

## **LMD 2 / Literary studies (All groups)**

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### ***Course1 : The Romantic Period in America (1820-1865)***

#### **Romanticism:**

It is a literary, artistic and philosophical movement which started in Europe by the end of the 18th century and flourished during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Its emergence was partly as a reaction to the abuses of the Industrial Revolution and the norms of the Age of reason (The Enlightenment) and its excessive rationality. This movement marked an unprecedented emphasis on the individual, the subjective, the natural, the imaginative, the irrational, the emotional, the visionary and the transcendental. As mentioned above, Romanticism as a worldview took hold in Western Europe in the late 18th century, and American writers embraced it in the early 19th century.

#### **Romanticism in the American Context:**

**In American context**, the romantic period is often regarded as the first **period of American literary creativity in comparison with the previous periods**. The historical context of Romanticism in America is generally placed within the **Westward expansion** and the **American civil war** within which **slavery** was the central issue of conflict between the opposing forces (**the North Vs the South**).

The Romantic impact on America started to be felt by the 1930s as this movement was generating a remarkable transformations in European civilization in all domains. Therefore, similar to the European Romanticism, the American romantic spirit was in a broadest sense a kind of a new attitude towards humanity, nature and society. It was an attitude that carried a **prominent privilege of individualism, imagination and freedom**. Yet, it should be noted that American Romantics were in a constant manner seeking to build up their own literary tendency as a result of getting their independence from the British. Besides, they concentrated much more on the idea that the human

nature is good, pure and free. They strongly held the faith that man's nature is corrupted by society, political absolutism and by modern civilization at large.

### **Tenets and Famous Figures:**

**The major drives and attitudes of American Romanticism include the followings:**

- ✓ a deep appreciation and idealization of nature.
- ✓ a strong power of imagination.
- ✓ a wider adoration of emotion over reason and of the senses over intellect.
- ✓ a strong emphasis on feelings ,intuition and idealism.
- ✓ an assault against the artificiality of modern civilization.
- ✓ a revolutionary attitude against the abuses of excessive rationality and urbanization.
- ✓ a celebration of individual freedom.
- ✓ The westward expansion and the discovery of new territories created and encouraged a new feeling of optimism and hope for a better life among Americans
- ✓ A strong impulse towards reforms reflected in the advocacy of women's rights and the abolition of slavery.
  
- ✓ a celebration of individualism clearly depicted in the writings of Emerson and Thoreau.
  
- ✓ an exploration of the dark side of human nature.( evoking supernatural and gothic themes ( Edgar Allan Poe).

Novels, short stories and poems replaced sermons and pamphlets as America's literary genres.

### Language:

Before evoking the aspect of language within the Romantic Movement in America, it is worth remembering the fact that Romanticism in America dominated the literary scene from around 1830 to the end of the Civil War and the rise of Realism. In literature, it fundamentally rose against the formal orthodoxy of Neoclassicism that stressed order, logic, and balance and witty insights. As such, Romanticism marked a divorce from the social concerns and conventions that were prevailing forces in **neoclassical literature (Literature of the 18<sup>th</sup> century)**.

In a rather deeper sense, Romanticism came to replace the neoclassic focus on reason and logic with an emphasis on the power of feelings, emotions and imagination. Also, the emphasis on authority and societal absolutism shifted to be a focus on individuality.

Broadly speaking, **the language of American romanticism was characterized as being less formalized in comparison with the previous periods.** This is mainly due to the fact that nature is a reflection of man, and simplicity is therefore prized over the established orthodoxies and conventions of the past. In other words, the simplicity and spontaneity of the romantic language is the comparable side of the simplicity of nature itself.

### Famous American Romantics:

The Romantic scene in America was led by talented writers such as:

- ✓ Washington Irving
- ✓ Emily Dickinson
- ✓ Walt Whitman
- ✓ Nathaniel Hawthorne
- ✓ Edgar Allan Poe
- ✓ Ralph Waldo Emerson
- ✓ Henry David Thoreau
- ✓ Herman Melville
- ✓ James Fenimore Cooper

## **Washington Irving's "Rip Van Winkle" (1820)**

### **Introduction:**

It is worth noting that within American Romanticism, the short story gained popularity and reached a significant level of development. In fact, by the early nineteenth century some famous authors within this movement took the lead in the development and the sophistication of the short story. For the sake of example, one may refer to: Nathaniel Hawthorne, Washington Irving and Edgar Allan Poe.

