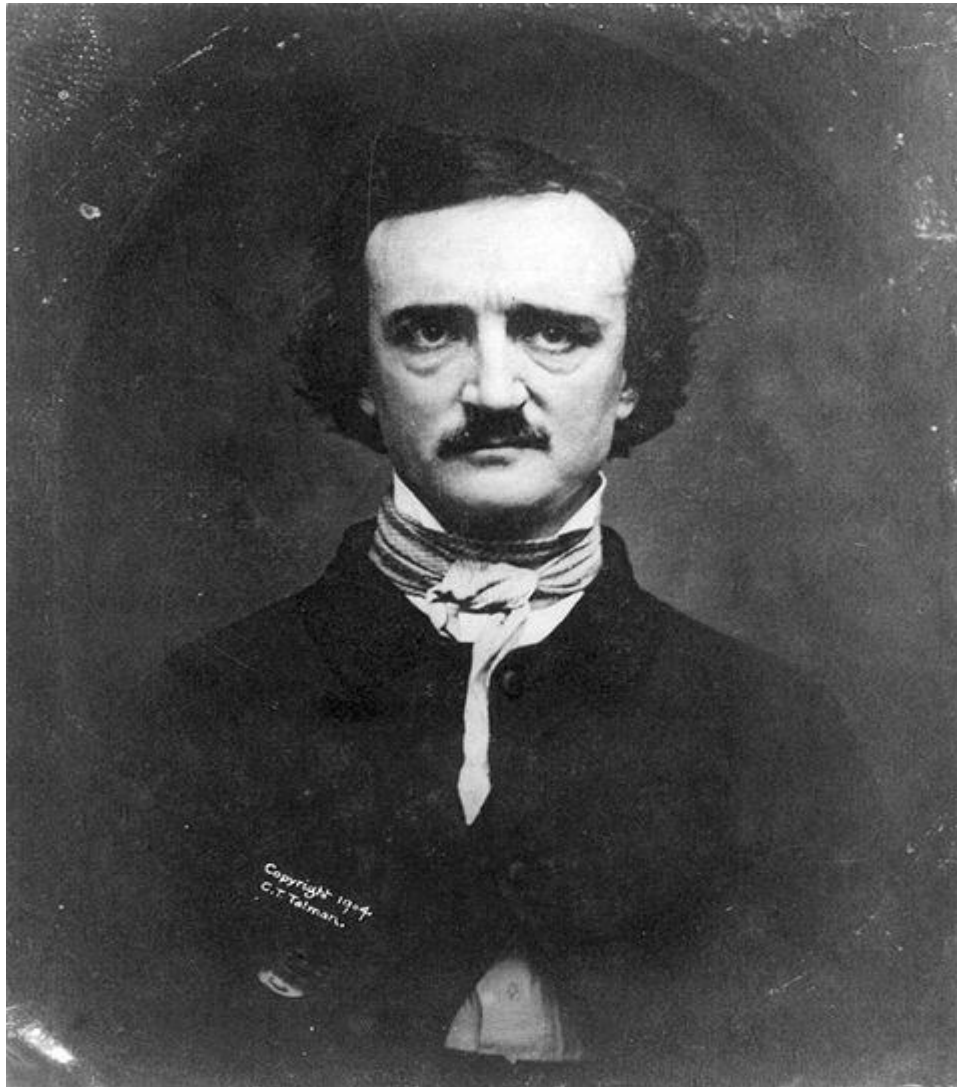


"Stories From Poe"

film directed
by Ric White



2009-2010 Study Guide

Designed and Published by
TENNESSEE THEATRE COMPANY

Film Screening
by
Tennessee Theatre Company

For Teachers: 2009-2010 Study Guide -

Contents of Study Guide

for "*Stories From Poe*" film screening
Designed and Published by TENNESSEE THEATRE COMPANY

Dear Educators,

The staff of the Tennessee Theatre Company is proud to present our film screening of "*Stories From Poe*" for you and your students. Thank you for your support of the **Arts** in Tennessee.

Tennessee Theatre Company

"**For Teachers: Study Guide**" pages enhance the teaching of Tennessee Curriculum Standards. "**For Students: Student Study Guide**" supplemental Information/Questions/Activities pages provide multi-grade level materials for Middle and High School students. This guide is a perfect introduction for learning about the life and times of Edgar Allan Poe; and also introduces the film making process. *This guide was prepared to provide support material that will enhance the educational experience for those attending the film screening "Stories From Poe".*

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Edgar Allan Poe

Background Information

Edgar Poe was born in Boston on January 19, 1809 to two traveling stage actors, David Poe, Jr. and Elizabeth Arnold Hopkins. Both of Poe's parents died before Edgar reached the age of three. Some reports state they died within days of each other, others that David died in 1810. Elizabeth likely died Dec. 8, 1811. Orphaned, Poe was separated from his brother and sister and went to live with John and Frances Allan of Richmond. In 1812, Poe was christened Edgar Allan Poe (with the Allans presumably serving as godparents). Poe's early education consisted of schooling in London as well as America. In 1826, Poe began studying at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville (a school founded by Thomas Jefferson). He later left the University of Virginia over a matter of gambling debts and enlisted in the United States Army. After brief service in the army, Poe spent a few months at West Point. By the age of 22, Poe had already published three books of poetry. In 1836, Poe married his 13-year-old cousin Virginia. They remained married until her death in 1847. During this time, Poe continued to write and work for several publications as both editor and contributor, producing such works as *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *The Raven*. When Virginia died in 1847, Poe was devastated and wrote, "Deep in the earth my love is lying and I must weep alone." Poe sank into depression after Virginia's death. He wrote less frequently and turned to alcohol. In 1849, he was found on the streets of Baltimore in a feverish stupor, wearing clothes that were not his. The last moments of his life were spent drifting in and out of consciousness in the Washington College Hospital.

