “the love of reading” (Gallo 35). In order to foster a love of reading, students should be able to read what they want to read because “What teens want more than anything else from novels is entertainment” (Gallo 35). Young adult literature should replace classics because students enjoy the books, and they are written by authors “who understand teenage readers” (Gallo 37). In other words, young adult literature is both interesting and personally relevant.

Another group of educators views both classic literature and young adult literature as significant and tries to teach both. A particular teaching method pertaining to this is pairing. This is when a young adult literature book is selected to complement a classic text, or even the other way around. In his article, Gallo suggests pairing as a suitable compromise, even though he would rather that young adult literature simply replace the classics (Gallo 38). Pike is concerned that young adult literature lacks meaning, while Gallo is concerned that classic literature is not interesting enough. By pairing the two together, there can be both interest and meaning. Joan F. Kaywell expresses this idea in Adolescent Literature as a Compliment to the Classics, “By using young adult novels in conjunction with the classics, teachers can expose students to reading that becomes relevant and meaningful” (Kaywell ix). Young adult literature can make the classics more interesting as Kaywell divulges: “It’s all in the presentation, and adolescent literature can help make our teaching of the classics more appealing” (Kaywel x). Why settle for one or the other when there can be both intrigue and critical thinking? Presented carefully, this might be possible with just the classics or just young adult literature. However, the
interest and the critical thinking intensify when the two kinds of literature are paired together.

I know that the Poe’s works and Shelley’s *Frankenstein* can be very difficult for most students to get through, especially *Frankenstein*. However, I think that if I paired these works with Gothic young adult books, these classics will make more sense and be more meaningful. In “Monsters' Ink: How Walter Dean Myers Made Frankenstein Fun,” Nathan Philips relates his experience teaching *Frankenstein*. He explains his purpose for teaching the novel,

I wanted my students to see that literature can be a way for us to discuss important issues. My purpose in reading Frankenstein was not to focus on its historical importance or context as a Romantic and Gothic novel, but to point out the connection that the book had to my students' lives. (Phillips 87)

Although my unit focuses on Gothic literature and I want students to recognize the key elements of the genre, I would like to use *Frankenstein* as a means to address relevant life issues. Phillips was excitedly relating the themes in the novel to current issues, but “toward the end of our study of the book, when I could see that interest was waning, I carefully considered how I could keep them from forever hating it” (Phillips 88). His solution was to pair it with a young adult novel and read the novel out loud in class. This was very successful. Students became excited about the new novel, and then began to connect it more with *Frankenstein*, increasing their interest in *Frankenstein*. Philips’ evaluation of this experience pairing young adult literature with a classic is positive: “if I build a bridge using YA literature, I know my students will cross it enthusiastically” (Phillips 89). In this way, young adult literature is used to grab students’ interest and lure
them in. Students are so taken with the book that they hardly notice that they have
crossed the chasm that distances them from classic literature and are headed straight
toward it.

Out of the three perspectives on Classic literature, I think that it is important to
incorporate both Classic literature and young adult literature into the English curriculum.
Pike makes a valid point that Classic literature forces students to reach beyond what they
know and gain a better understanding of the world. Classics are important and
substantial. It takes a lot of work to teach them effectively, but there is no reason to do
away with them completely. Gallo often makes the valid argument that “the love of
reading” should be an objective of high priority in the English classroom. Students like to
read young adult literature, which is a great reason to use it in the classroom. They can
also relate more to the characters and issues addressed in these texts. Classical Literature
also has a lot to offer, and teaching the two kinds of literature side by side multiplies the
efficacy of teaching literature. The outcome of using both is ideal; students actually enjoy
reading and are forced to step outside of what it familiar.

In my unit, I have carefully selected a variety of classic texts and young adult
literature texts within the genre of Gothic literature. They are meant to complement each
other. They young adult literature creates a bridge to the classic literature, while the
classic literature challenges students to think critically. Using both kinds of texts clarifies
the relevance and significance of the issues addressed in these works.

The way that I sequence the texts in my unit is a response to the theories of Lev
Vygotsky, a psychologist of the learning process. According to him, students learn best
when actively assisted and instructed through the “zone of proximal development”
(Wilhelm 10). The "zone of proximal development" is the cognitive state in which learning can take place. "Anything that the child can learn with the assistance and support of a teacher, peers, and the instructional environment is said to lie within the ZPD" (Wilhelm 16). The key to effective teaching is to give students tasks that are challenging, but can be accomplished with help, and practice these tasks until students can perform them without any help at all. Then, the next task given to students can be more difficult since the students' ZPD has expanded.

Scaffolding is a teaching method based on Vygotsky's theory of the ZPD. Instead of throwing students in to difficult and completely foreign tasks, scaffolding builds on what students already know. Wilhelm explains that in scaffolding, "The student is seen as constructing an edifice that represents her cognitive abilities. The construction starts from the ground up, on the foundation of what is already known and can be done. The new is built on top of the known" (Wilhelm 18). In other words, students begin by activating the knowledge they already have and build on this knowledge by accomplishing progressively harder and less familiar tasks. "Scaffolding must begin from what is near to the students' experience and build to what is further from their experience" (Wilhelm 19). Using the method of scaffolding, teachers build from the known to the unknown, placing more difficult texts later in the unit. Doing so will gradually build students' academic literacy, rather than straining students by assigning texts that lie beyond their ZPD. It would be ineffective for teachers to assign tasks that students have no experience to contribute to or use as a foundation to draw from.

An example of ineffective instruction is assigning a text that lies beyond the students' ZPD. If students cannot read and understand the text even when they have help,
they get frustrated instead of being met with an accomplishable challenge (Wilhelm 17). This does not mean that students will never be able to understand or gain from studying that difficult text. They can be successful with the same text if their teacher builds up to it, rather than throwing it at them before students have built up their knowledge and expanded their ZPD. This is why I do not begin the unit with the text *Frankenstein*. It is a difficult book to read, even for those beyond a high school education. Instead, *Frankenstein* is the last text in the unit because it is the most difficult.

I open the unit with a modern Gothic young adult novel. When I hook students with a book they are enjoying, I begin to increase the level of difficulty in the texts we read. *Twilight* is an easy read, but fascinating. I have students read “The Fall of the House of Usher” after it. This Poe short story is more challenging to read, but still contains the excitement and suspense of the supernatural, while the new element of Gothic setting is also present. Then, we move to “The Pit and the Pendulum.” This short story flows more easily than “The Fall of the House of Usher” in that the sentences are shorter and more direct. However, it is more difficult because it is denser in content, its dark undertone is more intense, and it contains the psychological element of Gothic literature. At this point, our discussions will become deeper. Rather than simply trying to have students connect with the text like I do early in the unit, I want students to think critically about the issues being presented in the text and how it relates to them. Then we will move to *Monster* and *Frankenstein*, a pair of novels that complement each other.

In order to create an effective unit, the texts used must be carefully selected. Ideally, texts form both classic literature and young adult literature are incorporated because each kind of literature can contribute something valuable to the unit. The
sequencing of the texts used in the unit is also an important factor to consider. The most
difficult texts should not be placed first in the unit because students may not have
expanded their zones of proximal development enough that these texts can be studied
without frustration. A good way to begin the unit is to start with a young adult literature
text that easily grabs students' attention and activates their knowledge with a familiar
context. Then, as the unit progresses, more difficult texts can be assigned and the
students' ZDP will expand. Their knowledge is gradually being built up. Hopefully,
students will find themselves enjoying the texts, even the more difficult ones, and will not
even realize how much they have learned.
Texts Selected and Rationale

Twilight (Stephanie Meyer)

This modern young adult novel is the first in a popular series. The main character is Bella, a seventeen year old who moves to a small town. She meets new people, including the mysterious Edward Cullen. At first she thinks Edward hates her and is confused when he supernaturally saves her life. Their complicated relationship develops into a not-so-typical teenage romance when Bella discovers that Edward is a vampire.