### **Definition of Short story:**

Though it seems to define itself (a short piece of prose fiction), the short story is not necessarily a story which is short. Yet, in comparison with the novel, it is much more condensed and concise. The short story therefore is a complete work of art composed of a beginning, middle and an end. It is said to be short because it makes its point quickly, economically, in terms of language, and efficiently in conveying its message. The short story does not provide an extended and/or experimented treatment of characters and events. All too often, it revolves around one central character and seldom more than two with a remarkable focus on one significant incident. It is basically written for the sake of producing a single impression. (Abrams, 1999)

### **Washington Irving's Biography:**

He was born in April, 1783, in New York City. During his childhood, Irving used to spend many hours roaming around the Hudson River valley and occasionally wandered into the Dutch neighborhood of New York City. There he used to hear traditional stories and folktales. These experiences were depicted later in his writings. He studied law but also began writing stories and essays. His first writing was in 1802, within a series of humorous essays. He made a two-year tour of Europe (1804-1806), where he could visit England, Italy, Holland and France. This inspired him to record such an experience in a travel journal. Back to America in 1806, he became an established lawyer. However, his emphasis on writing persisted. His works include the followings:

-*Salmagundi* (1807): Published with his brother William and a friend, it is a series of some 20 essays about society of the day.

*The Sketch Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent* (1819–20): This collection of about 30 stories and essays. It included “**The Legend of Sleepy Hollow**” and “**Rip Van Winkle**”. These are considered the first American short stories; they are in essence his retelling of folktales.

*The Alhambra* (1832): it is a collection of Irving’s versions of traditional stories of Spanish folktales. He died in 1859.

**“RIP VAN WINKLE”: Basic plot summary:**

This short story written by Washington Irving and was first published in *The Sketch Book* (1819–20). It was based on a German folktale. The plot is mainly centered on man called Rip Van Winkle, a friendly but lazy farmer who used to escape his nagging wife by wandering into the Caatskill Mountains with his dog, Wolf. There, he met a group of dwarfs who were playing ninepins in a theatre. Rip was offered a drink of moonshine; he accepted and immediately fell asleep for almost twenty (20) years. When he woke up, he found himself an old man with a long white beard; the dwarfs were nowhere in sight, even his dog was nowhere to be found. He decided to go back to his village. When he arrived, he was surprised to find that everything had changed. It was with immense difficulty that he reached his house that he found fallen apart. His wife died and his children grew up. He was astonished to find the portrait of George Washington (The first American President) standing in place of that of King George the Third (The British Monarch). Finally, his daughter Judith could recognize him and took him to her house. Rip entertained the people of his village with his tale in the mountains. People got fascinated with his story and wished to share his good luck for not witnessing the hardships of the American Revolution.

**Excerpt for analysis: Read the excerpt and answer the questions below**

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Certain it is, that he was a great favourite among all the good wives of the village, who, as usual with the amiable sex, took his part in all family squabbles, and never failed, whenever they talked those matters over in their evening gossiping, to lay all the blame on Dame Van Winkle. The children of the village, too, would shout with joy whenever he approached. He assisted at their sports, made their playthings, taught them to fly

kites and shoot marbles, and told them long stories about ghosts, witches, and Indians. Whenever he went dodging about the village, he was surrounded by a troop of them hanging on his skirts, clambering on his back, and playing a thousand tricks on him with impunity; and not a dog would bark at him throughout the neighborhood.

The great error in Rip's composition was an insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labor. It could not be from the want of assiduity or perseverance; for he would sit on a wet rock, with a rod as long and heavy as a Tartar's lance, and fish all day without a murmur, even though he should not be encouraged by a single nibble. He would carry a fowling-piece on his shoulder for hours together, trudging through woods and swamps, and uphill and down dale, to shoot a few squirrels or wild pigeons. He would never refuse to assist a neighbor, even in the roughest toil, and was foremost a man at all country frolics for husking Indian corn or building stone fences. The women of the village, too, used to employ him to run their errands, and to do such little odd jobs as their less obliging husbands would not do for them – in a word, Rip was ready to attend to anybody's business but his own; but as to doing family duty, and keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible.