Poe's Influence on Literature

Edgar Allan Poe was an American poet, short story writer and literary critic. His influence on literature has been immense, affecting writers such as Jules Verne, Charles Baudelaire, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Robert Louis Stevenson and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, among others. His short story *Murders in the Rue Morgue* and his three tales featuring Auguste Dupin created the detective story genre. Poe is also credited with mastering the short story, especially psychological horror stories. It has even been argued that Poe was the father of modern science fiction. Poe defined poetry as the "rhythmical creation of beauty." In poetry, he displayed a propensity for rhythmic effect, particularly in poems such as *The Bells*, *The Raven* and *Annabel Lee*. The first line of *The Raven* is a good example: "Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary..." He also frequently made use of alliteration and onomatopoeia. While Edgar Allan Poe is widely associated with grotesque and gothic themes, he also shows evidence of humor and satire in his short stories and literary criticism (e.g., *The Devil in the Belfry*, *The Duc de l'Omelette*, *Never Bet the Devil Your Head*). His personal experiments with writing contributed to the development of his literary theories and criticism. The latter was at times quite scathing. Poe is quoted as saying the purpose of literature is "to amuse by arousing thought." Certainly many of his writings are thought-provoking while amusing and suspenseful.

Popular association of Poe's work is entrenched in the complexity of the human mind, particularly in the darkness of fear, guilt and obsession. Stories such as *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Cask of Amontillado* and *The Fall of the House of Usher* have been reinterpreted and reproduced in films and popular television programs such as *Star Trek*, *Homicide: Life on the Street* and *The Simpsons*. Thus, Edgar Allan Poe's legacy as a master of suspense lives on two centuries after his birth.

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Literary Forms and Devices

A **short story** is a condensed work of fiction that generally has a small number of characters engaged in a single action with a specific thematic focus. It can be read at one sitting. During the 1800s, many writers began to consider the short story as a separate form of literature. Edgar Allan Poe was perhaps the most important writer to analyze short stories as a distinct literary form. One of the elements of a short story particularly important to him was "unity of effect." It was imperative to Poe that all elements of a story contribute to a single emotional impact. The first book about writing short stories, *The Philosophy of the Short Story* (1901) by Brander Matthews, an American critic, contained many of Poe's ideas.

Romanticism is a style in the fine arts and literature. It emphasizes passion rather than reason, and imagination and intuition rather than logic or science. Romanticism favors full expression of the emotions, and free or spontaneous action rather than restraint and order. The Romantic Movement usually refers to the period from around 1750 to 1870. During this movement, most writers were discontented with a commercial, inhuman and standardized world. To escape from modern life, the romantics turned their interest to remote and faraway places, the medieval past, folklore and legends, nature, common people and the supernatural. Romantic literature allowed a freer style of expression and more flexible form. It encouraged the mingling of genres (e.g., tragicomedy) and favored twisted, fast-paced plots and complex characters. By using first-person narration in his stories, Poe draws us into the state of mind of his characters, allowing us to identify more effectively with them, adding to the horror effect and intensity of the story.

One of Poe's finest talents was his brilliant use of words or diction to describe or set the tone he desired. Two techniques that he used were **alliteration** and **onomatopoeia**. Alliteration occurs when two or more words in a sentence begin with the same sound. A "crawling, long and horrible snake" can become more terrifying with alliteration as a "slithering, slippery and slimy snake." Examples from Poe's *The Raven* are: "While I nodded nearly napping" (note the "n" sound) and "And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain" using "s." This line about the rustling purple curtain is also a fine example of onomatopoeia, which is the use of a word or words whose sound imitates the sound represented. The repetitive "s" sounds in the line suggest the sound of rustling curtains. The "ur" sound in "purple" and "curtain" suggests a darker, more foreboding atmosphere. Tapping and rapping are also examples of onomatopoeia in the following lines from *The Raven*: "...suddenly there came a tapping, as of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door." Another example is the word "buzz," which suggests, as well as refers to, the sound made by bees. Poe was a master at employing rhythm and sound to advantage. In *The Bells*, his poetry mimics the chiming of instruments: To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells from the bells, bells, bells, bells, Bells, bells, bells, bells...

Irony is another device appreciated by Poe. For example, in *The Cask of Amontillado*, Montresor ironically shows concern for Fortunato's health, even though he intends to kill him. He also appears to try to talk Fortunato out of trying the Amontillado (sherry), even though Montresor clearly wants to get Fortunato drunk. Even Fortunato's name is ironic, since death by starvation and dehydration as a result of being buried alive in a wall does not coincide with his "fortunate" name.

Hyperbole (exaggeration) is another device used in *The Cask of Amontillado* when Montresor refers to "The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as best I could." The injuries may have been many, but one thousand is clearly not a factual count.

Poe uses **metaphor** when he refers to the drunken Fortunato's eyes as "two filmy orbs..." In *The Raven*, he also refers to the night as a "Plutonian shore," referring to the god of the underworld (Pluto).

Foreshadowing is another favorite device used by Poe. The appearance of the raven as the narrator ponders the death of his beloved Lenore is one example. The beating of the dead man's heart in *The Tell-Tale Heart* is another. When Fortunato states (in *The Cask of Amontillado*), "I shall not die of a mere cough," it foreshadows his death of starvation and dehydration, buried alive. Poe was a master at using these and other literary devices to increase the impact of his writing.

2009-10 Study Guide on "*Stories From Poe*"

Major Themes

Insanity versus rationality

In many of Poe's short stories, such as "The Tell-Tale Heart," the narrators are madmen and murderers who fail to disguise their lack of rationality with a discussion of their thought processes. However, their stories inevitably reveal gaps in their chains of thought that speak to their descent into immorality and selfishness. In many cases, insanity is interlocked with the narrators' emotional conceit; they are incapable of empathizing with others and think only of their own desire to satisfy their honor or their need to end the disruptions to their lives. On the other side of the equation lie Poe's rational characters, which are capable of consciously setting aside their own emotions in order to logically solve their problems. For example, C. Auguste Dupin's skill lies in being able to empathize with others in order to solve seemingly impossible cases. Where Poe's irrational characters create confusion out of order, Dupin is capable of reversing the process.

