

ENGLISH MIDTERM EXAM NOTES

DEFINITIONS

Gothic Romance: a precursor to the modern horror story. It features frightening settings, psychologically unbalanced characters, and mysterious perhaps supernatural, events. The romance genre takes a dark, twisted turn. In the 19th & 20th centuries, the gothic romance increasingly offers pointed social critiques and an investigation in human psych.

Uncanny:

- A) The familiar (places, people, situations) made frightening or strange.
- B) An experience of the uncanny can occur when triggered by “the return of the repressed” (Freud)

Juxtaposition: when two or more ideas, sentences, paragraphs, or images are set side by side in a text. This is a design element meant to bring the reader’s attention to something of significance in a story.

Hysteria: a psychological disorder involving extreme expressions of emotion and sometimes physical symptoms for which there is no obvious biological cause. The term in the past was used to describe the manifestation of two opposite emotions at the same time, i.e. laughing and crying. This signified a loss of control and a state of confusion and weakness.

Aesthetics: a set of principles and also a branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of beauty, especially in art and artistic taste.

Initiation (coming of age story): A character first learns a significant truth about the universe, reality, society, himself or herself. The protagonist begins in a state of innocence, and then is led to a moment of illumination, often seemingly negative.

Quest story (often some form of initiation as well): focuses on a journey, featuring a variety of physical, mental, and emotional challenges, with a special destination or goal. The story is often symbolic of an internal process of growth for the main character.

Hermeneutics: the art & science of the interpretation of written texts. In a broader sense, it refers to the interpretation and understanding of human action. From the 17th century onwards, it became more of a science interpretation concerned with bridging the gaps between interpretations, between cultural groups between time periods.

Narratives: are told from particular points of view; a narrator of some kind describes situations, characters, events, settings. Since there is a person telling the story, this is one ‘version’ of what happened.

The Modern Short Story:

1. Only about 200 years old: early decades of the 19th century.
2. A carefully crafted work of art, with very controlled and focused plot, and well-drawn, believable characters, and deliberate use of narrative design.
3. Preoccupied with the psychological make-up of the human being.
4. Critically explores how society impacts on the individual;

Rationalism:

1. A philosophy emphasized during the Age of Enlightenment in 18th century
2. Exalted human reason and logic; control over self and world
3. Downplayed the emotions
4. Distrusted and/or ignored the miraculous and the supernatural

Romanticism:

1. Late 18th century and early 19th centuries, was a reaction against rationalism.
2. Explored the validity of emotion, instinct and intuition, and perceptions and experiences that cannot be rationally explained
3. Focused on the importance of individuals' inner experience and personality.

Romance Narratives: Often set in the remote past in idealized or supernatural settings (castles, ruins, forests). The characters usually represent extreme human types or at least have exaggerated qualities (tending to be 1 or 2 dimensional in nature). The plot features magical events and adventure.

Allegory: the simplest level of symbolic interpretation. Each thing in the story represents once concept; there's a "one-to-one" correspondence between literal things in the story and their symbolic message. Allegorical meaning stays fixed and clear and never changes.

Catharsis: according to psychology, is a technique used to relieve tension and anxiety by bringing repressed material to the surface consciousness.

Prose fiction: more or less ordinary language. Only shaped and controlled for the impact on reader. It is story telling in the form of narrative.

Realism: To attempt to represent accurately the actual world; a literary movement that developed in reaction to the artificialities of romantic literature and melodramatic drama and that tended to focus on the lives of ordinary people, to use the language of daily speech, and to develop themes that offered social criticism and explored the problems of mundane life.

Naturalism: A literary movement based on philosophical determinism, the belief that the lives of ordinary people are determined by biological, economic, and social factors; naturalists tend to use techniques of realism in order to present a tragic vision of fate of individuals crushed by force they cannot control.

Epiphany: A religious term meaning a “manifestation” or “showing forth”; western Christianity celebrates the feast of the epiphany on January 6th to mark Christ’s manifestation of divinity to Magi; James Joyce applied the term to short fiction to describe the moment when events show forth their meaning, bringing illumination or revelation to a character.