In fact, he declared it was of no use to work on his farm; it was the most pestilent little piece of ground in the whole country; everything about it went wrong, and would go wrong in spite of him. His fences were continually falling to pieces; his cow would either go astray, or get among the cabbages; weeds were sure to grow quicker in his fields than anywhere else; the rain always made a point of setting in just as he had some out-of-door work to do; so that though his patrimonial estate had dwindled away under his management, acre by acre, until there was little more left than a mere patch of Indian corn and potatoes, yet it was the worst-conditioned farm in the neighbourhood.

His children, too, were as ragged and wild as if they belonged to nobody. His son Rip, an urchin begotten in his own likeness, promised to inherit the habits, with the old clothes of his father. He was generally seen trooping like a colt at his mother's heels, equipped in a pair of his father's cast-off galligaskins, which he had much ado to hold up with one hand, as a fine lady does her train in bad weather.

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Rip Van Winkle, however, was one of those happy mortals, of foolish, well-oiled dispositions, who take the world easy, eat white bread or brown, whichever can be got with least thought or trouble, and would rather starve on a penny than work for a pound. If left to himself, he would have whistled life away in perfect contentment; but his wife kept continually dinning in his ears about his idleness; his carelessness, and the ruin he was bringing on his family.

Morning, noon, and night, her tongue was incessantly going, and everything he said or did was sure to produce a torrent of household eloquence. Rip had but one way of replying to all lectures of the kind, and that, by frequent use, had grown into a habit. He shrugged his shoulders, shook his head, cast up his eyes, but said nothing. This, however, always provoked a fresh volley from his wife, so that he was fain to draw off his forces, and take to the outside of the house – the only side which, in truth, belongs to a henpecked husband.

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### Questions of Analysis:

1. Identify the passage and the literary genre.
2. Characters
3. Setting
4. Point of view
5. Theme
6. Two figures of speech and explain them.
7. Comment on style.

### **Task 2:** Write an *alternative ending* of “Rip Van Winkle”

*Rip Van Winkle lived in an old village near the Kaatskill Mountains; a village that was founded by the Dutch. He was a good man, nice neighbour and an obedient husband. He was very loved by children as he was always so kind to them. He was fond of hunting in the woods. Yet, he did not use to work a lot in his farm which grew potatoes and corn only. Rip Van Winkle had a son named after him. His wife used to blame him for his laziness. His best friend was his dog, Wolf. To escape his nagging wife, Rip Van Winke used to go to the woods with his dog.*





## ***Course 2: Transcendentalism: An overview***

Basically, **the verb to transcend -in the context of transcendentalism** -is to go beyond the limits of; exceed; be above and independent of the physical world.

### **-Transcendentalism:**

Transcendentalism was a 19th century **philosophical, religious and literary movement** that celebrates the capacity of the individual in knowing truth **intuitively**, that is, attaining **knowledge transcending the reach of the senses**. Transcendentalism **was one of the faces of American Romanticism**. The transcendentalists strongly believed that true reality transcends, or exists beyond, the physical world. Ralph Waldo Emerson , Henry David Thoreau, Margaret Fuller and Bronson Alcott stood at the center of American Transcendentalism. This movement made a deep impression upon the American people and upon Europeans too. Stemming from high mindedness, moral intensity, a strong desire to bring about reform and change to society and a strong assertion for the superiority of the philosophy of individualism over tradition and society, Transcendentalism marked new avenues in the American history and philosophy. (Baym, 2007)

### **-Consider the following quotes and state what do they emphasize?**

1. "Great men are they(those) who see that **spiritual is stronger than any material force**; that thoughts rule the world". (**Ralph Waldo Emerson**)

