

## Books Worth Revisiting: Gothic Romances

Romance novels are very popular, and for those who like a little suspense with their romances, the gothic romance can be a very satisfying read. Three distinct characteristics define the gothic romance. The first is the young and naïve heroine who is usually poor, alone in the world, and finds herself suddenly living in a large house presided over by a charismatic master. This fascinating hero is, of course, the second characteristic of the gothic romance. Our hero is a man of the world, capable, arrogant, and rich, and there's something about him that is suspicious, threatening, or just irritating; our heroine may not trust him and certainly does not understand him. Nevertheless, she cannot help herself—she falls hopelessly in love and spends a large portion of the story in emotional turmoil. The third characteristic of a gothic romance is that the story is always set in a splendid mansion on an impressive estate. The house often is so dominant in the story that it is like a third character in a romantic triangle: hero, heroine, house. And in true gothic fashion, something secretive, brooding, perilous is going on in the house, and our heroine soon finds that danger is closing in on her.

**Rebecca by Daphne du Maurier RC 48914; BR 12354; LB 00964; BARD download.** *Rebecca*, published in 1938, is the standard for gothic romances, and for Daphne du Maurier (1907-1989), it was the masterpiece in her distinguished writing career. Its opening line, "Last night I dreamt that I went to Manderley, again," is one of the most famous in modern literature. Manderley, of course, is the house at the center of this well-loved classic. The young, nameless heroine finds herself suddenly married to the enigmatic and brooding Maxim de Winter, owner of the fabled mansion on the Cornish coast. Almost immediately, the new Mrs. de Winter feels herself overwhelmed by the memory of her husband's first wife, the remarkable Rebecca, who had died the year before. So dominating is Rebecca's presence that the new Mrs. de Winter creeps about Manderley as if she is an unwanted intruder and fears to come into contact with Mrs. Danvers, the mansion's intimidating housekeeper who was totally devoted to her late mistress. When a terrible secret comes to light that threatens Max's very life, his new wife finds she is stronger and braver than anyone would have suspected. Suitable for adult and mature young adult readers. To order this book, call 1-800-252-9605 and ask for **RC 48914 / BR 12354 / LB 00964** or download it from the **BARD site**.

**Mistress of Mellyn by Victoria Holt RC 44443; LB 01117; BARD download.** Victoria Holt is one of the pseudonyms of London-born author

Eleanor Hibbert (1906-1993), and as Holt, she published thirty-two novels between 1960 and 1993. *Mistress of Mellyn* was the first. For a time, readers believed that Holt was really Daphne Du Maurier. This mistake mystified Holt, who saw no similarities in their writing styles, and she finally concluded that her novel's setting in Cornwall must have been the explanation. Martha Leigh journeys to Cornwall to become governess at the atmospheric and isolated estate of Connan TreMellyn. Martha finds the Cornish way of life very different from her quiet upbringing in rural England, but she thinks Mount Mellyn, the house at the center of the TreMellyn estate, to be an architectural wonder. Everyone is fascinated by her employer, whose private life is a rich source for gossipy speculation. The year before, Connan's wife had run away with a handsome neighbor, but the pair were killed in a train crash. Much mystery surrounds the tragedy, and as Martha finds herself falling in love with Connan, she also learns that Mount Mellyn has many secrets, some of which are deadly. This book is suitable for young adult and adult readers. To order this book, call 1-800-252-9605 and ask for **RC 44443 / LB 01117** or **download it from the BARD site.**

**Cousin Kate by Georgette Heyer RC 55928; BR 00988 and 14566; BARD download.** Georgette Heyer (1902-1974) is best known for her period romances, and while *Cousin Kate*, published in 1968, is definitely a romance, it also has a darkness about it that set it apart from Heyer's other romances. Kate Malvern, a penniless governess who has lost her latest position, finds herself spirited away to Staplewood Manor by Lady Minerva Broome, her late father's half-sister. Because her father had long ago quarreled with his half-sister, Kate really knows nothing about her aunt and finds her to be rather dictatorial and overpowering. Having no other options, however, she accepts what looks to be nothing but kindness on her aunt's part and soon finds herself installed as companion to her cousin Torquil. Kate, a very practical young woman, quickly realizes that all is not well at Staplewood Manor, especially with her cousin, who is a moody and excitable young man. Kate is by turns mystified, amused, and alarmed by the state of the household, as family, friends, and servants all try to keep Torquil's reckless and rebellious behavior in check. Kate finds herself more and more turning to Phillip Broome, Torquil's elder cousin, for advice and soon protection, as she realizes her aunt's true reason for bringing her to Staplewood. A gem of a gothic romance with an explosive ending, this book is suitable for young adult and adult readers. To order this book, call 1-800-252-9605 and ask for **RC 55928 / BR 00988 and 14566** or **download it from the BARD site.**