This book is very popular among adolescents. It is the opening text in this unit, largely because I want to captivate the students with something I'm confident they will actually enjoy reading. It contains the Gothic aspect of vampirism, but is presented in a clean and appropriate way. Many vampire novels are explicit sexually and graphically. While this novel describes vampirism in detail and is a romance, it is still appropriate to teach. Unlike other texts in the unit that contain multiple characteristics of Gothic literature, this novel is less complicated. Little emphasis is put on Gothic setting, psychological and emotional appeal, and does not blatantly address heavy issues. This makes it a great text to use to ease into more difficult ones, scaffolding our way up to them by studying this book first. It appeals mostly to females, but I am crafting my discussions and activities in a way that can make the book fun for both genders.

“The Fall of the House of Usher” (Edgar Allan Poe)

Edgar Allan Poe greatly influenced Gothic literature, and I feel it is important that his works play a prominent role in this unit. “The Fall of the House of Usher” is told by a narrator who is going to visit his childhood friend. The friend is dying from a mysterious illness and his sister is also dying of the same disease or curse. She dies while the narrator
is visiting and they discover on a stormy night that she was entombed alive. She makes her way upstairs to get revenge. Both of them die, which results in the fall of the House of Usher.

Out of Poe’s short stories, I selected “The Fall of the House of Usher” because it is especially rich with characteristics of the Gothic setting. The supernatural has a strong presence in this story and is enhanced by the characteristic of Gothic setting. This is ideal because students have already learned about the supernatural element in *Twilight*, and the fact that the supernatural and the Gothic setting are so connected in this story will make introducing a new aspect of Gothic literature a natural transition. Easing students into Poe, while also introducing a new aspect of Gothic literature will help create an effective bridge from young adult literature to classic literature that students will not mind crossing. The potentially confusing psychological aspect of other Poe works does not have a strong presence in this story, although it is implied in the questioning of Roderick Usher’s sanity. The subtle presence of the psychological makes using “The Fall of the House of Usher” a great transition into Poe’s more complicated short story “The Pit and the Pendulum.”

“The Pit and the Pendulum” (Edgar Allan Poe)

This terrifying short story is about a prisoner during the Spanish Inquisition. He finds himself in a very dark room with a pit in the middle of it. He awakens later to find himself strapped as a pendulum with a blade swings above him, getting closer with every swing. He manages to free himself by letting the rats chew off his ropes. Then death seems to take a different approach toward him. The narrator feels desperate and considers jumping to his death using the pit in the room.
Once students have crossed the bridge into classic literature, I want to take them deeper into Poe. This work is best described as haunting and is going to be a challenge to teach. It will take great effort to keep students from running back over to the other side of the bridge when reading this terrifying and rather fragmented piece. I will introduce and focus on the psychological and emotional aspect of Gothic literature at this point in the unit, while also drawing from what students already know about the supernatural and Gothic setting. I especially want to incorporate this work because hope, depression, and suicide are important themes presented in it. I feel that these themes must be addressed in the classroom because teen depression is such a pressing issue in current society. My goal is to present the story and the themes in such a way that hope prevails over suicide and students are forced to think critically about this heavy issue.

*Monster* (Frank Peretti)

A couple goes hiking, but the woman is taken away by a strange creature. There are rumors about a creature similar to Bigfoot that lives in the woods and Reed, the woman’s husband, exhausts every option in order to find his wife. Meanwhile, his wife Beck wakes up and finds herself with a group of strange creatures that are not as harmful as they seem. The creatures are apes that a group of scientists created with DNA, but the experiment had gone horribly wrong, and the scientists will do everything possible to cover up this mistake.

This is a great book to break up the challenging literature sandwiched on both sides of it in the unit. I will read this book out loud in class to keep students interested in the unit. It begins with a suspenseful and horrifying scene that could be considered Gothic. Like *Frankenstein*, the idea of a monster created by humans is central to the plot.
However, it is the creator who is the true monster in the end, not the creation. Pairing this book with *Frankenstein* will help students to better understand the themes presented in *Frankenstein*, particularly about what a monster is, and if it is necessarily supernatural. Categorizing this book as Gothic literature may be reaching. However, I think that it is still appropriate in the unit because it helps students better understand *Frankenstein*. We will examine the Gothic elements that appear in the beginning of the book, but focus primarily on *Frankenstein* when examining Gothic literature.

*Frankenstein* (Mary Shelley)

This famous work is the story of a young college student who has a potentially dangerous love for science. He is fascinated with the idea of creating life and secretly undergoes an experiment. He sews together parts from corpses and lightning sparks life into this creature. Victor Frankenstein soon regrets creating this “monster” and flees from it. The monster later catches up to him and tells his own story to Victor, including his desire for companionship. Victor agrees to create a companion for him, but changes his mind later. The monster becomes angry, and his outlet of this anger is fatal.

The story in this work is fascinating, as is the story about how Shelley became inspired to write it. It contains all of the aspects of Gothic literature that we have discussed so far and is written in a very sophisticated way. It also contains some very interesting and applicable themes. These include the concept of a monster, depression, and the danger of knowledge. Reading this work will undoubtedly challenge students because it is very complex and the language is unfamiliar. It may be the most difficult thing they have ever read. We will have to work through it together, and I am confident that with the right approach students can gain much from reading this work.
"The Outsider" (H.P. Lovecraft)

This is a short story selected from an anthology of Lovecraft's stories entitled *The Best of H. P. Lovecraft: Bloodcurdling Tales of Horror and the Macabre*. Little is known about the narrator of this story. He is unsure of his childhood and has never ventured beyond the dreary castle he lives in. He makes his way to a nearby tower and meets others, but they run in terror. Remaining behind, the narrator is also terrified and wonders what kind of creature scared the others away. He sees the horrifying creature and soon discovers that he is looking in a mirror.

This story is rich with the aesthetics of Gothic setting. It is dark, dreary, speaks of castles, forests, and decaying bones. The element of horror is also present as the suspense builds until the narrator discovers his identity. The suspenseful and short story is a great addition to this unit because it grabs the attention of the audience, drawing the audience in with suspense and the appeal of the mysterious horror. The story is especially well-suited for the unit because it addresses the question about monsters that is brought up in *Frankenstein*. Like the monster in *Frankenstein*, the narrator in "The Outsider" does not realize how his appearance terrifies others. The end portrays the realization and pain of being the outsider in a very profound way,

I know always that I am an outsider; a stranger in this century and among those who are still men. This I have known ever since I stretched my fingers to the abomination within the great gilded frame: stretched out my fingers and touched a cold and unyielding surface of polished glass. (Lovecraft 41)

In *Frankenstein*, the monster is startled and appalled when he sees a reflection of himself in a pond. This story can be used as another way to give the monster's point of view and
encourage more thought and discussion about *Frankenstein* and the relevant topic about monsters in society.
Strategies and Methods

I have been very deliberate in planning each day’s activities. I do not simply seek to fill up the class time. Everything in the day plan has a purpose. In this deliberate planning, I have sought to learn more about teaching strategies and methods that can better equip me to teach in my own classroom.