Obsession

The majority of Poe's narrators are nervous, oversensitive, and given to excessive worrying or strange fixations. In his works, Poe explores the consequences of such obsessive tendencies. In the case of the narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart," the main character's declarations of oversensitivity are merely a thin disguise for insanity. In other stories, obsession is driven by fear: in "The Premature Burial," the narrator develops catalepsy and begins to take myriad precautions because of his overwhelming fear of being buried alive. Some characters become obsessed by passion, as in the case of the painter in "The Oval Portrait," who essentially abandons his wife for his art. In many of Poe's stories, the narrators' obsessions lead to death and destruction, but Poe also proves false this conclusion in "The Premature Burial," in which the narrator's obsessions come to an abrupt end when his fretting leads him to drastically misinterpret an event in his life.

Man's relationship with death

The fear of death drives the actions of several of Poe's characters. In particular, the narrator of "The Premature Burial" obsesses about the possibility of premature burial, and his fear makes him so paranoid that when he wakes up in the berth of a ship, he mistakes it for a grave and has a terrifying experience for no real reason. At the same time, Poe describes several characters whose response to their fear of death is to avoid it, although the usual result of their avoidance is increased trauma. Prince Prospero and his courtiers in "The Masque of the Red Death" try to shut themselves away and ignore the slaughter caused by the Red Death, but death pays no attention to their barriers and kills them *en masse*. Similarly, the attempt by the narrator to arrest M. Ernest Valdemar at the point of death in "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar" only causes the consumptive patient to die and have his body gruesomely dissolve into a putrid puddle. However, the main character development of the narrator of "MS. Found in a Bottle" is that he learns to accept his impending death and replace his fear with anticipation.

Love and hate

Many of the crimes of Poe's protagonists (main characters) are particularly detestable because they involve the death of someone whom they formerly loved. The narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" claims that he loved the old man but reveals his madness and evil tendencies through his systematic terrorizing and murder of the old man, which he excuses by citing the old man's evil eye. Poe also introduces villain protagonists such as Montresor of "The Cask of Amontillado" who hate their enemies but whose hate becomes even more sinister and implacable because they mask it with signs of affection. Montresor's false solicitousness for Fortunato's health is ultimately revealed as a ploy to lure Fortunato to his death. In all of these cases, love and hate are shown to be closely connected, as one can easily turn into the other without warning.

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Questions and Activities for "Poe" Discussion

1. How did the events in Poe's life affect his writing? The outcome of his life? Is there anything he could have done differently to change the outcome of his life? If he made these changes, how would it have affected his writing? Discuss.
2. Was the main character in *The Telltale Heart* insane? Why did he murder the Old Man? If it wasn't a beating heart that he heard, what was it?
3. Rewrite the part of *The Telltale Heart* when the police come to investigate from one of the policemen's point of view. How is it different? What was he thinking about while he sat there? Would the Main Character have been caught if the police had decided to leave earlier? Rewrite the same part from the dead man's point of view.
4. What is the moral or message of *The Raven*? *The Tell-tale Heart*? *The Cask of Amontillado*? Would the same message be told if Poe wrote his stories as comedies? Does a comedy carry as much moral weight as a tragedy?
5. Books and movies are very different mediums. Try taking your favorite short story and writing a scene from it for a movie. (Avoid using a narrator if possible.) Perform it in front of your class. What worked? What didn't work? What are some of the challenges of adapting a book into a movie? What would be different if you adapted a book into a play?
6. How does Poe create suspense? How did the actors in the film build suspense for the audience?
7. How would these stories be different if the main characters were women instead of men?

Before viewing the "Poe" film Questions

1. What is fear? What is horror? What is terror?
2. Are these constants through the ages or have our perceptions changed?
3. Are there things that our ancestors were frightened of which no longer frighten us?
4. Are there things that frightened you when you were younger that no longer do?
5. Why do people enjoy being frightened by scary stories and horror movies?
6. Why does horror sometimes make us laugh? How is it possible for us to find something simultaneously frightening and funny?
7. What is madness?
8. What is the difference between persistence and obsession?
9. What is the difference between immorality and amorality?

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Question and Activities for "Poe" Discussion

1. What are some of the differences between a short story and a novel? What are the some of the characteristics that distinguish Edgar Allan Poe's short story form from others?
2. How would Poe's work change if it was written today? How important is language in creating atmosphere? Pick a section of *The Telltale Heart* and rewrite it in your own words in a modern setting. Be sure to use your own "voice". Now compare the two. What are the major differences? Whose is more suspenseful? Poetic?
3. Poe's most famous poem may have been *The Raven*. Using the meter and rhyming scheme of *The Raven*, write your own version of *The Telltale Heart*. Is poetry necessarily a better – or easier – way to tell a tale?
4. What is more important in creating suspense – sound or image? Why? When watching a scary movie, do you cover your eyes? Your ears? How important are sound effects in a film?
5. A fatal flaw is a personality trait that brings about a character's destruction. Which of the characters exhibited a fatal flaw? What was the flaw? Are there any personality flaws that are not considered "fatal"? What are they?
6. How did Poe use conflict, plot, climax and characters in his stories?
7. Compare the elements exhibited in Poe's style of writing with those of modern writers. What modern writers could have been influenced by Poe?

Answer the following questions:

1. How does music create a scary mood in movies or television?
2. Would these stories have had the same effect on you if you had heard them on the radio? Why or why not?
3. Did the stories end the way you expected them to? Would you have preferred another ending? Explain.
4. What words can you use to describe a blood chilling tale?