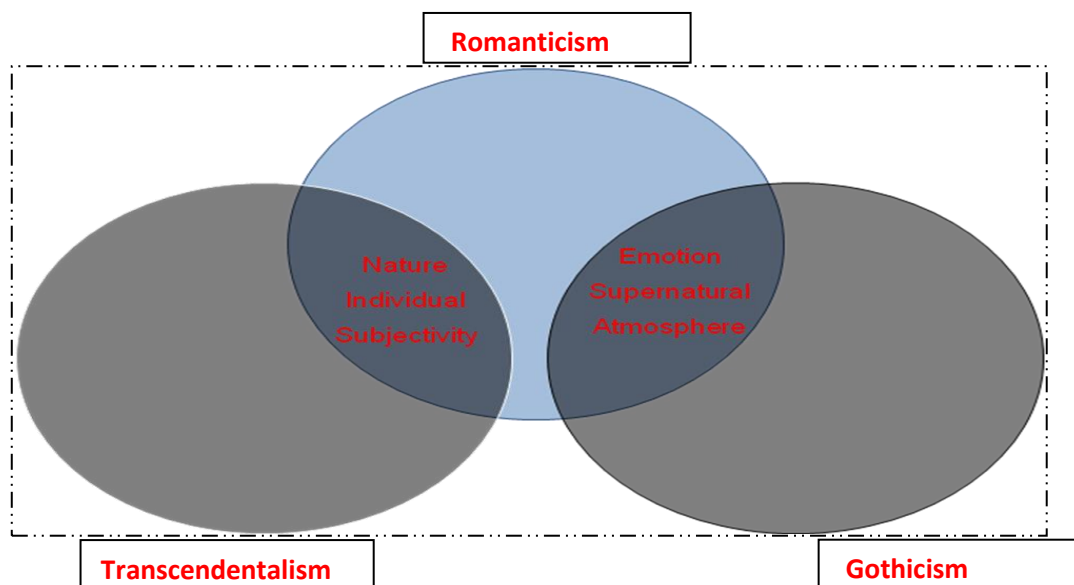
2. "We will walk on our own feet; we will work with our **own hands**; we will speak **our own minds**...A nation of men will for the first time exist, because each believes **himself** inspired by the **Divine Soul** which also inspires all men." (**Ralph Waldo Emerson**)

**FAMOUS FIGURES:** *The major figures that were at the center of this movement in America are:*

- Ralph Waldo Emerson
- Margaret Fuller
- Henry David Thoreau
- Bronson Alcott

American Transcendentalism started with the foundation of the **Transcendental Club** in Boston in 1836 .The movement founded its Magazine: *The Dial*.

**Task:** Consider the following chart to spot the intersections between **Romanticism**, **Transcendentalism** and **Gothicism**.



**Transcendentalists' Basic Beliefs:** The Major beliefs within this movement might be summarized in what follows:

- Everything in the universe, including people, is a reflection of God, or the *Divine Soul*.
- The physical world is merely a doorway to **the spiritual world**.

- Man can use **intuition** to see God in nature and in his own soul.
- The individual, not society is his or her own best authority.
- Feeling and intuition **are much more superior to reason and intellect.**
- **The Transcendentalists' strong belief in action:** Owing to their belief in the possibility of human perfection, the Transcendentalists:
  - Set practical goals for improving people's lives.
  - Envisaged plans for creating a perfect, or a utopian society
  - Aimed and worked hard for achieving a real social change ( abolition of slavery, advocacy of women's rights)
  - It enhanced a democratic, an egalitarian and universalist spirit.

### **Nature and the Oversoul:**

- In their writings, the Transcendentalists depict semi-religious feelings toward nature.
- They believed in the existence of a direct connection between the universe & the individual soul
- They consider that divinity is fused in everything ( animate and inanimate)
- The major purpose of human life is to achieve a kind of a union with the "Oversoul" : **a convergence of the individual, God & Nature**

**Major Transcendentalist Works:** Below are some influential transcendentalist works:

- **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

-“Self-Reliance” 1841 (an essay)

- **Henry David Thoreau**

-*Walden* 1854

-“Civil Disobedience”1849 (an essay)

- **Margaret Fuller**

-*Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1843).

## **Transcendentalism : The beginning**

Transcendentalism originated in New England in the early 1800s with the birth of *Unitarianism*. It grew out of the opposition between two major Christian religious camps. **The New Light theologians**-Those who believed that religion should be based on a purely emotional experience, and **The Old Light theologians**-those who praised reason and adopt it as the driving force of their religious philosophy.