Frontloading

In my endeavor to learn more about the *why* and *how* behind teaching, I have discovered how important it is to prepare students before throwing a lot of new information or texts their way. Frontloading is an essential element to successful teaching, especially in an English class when examining challenging texts. According to *Strategic Reading*, frontloading is “a way to prepare, protect, and support students into the acquisition of new content and new ways of doing things” (Wilhelm, Baker, and Hackett 92). More specifically in the English classroom, “frontloading is a technique used by teachers to help readers access or build prior knowledge (both conceptual and procedural) so they can better comprehend and approach a new text or kind of task” (Wilhelm, Baker, and Hackett 96).

As a teacher, I cannot simply dive into a challenging text and expect my students to keep up with me, or be motivated to keep up. Wilhelm agrees, saying that without frontloading, “it is likely that they will fall flat on their faces” (Wilhelm, Baker, and Hackett 93). This is why I try to help students connect with the texts or concepts before they actually get fully acquainted with them. Kylene Beers echoes this idea in the practical handbook *When Kids Can’t Read: What Teachers Can Do*. She even contrasts teaching to Nike, “I constantly remind my undergraduate teacher-education students that
education is not a Nike commercial: you can’t say, ‘Just do it.’ Instead, we must show
students how to do it. This means that we’ve got to be very direct and explicit in strategy
instruction” (Beers 41). This strategy instruction includes frontloading.

One way of connecting students to the texts and concepts through frontloading is
to emphasize their relevance or purpose. Wilhelm asserts that “Our purpose frames and
drives our reading. Reading is a purposeful and meaningful activity and must be framed
as such” (Wilhelm, Baker, and Hackett 103). In other words, how can students feel
motivated to read the text if the purpose or relevance in doing so is not identified?

Frontloading can take on many forms. In my unit, I often frontload through quick-
writes, which are free-writes with a purpose (Wilhelm, Baker, and Hackett 111). I do this
in Day One of my unit when I ask students “What is Goth and why are teens so intrigued
by it?” According to Wilhelm, quick-writes can be used as a diagnostic tool to discern
what students know about a certain topic or concept (Wilhelm, Baker, and Hackett 111). I
also use quick-writes to simply get students thinking more about what they have read or
get them interested in what is ahead. In Day Thirteen I ask students to write about how
they view Roderick Usher in “The Fall of the House of Usher.” I pose the question in
such a way that undermines the character’s sanity to lead them along to our discussion
the following day. Then, in Day Fourteen I introduce the psychological element that is
present in Poe’s works. The question the day before had prepared them for this.

Similar to quick-writes is the method of surveying. The use of surveys is a helpful
frontloading tool because they “require students to articulate their own beliefs about a
certain topic” (Wilhelm, Baker, and Hackett 117). I ask students what they typically
associate the word “Goth” with, and then to rate their interest in the Gothic. I chose to use
a scale because scales can help students organize and visualize their thoughts (Beers 139). In this way, asking students their opinions or views about a topic can stir an interest in it.

Another method of frontloading is using drama. Although I do not incorporate skits into my unit, the frontloading method I use in Day Eleven could be considered part of this category. I will be very dramatic in the way that I decorate the classroom and will have wind noises and such in the background. This is, no doubt, theatrical. I do this to grab students’ attention and prepare them to learn about the new concept of Gothic setting. Role-playing is another way drama can be used as a frontloading method. In Strategic Reading, a teacher uses role-playing to recreate what Ellis Island was like in order to help her students connect to this time in history (Wilhelm, Baker, and Hackett 101). Drama can be a very effective method, but is also very difficult because it “depends on the attitudes and efforts of your students, as well as your own commitment” (Wilhelm, Baker, and Hackett 102). I would only use role-playing as a frontloading method if I was confident that my students would get into it.

“Tea Party,” or “Party Talk,” is a fun and interactive way to frontload the upcoming reading of a difficult text. It is an activity that “students from all grade levels enjoy” (Beers 95). It must be an effective tool because both Beers and Wilhelm incorporate a variation of this activity into both of their separate books. In this activity, phrases from a text are distributed to students on note cards. In Beers’ variation, key phrases are distributed to multiple students to show their importance. Students mingle around the classroom to see what is written on the other note cards (Beers 95). Then they brainstorm “communal ideas about plot, setting, characters, character relationships,
purposes, and arguments of the text” (Wilhelm, Baker, and Hackett 117). I prefer Beers’ version in which students brainstorm together in small groups first and then each group shares its ideas with the class in contrast to Wilhelm’s variation where students mingle alone and then brainstorm as an entire class. I use this frontloading strategy when introducing “The Pit and the Pendulum” on Day Fifteen.

Reading Activities

Not only is it important to prepare students before leading them into a difficult text, it is also crucial to make sure that they keep up along the way through the text. If there is nothing to push them along, chances are that many students will simply not read. Therefore it is necessary for teachers to facilitate activities that seek to maintain students’ interest in texts they are reading and also help them to better understand the texts.

One way to engage students in the texts while working through them is to have students create summaries or recall main ideas while they read. In her book *When Kids Can’t Read: What Teachers Can Do*, Beers dedicates a chapter to discussing reading activities. I incorporated two of these activities into my unit plan. On Day Fifteen I use the “Post-it Notes” activity. Unlike in college when students buy their own books, students in public school can not write in their books. Beers’ principal asked her what she thought would help students, and she requested that students be provided with Post-It notes. She recalls that

> He did it and soon students were “writing” in their textbooks. Students used them to flag what they didn’t understand or particularly liked. They used them to jot down notes about characters… As students finished chapters or stories, they took
the sticky notes off the pages of their text and put them onto notebook paper they kept in their notebooks. (Beers 133)

I use this strategy on Day Fifteen when assigning students to read “The Pit and the Pendulum.” Unlike Twilight, this Poe short story is fairly difficult to read due to the different kind of language and the way that the fragmented narrative. I ask students to keep track of what is going on in the story by writing down key events or ideas from each page on a Post-It note, along with any areas they find confusing or frustrating. It is easier and more effective for students to summarize and contemplate the text as they go through it. The Post-It activity is also a great way to see if students have completed the reading. If they have, then there will be Post-It notes in their books.

Another similar strategy is to have students create bookmarks to write on as they read. Beers suggests using bookmarks to keep track of new vocabulary words, setting changes, questions that arise while reading, character information, bold words from textbooks (Beers 132). I incorporate this strategy into my unit while teaching Frankenstein. I have students keep track of the setting and basic events for each chapter by writing it down on an oversized bookmark. This will help students better understand the book because the setting changes often, as do the character narratives. Students gain clarity about what they just read by writing notes on the bookmarks, and they also create their own “Spark Notes” to refer back to later.

A strategy that I like to use to keep students engaged in the reading is to, after each reading assignment, ask them one question related to the reading. Some questions are more surface-level and do not challenge students to think critically. Still, these questions are useful because they can be fun to answer. One such question is asked in
Day One, “What were your first impressions of Bella and Edward?” Another similar question is asked in Day Eight, “Having nice cars is important to the Cullens, especially cars that can go really fast! If the speed limit and price were not an issue, like in Edward’s case, what kind of car would you have?” Questions like this are intended to be low stress, perhaps even “fluffy,” but still establish a connection between the students and the text.

