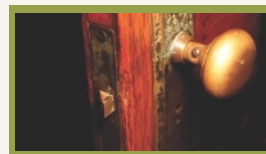




THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER

Comparing Texts

You will now read “House Taken Over.” First, complete the first-read and close-read activities. Then, compare the literary styles of “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “House Taken Over.”



HOUSE TAKEN OVER

About the Author



Julio Cortázar (1914–1984) grew up in a suburb of Buenos Aires, in Argentina. Because he had health problems as a child, he spent much of his time in bed, reading, but he grew to be an impressive man, about six feet six inches tall. His talents were impressive, too. After teaching for several years in Argentina, he moved to Paris, where he lived out his days writing and translating distinguished English-language literature, particularly that of Edgar Allan Poe, into Spanish. Cortázar remained connected to his Argentinian roots throughout his life.

Tool Kit

First-Read Guide and Model Annotation

STANDARDS

Reading Literature

By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9–10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.

House Taken Over

Concept Vocabulary

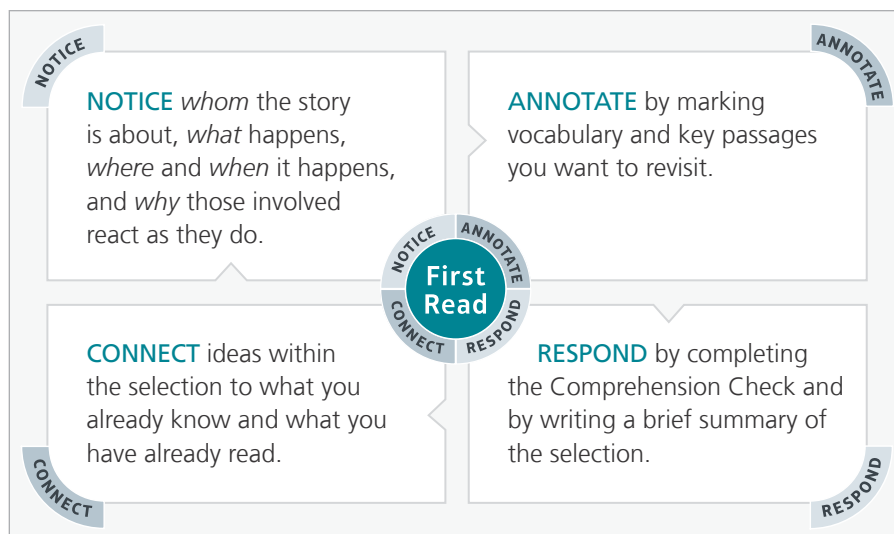
You will encounter the following words as you read “House Taken Over.” Before reading, note how familiar you are with each word. Then, rank the words in order from most familiar (1) to least familiar (6).

WORD	YOUR RANKING
spacious	
unvoiced	
obscure	
recessed	
vestibule	
muffled	

After completing the first read, come back to the concept vocabulary and review your rankings. Mark changes to your original rankings as needed.

First Read FICTION

Apply these strategies as you conduct your first read. You will have an opportunity to complete the close-read notes after your first read.



House Taken Over

Julio Cortázar



BACKGROUND

In 1946, when this story was written, Julio Cortázar lived in Buenos Aires, Argentina. World War II had only recently ended, and Argentina was in a state of political turmoil. Young people, including Cortázar, were critical of a conservative element in the government that had refused to join the Allied cause against Adolf Hitler until late in the war, by which time communication with Europe had all but stopped. The young author left Buenos Aires five years after writing this story, in protest against the policies of Juan Peron, who was increasingly dominating Argentinian politics.

SCAN FOR
MULTIMEDIA



- ¹ **W**e liked the house because, apart from its being old and **spacious** (in a day when old houses go down for a profitable auction of their construction materials), it kept the memories of great-grandparents, our paternal grandfather, our parents and the whole of childhood.

NOTES

spacious (SPAY shuhs) *adj.*
large; roomy

unvoiced (uhn VOYST) *adj.*
not spoken out loud or
expressed

obscure (uhb SKYAWR) *adj.*
not well-known

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: Mark details in paragraphs 3 and 4 that relate to the idea of being necessary or unnecessary, useful or useless.

QUESTION: Why might concepts of necessity and uselessness be important?