Consequently, the Old Lights became to be known first as **liberal Christians** and later as **Unitarians**. The Unitarians denied the Holy Trinity of Father, Son and Holy Ghost and went further to advocate the mortality of Jesus Christ. The divide between Transcendentalists and Unitarianism was mainly due to **the excessive rationality of the latter (Unitarianism)**.

Transcendentalists instead embraced German Romanticism seeking more spiritual experience and freedom. Therefore, they adopted the ideas of philosophers namely of Immanuel Kant and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, in addition to those of the famous English poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Commenting on the Transcendentalists' orientation of thought, Mac Donald (2008) writes: "In their search for an intellectual grounding of religion, they rejected Locke's barren empiricism and turned instead to the idealism of Kant, Schelling, and Coleridge." (p.92)

Transcendentalists stressed on the idea of a personal knowledge of God. Their slogan was that no intermediary is needed to obtain spiritual insight.

## **The Major Roots of Transcendentalism:**

To trace back the rise of this movement and to get deeper insight into its principles, it is quite important to shed light on its major philosophical driving forces, which include the followings:

**1. Idealism:** Basically, Idealism was a philosophy that was advocated by the famous Greek philosopher Plato in the 4th century B.C. The essence of idealism is that true reality can be found in ideas, not in the physical world. Commenting on the influence of Idealism on transcendentalism, Ralph Waldo Emerson claimed that Transcendentalism was simply Idealism rediscovered and applied to the nineteenth-century world. To measure the influence of Idealism on Transcendentalism, one has to consider the following points:

- Transcendentalists embraced Plato's belief in an **all-encompassing spiritual reality**.
- Transcendentalists applied Idealist ideas to human life. They believed in human perfectibility and they worked to achieve this goal.

“The attraction of idealism to the Transcendentalists was its conception of the mind as creative, intuitive, and interpretive rather than merely reactive to external events.”

(Macdonald, 2008, p.92)

## **2. Puritanism:**

Puritanism was an early American religious philosophy. The Puritans' faith was essentially centered on the followings:

- Religion is a **personal matter; it is an inner experience** that must not be filtered through clergy and/ or government.
- Celebration of **self reliance** (people should be self- reliant)
- The existence of God can be revealed primarily through the **Bible, but also through signs in the physical world.**
- Salvation is given to chosen people ( “elect” people).

Transcendentalists shared with the Puritan the belief in the personal nature of religion and the desirability of self-reliance. **However, Transcendentalists differed because they:**

- looked to nature, not the Bible, as the primary source of divine revelation.

- believed that all humans, not only the “elect,” were connected to a divine soul.

### **3. Romanticism:**

As seen before, Romanticism was a movement that began in late eighteenth-century Europe and reached America in the nineteenth century. The Romantics basically:

- Valued imagination and feelings,
- Celebrated and idealized nature,
- Privileged nature over reason, logic and civilization,
- Championed individualism and personal freedom,
- Prompted reflection on nature to gain spiritual wisdom,

It becomes clear that the transcendentalists shared the romantic belief that spiritual wisdom can be found in nature. They went further to believe that everything in the universe, including the human beings, is a reflection of God. In addition to this, the Transcendentalists held the belief that man is capable of attaining perfection because he is part of the Divine Soul. The Transcendentalists like their romantic counterparts, were trying to forge a distinctive American literature and philosophy that valued the power of the individual.

## Course 3: The Gothic Influence in America

### Introduction:

The gothic style of writing has traditionally included medieval settings and supernatural elements. Typical scenarios within gothic literature would include dark and haunted castles inhabited by innocent damsels in a status of distress and evil men preying on these young and helpless women. The dive in the supernatural is often manipulated by the author and his creative potential. The author of a gothic story is not restrained by or bound to the standard artistic conventions, particularly the realistic element.(Abrams, 1999)

Gothic literature is therefore associated with all what is dark, mysterious, scary and gloomy. Etymologically, the word gothic derives from the “Goths”. These were Germanic tribes that settled in different parts of Europe approximately from the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries A.D. The term was later used to describe a medieval kind of architecture usually referred to by critics as barbaric.