Along with asking these questions about the reading, I ask students to post their answers to these questions online in the form of a blog. Posting their feedback online helps to vary the way students respond to texts, which Beers asserts is important in attaining more confident responses from students. She believes that “students benefit when we provide the same layered approach to classroom participation” (Beers 268). She says that students need a chance to form their thoughts and decide what they want to say about the reading, and then progress to sharing in small groups, and then participate in classroom discussion or online discussion (Beers 268). I believe that blogging can build student response confidence in a way that discussion in class can not. Students, especially when they post with screen names, are less intimidated than when they speak in front of their classmates. Blogging with concealed identities that only the teacher knows allows students to express themselves more freely and engage in discussion without being afraid of how others may perceive them.

Incorporating the media into the classroom, like the way I would like to by using blogs, creates a certain connection between the text and the students. The text seems more relevant because they can express themselves in a familiar way. According to the research done by Ivey and Fisher in “Learning From What Doesn’t Work,” “Studies
further suggest that we must provide students with opportunities to draw from what that already know—popular culture and media, for example, so they can easily learn new information” (Ivey and Fisher 9). The connection students can make to texts through the media is also why I chose to incorporate video clips into my unit. Video clips are a great teaching tool because they can easily stir interest and help student learn through a visual aid. I introduce *Frankenstein* by showing a short clip of the 1931 film “Young Frankenstein.” I use this as a frontloading tool because it is the view of Frankenstein that students are familiar with. Then I explain that this is nothing like the real Frankenstein to stir interest as I introduce the novel *Frankenstein*.

Each teaching strategy fuels the texts and concepts covered with purpose. Frontloading, in its many forms, draws students into texts and new concepts. This stirs interest in these new texts and concepts before they are even introduced. Reading activities help to maintain interest in the texts and build students’ comprehension of what they have read. Incorporating the media into the unit provides students with another outlet to express and discuss their ideas in less intimidating way. This builds their confidence, which enable students to respond more critically to the texts. Deliberately incorporating these strategies into an English classroom will create a stronger connection between students and texts, which will make what is learned relevant to students. Truly successful teaching is when students feel that what they are learning is important and relevant. Students should not only develop their reading and writing skills, but should also be able to make connections with the texts that enable them to grow and develop as individuals.
Gothic Literature Unit Framework

The following section is my application of what I have learned from examining the literary history of Gothic literature, the psychology of learning, and teaching methods used in English Education. The unit is made up of daily outlines of activities, assignments, and discussions. Overall, it is written as a guide for the teacher using it. Phrases are italicized to indicate that they are statements, questions, and instructions directed toward the students. The homework sections, although obviously directed toward students, do not appear in italicized letters because they are set apart by their location at the bottom of each daily lesson plan.

The objective of this unit is to appeal to students' interest in the Gothic. The unit begins with a familiar young adult novel and progresses to more and more difficult Gothic literature texts. High school seniors are the intended audience for this unit. This is largely due to the difficulty of the unfamiliar language and complicated narrative of *Frankenstein*. Also, the added maturity of this older age group makes it possible to discuss the topics of depression, suicide, identity, and social rejection in greater depth. However, the unit could be adjusted so that it is appropriate for younger grade levels. If *Frankenstein* were omitted from the unit, high school freshmen and sophomores could be the target audience. In this case, the unit would end between Day Seventeen and Day Eighteen with “The Pit and the Pendulum.”
Day One

-Open class with a slide show of pictures typically associated with “Goth.” Ask the question, “What is Goth?” Have students write their answers to this on the hand out (See next page).

-Have students write down what they usually think of in response to the word “Goth” and rate their interest in it on the scale. Then have them answer why they think teens are so interested in the Gothic.

-We will be studying what Goth is in relation to literature. Brief introduction to Gothic literature. Talk about how Gothic literature includes novels written two hundred years ago, poems, and even modern books. This literature ranges from castle romances, to vampire stories, ghost stories, and short and scary stories. Give some historical background about Walpole’s novel *The Castle of Otranto*.

-Highlight that one essential element of Gothic literature is the supernatural. *What does “supernatural” mean?* Possible responses: magic, not normal, from another world, super power, and spiritual.

-Some supernatural elements of Gothic literature include: ghosts, fairies, vampires, monsters, visions, dead coming back to life, and unlikely events happening without explanation.

-Then, have students think of an answer to the following question and discuss for a couple minutes: *If you could have any supernatural power (like a super hero), what would you choose and why?*

-Introduce Twilight, the first book of the unit by saying that some characters in it have supernatural powers.
- Read the preface out loud, and maybe even the first chapter if there’s time.

- Homework: Read chapters 1 and 2. What were your first impressions of Bella and Edward? Then include a first impression of one other character from that chapter.

Below is the frontloading worksheet I’ll give to students on a half sheet:

No Name Please

1.) What do you think of when you hear the word “Goth?” Write down all word associations.

2.) On a scale from 1-5, rate your interest in what is considered “Gothic.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>High</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.) Why do you think teens are so interested in what is considered “Gothic?”
Day Two

- Quick write: Last night you wrote about your first impressions of characters from *Twilight*. *How do you think people perceive you when they first meet you? Is this accurate? Have your first impressions of people ever turned out to be completely wrong?*

- Discuss and share answers from quick write. This is intended to help students begin to form connections with the book, write a little, and then build more camaraderie with their peers.

- Pass out a rules contract on blogging. Students are asked to sign it to show that they understand that blogging is a special privilege and that certain rules must be followed.

- Emphasize that being able to create and use blogs for class is a *privilege*. If content becomes inappropriate or inconsiderate toward others, we will not be blogging. To students: *I want this to be a fun way to incorporate the media into what we’re learning, so please be respectful of your peers and me.*

- Take students down to the computer lab.

- Students must set up their own blogs, and create screen names to use. Their names should not appear anywhere in their blogs, and screen names should not reveal identity. I want students to maintain a certain level of anonymity among themselves so that they are more expressive when they write. Each student, for a grade that day, must create a blog and email his or her screen name to me. I will need to know screen names for grading purposes, and to keep track of how appropriate comments are.

- Homework: Read reading chapters 3-5. Then blog on the following: What’s the story behind the Cullens? Speculate. Why do you think things are so inconsistent between Edward and Bella? Why is he friendly to Bella some days, and ignores her on others?
Day Three

-We’re going to the computer lab to blog!

-Quick write in the blogs: Choose one of the following questions and prompts. Your response must be a well-developed paragraph. Be sure to give plenty of details and explanation.

-Read page 68. What is Bella’s dream about? Write about a weird dream you’ve had.

-Read page 55. Bella was touched by Charlie’s kindness. Write about a time someone did something nice for you that you didn’t expect.

-Read pages 72, and 76-78. Yes, the awkward dance fiasco. Do you like dances? Have you ever been in a situation similar to Bella’s? Or, just share a memory about a dance or being asked to one.

-Go back to the classroom.

-Time to give a mini lesson on writing. Introduce the concepts of AFOSP, a simple writing guide designed by staff at the Washington State University Writing Center (see next page). Then hand out a short sample of work for us to look over as a class and evaluate based on AFOSP.

-Homework: Read chapters 6-8 of Twilight. After reading chapter 6 where Bella tries to learn more about vampires, look up a “fact” about vampires and post it on your blog. Be sure to specify where you got it from.
The Secret to Successful Writing

**Assignment**
**Focus**
**Organization**
**Support**
**Proofreading**

Your work will be evaluated based on this tool. Not only will this help you in this class, but you can apply it to any kind of writing. It can only make you become a better writer. Be sure to take additional notes about the different components of AFOSP below.

