

A) READ THE WHOLE THING	to get a general sense
B) TAKE SAMPLE	Beginning/end/in-between Look at possible basic conflicts or tensions, then follow the seven steps below.
C) Follow Seven STEPS	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) take a closer look at opening page 2) select and analyse a second passage 3) select and analyse a third passage 4) select and analyse a fourth passage 5) Have I gained a sufficiently complex sense of the novel? 6) Go beyond simple: zero in on other features of the novel 7) Consider critics; Who says what? Look at journal articles/books/online resources. Start with recent material (last 10 years). Take notes, write a short bibliography. You could use Zotero (free app) if you want to arrange, store and catalogue your research findings.

D) GO BEYOND SIMPLE Don't **get stuck** on the hackneyed category of themes: "theme" is a useful but rather **BROAD** word (it is the general subject or topic of a discourse). **INSTEAD** (thinking metaphorically):

- Look for traces/nuances/gradations/shades of colour/hues/tinges/streaks or strains
- Find creases/wrinkles/folds Untangle knots/Find threads/filaments/fibres/
- Listen to modulations/undertones/overtones/connotations
- Detect fault-lines/undercurrents

E) DELVE DEEPER Look at layers or levels of language/form (**esp. in POETRY**)

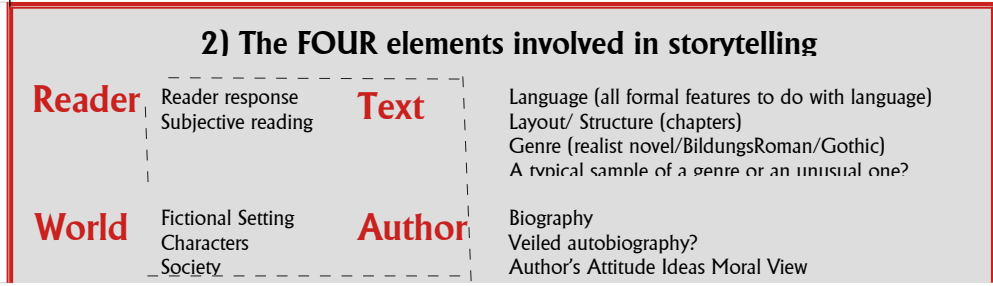
<p>All levels are interconnected</p> <p>Multiple approaches (or EMPHASES) are possible:</p> <p>STYLISTIC NARRATOLOGICAL PSYCHOANALYTICAL ARCHETYPAL/ SYMBOLICAL PHILOSOPHICAL NEW HISTORICAL FEMINIST QUEER</p>	PRAGMATIC	Who is the speaker? Who narrates the story?
	LEXICAL	Which words are used? Which DICTION is used? "Diction signifies the words or phrases chosen for a piece of writing. It is the Latin equivalent of Greek <i>Lexis</i> ."
	SYNTACTIC	In which order are they used? Paratactic Hypotactic
	RHETORICAL	Are there "special effects"? Or schemes? Tropes? Figures of speech? (metaphor, metonymy, simile, hyperbole, personification, litotes) Figures of thought or Speech Acts? (irony, paradox, rhetorical question)
	SEMANTIC	Are you recurrent words? Clusters of meaning? Thematic Units? Motifs?
	SYMBOLIC	Do recurrent words point to a symbol? What type of images/imagery do I find?

1) How we read

WHO WHAT WHERE WHEN (basic, easier)
WHY HOW (deep level, harder)

Zoom in "zero in on" "read closely" (MOTIFS/SYMBOLS)
HOW language is used to describe characters, settings, or moods.

Zoom out "look at the wider scope" "big picture" (THEME); **WHEN WHERE**
historical cultural context (across various media: printed books/legal or scientific essays/journals/newspapers/political debates/cinema/radio/figurative arts; a term at times used to include all of these and more structure of power comes from Foucault and is "discursive practices")



3) How the story is told

NARRATOLOGY: to analyse storytelling:
As you read, keep track of **who** says what to **whom** (what type of narrator or storyteller do we have?) **when** (is it a recollection or a story in the present or a combination of both?). Start with the basic distinction: **STORY** (STORIA *what*), **PLOT or narrative** (discorso; racconto; trama; intreccio *how*), and **NARRATION** (l'atto di narrare;)
Then carefully consider each of these:

