

We Have Always Lived in the Castle – By Shirley Jackson Summer
Reading Assignment

Background: Narrated by the eccentric Merricat Blackwood, who lives with her sister Constance and Uncle Julian in a decaying mansion, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* is a gothic tale of isolation, family secrets, and madness. The story follows the family's secluded life, which is disrupted by the arrival of their cousin Charles, forcing Merricat to use her peculiar rituals and magic to protect their fragile world from both her cousin and the town's hostile villagers.

Assignment: Keep a handwritten journal in a composition notebook in which you respond to the following prompts.

Video – “What is Gothic Literature?”

- Before reading the novel, watch the following video up until the last section (18:35): <https://youtu.be/NULLOYGisDI>
- After you've finished reading the novel, write seven detailed paragraphs in which you address how each of the aspects from the video is illustrated in the novel.

1. Castle

2. Wild Nature

3. Supernatural

4. Metonymy

5. Sublime

6. The Past

7. Confinement

- Your paragraphs should reference specific settings, characters, imagery, or symbols from the novel and feature at least one direct quote (in MLA format).

Example: “Charles had blackened the world” (94).

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Dialectical Journal – Chapters #1-10

- Create a two-column chart.
- In the first column, quote 5 key passages from each of the novel's 10 chapters (in MLA format of course!).
- In the second column, write 2-3 sentences that explain how the passage exhibits one of the following three connections:

Text-to-Self: How does this relate to my own life?

Text-to-World: How does this relate to real-world events or life in general?

Text-to-Text: How does this connect to something else that I've seen or read?

First Page, Last Page

- Closely reread the first page of the novel (ending with “... that thought I could not endure”) and the last page of the novel (beginning with “I told you that you would like it on the moon”).
- Write a detailed response in which you compare the two pages and examine the ways in which the following elements are presented by the author: setting, characterization, conflict, and theme.
- You should have a separate response for each element.