

Top Ten List ~ Earliest Gothic Fiction

An Examination of the Earliest Pioneers in Gothic Literature

Official List Validated By Claude AI For GNO Site. File Downloads Provided By (GothicNovelOrg) 2026.05.05

This page provides an official list of the earliest Gothic works in literature, sorted by ascending publication date. Note that each of these famous Gothic works also serves as a hyperlink to a downloadable PDF file, where you can download your own free copy of the work. The list includes the author, birth and death dates, work title and date, and a brief notation. Click on the title to be prompted for a download. The top ten (+1) list of earliest works in the genre are as follows:

1. **Walpole, Horace (Horatio)** - Title: Fourth Earl of Orford [born:1717; died:1797] — Work: **The Castle of Otranto (1764)** — Widely considered the first Gothic novel, it established the genre's signature elements: a medieval castle, supernatural events, tyranny, and terror. *Available for download from site: [YES](#).*
2. **Reeve, Clara** [born:1729; died:1807] — Work: **The Old English Baron (1778)** — An important bridge between Walpole's Castle of Otranto and the later Gothic tradition, blending chivalric romance with supernatural elements and moral themes. *Available for download from site: [YES](#).*
3. **Beckford, William Thomas** [born:1760; died:1844] — Work: **Vathek (1786)** — An Oriental Gothic tale of a caliph who makes a pact with dark forces in pursuit of forbidden knowledge. *Available for download from site: [YES](#).*
4. **Radcliffe, Ann** [born:1764; died:1823] — Work: **The Mysteries of Udolpho (1794)** — A landmark Gothic novel featuring a young woman imprisoned in a sinister Italian castle, full of suspense and atmospheric dread. *Available for download from site: [YES](#).*
5. **Flammenberg, Lawrence (Pseud.)** - Kahlert, Karl Friedrich (*Real*) [born:1765; died:1813] — Work: **The Necromancer; or, The Tale of the Black Forest (1794, translated to English 1794)** — A German Gothic novel, one of the earliest entries in the "Schauerroman" ('shudder novel') tradition, involving a fraudulent sorcerer. *Available for download from site: [CHECK CURRENT AVAILABILITY](#).*
6. **Lewis, Matthew Gregory** [born:1775; died:1818] — Work: **The Monk (1796)** — A darker, more transgressive Gothic tale involving a monk's moral corruption, murder, and demonic temptation. *Available for download from site: [YES](#).*
7. **Radcliffe, Ann** [born:1764; died:1823] — Work: **The Italian (1797)** — Another Radcliffe masterpiece, centred on a villainous monk and the Inquisition, refining the "explained supernatural" style. *Available for download from site: [YES](#).*
8. **Brown, Charles Brockden** [born:1771; died:1810] — Work: **Wieland; or, The Transformation (1798)** — Often called the first American Gothic novel, exploring religious mania and mysterious voices driving a man to murder. *Available for download from site: [YES](#).*

9. **Godwin, William** [born:1756; died:1836] — Work: **St. Leon (1799)** — A Gothic tale involving the Philosopher's Stone and the Elixir of Life, blending horror with philosophical themes of immortality and isolation. Available for download from site: [CHECK CURRENT AVAILABILITY](#).
10. **Shelley, Mary Wollstonecraft** [born:1797; died:1851] — Work: **Frankenstein; or, The Modern Prometheus (1818)** — A cornerstone of both Gothic and science fiction, exploring creation, responsibility, and the terror of the unnatural. Available for download from site: [YES](#).
11. **Maturin, Charles Robert** [born:1780; died:1824] — Work: **Melmoth the Wanderer (1820)** — A complex, layered Gothic novel about a man who sells his soul for extended life and seeks someone to take his place. Complete set as independent volume downloads: *Volume I, Volume II, Volume III, Volume IV*. [All Volumes Available for download from site: YES](#).

The above official list of 10(+1) Gothic works are the first creations of the genre and define the literary category which we now know today (250+ years in existence). For a primer on what makes these works deserving of their own category in literature, you might wish to examine what they all have in common. In other words, the question might be posed: “What makes a Gothic work uniquely “Gothic”? The **GNO Site** ([GothicNovelOrg](#)) covers most every aspect of this question. Visit <https://www.gothicnovel.org> to find out more.



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