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Synopsis of "*The Cask of Amontillado*"

["The Cask of Amontillado"](http://fayette.k12.in.us/~cbeard/amontillado.html) Online text of the story with vocabulary support.
(<http://fayette.k12.in.us/~cbeard/amontillado.html>)

["The Cask of Amontillado"](http://www.argo217.k12.il.us/departs/english/blettiere/short_stories2.htm#cask) Worksheets, vocabulary practice, and related links.
(http://www.argo217.k12.il.us/departs/english/blettiere/short_stories2.htm#cask)

["The Cask of Amontillado"](http://go.hrw.com/resources/go_mk/la/latm/LITRES05.PDF) Further exercises and worksheets.
http://go.hrw.com/resources/go_mk/la/latm/LITRES05.PDF

Plot Summary

It is dusk on a day during the annual carnival celebration in an Italian city. People are eating, drinking, and making merry before the beginning of the 40-day Lenten season.

But one of the city's residents, Montresor, is not at all merry. Some time ago, a man named Fortunato—a wine connoisseur (expert)—wronged Montresor. In fact, according to Montresor, who is the narrator of the story, Fortunato had committed numerous offenses against him—the last one an intolerable insult. Montresor now plans revenge against Fortunato. A man can stand only so much.

When he encounters Fortunato on the street, Montresor does not let on that he is angry or means harm to Fortunato, who, in keeping with the carnival festivities, is tipsy. Fortunato is wearing a court jester's motley outfit and a cone-shaped hat topped with a bell that sometimes rings when he moves his head. After Montresor greets Fortunato and shakes his hand, he tells Fortunato that he recently came into possession of a pipe (126 gallons) of Amontillado, a prized amber dry wine from Spain. However, Montresor says, he is not sure whether the wine is the genuine article. Proud Fortunato, eager to demonstrate his knowledge of wine, immediately agrees to take up the challenge of determining whether the Amontillado is the real thing.

After they arrive at Montresor's palazzo (a lavish and costly private residence), they descend into the cold, damp vaults where the wine is kept. The vaults are part of a network of catacombs containing the bones of long-dead members of the Montresor family. Several times, Montresor pretends to be concerned about the health of Fortunato, who has a cough, and suggests that they turn back. But Fortunato says, "The cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me."

"True—true," Montresor answers without outward show of the inner glee he must have been feeling.

Montresor takes a bottle of Médoc from a shelf, opens it, and gives Fortunato a deep drink to ward off the cold. He toasts Fortunato, saying, "To your long life." Moments later, Montresor presents Fortunato a flagon (container for liquids) of De Grève (an interesting name for a deadly occasion). Fortunato empties it. His mind now swims in groggy joy.

When they arrive at a wall at the end of their subterranean journey, Montresor quickly claps his drunken companion in chains attached to iron staples in the wall, then turns the key of a padlock attached to the chains. "The Amontillado!" Fortunato says, failing to comprehend his predicament.

With stone and mortar that had been ensconced (placed snugly) nearby, Montresor walls up Fortunato. There are screams from the niche, then laughter. Fortunato thinks he is the victim of a joke. Montresor continues to work on the vertical tomb. When he completes his task, he hears the jingling of bells on Fortunato's cap. Then Montresor erects a rampart (fortified embankment) of bones against the wall.

Fifty years pass. Fortunato remains behind the wall, resting in eternal peace.

Setting

It is early evening in an Italian city during a carnival immediately preceding Lent.

Cask of Amontillado continued

Characters

Montresor, a deranged man who seeks revenge.

Fortunato, a haughty wine connoisseur against whom Montresor seeks revenge.

Type of Work

Cask of Amontillado is a short story in the horror genre, although careful readers will note that the story contains a great deal of subtle humor. Poe was one of the developers of the short story as a literary genre. He defined a short story as a narrative prose work that (1) is short enough to be read in one sitting, (2) takes place in one locale on a single day, (or even in a few hours), (3) centers on a single line of action, and (4) maintains a single mood. Every word or phrase should contribute to the theme and the mood.

Narration (Point of View)

First-Person Unreliable. Montresor tells the story in the first person, meaning he uses pronouns such as *I, me, my*, and so on. He is called an “unreliable” narrator because he is mentally unbalanced; his narration may be untrustworthy. For example, he could have imagined that Fortunato wronged him.

Themes

Revenge - Fortunato had committed many offenses against Montresor, the last one an insult, according to Montresor.

Deception - To lure Fortunato into the catacombs, Montresor deceives Fortunato, telling him he wants to taste some wine to determine whether it is genuine Amontillado.

Pride - Fortunato readily accepts Montresor's invitation to taste wine and determine whether it is genuine Amontillado, for Fortunato believes himself to be a great wine connoisseur. So proud is he of his ability that he takes on the challenge even though he has a cough and is already somewhat drunk.

Use of Irony

Throughout the story, Poe uses verbal and dramatic irony to build suspense, foreshadow the ending, and add a touch of macabre (grim and horrible) humor. Here are some examples of irony:

The Title: The word *cask*, meaning *wine barrel*, is derived from the same root word used to form *casket*, meaning *coffin*. Thus, the cask figuratively represents Fortunato's casket.

Fortunato's Name: The Italian name *Fortunato* suggests good fortune, luck. However, Fortunato is anything but fortunate; he is going to his death.

Fortunato's Costume: Fortunato dresses as a court jester. His festive outfit contrasts with the ghastly fate that awaits him. From time to time, the bell on his cone-shaped hat jingles—a nice comic touch from Poe.

Reference to Masons: Fortunato asks Montresor whether he is a mason, meaning a member of the fraternal order of Freemasonry. Montresor says he is indeed a mason. However, he is using the word to mean a craftsman who builds with stone and mortar (because he will be building Fortunato's “tomb,” a stone wall.)