CONCLUDE: What do these details show about the characters and their lives?

- 2 Irene and I got used to staying in the house by ourselves, which was crazy, eight people could have lived in that place and not have gotten in each other's way. We rose at seven in the morning and got the cleaning done, and about eleven I left Irene to finish off whatever rooms and went to the kitchen. We lunched at noon precisely; then there was nothing left to do but a few dirty plates. It was pleasant to take lunch and commune with the great hollow, silent house, and it was enough for us just to keep it clean. We ended up thinking, at times, that that was what had kept us from marrying. Irene turned down two suitors for no particular reason, and María Esther went and died on me before we could manage to get engaged. We were easing into our forties with the **unvoiced** concept that the quiet, simple marriage of sister and brother was the indispensable end to a line established in this house by our grandparents. We would die here someday, **obscure** and distant cousins would inherit the place, have it torn down, sell the bricks and get rich on the building plot; or more justly and better yet, we would topple it ourselves before it was too late.
- 3 Irene never bothered anyone. Once the morning housework was finished, she spent the rest of the day on the sofa in her bedroom, knitting. I couldn't tell you why she knitted so much; I think women knit when they discover that it's a fat excuse to do nothing at all. But Irene was not like that, she always knitted necessities, sweaters for winter, socks for me, handy morning robes and bedjackets for herself. Sometimes she would do a jacket, then unravel it the next moment because there was something that didn't please her; it was pleasant to see a pile of tangled wool in her knitting basket fighting a losing battle for a few hours to retain its shape. Saturdays I went downtown to buy wool; Irene had faith in my good taste, was pleased with the colors and never a skein¹ had to be returned. I took advantage of these trips to make the rounds of the bookstores, uselessly asking if they had anything new in French literature. Nothing worthwhile had arrived in Argentina since 1939.
- 4 But it's the house I want to talk about, the house and Irene, I'm not very important. I wonder what Irene would have done without her knitting. One can reread a book, but once a pullover is finished you can't do it over again, it's some kind of disgrace. One day I found that the drawer at the bottom of the chiffonier, replete with mothballs, was filled with shawls, white, green, lilac. Stacked amid a great smell of camphor—it was like a shop; I didn't have the nerve to ask her what she planned to do with them. We didn't have to earn our living, there was plenty coming in from the farms each month, even piling up. But

1. **skein** (skayn) *n.* quantity of thread or yarn wound in a coil.

Irene was only interested in the knitting and showed a wonderful dexterity, and for me the hours slipped away watching her, her hands like silver sea urchins, needles flashing, and one or two knitting baskets on the floor, the balls of yarn jumping about. It was lovely.

5 How not to remember the layout of that house. The dining room, a living room with tapestries, the library and three large bedrooms in the section most **recessed**, the one that faced toward Rodríguez Peña.² Only a corridor with its massive oak door separated that part from the front wing, where there was a bath, the kitchen, our bedrooms and the hall. One entered the house through a **vestibule** with enameled tiles, and a wrought-iron grated door opened onto the living room. You had to come in through the vestibule and open the gate to go into the living room; the doors to our bedrooms were on either side of this, and opposite it was the corridor leading to the back section; going down the passage, one swung open the oak door beyond which was the other part of the house; or just before the door, one could turn to the left and go down a narrower passageway which led to the kitchen and the bath. When the door was open, you became aware of the size of the house; when it was closed, you had the impression of an apartment, like the ones they build today, with barely enough room to move around in. Irene and I always lived in this part of the house and hardly ever went beyond the oak door except to do the cleaning. Incredible how much dust collected on the furniture. It may be Buenos Aires³ is a clean city, but she owes it to her population and nothing else. There's too much dust in the air, the slightest breeze and it's back on the marble console tops and in the diamond patterns of the tooled-leather desk set. It's a lot of work to get it off with a feather duster; the motes⁴ rise and hang in the air, and settle again a minute later on the pianos and the furniture.

6 I'll always have a clear memory of it because it happened so simply and without fuss. Irene was knitting in her bedroom, it was eight at night, and I suddenly decided to put the water up for *mate*.⁵ I went down the corridor as far as the oak door, which was ajar, then turned into the hall toward the kitchen, when I heard something in the library or the dining room. The sound came through muted and indistinct, a chair being knocked over onto the carpet or the **muffled** buzzing of a conversation. At the same time or a second later, I heard it at the end of the passage which led from those two rooms toward the door. I hurled myself against the door before it was too late and

2. **Rodríguez Peña** fashionable street in Buenos Aires.