Gothicism in literature developed in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century in Britain as a reaction to the ideology of the Enlightenment that dominated the age.

In 18<sup>th</sup> century America, writers of the gothic genre were witnesses of the tragic life that Americans were enduring. As a reaction to this, they developed a new literary genre through which they expressed their beliefs, sufferings and the darkness they were experiencing inside themselves.

In most cases and as stated earlier, the gothic form of writing is filled up with pictures of deaths, mysteries, terror and horror. Gothic literature takes as its primary interest the exploration of the dark side of human nature. These characteristics are found in the writings of Edgar Allan Poe who himself experienced hardships and psychological uneasiness. He could therefore write successful gothic stories such as *The Fall of the House of Usher* (1839), *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* (1841) *The Black Cat* (1845) and *The Masque of the Red Death* (1850)

## Edgar Allan Poe's Biography:

A son of a family of actors, Poe was born in Boston in 1809. His father died one year after his birth. His mother took care of him and other two children until her death in 1811 in Virginia. A remarkable event in Poe's life is that he was adopted by a wealthy family ( The Allans). Yet; he never get along with his foster father (John Allan) as he was always in conflict with him. When his foster father died, nothing was attributed to Poe in his will. Meanwhile, Poe started writing stories and poems to earn his living. However, because he was given to drinking, he did not use to keep his work for long. He got married in 1835 but his wife (Virginia) died eleven years later. After the death of his wife, Poe's conditions of mind got worse. His state of health was swinging between "Euphoric" drunkenness and "Neurotic" depression. Worse still, because of such state of mind, Poe felt helpless to deal with his problems and this led him, at times, to attempt suicide. He was a skilled writer and contributed a lot in the development of the gothic genre in American literature. He died in 1849. His famous works include the followings:

- **Poems:** *Alone (1875)- Annabel Lee (1849)- The Bells (1849)- The Conqueror Worm (1843)-The Raven (1845)- To the River (1829)- Spirits of the Dead (1829).*
- **Short stories :** *The Fall of the House of Usher (1839), The Murders in the Rue Morgue (1841) The Black Cat (1845) The Masque of the Red Death (1850), The Angel of the Odd (1844), Bernice (1825), Hop-Frog (1849), Mesmeric Revelation (1849), The premature Burial (1850)*

## The Fall of the House of Usher (1839) : Basic plot summary :

The story opens with the arrival of Roderick Usher's boyhood friend (an unnamed narrator) after receiving a letter from him asking for his company. Usher's house was an old mansion encircled by a small tarn (lake). A bridge across this lake was the only access to the mansion. Roderick received his friend cordially despite his illness. He was suffering from a strange mental disease that was the source of his unrest. He lived in the house was his twin sister called Madeline. This latter was also suffering from a strange disease. During his stay in the house, the guest provided company to Roderick who used to spend time inside painting and playing guitar avoiding the sunlight. Roderick sadly attributed his mental and physical uneasiness to the house, and this is something that his friend too has suspected since his entry. When Madeline died, Roderick decided to bury



her in a vault underneath the house. In so doing, he sought help from his friend (the narrator).

A few days later and during a stormy night, Roderick got agitated and couldn't sleep. His friend joined him in his room and tried to calm him down. He started reading from his "The Mad Trist", a story about a knight who slays a dragon and wins a shield of shining brass. Strangely, as his friend was reading, they could both hear identical sounds narrated in the story. At these terrifying moments, Roderick declared that his sister Madeline was still alive when he buried her. Suddenly, she appeared to them bloodied and started to throttle Roderick until he died. Terrified by this scene, the narrator escaped; turning his back, he saw the house crumbling down into the tarn.

### Analysis of the story

#### **1. Major Characters**

- **The narrator:** He is the boyhood friend of Roderick. He was requested by Roderick to come and stay with him. As soon as his arrival to the house, he suspected that the mansion itself is a source of malaise to Roderick. This image is depicted in the very outset of the story as the narrator felt something strange when he got in the house. **'..within view of the melancholy House of Usher. 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 that of '** (TFHU,p.11)
- **Roderick Usher:** Roderick and his twin sister were the last two members in a long line of Ushers whose family tree has never branched. Roderick was the master of the house. He was suffering from mental disorder and physical unrest. **' Up on my entrance, Usher arose from a sofa on which he had been lying at full length, and greeted me with a vivacious warmth which had much in it, I at first thought, of an overdone cordially –of the constrained of the ennuye man of the world. (TFHU,p.18)**

- **Madeline Usher:** She is the twin sister of Roderick. Similar to him, she was suffering from depression and mental unrest. The impact of her mental disease was deeply reflected in her strange behaviour. When she apparently died; Roderick buried her in a tomb in the house basement. But she emerged bloodied later.