TENSE (time): ORDER (chronology; flashbacks; aniso-chronies)
Analepsis leap backward/flashback/recollection
Prolepsis leap forward anticipation/foreshadowing
DURATION (compressed?); **FREQUENCY** (repetition)
MOOD: Attitude of the narrator/Point of View Perspective
VOICE: Distance of the speaking voice/ Focalisation (for Genette: who speaks)
Internal focalisation – the narrator is a character
External focalisation – the narrator knows less than the character (camera eye that gives only facts descriptions)
Zero focalisation – there is an omniscient narrator, who interprets events

Mind the difference between **THEME** (abstract, general idea, usually EXPLICITLY discussed or brought up); **MOTIF**; (recurrent topic), subject, image that builds up a pattern); **TOPOS/topoi** (a standardised topic or motif; a FORMULA.); **an ALLUSION** (only a veiled reference to something to be found BETWEEN THE LINES; **SYMBOL** (similar to a motif, but with much deeper ramifications/implications (as an EMBLEM). See entries in *The Princeton Encyclopedia*.

	THEMES (TOPICS) issues (argomenti/temi/istanze/problemi)	MOTIFS overarching/often repeated /images/ideas that reinforce or qualify the main theme (motivi ricorrenti)	TOPOI LOCI a literary commonplaces, stock formulas/cliches/rhetorical convention a meme, something that goes viral (luoghi comuni) → <i>in English often ERRONEOUSLY called TROPES</i>	ALLUSIONS (allusioni)	SYMBOLS (simboli) usually a material object used to embody a complex idea [NOT the generic use of 'symbol' as pointer or sign]
	Moral topic literary topic Everyday life/ Social issues love, nature, mythology, philosophical and religious speculation, political ideas, education, science, disease, religion	Desire and lack Tears the crowd	Proverbs The Locus Horridus/ the Locus Amoenus/Carpe Diem/Memento Mori/The Wandering Jew/The Nostos/The Descensus ad Inferos/ The dangerous night/The Golden Age/Warlike Love/The Quest/ Eros and Thanatos (Love and Death)/ The world upside down	Also related to the UNCANNY (il perturbante)	The Rose The Veil The Tower The Lamb The Sea The Whale The Albatross
Novel	Possible Thematic Threads	Possible Motifs	Possible Topoi	Possible Allusions	Possible Symbol
<i>The Castle of Otranto</i>	The Past influences the Present Superstition vs Enlightenment Legitimacy vs Illegitimacy Property Inheritance The sins of the fathers Emotion and sensibility	The haunted castle (house)/ The curse <i>The motif of dread</i> / The supernatural Dreams/ Passageways Thunder Melancholy Reverie	The Lost Manuscript/ The Gothic villain/ The despotic father / The damsel in distress/ The labyrinth / The descent/ The missing heir/ The virtuous bastard/ Mistaken identity and Doubling/The fatal secret The topos of the limen (Otranto→ exotic?)	Incest (Manfred wanting to marry his would be daughter in law)	The Castle of Otranto – symbol of cultural decay? The Statue of Alfonso The Colossal Helmet – material manifestation of history?
<i>The Mysteries of Udolpho</i>	Reasonable present vs superstitious past Reason vs Imagination Fortitude vs sensibility Sense vs Sensibility Vulnerability of women Claustrophobia virtue rewarded	The supernatural/ the Sublime and the Picturesque/ The haunted abbey/ The haunted castle/ The cemetery / The motif of terror <i>Imprisonment</i> / The locked door	Memento Mori / The weak heroine/ The locus horridus/ the locus amoenus (picturesque) The dangerous night/ the dungeon/The evil monk The handsome fiend (Montoni)	Rape	Udolpho The veiled summits The veil (chastity?) The black veil The mirror?
<i>Dracula</i>	The Monster/ The Occult vs Science/Religion/	Blood/ lineage/disease/infection/ miscegenation?/pollution	The femme fatale / The mad scientist/ The wanderer	Sexual abuse/financial abuse	Blood/Black soil Vampire

Excellent Resource for looking at possible motifs/symbols in Gothic novels:

Ann B. Tracy, *The Gothic Novel, 1790–1830: Plot Summaries and Index to Motifs* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1981)