

A dark, atmospheric illustration featuring a large, gnarled tree silhouette with several birds perched on its branches. A large, bright full moon is visible in the upper left background. The overall color palette is dark, with the moon providing a focal point of light.

# Dark Romanticism and the Gothic Literature movement

Learning Target:  
RL9

I can describe the foundational works of eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and twentieth-century American literature.  
I can compare and contrast how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.

1. What is Dark  
Romanticism?

Notes Here!

# A Dark Romantic View



I know not how it was—but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, sentiment, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. --From “The Fall of the House of Usher” by Edgar Allan Poe



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# Dark Romanticism



- A literary subgenre of Romantic Literature that emerged from the transcendental philosophical movement popular in nineteenth-century America.
- Works in the dark romantic spirit were influenced by Transcendentalism, but did not entirely embrace the ideas of Transcendentalism.

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1. What is Dark Romanticism?
2. How are the Dark Romantics different from the Transcendentalists writing at the same time?

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# Transcendentalism vs. Dark Romanticism



- The basic philosophy of the transcendental movement was a belief in man's spiritual essence and his soul's ability to transcend the physical.
- Dark Romantic works are notably less optimistic than Trans. texts about mankind, nature, and divinity.
- The Romantic era was characterized by flair, extravagance, emotion and imagination



# Transcendentalism vs. Dark Romanticism



- While both groups believe nature is a deeply spiritual force, Dark Romanticism views it in a much more sinister light than does Transcendentalism, which sees nature as a divine and universal organic mediator.
- Some, including Poe, Hawthorne and Melville, found Transcendental beliefs far too optimistic and egotistical and reacted by modifying them in their prose and poetry

# Transcendentalism vs. Dark Romanticism



## Differences

### Transcendentalist

- Saw divine goodness and beauty beneath everyday reality
- Embraced the mystical and idealistic elements of Puritan thought

### Dark Romantic

- Believed spiritual truths may be ugly or frightening
- Reintroduced the dark side of Puritan beliefs: the idea of Original Sin and the human potential for evil.



# Transcendentalism vs. Dark Romanticism



## Similarities

### Transcendentalist

### Dark Romantic

- True reality is spiritual
- Intuition is superior to logic or reason
- Human events contain signs and symbols of spiritual truths

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3. What are some characteristics of Gothic Romanticism?

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# Characteristics of the Genre



- Dark Romantics present individuals as prone to sin and self destruction, not as inherently possessing divinity and wisdom.
- The natural world is dark, decaying, and mysterious; when it does reveal truth to man, its revelations are evil and hellish.
- Dark Romanticism frequently show individuals failing in their attempts to make changes for the better.

# Themes of Dark Romanticism



- A collection of works concentrating upon themes of horror, tragedy, the macabre and the supernatural.
- The success of this movement also relies on the fact that the human psyche is attracted in a subtle way to the fear, pain and tragedy
- It has lead to the birth of the Gothic style and has greatly influenced music and art.

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3. What are some characteristics of Gothic Romanticism?
4. Who were some of the Dark Romantic authors, and what were their styles like?

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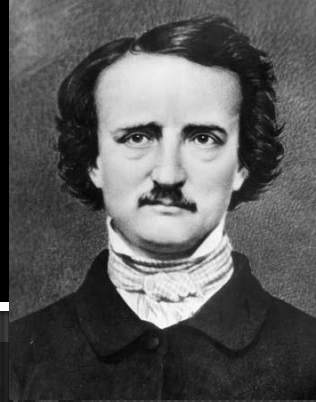
# Emily Dickinson



- A reclusive 19<sup>th</sup> century poet who lived in most of her adult life in isolation
- She was a deeply energetic, intense person
- She wrote and read widely but wasn't published until after her death
- Her family organized and published her poetry, but it didn't gain national recognition until 1955

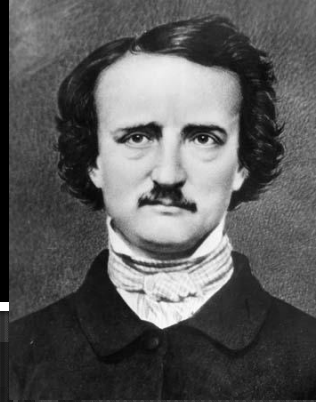


# Edgar Allan Poe



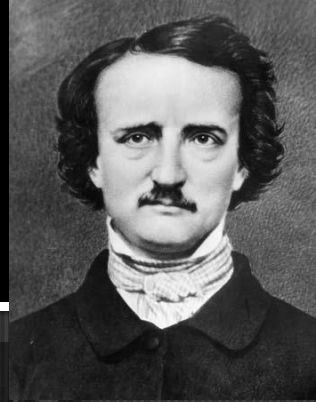
- Mother died when he was 2, he was adopted by a merchant and his wife
- After taking up drinking and having to quit university, he joined the army
- He eventually lived in New York, became a newspaper and magazine editor, and began publishing writing
- His personal life was plagued with tragedy and he died suddenly of an unexplained illness on October 7, 1849