3. **Buenos Aires** capital of Argentina.

4. **motes** *n.* specks of dust or other tiny particles.

5. **mate** (MAH tay) *n.* beverage made from the dried leaves of a South American evergreen tree.

NOTES

recessed (rih SEHST) *adj.*
remote; set back

vestibule (VEHS tuh byool) *n.*
entrance room

muffled (MUH fuhld) *adj.*
difficult to hear because
something is covering and
softening the sound

NOTES

CLOSE READ

ANNOTATE: In paragraphs 8–13, mark the short sentences.

QUESTION: Why does the author use so many shorter sentences?

CONCLUDE: How do these short sentences add to the portrayal of the characters' reactions?

shut it, leaned on it with the weight of my body; luckily, the key was on our side; moreover, I ran the great bolt into place, just to be safe.

7 I went down to the kitchen, heated the kettle, and when I got back with the tray of *mate*, I told Irene:

8 "I had to shut the door to the passage. They've taken over the back part."

9 She let her knitting fall and looked at me with her tired, serious eyes.

10 "You're sure?"

11 I nodded.

12 "In that case," she said, picking up her needles again, "we'll have to live on this side."

13 I sipped at the *mate* very carefully, but she took her time starting her work again. I remember it was a gray vest she was knitting. I liked that vest.

14 The first few days were painful, since we'd both left so many things in the part that had been taken over. My collection of French literature, for example, was still in the library. Irene had left several folios of stationery and a pair of slippers that she used a lot in the winter. I missed my briar pipe, and Irene, I think, regretted the loss of an ancient bottle of Hesperidin.⁶ It happened repeatedly (but only in the first few days) that we would close some drawer or cabinet and look at one another sadly.

15 "It's not here."

16 One thing more among the many lost on the other side of the house.

17 But there were advantages, too. The cleaning was so much simplified that, even when we got up late, nine thirty for instance, by eleven we were sitting around with our arms folded. Irene got into the habit of coming to the kitchen with me to help get lunch. We thought about it and decided on this: while I prepared the lunch, Irene would cook up dishes that could be eaten cold in the evening. We were happy with the arrangement because it was always such a bother to have to leave our bedrooms in the evening and start to cook. Now we made do with the table in Irene's room and platters of cold supper.

18 Since it left her more time for knitting, Irene was content. I was a little lost without my books, but so as not to inflict myself on my sister, I set about reordering papa's stamp collection; that killed some time. We amused ourselves sufficiently, each with his own thing, almost always getting together in Irene's bedroom, which was the more comfortable. Every once in a while, Irene might say:

19 "Look at this pattern I just figured out, doesn't it look like clover?"

6. **Hesperidin** substance that comes from the rind of certain citrus fruits and is used for various medicinal purposes.

- 20 After a bit it was I, pushing a small square of paper in front of her so that she could see the excellence of some stamp or another from Eupen-et-Malmédy.⁷ We were fine, and little by little we stopped thinking. You can live without thinking.
- 21 (Whenever Irene talked in her sleep, I woke up immediately and stayed awake. I never could get used to this voice from a statue or a parrot, a voice that came out of the dreams, not from a throat. Irene said that in my sleep I flailed about enormously and shook the blankets off. We had the living room between us, but at night you could hear everything in the house. We heard each other breathing, coughing, could even feel each other reaching for the light switch when, as happened frequently, neither of us could fall asleep.
- 22 Aside from our nocturnal rumblings, everything was quiet in the house. During the day there were the household sounds, the metallic click of knitting needles, the rustle of stamp-album pages turning. The oak door was massive, I think I said that. In the kitchen or the bath, which adjoined the part that was taken over, we managed to talk loudly, or Irene sang lullabies. In a kitchen there's always too much noise, the plates and glasses, for there to be interruptions from other sounds. We seldom allowed ourselves silence there, but when we went back to our rooms or to the living room, then the house grew quiet, half-lit, we ended by stepping around more slowly so as not to disturb one another. I think it was because of this that I woke up irremediably⁸ and at once when Irene began to talk in her sleep.)
- 23 Except for the consequences, it's nearly a matter of repeating the same scene over again. I was thirsty that night, and before we went to sleep, I told Irene that I was going to the kitchen for a glass of water. From the door of the bedroom (she was knitting) I heard the noise in the kitchen; if not the kitchen, then the bath, the passage off at that angle dulled the sound. Irene noticed how brusquely I had paused, and came up beside me without a word. We stood listening to the noises, growing more and more sure that they were on our side of the oak door, if not the kitchen then the bath, or in the hall itself at the turn, almost next to us.
- 24 We didn't wait to look at one another. I took Irene's arm and forced her to run with me to the wrought-iron door, not waiting to look back. You could hear the noises, still muffled but louder, just behind us. I slammed the grating and we stopped in the vestibule. Now there was nothing to be heard.
- 25 "They've taken over our section," Irene said. The knitting had reeled off from her hands and the yarn ran back toward the door and

