

Entry printed from *Oxford English Dictionary Online*
 © Oxford University Press 2003

Gothic, a. and n.

SECOND EDITION
1989

(gɒθɪk) Forms: 7 **Gotic**, **Gotiq(ue)**, **Gothicke**, **Gottic**, **Gothiq**, 7-8 **Gothique**, 7-**Gothic**. [ad. L. *gothic-us*, f. *Goth̄* (see [GOTH](#)). Cf. F. *gothique*.]

A. *adj.*

1. a. Of, pertaining to, or concerned with the Goths or their language.

1611 BIBLE *Transl. Pref.* 5 Vpilas is reported..to haue translated the Scriptures into the Gothicke tongue. **1776** GIBBON *Decl. & F.* x. I. 244 Cassiodorus gratified the inclination of the conquerors in a Gothic history. **1845** STODDART *Grammar* 192/1 The Gothic substantive *leik*, body. **1892** WRIGHT (*title*) *A Primer of the Gothic Language*.

b. = [MOZARABIC](#).

1867 tr. *Guéranger's Life St. Cecilia* xviii. 164 The Gothic Church of Spain, whose Liturgy was compiled by St. Leander, Archbishop of Seville. **1874** *Month* Feb. 223 The old Gothic or Mozarabic rite. **1911** E. B. O'REILLY *Heroic Spain* 235 The Christians who were under Moorish rule..kept to the old Gothic ritual.

†2. Formerly used in extended sense, now expressed by [TEUTONIC](#) or [GERMANIC](#).

1647 N. BACON *Disc. Govt. Eng.* I. xl. 96 Nor can any Nation upon earth shew so much of the ancient Gothique Law as this Island hath. **a1690** G. ETHEREGE *Poems* Wks. (1888) 378 A tawdry ill-bred ramp, Whose brawny arms and martial face Proclaim her of the Gothic race. **1721** SWIFT *Let. to Pope* 10 Jan. Wks. 1841 II. 551/2 As to Parliaments, I adored the wisdom of that Gothic institution which made them annual. **1735-8** BOLINGBROKE *On Parties* 102 Maintaining the Freedom of our Gothick Institution of Government. **1832** PALGRAVE *Eng. Commw.* I. 500 There is no Gothic feudality unless the parties be connected by the mutual bond of Vassalage and Seigniorie. **1846** MCCULLOCH *Acc. Brit. Empire* (1854) I. 395 The Gothic blood would seem to have been preserved pretty pure in all the country to the north and east of the Severn and the Exe. **1857** MAURICE *Ep. St. John* xx. 336 He raised up the Gothic or Teutonic race.

absol. **1685** DRYDEN *Albion & Alb.* Pref., This language [Italian] has in a manner been refined and purified from the Gothic ever since the time of Dante.

3. †a. Belonging to, or characteristic of, the Middle Ages; mediæval, 'romantic', as opposed to classical. In early use chiefly with reprobation: Belonging to the 'dark ages' (cf. sense 4). *Obs.* [Cf. F. *les siècles gothiques*.]

1695 [see 4]. **1710** SHAFTESBURY *Charact.* (1727) I. III. 217 [The Elizabethan dramatists] have been the first of Europeans, who since the Gothick Model of Poetry, attempted to throw off the horrid Discord of jingling Rhyme. **1762** HURD *Lett. Chiv. & Rom.* 56 He [Spenser] could have planned, no doubt, an heroic design on the exact classic model: Or, he might have trimmed between the Gothic and Classic, as his contemporary Tasso did..Under this idea then of a Gothic, not classical poem, the *Faery Queen* is to be read and criticized. **1765** H. WALPOLE (*title*) *The Castle of Otranto*, a Gothic Story. — *Lett. to Cole* 9 Mar., A very natural dream for a head filled like mine with gothic story. **1771** BEATTIE *Minstrel* I. xi, There liv' d in gothic days, as legends tell, A shepherd swain. *Ibid.* I. ix, Here pause, my gothic lyre, a little while. **1773** JOHNSON *Lett. to Mrs. Thrale* 21 Sept., A castle in Gothick romance. **1782** COWPER *Table Talk* 564 He sunk in Greece, in Italy he rose, And, tedious years of Gothic darkness past, Emerged all splendour in our isle at last.

b. A term for the style of architecture prevalent in Western Europe from the twelfth to the sixteenth century, of which the chief characteristic is the pointed arch. Applied also to buildings, architectural details, and ornamentation. (Also *transf.* of the wing of an aeroplane).