# Edgar Allan Poe



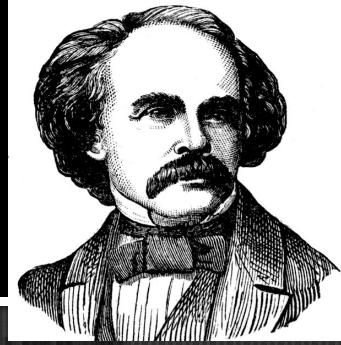
- Considered master of Gothic Romantics of in the United States
- Characteristics of his writing:
  - Weird settings (decaying castles or other secluded settings) for terrifying events.
  - Insane male narrators
  - Beautiful female characters that are dead or dying

# Edgar Allan Poe



- Characteristics of his writing continued:
  - Involved extreme situations:
    - Buried alive
    - Murder
    - Physical and mental torture
    - Retribution from beyond the grave
- Poe believed that only in these extreme situations could you reveal people's true nature.
- Poe explored the human mind searching for an essential truth

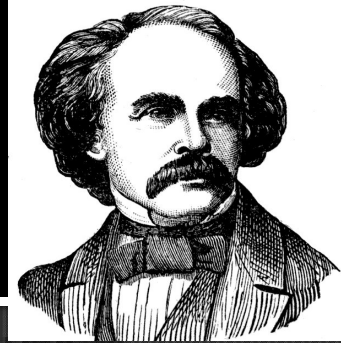
# Nathaniel Hawthorne



- Born in Salem, Massachusetts to a family with a long New England history
- Changed his name from Hathorne to Hawthorne to separate himself from the legacy of judge Hathorne (witch trials)
- Friends with transcendentalists but was rather reclusive with his wife
- Works: Scarlet Letter, Minister's Black Veil

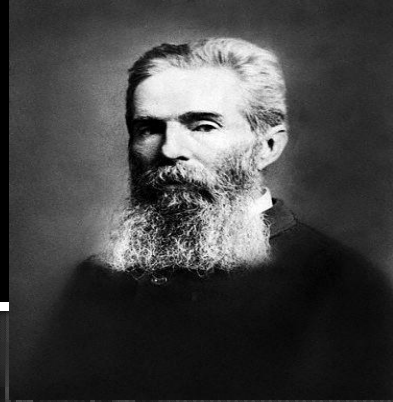


# Nathaniel Hawthorne



- Instead of looking into the human mind (like Poe) Hawthorne focused on the human heart under various conditions:  
Fear      Greed      Vanity      Mistrust  
Betrayal
- Hawthorne was also sensitive to the subject of secret sin and whether it should remain a secret or be out in the light.

# Herman Melville



- Raised in a prominent New York family until his father's death
- At age 12 he was attempting to support his family with odd jobs
- His adventures as a seaman inspired him to write
- Works: Moby Dick, Bartleby the Scrivener



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5. What is the legacy of the Gothic Romantics?

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# The Dark Romantic Legacy



- Dark Romantic themes still appear in stories, books, movies, TV shows, and comic books.
- Present-day horror stories and movies borrow images and themes from the original master of horror, Edgar Allan Poe.
  - The conflict between good and evil and the effects of guilt and sin are major themes in current literature, popular writing, and television.

