Gothic, a. and n.

(ˈgoʊtɪk) Forms: 7 Gothic, Goti(ue) Gothick. Gothic. Gothique. 7-8 Gothique, 7-
Gothic. [ad. L. gothic-us, f. Goth (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 Vlpiias 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. Etheridge 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 Seigniory. 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 Gothic 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. — Let. 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 Let. to Mrs. Thrale 21 Sept., A castle in Gothic 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 seen. 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 gothic window over it. 1713 WREN in Parentalia (1750) 297 This we now call the Gothic 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 Gothic pointed-arch. 1783 RALPH Rev. Public Buildings Lond., [The tower of St. Michael’s, Cornhill, is] in the Gothic style of architecture1801 TELFORD & DOUGLAS Acc. Improvem. Port London 17 The whole external form of the bridge is to be composed of Gothic tracery. a1839 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.


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 Gothic as they pretend. 1715 BURNET *Own Time* (1753) V. 222 His [Chas. XII] temper grew daily more fierce and Gothick. 1732 BERKELEY *Alceiphr.* v. §13 This Gothic crime of duelling. 1749 FIELDING *Tom Jones* VII. iii. ‘Oh more than Gothic ignorance,’ answered the lady. 1782 F. BURNET *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).


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*.


http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/00097162?query_type=word&queryword=gothic... 31/07/2003
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 Gotic.  

1726 Leoni Alberti’s ArchitLife 4 Ornaments, which have I know not what in them of Gothick.  

1757 Serenus Eng. & Swed. Dict. (ed. 2) Pref. 2 There are very few that have professedly treated the ancient Gothick.  

1762-5 H. Walpole Vertue’s Anec. Paint(ed. 2) I. 116 Imitations of the Gothick.  

1786 Ibid. 120 The builders of Gothick.  

1825 Lockhart in Scott’s Fam. Lett. (1894) II. 308 Then to the Castle Chapel—the best by far of all modern Gothicks.  

1841 Lever C. O’ Malley lxxxii. 395 Gazing steadfastly on the fretted gothic of the ceiling.  

1889 Athenæum 16 Feb. 221/1 The crisp, sharp, and firm ‘Gothicity’ of the direct followers of the Van Eycks.  

1893 K. D. Wiggan Cathedral Courtship 36 She’s going to build a Gothicky memorial chapel somewhere.

Hence *Gothicity*, 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 Gothicky 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. Wiggan 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.