**Assignment:**

**Focus:**

**Organization:**

**Support:**

**Proofreading:**
Day Four

- Discuss briefly what students found out about vampires.

- Talk a little bit more about the first Gothic novel ever written. Go back to Walpole’s goal and explain that Walpole wanted to depict how real people would respond in supernatural situations.

- Tie this into *Twilight* and pass out the essay prompt (separate form the rubric).

Obviously, this story isn’t a piece of nonfiction and the supernatural is an essential element.

Essay prompt: *Are the characters themselves in Twilight believable? Do you feel that they are normal people reacting reasonably in supernatural circumstances? Take a definite side—one or the other and explain either why you find the characters believable or why you do not find the characters believable. You must give three examples from the book to support your argument. Include direct quotes from the book using the MLA format we talked about in class.*

- In order to help students do well on this essay, we need to go over a few things. Review the components of AFOSP. To students: *We will especially be focusing on the two components of “Assignment” and “Support” in this essay. Part of the homework for tomorrow is to find at least one example from the book that could be used as support for the argument of your essay.*

- After going into a little more detail about “Assignment” and “Support,” and give a mini lesson on MLA in text citations. This is how students will refer to their examples from the book. Emphasize author and page number.
Day Five

-Open by dividing students up into teams of about 4 students. We will be playing a game called “Finish that Quote!” Students will work in teams. Each team will have a section of the whiteboard to write on. Give each team a worksheet with unfinished quotes from the chapters they’ve read in *Twilight*. Two people will be designated the flippers and must search through their books to try and find the page the quote is from. The other group members should help the flippers figure out where the quotes are in the book. When they’ve found it, they must run up to the whiteboard, finish writing the sentence, and be sure to cite the page number using the correct MLA in text citation form. Have music playing softly in the background, and every time it is turned off, the flippers must shut their books and hold them over their heads until the music starts again. The team that finds the most quotes first wins.

-To students after the game: *Take out the example you found for your argument in the book last night. Did you include the page number you found it on? Did you cite it correctly, according to the MLA format we’ve discussed in class?*

-Talk about introducing quotes. Have students look at the worksheet from the game. I made an effort to write so that I introduced the quotes into my sentences. I did not simply write the quote and the page number.

-To students: *Try to incorporate your quote into a sentence by leading into it with a statement that introduces what the quote has to say.* Do a few examples together in class. *Look at the worksheet and pick a quote. Find a different way you could lead into it.* Have students do this alone silently, and then talk about what they did as a class by sharing
examples. *Now take the quote you found last night and create two ways you could lead into it.*

-Homework: Read chapters 12-14. Also, find two more examples and or quotes from the book that support your essay’s argument. Work on incorporating your quotes into your sentences like we did in class. Be sure to bring your three shining examples and polished quotes to class on Monday.
Day Six

- Quick write: *Earlier last week, we briefly touched on the element of the supernatural in Gothic literature. Is there anything supernatural in *Twilight*? (The right answer is yes). Identify at least two instances in the book so far where something is supernatural. Describe what is going on in these situations.

- Discuss the supernatural in *Twilight*.

- Jump to the essay examples students worked on at home. We’re going to turn each example into body paragraphs for the essay.

- Toward the top of a piece of paper write down “Believable” or “Unrealistic” to identify which side of the argument you’re choosing.

- In the margin of the paper, write down a key word to identify the example you chose. It could be something simple, like “car accident.” Do the same thing on the back of this paper for your second example and then the same thing on a new piece of paper for your third example. This is so that you have plenty of room to write and brainstorm.

- Each paragraph should answer the following questions: What is going on in the book during your example? Which characters are doing what? What is this example showing and how does it support your side of the argument? If you need to go into more detail, explain why you chose this example from the book to support your argument. In other words, why is this a good example of how believable the characters are? Make sure that the better part of your paragraph is spent showing the why and the how of your examples rather than spending most of your time merely summarizing.

- Compose examples to share. One paragraph will be very simple, and “tells” instead of “shows,” and the other paragraph will be more of what I expect from the students.
-Have students continue to work on their body paragraphs. Tell them to be sure to incorporate their quotes into their paragraphs stealthily by introducing the quotes with a phrase or sentence.

Read chapters 15-17

-Homework: Read chapters 15-17 and write in your blog about “meeting the parents.” Retell a story about this event. Have you ever had to go through the scary process of meeting a boyfriend or girlfriend’s parents and family? Or, do you have interesting stories about meeting your friends’ parents and families? Also, what do you think of the book so far? Like it, hate it, sappy, awesome, etc.? 
Day Seven

-Discuss the “meeting the parents” blog and transition to the book. What did you think about Edward’s family?

-Time to talk about essay introductory paragraphs.

-What does the intro do? Have students tell me.

-The intro should: Give some background to the topic and or book. It should also plainly state the purpose or intention of your essay, and then how you are going to accomplish this purpose.

-Play the game “Good, Bad, Best” Divide into groups. Give each group three sample intro paragraphs. As a team, rank the paragraphs “good,” “bad,” or “best.” The samples are on three separate pieces of paper. For each sample, every person in the group must write down a reason why that rating was chosen

-As a class:

-What’s so bad about the one you rated “Bad?”

-What’s good about the “Good” intro?

-What’s so good about the “Best” intro that makes it different from the “Good” intro?

-With the remainder of the class period, work on crafting an intro of the “Best” quality.

-Homework: Read chapters 18-20.

Write in your blog: What would you do if you were in Bella’s situation?
Day Eight

-Discus blog question “What would you do if you were in Bella’s situation?”

-Talk about the conclusion. What do you think a concluding paragraph should do?

A concluding paragraph should:

- Restate the overall purpose and or argument of your paper
- Tie all of your main points together
- Explain how your main points supported your argument and achieved your paper’s purpose.
- A conclusion of “Best” quality goes on to explain the significance of the paper’s topic. One to two sentences explaining why this topic is important will do it.

-Play the “Good,” “Bad,” and “Best” game again with different examples of concluding paragraphs.

-For the remainder of class, have students work on their essays or read.

-Tomorrow is a work day. Tell students to be sure to bring their books, and whatever they need to work on their essays.

-Homework: Read chapters 21-23. Also, blog about cars. Several cars are mentioned throughout the book. Having nice cars is important to the Cullens, especially cars that can go really fast! If the speed limit and price were not an issue, like in Edward’s case, what kind of car would you have? Identify the car, why you would choose it, and (if you can find one) post a picture of it.
Day Nine

-How are you doing on your essays? Do you feel pretty confident?

-Go over the rubric again. We’ve talked about a lot of writing techniques, so the rubric will make more sense. The purpose of going over it again is to help students remember what we’ve talked about, and reevaluate what they need to accomplish in their essays as they are due on Friday (tomorrow).

-Have students read over their own papers and consider the following questions.

After looking at the rubric, how do you think you would evaluate your essay?
Does it address all aspects of the prompt (the Assignment aspect of AFOSP)?
How strong is the support of your argument? You must have three examples. Do you incorporate at least one quote from the book into your essay? Do you introduce your quote, and do you cite the page number using the MLA format correctly?

-Have students spend the rest of the class period working on their papers or reading.

-Homework: Your essay is due tomorrow. Be prepared for a class discussion on your essays tomorrow. Everyone will need to contribute. Also, read chapter 24 and the epilogue. Reflect back on the book. We’ve talked about the element of the supernatural present through vampirism. Consider the contrast between Edward’s immortality and Bella’s mortality. What does this say about life and death?
Day Ten

- Have students hand in their completed essays. Be sure to praise them for their hard work.