7. **Eupen-et-Malmédy** (yoo PEHN ay mahl may DEE) districts in eastern Belgium.

8. **irremediably** (ih-r ih MEE dee uh blee) *adv.* in a way that cannot be helped or corrected.

disappeared under it. When she saw that the balls of yarn were on the other side, she dropped the knitting without looking at it.

26 “Did you have time to bring anything?” I asked hopelessly.

27 “No, nothing.”


28 We had what we had on. I remembered fifteen thousand pesos⁹ in the wardrobe in my bedroom. Too late now.

29 I still had my wrist watch on and saw that it was 11 p.m. I took Irene around the waist (I think she was crying) and that was how we went into the street. Before we left, I felt terrible; I locked the front door up tight and tossed the key down the sewer. It wouldn’t do to have some poor devil decide to go in and rob the house, at that hour and with the house taken over. 🐼

9. **fifteen thousand pesos** large sum of money at the time of the story.

Comprehension Check

Complete the following items after you finish your first read.

1. Briefly describe the house in which the narrator and his sister live.
2. What is the source of the siblings' income?
3. How do Irene and the narrator occupy their time?
4. What decision do Irene and the narrator make when they realize the back part of the house has been taken over?
5. What happens to the brother and sister at the end of the story?
6.  **Notebook** Write a summary of "House Taken Over" to confirm your understanding of the story.

RESEARCH

Research to Clarify Choose at least one unfamiliar detail from the text. Briefly research that detail. In what way does the information you learned shed light on an aspect of the story.

Research to Explore Research the origin of the story. Discover information about the home in Buenos Aires Province that inspired it.



HOUSE TAKEN OVER

Close Read the Text

1. This model, from paragraph 6 of the text, shows two sample annotations, along with questions and conclusions. Close read the passage, and find another detail to annotate. Then, write a question and your conclusion.

ANNOTATE: The words describing the sounds the intruders make seem intentionally vague.

QUESTION: Why does the writer give so little detail about the intruders?

CONCLUDE: By providing only vague hints, the writer makes the invaders seem more frightening and mysterious.

ANNOTATE: The writer includes a series of action verbs in one sentence.

QUESTION: Why does the writer pack all of these actions into a single sentence?

CONCLUDE: Packed into one sentence, this series of urgent actions shows the narrator's intense fear.

... I heard something in the library or the dining room. The sound came through muted and indistinct, a chair being knocked over onto the carpet or the muffled buzzing of a conversation. ... I hurled myself against the door before it was too late and shut it, leaned on it with the weight of my body; luckily, the key was on our side; moreover, I ran the great bolt into place, just to be safe.

Tool Kit

Close-Read Guide and Model Annotation

2. For more practice, go back into the text and complete the close-read notes.
3. Revisit a section of the text you found important during your first read. Read this section closely, and **annotate** what you notice. Ask yourself **questions** such as "Why did the author make this choice?" What can you **conclude**?

Analyze the Text

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE to support your answers.

Notebook Respond to these questions.

1. **(a) Interpret** To what social class do the brother and sister belong? How do you know? **(b) Connect** How are the characters' hobbies evidence of their social class?
2. **(a) Compare and Contrast** How is the behavior the siblings exhibit during sleep different from their behavior while awake?
(b) Analyze What does this difference suggest about their true reactions to the invasion of the house?
3. **Extend** Cortázar wrote this story after having a nightmare. In what ways does this story resemble a nightmare? Explain.
4. **Essential Question: *What is the allure of fear?*** What have you learned from this story about portrayals of fear in literature?