Poe also uses irony frequently in the dialogue. For example, when Montresor runs into Fortunato, he says, “My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met.” Later, when Montresor pretends to be concerned about Fortunato's hacking cough as they descend into the vaults, Montresor says, “We will go back. Your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as I once was. You are a man to be missed.” Fortunato then tells Montresor not to worry: “The cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I will not die of a cough.” To this reply, Montresor says, “True—true.” The reader at this point can almost see a devilish gleam in Montresor's eyes, for he knows exactly how Fortunato will die.” Later, Montresor opens a bottle of wine and toasts Fortunato: “To your long life,” he says.

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Student Exercises for "The Cask of Amontillado"

I. Using context clues, what do the underlined words mean?

1. The catacombs were cold and damp.
2. He was determined to get revenge after he was insulted.
3. The wine was in a cask in the cellar.
4. They carried flambeaux down the dark hallway.
5. Fortunato wanted to taste the amontillado.

II. Answer the following questions?

1. What added impression of Fortunato do you get from his costume?
2. How did the carnival help Montresor execute his plans?
3. What kind of person is Montresor? Do you think he is insane? Why or Why not?
4. Do you think Montresor will ever get caught for this crime? How?

III. Define these terms:

Foreshadowing-

Irony -

Discuss literary terminology foreshadowing and irony.

Can you think of a movie where the screenwriter gives you some clues on what is going to happen or who the villain in the story is? It may be the music, or a facial expression from a character that gives you a clue. The screenwriter helps the viewer predict what is going to happen. Poe also gives the reader clues in his writing of what is going to happen.

Poe chooses the words in his story very carefully. The title of the story and the main characters names were not given by accident. Many times the words or phrases he used gave the reader a clue of what was to follow. He also used double meanings of words to lead to his sarcastic humor. Analyze the following lines or scenes from the story. Do they contain foreshadowing or irony? Explain why?

1. "I continued as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile NOW was at the thought of his immolation."
2. "The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells."
3. I said to him -- "My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to day!"
4. "I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together on the damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors."
5. "Come," I said, with decision, "we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchesi!"
6. "The cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough." "True -- true," I replied.
7. "I drink," he said, "to the buried that repose around us." "And I to your long life", I said.
8. "Nemo me impune lacessit."
9. "Once more let me IMPLY you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you."
10. "Let us be gone." "Yes," I said, "let us be gone."
11. The Cask of Amontillado - the title
12. Fortunato - name of main character

The choice of words can have a tremendous impact on the story. Poe's descriptive writing and play on words is what makes his stories able to be read on many different levels.

Student Exercises for "The Cask of Amontillado" continued

IV. Answer the following questions:

1. Re-read the first paragraph of "The Cask of Amontillado." What does the narrator think of himself? To whom might he be speaking?
2. The narrator tells us that he had dealt with "injuries" and finally even an "insult" from Fortunato. What examples can you find in the story to support the narrator's perception that Fortunato really is so rude?
3. In paragraph 42 of the story, Montresor says he drinks to Fortunato's "long life." Now that you have read the whole story, what double meaning can you understand?
4. Re-read the final paragraph. Does Montresor feel any remorse for his actions? Explain your answer.
5. List two ways this story would be different if it were told by Fortunato, waiting to die in the crypt.

V. Circle the correct answer:

1. Why does Fortunato cough when he enters the catacombs in "The Cask of Amontillado"?
 - A. Allergies
 - B. Choking
 - C. Dust
 - D. Nitre
2. What does Montresor offer Fortunato when the latter begins coughing in "The Mask of Amontillado"?
 - A. Medoc wine
 - B. A handkerchief
 - C. Nitre
 - D. Amontillado
3. In "The Cask of Amontillado," what is on the arms of the Montresors?
 - A. A red cross
 - B. A foot d'or crushing a serpent rampant
 - C. A dragon on a field of blue
 - D. A lion and a unicorn
4. How does Montresor kill Fortunato in "The Cask of Amontillado"?
 - A. He allows Fortunato to die from nitre.
 - B. He walls Fortunato into a niche in the catacombs.
 - C. He poisons the amontillado.
 - D. He causes Fortunato to become lost in the catacombs.
5. What are Fortunato's last words to Montresor in "The Cask of Amontillado"?
 - A. "Ugh! ugh! ugh!"
 - B. "God help us all!"
 - C. "For the love of God, Montresor!"
 - D. "The Amontillado!"
6. Why does Montresor vow revenge on Fortunato in "The Cask of Amontillado"?
 - A. Fortunato tried to poison him.
 - B. He was tired of the thousand injuries of Fortunato.
 - C. Fortunato stole from him.
 - D. He disagreed with Fortunato's taste in wine.

Student Exercises for “The Cask of Amontillado” continued

VI. See how the season of Carnival is celebrated throughout the world.

The setting of the story takes place during the carnival season in Venice, Italy. Explore this web site and take a virtual tour of Venice, Italy. (www.italyguides.it/us/venice_italy/venice_travel.htm)

What is the significance of carnival season?

The word Carnival can be traced to the Medieval Latin *carne[m] levare* or *carnelevarium*, which means to take away or remove meat. Carnival is a celebration, which proceeds the 40 days of Lent leading up to Easter. Many Christian religions celebrate and indulge themselves in the Carnival season before having to give up something during the Lenten season. Many people give up meat, hence the term “Carnival”. Although many countries and nationalities celebrate Carnival, the first day of the carnival season varies with both national and local traditions.

View website on <http://www.carnaval.com/main.htm>

Students will be able to view Carnival celebrations in Trinidad, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, New Orleans, Vera Cruz, San Francisco, Toronto, Nice, London and New York.

Using NEWSBANK, EBSCO, SIRS or another periodical database. Students will look for magazine and newspaper articles about the carnival season. To help with your search you may want to refer to <http://www.teachnet-lab.org/is24/cposer/searching.htm>

Vocabulary Words

Following is a glossary of difficult words used in the story:

Amontillado [uh MON te YAH doh] - Dry, amber wine. The word *Amontillado* is derived from *Montilla*, the name of a Spanish town. The suffix *ado* means *in the style of*. Thus, Amontillado is a wine in the style of the kind made in Montilla, Spain.