- Discuss answers to the question about mortality. Death is a recurring theme of Gothic literature that we will be examining throughout the unit. What message does Twilight communicate about death?

- Now let's discuss what you argued in your papers.

- Are the characters in Twilight believable? All who said the characters are believable will be on one side, and all who said the characters are unrealistic will be on the other. One side will begin by sharing an essay example to show why the characters were believable or not. The other side will do the same thing. We are arguing in a sense that there are two sides who do not agree. However, this experience will be different than that of a typical debate. Students are not trying to sway each other’s views. They are simply explaining why they chose a particular side of the argument.

- After the discussion, have students write down two interesting examples people shared. They can be from either side of the argument.

- To students: we’ve covered a lot these last two weeks. You learned that Gothic literature is its own unique genre, and that the supernatural is an essential aspect of it. Just as a quick review, what was supernatural in Twilight? Think of particular situations. The supernatural is just one aspect of Gothic literature. We will continue to explore this genre next week. Thank you for your hard work to keep up with the reading and writing your essays. There’s no homework this weekend. Enjoy!
Day Eleven

- Have the classroom decorated in a creepy way. Dark lighting, some posters of creepy trees, wind sounds in the background. It would even be fun to get a fog machine. This is a frontloading activity to introduce Gothic setting.

- Have students take out a piece of paper and describe the way the classroom looks today in a couple sentences.

- We’ve talked about the aspect of the supernatural in Gothic literature, now we’re going to take a look at typical Gothic setting.

- On a power point slide show, prepare a collection of excerpts from works we have and will read in this unit. Each excerpt is an example of Gothic setting. Also try to find pictures to go along with these short excerpts. At least one excerpt will be from *Twilight* so students feel like there is something familiar in this exercise.

- Discuss the excerpts. *What did they have in common? Based on these excerpts, what are some characteristics of the Gothic setting?*

- Then we will jump into our next work, “The Fall of the House of Usher.”

- We’ll begin reading it out loud while we still have the mysterious ambiance of the classroom.

- Homework: Read the rest of the story and be prepared to discuss it tomorrow. Keep the Gothic setting in mind as you read.
Day Twelve

-Poe’s writing is a lot different from anything else we’ve read yet. Make sure that students understand “The Fall of the House of Usher.” We’re going to map it out on the whiteboard. Tell students to be sure to take notes because we are essentially creating our own “Spark Notes” for the story.

-How does the story begin? We will review the entire story page by page to make sure that students understand what is going on.

-Ask students: Did you find anything confusing in the story? If so, what part? Let’s figure it out.

-Homework: Identify one passage from the story that depicts a Gothic setting. What characteristics make it a Gothic setting? Your answer should be a well-developed paragraph. Also, what kinds of feelings did the Gothic setting stir in you as you read and what particular words and or phrases caused this emotional response?
Day Thirteen

-Let’s discuss and share the Gothic setting descriptions found last night. Comment that sometimes it isn’t simply what is being described visually. The emotional effect the description has on the reader also makes it a Gothic setting.

-Do magazine activity: Cut out a picture from a magazine a write a Gothic description of what you see. The picture doesn’t need to seem dreary. It’s all about the way you use your words. Think about the examples of Gothic setting we just discussed, and try to recreate the same undertone in your description of the magazine clip. Your description should be 2-3 sentences.

-End with a short introduction to the psychological aspect of Poe’s writing.

-Homework: Blog it. What do you think of Roderick Usher? Is he crazy, cursed, sick, or a combination? Be sure to justify your evaluation by referring to at least one situation or direct quote from the story. Also, what kind of role does death play in this story? Is there an underlying message pertaining to life and death in the story?
Day Fourteen

- Discuss the presence of death in the story and what kind of message it communicates.

- Take a brief poll of what students thought of Roderick Usher (crazy or not).

- Introduce the psychological aspect of Poe’s writing. Poe did not simply write to tell a story. Perhaps something that distinguishes him from many other Gothic authors is that he addresses the psychological through his narrators and creates a certain emotional response in his readers. The sanity of most of Poe’s narrators is questionable.

- Ask students where they see the element of the psychological in “The Fall of the House of Usher.” What causes Roderick to become sick? How do his actions affect his friend? Fear seems to be an important influence over Roderick’s health. Ask students to consider fear for a moment. How does fear affect people? Is there a relationship between fear and madness?
Day Fifteen

-Play the frontloading “Tea Party” game. Cut up sentences from “The Pit and the Pendulum.” Divide students into groups. Key phrases are distributed to multiple students to show their importance. Have students mingle around the classroom to see what is written on the other note cards. Then have them come back to their groups and brainstorm together about the story’s plot and characters.

-Introduce “The Pit and the Pendulum.” The psychological in this work is even more present, and the emotional effect on the reader is more intense than in “The Fall of the House of Usher.”

-Hand out about 10 large Post-it notes to each student.

-Homework: Read the rest of “The Pit and the Pendulum.” I know the language is difficult and the narrative is fragmented, but I know you can get through it! For every page, write down one sentence on a Post-it note that summarizes what happens on that page and at least one word each page that describes your emotional response to the reading. Like we did with “The Fall of the House of Usher,” you’re creating your own Spark Notes. Also if you find areas in the story that are frustrating or confusing, be sure to identify it on your Post-it notes. Is there a deeper meaning behind this text? What does it say about life and death? I expect that you will have read the entire story by Monday.
Day Sixteen

- Quick Write: Identify several aspects of Gothic setting in “The Pit and the Pendulum?”
- Discuss the events of “The Pit and the Pendulum” and map the story out on the board.
- What was going on with the main character? Why was he in prison? What were his options in the dungeon?
- Give some historical background information about the Inquisition Poe refers to in the story.
- Last week we talked about how there is a psychological element to Poe’s work. Where do you see it in this story? Discuss. Also, is the narrator mad?
- Tell students: “The Pit and the Pendulum” is more than just a story you have to read for class. We can gain a lot of insight on the important issues of suicide and depression when we think critically about what we have read. Have students carefully examine the passages in the story in which Poe specifically mentions hope or refers to suicide. Read them out loud to the students.
- Homework: What is hope? Where does it come from? What gives you hope? Have you ever lost hope? Write as much as you can, and let the words just flow out—not matter what form it’s in. You can write a poem, song lyrics, story, fragmented thoughts, essay, or just personal narrative.
Day Seventeen

- Discuss hope. How did you write about it? Did you write a poem, essay, story, or fragmented thoughts? See where the discussion goes.

- Discuss the ending of the story. It is debatable whether or not the main character actually did jump into the pit. There are two possible endings to the story. One is that the French soldiers come just in time and save the narrator before the walls press in on him and before he can jump to his death into the pit. The other ending is that the narrator decides to jump into the pit just as the French come to rescue him. He could have been saved, but just barely missed his rescue.

- What do the two endings say about hope and suicide?

- “The Pit and the Pendulum” is relevant to us because it addresses depression and suicide—something we are unfortunately very familiar with.

- Present students with statistics about depression and suicide. Be sure to identify as many resources as possible that students can turn to when they find themselves considering suicide.

- Show the “Hold On” music video at the end of class and pass out the lyrics (“Hold On” and “Good Charlotte Lyrics”). The song encourages listeners to hold on, even when it feels hopeless. Throughout this powerful music video, people who have lost loved ones to suicide or have attempted suicide are interviewed.