The most usual names for the successive periods of this style in England are *Early English* (or *First Pointed*), *Decorated*, and *Perpendicular*, q.v.

Our quotations seem to show that the term was taken in the first instance from the French, and employed to denote any style of building that was not classical (Greek or Roman), but used by many writers as if derived immediately from sense 2.

1641 EVELYN *Diary* Aug., This..towne..hath one of the fairest Churches, of the Gotiq design, I had seene. **1664** WOOD *Descr. Bampton Castle in Wood's Life* (O.H.S.) II. Plate 1, The cheife gate-house where is a ruined entrance, and an old gothick window over it. **1713** WREN in *Parentalia* (1750) 297 This we now call the Gothick Manner of Architecture (so the Italians called what was not after the Roman style). **1739** C. LABELYE *Short Acc. Piers Westm. Br.* 44 Narrow Gothic Arches, supported by monstrous Piers. **1742** B. LANGLEY *Anc. Archit. Restored* Dissert. i, Every ancient Building which is not in the Grecian Mode is called a Gothic Building. **1750** S. WREN in *Parentalia* 273 They had not yet fallen into the Gothick pointed-arch. **1783** RALPH *Rev. Public Buildings Lond.*, [The tower of St. Michael' s, Cornhill, is] in the Gothic style of architecture **1801** TELFORD & DOUGLAS *Acc. Improvem. Port London* 17 The whole external form of the bridge is to be composed of Gothic tracery. **1839** PRAED *Poems* (1864) I. 69 Some time-honoured Gothic pile. **1880** M. E. BRADDON *Just as I am* vii, The cosy chair beside the Gothic fire~place. **1881** RAYMOND *Mining Gloss.*, *Gothic groove*, a groove of Gothic arch section in a roll. **1959** J. L. NAYLER *Dict. Aeronaut. Engin.* 121 *Gothic wing*, a wing whose plan form is like a Gothic window. **1961** *Flight* LXXX. 966/2 The Super Caravelle wing is of gothic delta plan form with considerable leading edge camber.

c. *nonce-use*. Concerned with Gothic buildings.

1875-7 RUSKIN *Morn. in Florence* (1881) 48 As our Gothic Firms now manufacture a Madonna.

d. **Gothic Revival** = [REVIVAL](#) 1d. Also *attrib.* So **Gothic Revivalist**.

1869 C. L. EASTLAKE *Hints Household Taste* (ed. 2) i. 32 The earliest promoters of the Gothic revival appreciated the superficial effect of such features... The glories of the 'fretted vault' were not unfrequently imitated in lath and plaster. **1934** A. HUXLEY *Beyond Mexique Bay* 114 The Gothic revival in England was a product of the Oxford Movement. **1950** *Oxoniensia* XV. 118 Jackson

witnessed the evolution of the Gothic Revival. *Ibid.*, They, the Gothic Revivalists, had got the old dead style on its legs and propped it up, but they could not make it walk. **1958** R. LIDDELL *Morea* III. ii. 243 A Gothic revival school building was a relic of the British protectorate. **1963** H. READ *Contrary Experience* III. ix. 276 The Gothic Revival was almost a spent force when Ruskin began to publish *The Stones of Venice* in 1851.

4. Barbarous, rude, uncouth, unpolished, in bad taste. Of temper: Savage.

1695 DRYDEN *Du Fresnoy's Art Paint.* 93 All that has nothing of the Ancient gust is call' d a barbarous or Gothique manner. **1710** SHAFTESBURY *Charac.* (1733) I. III. 274 We are not so Barbarous or Gothick as they pretend. **1715** BURNET *Own Time* (1753) V. 222 His [Chas. XII] temper grew daily more fierce and Gothick. **1732** BERKELEY *Alciph.* v. §13 This Gothic crime of duelling. **1749** FIELDING *Tom Jones* VII. iii, 'Oh more than Gothic ignorance,' answered the lady. **1782** F. BURNEY *Cecilia* IV. ii, What he holds of all things to be most gothic, is gallantry to the women. **1812** SHELLEY *Lett. Prose Wks.* 1888 II. 384 Enormities which gleam like comets through the darkness of gothic and superstitious ages. **1833** CHALMERS *Const. Man* II. i. (1835) I. 173 Such a gothic spoliation as this. **1841** J. T. J. HEWLETT *Parish Clerk* I. 111 Dinner, which was eaten at the gothic hour of one o' clock.