**‘..but then without those doors there DID stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame.(TFHU,p387 )**

## **2.Minor Characters :**

- **The servant:** He is a servant working in the house of Usher.
- **The valet:** A male domestic in the house of Usher
- **The physician:** He is one of the doctors who used to treat Madeline Usher.

## **3. Setting :**

**Time:** The major events of the story of *The Fall of the House of Usher* started at a dusk night of an autumn day. This was very probably in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

**Place:** The events took place in a mansion (old house). This latter is described in the story as a scary place. It was covered with fungus and encircled by a small tarn (lake). A bridge across this lake provided the unique access to the house.

**4. Major themes of the story:** The story conveys a number of themes. The focus is to be put on the most predominant ones. These are :

- **Terror and horror:** the events of the story depict the sense of horror and terror. This sense basically arises from the mysterious house.
- **Madness:** Madness is a predominant theme in the story. It is revealed through the representation of Roderick and his sister as both were suffering from a mental disorder. Their behavior in the story is reflected in signs of anxiety, nervousness, hysteria and depression.

- **Evil:** Evil haunted the Usher family for a long time. This element is clearly depicted in the story via the relationship between Roderick and his sister Madeline.
- **Mystery:** the sense of mystery in the story is omnipresent throughout the plot. From the very outset, the narrator predicted that the house he was entering is in itself a world of mystery.
- **Isolation:** the location of the house put the characters ( Roderick and Madeline) in isolation. They were cut off from the outside world. This aspect of isolation aggravated their madness.
- **Family:** The story renders the strange life of Roderick and Madeline who are representative members of the Usher family. Their death marked the end of a race.

**5. Point of view:** The **predominant point of view** in the story is the first person point of view. The nameless character describes the flow of the events as he witnessed them. The narrator relays the events from his own perspective, and this way he allows the reader to be aligned with him in getting closer to the mysterious atmosphere inside the mansion.

**Task:** Read the excerpt below from the Story *The Fall of the House of Usher* and elaborate and analysis in which you:

- Identify the passage and the literary genre
- Characters
- setting
- Point of view
- Figures of speech with explanation and their effect on meaning.
- Tone
- theme

Upon my entrance, Usher arose from a sofa on which he had been lying at full length, and greeted me with a vivacious warmth which had much in it, I at first thought, of an overdone cordiality — of the constrained effort of the ennuyé man of the world. A glance, however, at his countenance, convinced me of his perfect sincerity. We sat down; and for some moments, while he spoke not, I gazed upon him with a feeling half of pity, half of awe. Surely, man had never before so terribly altered, in so brief a period, as had Roderick Usher! It was with difficulty that I could bring myself to admit the identity of the wan being before me with the companion of my early boyhood. Yet the character of his face had been at all times remarkable. A cadaverousness of complexion; an eye large, liquid, and luminous beyond comparison; lips somewhat thin and very pallid, but of a surpassingly beautiful curve; a nose of a delicate Hebrew model, but with a breadth of nostril unusual in similar formations; a finely moulded chin, speaking, in its want of prominence, of a want of moral energy; hair of a more than web-like softness and tenuity; these features, with an inordinate expansion above the regions of the temple, made up altogether a countenance not easily to be forgotten. And now in the mere exaggeration of the prevailing character of these features, and of the expression they were wont to convey, lay so much of change that I doubted to whom I spoke. The now ghastly pallor of the skin, and the now miraculous lustre of the eye, above all things startled and even awed me. The silken hair, too, had been suffered to grow all unheeded, and as, in its wild gossamer texture, it floated rather than fell about the [page 69:] face, I could not, even with effort, connect its Arabesque expression with any idea of simple humanity.

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