STANDARDS

Reading Literature

- Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it, and manipulate time create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.
- Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.

Analyze Craft and Structure

Literary Style “House Taken Over” is an example of **Magical Realism**, a literary genre closely associated with some Latin American twentieth-century authors. Magical Realism combines two seemingly contrasting elements: reality and fantasy. By introducing supernatural or unreal elements into carefully observed depictions of real life, writers in this genre shock and surprise readers while also providing insightful commentary on human nature and perceptions. Elements of magical realism include:

- Recognizable characters who feel, act, and react in customary ways
- Realistic settings that include ordinary details of everyday life
- Fantastic events that coexist with realistic characters and actions
- An accepting or unimpressed narrative **tone**, or attitude, that presents fantastic events as logical parts of life

Cortázar balances these elements carefully, creating a unique representation of a realistic world where dreamlike events can still happen.

Practice

CITE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE
to support your answers.

Use the chart to record passages from the story that exemplify elements of Magical Realism. Explain each choice.

MAGICAL REALIST ELEMENT	PASSAGE(S)	EXPLANATION
Recognizable Characters		
Realistic Setting and Details		
Fantastic Events		
Unimpressed Tone		



HOUSE TAKEN OVER

Concept Vocabulary

spacious

obscure

vestibule

unvoiced


recessed

muffled

Why These Words? These concept vocabulary words express different types of emptiness, including those of emotion, sound, and space. For example, the narrator describes one part of his home as being “the most recessed.” Something *recessed* is set back or remote.

1. How does the author use the concept vocabulary to describe the house vividly and precisely?
2. What other words in the selection connect to the idea of emptiness?

Practice

 **Notebook** The concept vocabulary words appear in “House Taken Over.” Tell whether each sentence is true or false, and explain why.

1. A *spacious* home would probably be cheaper than a cramped one.
2. People’s loud, persistent complaints are usually *unvoiced*.
3. You should consider visiting *obscure* places if you want to avoid crowds.
4. A *recessed* set of shelves sticks out into a room.
5. A *vestibule* is a small building that stands at a distance from a house.
6. It is easy to understand a *muffled* announcement over a PA system.

Word Study

Patterns of Word Changes Suffixes and prefixes can be added to base words to change their meanings. Often, suffixes change a word’s part of speech. The base word *space*, a noun—from the Latin *spatium*—becomes *spacious*, an adjective, when the suffix *-ious* is added.

1. The word *voice*, when it is used as a verb, means “to speak out loud.” Explain how this word is changed by the addition of the prefix *un-* and the suffix *-ed*.
2. Find two other examples in the story of words that contain either a prefix or a suffix. Explain how the meaning of the base word is changed by the addition of the prefix or suffix.

WORD NETWORK

Add words related to fear from the text to your Word Network.

STANDARDS

Language

- Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
- Use various types of phrases and clauses to convey specific meanings and add variety and interest to writing or presentations.
- Identify and correctly use patterns of word changes that indicate different meanings or parts of speech.
- Demonstrate understanding of figurative language, word relationships, and nuances in word meanings.

Conventions

Types of Phrases A **preposition** connects a noun or a pronoun to another word in the sentence. A **prepositional phrase** is made up of a preposition, the object of the preposition, and any modifiers of the object. Prepositional phrases modify other words by functioning either as adjectives or as adverbs. In these examples from “House Taken Over,” the prepositions are underlined once, and the objects of the prepositions are underlined twice.

<u>in</u> the <u>house</u>	<u>by</u> <u>ourselves</u>	<u>at</u> <u>seven</u>
<u>of</u> the <u>day</u>	<u>from</u> the front <u>wing</u>	<u>through</u> a <u>vestibule</u>
<u>into</u> the <u>living room</u>	<u>before</u> the <u>door</u>	<u>with</u> a <u>feather duster</u>
<u>on</u> the <u>sofa</u>	<u>down</u> the <u>corridor</u>	<u>against</u> the <u>door</u>

TIP


CLARIFICATION

Refer to the Grammar Handbook to learn more about these terms.