Aperture - Opening.

Carnival - Festival just before Lent. It is called *Mardi Gras* in some western countries. The word *carnival* is derived from the Latin words *carne* (meat) and *vale* (farewell). Thus, it literally means “farewell to meat.” During Lent, Roman Catholics do not eat meat on Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays thereafter, until Easter.

Catacombs - Underground burial places.

Circumscribing - Encircling, surrounding; tracing a line around.

Fetter - Shackle, chain, bond.

Flambeau - Torch; plural, *flambeaux*.

Hearken - Listen carefully.

Immolate - Kill a person as a sacrifice.

Imposture - Deception, fraud.

Impunity - Freedom from punishment; exempt from punishment.

Médoc - Red wine from the Bordeaux region of France.

Motley - Apparel of many colors; jester’s costume.

Nemo me impune lacessit [NAY moh MAY im POO nay lah CHESS it] - Latin for *No one injures me with impunity*. This sentence appeared on coins of James I of England.

Nitre - Potassium nitrate.

Palazzo - Palace; splendid home.

Pipe - Cask holding 126 gallons.

Puncheon - Cask holding 84 gallons.

Rapier [RAY pe er] - Two-edged sword.

Rheum [ROOM] - Watery discharge.

Roquelaure [rok uh LAHR or rok LAHR] - Knee-length, often fur-trimmed cloak after Duc de Roquelaure (1656-1738)

Sconce - Bracket on a wall for holding a candle or a torch.

2009-10 Study Guide on "*Stories From Poe*"

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Teacher's Answers to "The Cask of Amontillado" exercises

I. Using context clues, what do the underlined words mean?

1. The catacombs were cold and damp.
2. He was determined to get revenge after he was insulted.
3. The wine was in a cask in the cellar.
4. They carried flambeaux down the dark hallway.
5. Fortunato wanted to taste the amontillado.

ANSWERS:

1. Catacombs- underground cemetery
2. Revenge- to get back at someone for pain inflicted
3. Cask- a barrel for holding liquids
4. Flambeaux- torches
5. Amontillado- a pale-dry wine

II. Answer the following questions?

1. What added impression of Fortunato do you get from his costume?
Fortunato was dressed as a fool at the carnival and was played for one.
2. How did the carnival help Montresor execute his plans?
*-Montresor's home was free of his servants due to the carnival.
-The drunkenness at the carnival made it easier for Fortunato to be persuaded.
-The costumes at the carnival allowed them to be seen together without being recognized.
-The noise of the carnival prevented anyone from hearing cries for help from Fortunato.*
3. What kind of person is Montresor? Do you think he is insane? Why or Why Not?
Opinions will vary
4. Do you think Montresor will ever get caught for this crime? How?
Opinions will vary

III. Define these terms:

Foreshadowing - to indicate or suggest something, usually something unpleasant that is going to happen

Irony - using words to suggest the opposite of their literal meaning. Something said or written that uses sarcastic humor

Discuss literary terminology foreshadowing and irony.

Can you think of a movie where the screenwriter gives you some clues on what is going to happen or who the villain in the story is? It may be the music, or a facial expression from a character that gives you a clue. The screenwriter helps the viewer predict what is going to happen. Poe also gives the reader clues in his writing of what is going to happen.

Poe chooses the words in his story very carefully. The title of the story and the main characters names were not given by accident. Many times the words or phrases he used gave the reader a clue of what was to follow. He also used double meanings of words to lead to his sarcastic humor. Analyze the following lines or scenes from the story. Do they contain foreshadowing or irony? Explain why?

1. **"I continued as was my wont, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile NOW was at the thought of his immolation."** *Foreshadowing- Montresor smiles in Fortunato's face as he is thinking about killing him.*
2. **"The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells."** *Ironic- Fortunato comes to the carnival dress like a fool. He is taken for a fool by going after the amontillado, which leads him to his death.*
3. **I said to him -- "My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to day!"** *Ironic- Montresor comments how lucky they are to meet. By this chance meeting Montresor's plan of revenge begins to take form. Although Fortunato looks good now, he will be dead by the end of the day.*
4. **"I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the foot of the descent, and stood together on the damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors."** *Ironic & Foreshadowing- It is ironic that he cautions him going down the stairs when he is planning to kill him shortly. The descending to the catacombs is a foreshadowing of Fortunato's fate.*
5. **"Come," I said, with decision, we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchesi"** *Ironic & Foreshadowing – Montresor tells Fortunato to go back that his health is precious and that he will be missed if something should happen to him. Yet Montresor is plotting his death. The quote "you are happy as I once was" is a foreshadowing of the revenge that is about to be inflicted.*
6. **"The cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough." "True -- true," I replied** *Ironic & Foreshadowing –Poe shows his sarcastic humor here. It is ironic that Fortunato brings up the topic of dying. He will not die from the cough but by Montresor's revengeful plan.*
7. **"I drink," he said, "to the buried that repose around us." "And I to your long life", I said.** *Ironic – The toast to the dead around them and to Fortunato's long life is another sarcastic play on words knowing that Fortunato's life will be over shortly.*
8. **"Nemo me impune lacessit."** *Ironic –The motto on Montresor's coat of arms is translated from Latin meaning: "No one injures (attacks) me with consequences" It is because of Fortunato's insults or verbal attacks that Montresor is killing him*
9. **"Once more let me IMPLY you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you."** *Foreshadowing- He begs him to leave one last time and then states that he will leave him for good.*

Teacher's Answers to "Cask of Amontillado" exercises continued

10. "Let us be gone." "Yes," I said, "let us be gone." *Ironic – Fortunato states "let us be gone" meaning lets go back to the carnival the joke is over. Montresori states "let us be gone" meaning your death is approaching.*

11. The Cask of Amontillado *Irony - The title of the story is also a play on words for it is this cask, which leads him to his casket.*

12. Fortunato *Irony - Fortunato name means Fortunate which he is anything but.*

IV. Answer the following questions:

1. Re-read the first paragraph of "The Cask of Amontillado." What does the narrator think of himself? To whom might he be speaking?