5. Writing and Printing. †**a.** Used for some kind of written character (? resembling black letter).

1644 EVELYN *Diary* 18-21 Mar., Some English words graven in Gotic characters. **1658** *Ibid.* 27 Jan., He could perfectly reade any of the English, Latine, French, or Gottic letters.

b. In England, the name of the type commonly used for printing German, as distinguished from roman and italic characters. (Formerly, and still in non-technical use, equivalent to *black letter*.)

1781 WARTON *Hist. Eng. Poetry* Diss. iii. III. p. iv, This edition..is in the Gothic letter. **1824** J. JOHNSON *Typogr.* II. i. 10 Black Letter. This letter, which is used in England, descended from the Gothic characters: it is called Gothic, by some; and Old English, by others. **1888** JACOBI *Printers' Voc., Gothic*, an antique character of type similar to black letter. **1895** W. A. COPINGER in *Trans. Bibl. Soc.* II. ii. 111 Gothic type was the first in use..Roman character not being introduced till 1467.

c. Applied in the U.S. to the type called in England [GROTESQUE](#) (also *sans-ceriph*, and, by some type-founders, *doric*; formerly *stone letter*).

6. In combination with an adjective formed on a proper name: Gothic and; Gothic in connection with; as *Gothic-Finnish*, *-Sarmatian*, *-Scandinavian*.

1928 C. DAWSON *Age of Gods* iv. 84 The Gothic-Sarmatian kingdom from the Crimea to the lower Danube. **1931** A. SENN in *Jrnl. Eng. & Germ. Philol.* XXX. 143 (*title*) A contribution to Gothic-Finnish relations. **1965** *Language* XLI. 36 The theory of a Gothic-Scandinavian linguistic community distinct from the West Germanic languages.

B. quasi- *n.* or *n.*

That which is Gothic. **a.** The Gothic language. **b.** A Gothic building. **c.** Gothic architecture or ornamentation.

1644 EVELYN *Diary* 27 Feb. The style of magnificence then in fashion, which was with too great a mixture of the Gothic. **1726** LEONI *Alberti' s ArchitLife* 4 Ornaments, which..have I know not what in them of Gothick. **1757** SERENIUS *Eng. & Swed. Dict.* (ed. 2) Pref. 2 There are very few that have professedly treated the ancient Gothick. **1762-5** H. WALPOLE *Vertue' s Anecd. Paint*(ed. 2) I. 116 Imitations of the Gothic. *Ibid.* 120 The builders of Gothic. **1825** LOCKHART in *Scott' s Fam. Lett.* (1894) II. 308 Then to..the Castle Chapel—the best by far of all modern Gothics. **1841** LEVER *C. O' Malley*xxxii. 395 Gazing steadfastly on the fretted gothic of the ceiling. **1858** MAX MÜLLER *Chips* (1880) II. xx. 192 Gothic, as a language, is more ancient than Icelandic. **1915** *Irish Eccl. Record* July 50 Some of these new Gothics were designed by a priest. **1916** *Ibid.* Sept. 209 The fine old walls..gave place to the Gothics.

Hence **Go'thicity**, the quality of being Gothic; **'Gothicky** *a. colloq.*, Gothic-like; †**Gothicly** *adv.*, in a Gothic manner, barbarously.

1777 W. DALRYMPLE *Trav. Sp. & Port.* xl, The apartments are low..and Gothicly furnished. **1863** *Ecclesiologist* XXIV. 290 The absolute Gothicity of the general idea. **1889** *Athenæum* 16 Feb. 221/1 The crisp, sharp, and firm 'Gothicity' of the direct followers of the Van Eycks. **1893** K. D. WIGGIN *Cathedral Courtship* 36 She' s going to build a Gothicky memorial chapel somewhere.

APPENDED FROM ADDITIONS 1993

Gothic, a.

Add: [3.] **e.** Of or pertaining to goth music or its followers: see ***GOTH** *n.* 3.

[**1981** *Melody Maker* 4 July 9/6 Bauhaus are forced to rely on pure theatricality to further their reputation as Gothic-horror outlaw weirdos.] **1983** *New Musical Express* 24 Dec. 7/3 Why is this gothic glam so popular? **1986** *Q* Oct. 74/2 Love & Rockets used to be three quarters of Bauhaus..and are obviously finding life as gothic has-beens hard going. **1988** *Sunday Tel.* 6 Mar. 21/7 'The Gothic people will be pleased that black is still *in*,' remarked Miss Fackrell, who teaches hair and beauty studies. Gothic people? They are all the young folk who go around wearing black, apparently.