Read It

1. Mark all of the prepositional phrases in each sentence. Then, label each preposition and its object.
 - a. I lived in this part of the house and rarely went beyond the oak door.
 - b. A chair was knocked onto the carpet and dragged along the floor.
 - c. I hurried toward the door and pushed the heavy bolt into place.
2. Reread paragraph 24 of the story. Mark the prepositional phrases, and tell how these phrases help to clarify the action.

Write It

 **Notebook** In the example, the second sentence in each pair contains prepositional phrases that help clarify, describe, or explain. Revise the paragraph below. Add prepositional phrases to make the paragraph more interesting and detailed.

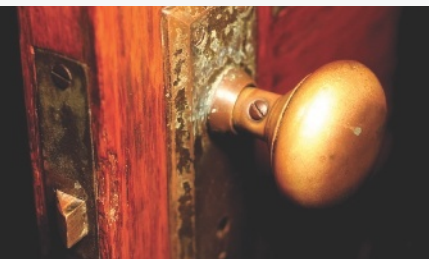
EXAMPLE

I tossed the key. I tossed the key down the drain in the gutter.
I heard a noise. At midnight, I heard a noise behind the door.

We heard a noise that was impossible to describe. When the noise grew louder, we decided to run. We didn’t have time to grab anything. We found ourselves outside. We looked but could see nothing.



THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER



HOUSE TAKEN OVER

Writing to Compare

You have read “The Fall of the House of Usher” and “House Taken Over,” two short stories that have similarities but represent two different literary styles, or genres. Now, deepen your understanding of both stories by comparing and writing about them.

Assignment

Write an **explanatory essay** in which you compare and contrast Gothic style and Magical Realism as seen in the stories by Poe and Cortázar. Include the following elements in your essay:

- definitions of the two genres
- a discussion of how each story is a good example of its genre
- effective use of evidence from the stories
- an evaluation of the effect each story has on the reader

Make sure you are clear about the qualities that define the Gothic style and Magical Realism. If necessary, do a little research or reread the instruction about the genres.

Planning and Prewriting

Analyze the Texts When you are analyzing complex works, a smaller focus can help you see the bigger picture more clearly. For example, instead of analyzing all the elements of both stories, you might focus on the siblings, the supernatural elements, or another specific aspect of each story. For this assignment, compare and contrast the settings—the two houses and the worlds they occupy. Use the chart to gather story details that relate to that focus.

FOCUS: DETAILS RELATED TO SETTING	
THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER	HOUSE TAKEN OVER

Notebook Respond to these questions.

1. How are the settings of the two stories similar? How are they different?
2. In each story, how does the setting affect the characters and the choices they make?

STANDARDS

Reading Literature

Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it, and manipulate time create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

Writing

- Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.
- Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
- Apply *grades 9–10 Reading standards* to literature.

Drafting

Synthesize Ideas Review your Prewriting notes. Decide how setting reveals Gothic sensibilities in Poe’s story and Magical Realist ideas in Cortázar’s story, and how those styles are both similar and different. Record your ideas using these sentence frames:

In both stories, the setting _____

 _____.

However, in Poe’s story “The Fall of the House of Usher,” the setting: _____

 _____.

Similarly/By contrast, in Cortázar’s story “House Taken Over,” the setting _____

 _____.

Identify Supporting Details Identify passages to use as examples for your ideas. Make sure each passage presents a clear similarity or difference, and demonstrates either a Gothic or a Magical Realist approach. Note the passages you will use and the ideas each one will support.

PASSAGE	IDEA

Organize Ideas Make some organizational decisions before you begin to write. Consider using one of these two structures:

Grouping Ideas: discuss all the similarities between the settings and genres of the two stories and then all the differences

Grouping Texts: discuss the setting and genre of one story and then the setting and genre of the other story

Review, Revise, and Edit

Once you are done drafting, review your essay. Because your essay is about multiple subjects—two different settings and two different genres—clarity and balance are critical. Reread your draft, and mark the points at which you discuss Poe’s story and the Gothic. Use a different mark to identify the points at which you discuss Cortázar’s story and Magical Realism. Check your draft to see if you have addressed the two stories in a balanced way. Add more analysis or examples as needed. Then, proofread and edit your essay for grammatical and spelling errors.

EVIDENCE LOG

Before moving on to a new selection, go to your Evidence Log and record what you learned from “House Taken Over.”