The narrator sees himself as a victim who deserves revenge. He mentions that he is speaking to someone who knows "the nature of [his] soul." This could be someone close to him, a wife, a son, a close friend, or a priest. The final paragraph says that the incident happened 50 years earlier, so this could be a deathbed confession. It might also be a deathbed boast.

2. The narrator tells us that he had dealt with "injuries" and finally even an "insult" from Fortunato. What examples can you find in the story to support the narrator's perception that Fortunato really is so rude?

Fortunato insults Luchresi several times. He also makes a point of saying that Montresor is not "of the brotherhood," which is a kind of one-upping him. He does not, however, seem to be a monster. He acts in the way many people act from time to time. Montresor may be overreacting.

3. In paragraph 42 of the story, Montresor says he drinks to Fortunato's "long life." Now that you have read the whole story, what double meaning can you understand?

Montresor knows he is going to bury Fortunato alive, so he hopes Fortunato will suffer a long time before he dies.

4. Re-read the final paragraph. Does Montresor feel any remorse for his actions? Explain your answer.

Answers will vary. Some students may say that leaving the scene undisturbed for 50 years shows no remorse, and Montresor never says that he is sorry. Other students may point to "my heart grew sick" as an expression of remorse, despite the claim that it was caused by the dampness. They may also point to his haste to finish the job.

5. List two ways this story would be different if it were told by Fortunato, waiting to die in the crypt.

Answers will vary, depending on the student's interpretation of Fortunato.

V. Circle the correct answer:

1. Why does Fortunato cough when he enters the catacombs in "The Cask of Amontillado"?

D. Nitre

2. What does Montresor offer Fortunato when the latter begins coughing in "The Mask of Amontillado"?

A. Medoc wine

3. In "The Cask of Amontillado," what is on the arms of the Montresors?

B. A foot d'or crushing a serpent rampant

4. How does Montresor kill Fortunato in "The Cask of Amontillado"?

B. He walls Fortunato into a niche in the catacombs.

5. What are Fortunato's last words to Montresor in "The Cask of Amontillado"?

C. "For the love of God, Montresor!"

6. Why does Montresor vow revenge on Fortunato in "The Cask of Amontillado"?

B. He was tired of the thousand injuries of Fortunato.

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Synopsis of "*The Tell-Tale Heart*"

["The Tell-Tale Heart"](http://fayette.k12.in.us/~cbeard/heart.html) (<http://fayette.k12.in.us/~cbeard/heart.html>)

Online text of the story with vocabulary support.

["The Tell-Tale Heart"](http://loudlit.com/works/heart.htm) (<http://loudlit.com/works/heart.htm>)

Follow links for a downloadable audio file or to listen and read at the same time.

Plot Summary

The narrator has been so nervous that he jumps at the slightest sound. He can hear all things on heaven and earth, he says, and some things in hell. But he maintains that he is not mad. To prove his sanity, he says, he will calmly tell the reader his story.

One day, he decided to take the life of an old man for no other reason except that he had an eye resembling that of a vulture—"a pale blue eye with a film over it." Over time, it became so unbearable to look upon it that the narrator had no other choice but to get rid of the old man. The way he went about the task, with such calculation and cunning, demonstrates that he is not mad, the narrator says.

At midnight, he would turn the knob on the door of the old man's bedroom. Then he would open the door ever so slowly. In fact, it would take him an hour to open the door wide enough to poke his head into the room. Would a madman have been so cautious? Then he would open a little slot on his lantern, releasing light, to check the hideous eye. For seven straight nights, it was closed, "and so it was impossible to do the work," he says, "for it was not the old man who vexed me but his Evil Eye."

On the eighth night, the narrator opened the door with greater caution than before. As before, the room was completely dark. He was about to shine the lantern when the old man sat up and said, "Who's there?" The narrator did not answer but remained in place, not moving a muscle, for an entire hour. All the while, the old man continued to sit up, wondering—the narrator speculated—what he had heard. The wind? A mouse? A cricket?

Although he did not hear the old man lie down again, the narrow open the lantern slot just a sliver, then wider. The beam fell upon the open vulture eye. Then the narrator heard a low, muffled sound—the beating of the man's heart! Or so he believed. The heartbeat louder—then louder and louder. Would a neighbor hear it?

Shouting, the narrator rushed into the room. After the old man shrieked, the narrator quickly threw him to the floor and pulled the bed on top of him. The heart continued to beat, but only softly. Moments later, the beating stopped. The narrator checked his pulse. Nothing. The old man was dead. After moving the bed aside, the narrator took up three floorboards, secured the old man between the joists, and replaced the boards. The narrator felt proud of himself, for there was no blood to wash out, no other task of any kind to do.

At 4 a.m., just when he had finished his work, the narrator answered a knock at his front door. When he opened it, three policemen entered, saying a neighbor had reported hearing a shriek, possibly indicating foul play. They needed to search the premises. "I smiled," the narrator says, "for what had I to fear?" After welcoming the police, he told them the shriek was his own; he had cried out during a dream. He also told them that the old man who lived in the house was away in the country. Next, he took the police all over the house, inviting them to search everything—thoroughly. After they entered the old man's chamber, the narrator pointed out that the old man's possessions had not been disturbed.