- Pass out my personal letter to the students as they leave.
Hold On
By Good Charlotte

This world,
This world is cold
But you don’t
You don’t have to go
You’re feeling sad,
You’re feeling lonely
And no one seems to care
Your mother’s gone and your father hits you
This pain you cannot bear
But we all bleed the same way as you do,
And we all have the same things to go through

Hold on if you feel like letting go
Hold on, it gets better than you know

The days, you say they’re way too long
And your nights, you can’t sleep at all, hold on
And you’re not sure what you’re waiting for but you don’t want to no more
And you’re not sure what you’re looking for but you don’t want to no more

But we all bleed the same way as you do
And we all have the same things to go thru

Hold on if you feel like letting go
Hold on, it gets better than you know
Don’t stop looking, you’re one step closer
Don’t stop searching, it’s not over,
Hold on

What are you looking for?
What are you waiting for?
Do you know what you’re doing to me?
Go ahead
What are you waiting for?

Hold on if you feel like letting go
Hold on, it gets better than you know
Don’t stop looking you’re one step closer
Don’t stop searching it’s not over
Hold on if you feel like letting go
Hold on, it gets better than you know
Hold on
To my remarkable students:

I’m writing to you because I don’t think that anyone can get told often enough how valuable they are. Each of you has a special place in this world. Who knows how many other lives you’ve touched? My point is that each of you is important, talented, and valuable. Don’t ever let yourself be convinced of anything else! I know that life can be incredibly painful. Sometimes it may even seem like things will never get better. BUT THERE IS ALWAYS HOPE! If you have lost hope, please tell someone. Many of us, me included, have lost hope at some point, and we need someone else to help us find it again. There’s never any shame in that. So hold on to hope, even when it’d be a whole lot easier to just let go. I can tell you that the fight is worth it!

Ms. Dole
Day Eighteen

- Show a brief video clip of a movie that depicts Frankenstein in a way that is contrary to the book. This awkward, sometime even green, monster is the impression of Frankenstein that students enter the unit with. Tell students that this perception is not accurate of the real Frankenstein.

- Then begin to introduce the book. The real *Frankenstein* is nothing like the movie!

- Go into detail about how Mary Shelley was inspired to write the story. They will be able to connect with it and may even think it is “cool” that she and her friends were reading ghost stories and decided to have a ghost story competition. Read a quote form Shelley’s introduction about the dream she had that gave her the last bout of inspiration.

- Then begin to explain the complicated narrative. Bring in three different colored boxes and place the smaller ones inside of the bigger one. Explain to students by physically illustrating that the book is layered. Robert Walton’s letters to his sister are the biggest box that contains everything else. He is telling his sister about Victor Frankenstein’s story, and the narrative switches to Victor Frankenstein’s point of view. Then, take the other two boxes out of the largest box (the smallest one should still be inside the second box). Victor tells his story, but in the middle of the novel, another character tells his story to Frankenstein and the narrative is told from his point of view. The point of view changes throughout the novel. Since this can be confusing, the colored boxes will be used to clarify which narrative we are examining each day. This will help them to visualize and connect which narrative is which.

- Give a little bit of background about Robert Walton, and pass out bookmarks. Explain the purpose of the bookmark. There are two columns for each chapter. One is called
“What’s going on?” and the other says “Where are we?” In the first section “What’s going on?” students are asked to write a sentence or two about what happens in each chapter. The narrative is very complex, as is the plot, and this will help students to better understand the events that take place. In the other section, students indicate where the chapter takes place. The setting in this novel changes often. Taking note of this change will make it easier to examine the Gothic setting since students will not be so lost.

-Homework: Read the Preface (Robert Walton’s first couple letters that lead into Victor Frankenstein’s narrative.)
Day Nineteen

-What color is the box? Discuss what they read in Robert Walton’s letters. Write down main ideas.

-We are going to switch boxes now since Victor Frankenstein is going to be telling his story.

-For the rest of the class time I will begin reading *Monster* out loud. I realize that students have been reading challenging and heavier texts lately. I want to switch it up with something different that will capture their attention and still relate to *Frankenstein*.

-Homework: Read chapter I-II. Be sure to fill out your bookmarks. Also, what is Victor like? Write this in your blog.
Day Twenty

-Read *Monster* out loud.

-Discuss: What were you impressions of Victor? What role does knowledge play as Victor grows up?

-To the students: We’ve talked about how the supernatural is an important element of Gothic literature. Where do you see the supernatural at work in Frankenstein so far? *Find an example from the text.*

-Homework: Read chapter III-IV. Be sure to fill out your bookmarks. Is Victor becoming obsessive? How much is too much? What message is portrayed about death in the way that Victor Frankenstein sews parts of corpses together? How does his view of death compare with yours? Write this in your blog.
Day Twenty-One

-Discuss whether or not Victor is too obsessive. *At what point does obsession become harmful? What is Victor's view of death? How is it different from the way others in the novel view death?*

-Play the "Tea Party" game. Divide students into groups. Key phrases are distributed to multiple students to show their importance. Have students mingle around the classroom to see what is written on the other note cards. Then have them come back to their groups and brainstorm together about what will happen in chapter V.

-Read chapter V out loud (when the monster is jolted to life).

-Homework: Read chapter VI to VIII. Be sure to fill out your bookmarks. What names and descriptions does Victor use to refer to the monster?
Day Twenty-Two

- Read *Monster* out loud.

- What's going on? Have students retell what has occurred in the novel so far.

- Show slide show of different ways that Victor's monster has been depicted in movies, plays, and art. *Which one do you think is the most accurate, or fits the way you picture him? Notice that the monster does not have a name. What would you refer to him as?*

- Discuss the way Victor refers to the monster. *Why does he refer to him this way? How does his use of names affect the monster? How does it affect your identity when people refer to you with different names?*

- Homework: Read chapter IX to X. Be sure to fill out your bookmarks. Select a sentence or phrase from the novel so far that describes a Gothic setting.
Day Twenty-Three

- Read Monster out loud.

- Have some students share which phrases or sentences they selected as examples of Gothic setting.

- What color is the box? We are about to switch boxes since the monster will soon be the narrator, telling his story.

- Get into small groups and have students discuss: What is your impression of the monster? Is he so bad? Do you find yourself sympathetic toward him, or resistant? What kinds of human emotions does the monster discuss experiencing?

- Homework: Read chapter XI to XIII. Be sure to fill out your bookmarks. How does the monster in Frankenstein compare with the “monsters” in Monster? Write this in your blogs. What is a monster? Explain.
Day Twenty-Four

-Discuss students’ comparisons of the two monsters.

-Talk about how students define monster. *What makes someone or something a monster?*

-What’s going on? Have students retell what has occurred in the novel so far.

-Show a clip from Hallmark’s “Frankenstein” movie that shows the monster’s life as he is telling Victor about it. This movie stays true to the book, especially in its depiction of the monster. Visualizing the monster and seeing this part of the book on film will help students connect more to the text and gain a better perspective of the monster.

-Homework: Finish reading the monster’s narrative chapters XIV to XVI. Be sure to fill out your bookmarks. What do you think of the monster now? Is he human? What human emotions does the monster continually experience? What emotions does the monster’s narrative stir in readers?
Day Twenty-Five

- Read *Monster* out loud.

- Review what happens in the monster’s narrative.

- Take a poll on if impressions of the monster have changed after reading his narrative.

- Discuss views of the monster. *Is he human? Based on this answer, how should he be treated?*

- Now we are switching boxes again. After the monster finishes telling his story, the narrative switches back to Victor’s point of view.