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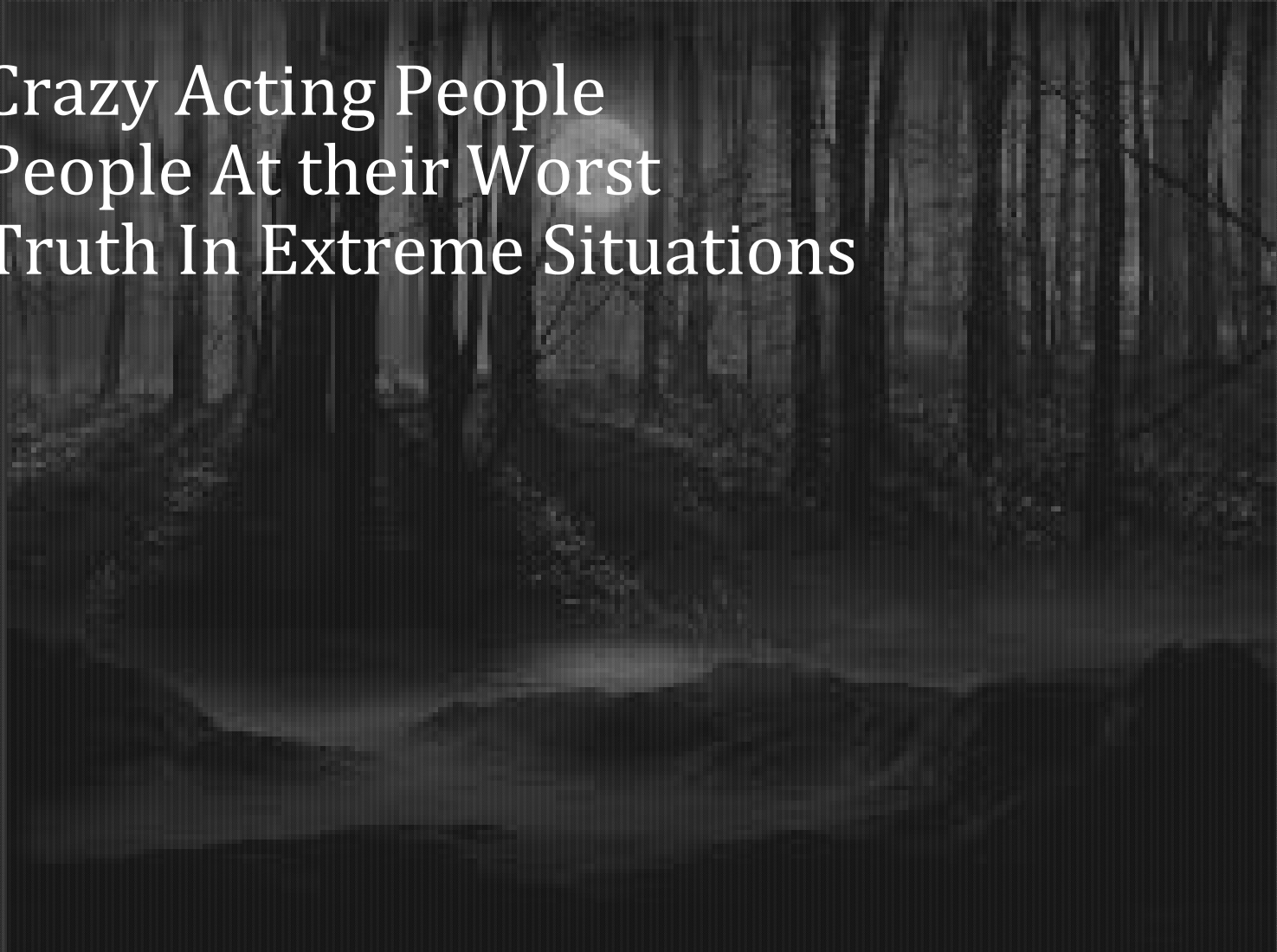
5. What is the legacy of the Gothic Romantics?
6. What's an easy way to remember the Dark Romantic characteristics?

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# Dark Acronymy



- Crazy Acting People
- People At their Worst
- Truth In Extreme Situations



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6. What's an easy way to remember the Dark Romantic characteristics?
7. What are some characteristics of the Byronic/Gothic hero?

Notes Here!



“The death...of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetic topic in the world—and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover.”  
--Edgar Allan Poe



# Wait -- You're Still There?



# The Dark Hero Characteristics



Including but not limited to:

- i. Issues with societal norms associated with expectations and class
- ii. An outcast or outlaw
- iii. Arrogant and/or Cynical
- iv. Moody or unpredictable
- v. Cunning, Clever, extremely intelligent or perceptive, sophisticated and well educated
- vi. “Darker” attributes not usually assigned to heroes



# The Dark Hero Characteristics



Including but not limited to:

- vii. Mysterious with hidden or tragic past
- viii. Charismatic and seductive
- ix. Self destructive
- x. Broody and introspective
- xi. Morally ambiguous

Escapism -- Same as romantic escapism, but  
escape into darkness...

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Read “One Summer Night” and decide is it a Gothic story and does it have a Gothic hero?