- Read Chapter XVII out loud (when the monster asks Victor to make him a companion).

- Homework: Read chapter XVIII to XIX. Be sure to fill out your bookmarks. Do you think Victor should make a companion for the monster? Why or why not? Use one example from the book to support your answer. What message does the novel portray about the theme of identity? Write this in your blog.
Day Twenty-Six

- Read *Monster* out loud. Who is truly the monster in this book?

- Take a poll on who thought that Victor should or should not create a companion.

- Have students get into small groups. *Discuss whether or not Victor should make a companion for the monster.* Is the monster's request reasonable? What real life issues have come up in the novel so far? How do they transfer over into our modern context?

- Hand out essay prompt and rubric.

- Prompt: *What is a monster? Based on your definition, is the monster in Frankenstein a "monster?"* Be sure to support your side of the argument with examples and or quotes from the book. Then, briefly answer the question “Do monsters exist in society today?”

- Like the *Twilight* essay, the “Assignment” and “Support” aspects of AFOSP will be top priority in this essay.

- Homework: Read chapter XX to XI. Be sure to fill out your bookmarks. The monster is an outcast and feels that he can never be accepted by society. Some people get labeled as “monsters,” or at least rejected like the monster is in *Frankenstein.* Give an example of this. Write it in your blog.
Day Twenty-Seven

- Review what’s gone on in the book so far.

- Read “The Outsider” out loud by H. P. Lovecraft.

- Discuss: Can you think of an example, either current or historical, when people have been outcast from society as if they were monsters?

- Quick write: Write about a time when you have been the outsider.

- Have students discuss in small groups: How is the narrator in “The Outsider” compare with the monster in Frankenstein? What are their reactions to rejection? How do people react when rejected by others?

- Homework: Read XXII to XXIII. Be sure to fill out your bookmarks. For tomorrow, bring three paragraphs with examples that support your argument on whether or not the monster is really a “monster.”
Day Twenty-Eight

-Discuss what has happened so far, especially clarifying what happens leading up to the wedding and then the wedding night.

-Were the monster's murders justified? Were they really his fault?

-Have students get into small groups. Trade papers with someone. Give them feedback on their support about whether or not the monster is a "monster." If they did well, why were these paragraphs good? How can they improve? Is their enough support to their argument? Trade with at least two people, so you give and receive feedback at least twice.

-In your groups, predict what you think will happen to Victor and the monster.

-Clarify what the narratives are like in the last two chapters. Part of it is still told from victor's point of view, but the book ends like it began, with Robert Walton and his letters to his sister.

-Homework: Finish reading the rest of the book. Be sure to fill out your bookmarks.

Work on your essays. Think about how the themes we have discussed in this book relate to you in your life.
Chapter Twenty-Nine

- Clarify what happens in the end of *Frankenstein*.

- Go through the box layers again to illustrate the way the narrator changes throughout the book.

- Discussion: *What did you think of the end? Do you think that the monster could have hope to live, even if he never finds a companion? What messages does this novel communicate to readers about death, hope, and suicide?*

- Go over the essay rubric again. Let students ask any questions they may have about the essay.

- Devote the rest of the time to working on your essays, or peer editing each other’s work.

- Homework: Finish your essays. They are due tomorrow!
Day Thirty

- Collect essays.

- Discuss the essay's argument. Is the monster truly a "monster?" Have students from one view stand on one side of the classroom and students with the other view stand on the other side. Share main points and supporting evidence to back up your side of the argument. Listen to your peers, even if you do not agree. Write down one main point from each view someone made that you found interesting.

- Review several themes we have discussed in Frankenstein.

- Make sure to praise students for their hard work in this challenging unit.

- Briefly review what we have leaned about Gothic literature. Have students take the same survey they took at the beginning of the unit (See Day One). They will rate their interest in what is considered Goth, and then explain whether or not their view of what is Gothic has changed since the beginning of the unit. In addition to this, have them answer why they think adolescents are interested in the Gothic.

- Celebrate! You worked hard throughout the unit.
Final Discussion

My ultimate goal for this project was to research a question that would equip me with knowledge that I could use later after college. As a future teacher, I especially wanted to gain knowledge to take with me into the classroom that would enable me to become a more effective teacher. I have accomplished this goal by examining the role of Gothic literature in the classroom. I now have a Gothic literature unit plan that I could actually use when I teach someday.

Prior to my research, I knew very little about Gothic literature. My only exposure to it was in a college course when we read Frankenstein. Until that class, I was unaware that the genre of Gothic literature even existed! Not long after this, I noticed adolescent interest in the Gothic. I became fascinated with the subjects of Gothic literature, adolescent interest in the Gothic, and English Education. Seeing a correlation between these interests, I was challenged to examine the role of Gothic literature in the classroom.

I began my research by studying Gothic literature, wanting to acquire a background of knowledge about the genre that would enable me to create a teaching unit focusing on Gothic literature. Through careful reading of primary texts and secondary texts by critics, I identified defining characteristics of Gothic literature. The characteristics I identified were: the presence of the supernatural, Gothic setting, fragmentation, and the reader’s emotional response to the text (usually horror). The defining characteristics provided me with the foundation I needed in order to select texts to include in my Gothic literature unit, and directed how I address the texts within the unit.
Examining the psychology of learning also provided me with direction for my unit. Vygotsky’s theory about zones of proximal development revealed the process that students go through when interacting with a new text. If teachers assign texts that lie beyond students’ zones of proximal development, then the unit will be unsuccessful. Students become frustrated and gain very little from the texts assigned. Through new knowledge about ZPD, I understood how important it is to build upon students’ existing knowledge through the method of scaffolding. Students are challenged, but do not get frustrated or strained because the unknown is built on what they already know.

By considering the conflicting views of classic literature and young adult literature, I became convinced that both kinds of texts are valuable to the English classroom. Students tend to relate more to young adult literature and are often more interested in reading it, but classic literature challenges students to think critically by stepping outside of what is familiar. The solution is to use both young adult literature and classic literature. Young adult literature can even be used to scaffold from the known to the unknown of classic literature. With proper selection, pairing young adult literature and classic literature together can complement each other and reach students in a very powerful way.

Another crucial aspect of my gothic literature unit was the integration of English Education teaching methods. I studied methods that are currently being advocated as successful within the field of Education. These methods showed me how important it is to prepare students for new texts before even introducing them. A connection needs to be established between the students and the text before they even read it. The connection must be maintained while students read and even for a time after students have finished
reading in order for students to gain the most they can from the texts. Maintaining the connection between students and texts requires the use of activities, discussion, and written responses. Effective teaching is deliberate and demands hard work from the teacher.

Truly successful teaching in the English classroom not only enables students to develop their literacy skills, but also helps students to grow personally. Gothic literature is a great addition to the English classroom because adolescents actually enjoy reading it and are interested in the Gothic. However, the true significance of incorporating Gothic literature into the classroom is that it challenges students to think critically about important issues that are relevant to their lives. In the unit I created, Gothic literature provokes students to examine the issues of depression, hope, suicide, identity, and social rejection. Through this examination of relevant issues, students grow both academically and personally. Teachers have a great responsibility, and the most effective teachers continue to influence their students outside of the classroom. Examining the role of Gothic literature in the classroom has better prepared me for my place in the classroom as an effective teacher.
Works Cited


<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xx9LQDLpIUY>.


Shelley, Mary. *Frankenstein*. Karbiener 1-220.


84