In his swelling self-confidence, the narrator brought in chairs and invited the policemen to rest. "I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim," the narrator says. The police appeared completely satisfied that nothing criminal had occurred in the house. However, they continued to chat idly, staying much longer than the narrator had expected. By and by, he began to hear a rhythmic ringing in his head. While he was talking with the police, the noise—which had the cadence of a ticking watch but a much louder sound—persisted, becoming more distinct. A moment later, he concluded that the rhythmic ringing was outside of him. Still, he talked on, now more loudly. The policemen did not seem to hear the noise.

When it grew even louder, the narrator rose and began arguing with the officers about trivial matters, punctuating his conversation with wild hand movements. He also paced back and forth. Then he raved and cursed and dragged his chair over the floorboards, all in an apparent attempt to drown out the noise he was hearing. Meanwhile, it grew still louder, and louder, and louder. How was it possible that they could not hear it?

In fact, they must have heard it, the narrator decided. And they must have suspected him of a crime all along. Their calm manner and idle chatter were part of a ruse to mock him. Unable to brook their counterfeit behavior any longer, unable to endure the sound any longer, the narrator brought the whole business to a crashing climax. "Villains!" I shrieked, "dissemble no more! I admit the deed! – tear up the planks! – here, here! – it is the beating of his hideous heart!"

Setting

The story opens in an undisclosed locale, possibly a prison, when the narrator tells readers that he is not mad. To defend his sanity, he tells a story which he believes will prove him sound of mind. His story is set in a house occupied by the narrator and an old man. The time of the events in the story is probably the early 1840's, when Poe wrote the story. The action in the narrator's story takes place over eight days.

The Tell-Tale Heart continued

Characters

The Narrator: Deranged unnamed person who tries to convince the reader that he is sane. The narrator's gender is not identified, but Poe probably intended him to be a man. Here is why: Poe generally wrote from a male perspective, often infusing part of himself into his main characters. Also, in major short stories in which he identifies the narrator by gender—stories such as "The Black Cat," "The Cask of Amontillado," and "The Fall of the House of Usher"—the narrator is male. Finally, the narrator of "A Tell-Tale Heart" exhibits male characteristics, including (1) A more pronounced tendency than females to commit violent acts. Statistics demonstrate overwhelmingly that murder is a male crime. (2) Physical strength that would be unusual in a female. The narrator drags the old man onto the floor and pulls the bed on top of him, then tears up floorboards and deposits the body between joists. (3) The narrator performs a man's chore by bringing four chairs into the old man's bedroom, one for the narrator and three for the policemen. If the narrator were a woman, the policemen probably would have fetched the chairs. But they did not.

The Old Man: Seemingly harmless elder who has a hideous "evil eye" that unnerves the narrator.

Three Policemen: Officers who search the narrator's house after a neighbor reports hearing a shriek.

Year of Publication

"The Tell-Tale Heart" was first published in the winter of 1843 in *The Pioneer*, a Boston magazine.

Themes

Theme 1: A human being has a perverse, wicked side—another self—that can goad him into doing evil things that have no apparent motive. This is the same theme of another Poe story, "The Black Cat." The narrator of "The Tell-Tale Heart" admits in the second paragraph of the story that he committed a senseless crime, saying: "Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire." However, he does note that his evil deed, murder, was not entirely unprovoked; for the old man he killed had a hideous eye that unnerved him. Unable to look upon it any longer, he decided to kill the old man.

Theme 2: Fear of discovery can bring about discovery. At the end of the story, the narrator begins to crack under the pressure of a police investigation, hearing the sound of the murdered man's beating heart, and tells the police where he hid the body. Fear of discovery is the principle under which lie detectors work.

Theme 3: The evil within is worse than the evil without. The old man has a hideous, repulsive eye; outwardly, he is ugly. But, as the narrator admits, he is otherwise a harmless, well-meaning person. The narrator, on the other hand, is inwardly ugly and repulsive, for he plans and executes murder; his soul is more repulsive than the old man's eye.

Point of View

The story is told in first-person point of view by an unreliable narrator. The narrator is obviously deranged, readers learn during his telling of his tale, even though he declares at the outset that he is sane. As in many of his other short stories, Poe does not name the narrator. A possible explanation for this is that the unnamed narrator becomes every human being, thereby enhancing the universality of the short story. In other words, the narrator represents anyone who has ever acted perversely or impulsively—and then had to pay for his deed.

Prose Beats Like a Heart

From time to time, Poe uses a succession of short sentences or word groups, creating a rhythm not unlike that of a heartbeat. Note the following examples from the story:

Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! Yes, it was this!

I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could to maintain the ray upon the eye. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased.

Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God! – no, no? They heard! – they suspected! – they KNEW! – they were making a mockery of my horror! – this I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die! – and now – again – hark! louder! louder! louder! LOUDER! – "Villains!" I shrieked, "dissemble no more! I admit the deed! – tear up the planks! – here, here! – it is the beating of his hideous heart!"

The Tell-Tale Heart continued

Figures of Speech

As in other works of his, Poe uses many figures of speech. Examples are the following:

Anaphora A figure of speech in which a word or phrase is repeated at the beginning of a clause or another group of words.

Anaphora imparts emphasis and balance. Here are boldfaced examples from "The Tell-Tale Heart":

I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. **I heard** many things in hell.

With what caution—**with** what foresight, **with** what dissimulation, I went to work!

He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. **He had been** saying to himself, "**It is** nothing but the wind in the chimney, **it is** only a mouse crossing the floor," or, "**It is** merely a cricket which has made a single chirp."

There was nothing to wash out—**no** stain of any kind—**no** blood-spot whatever.

They heard!—**they** suspected!—**they** KNEW!—**they** were making a mockery of my horror!

Personification

Death in approaching him had stalked with his black shadow before him and enveloped the victim. [Here, Death is a person.]

Simile

So I opened it—you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily—until at length a single dim ray like the thread of the spider shot out from the crevice and fell upon the vulture eye. [The simile is the comparison of the ray to the thread of the spider with the use of the word *like*.

It increased my fury as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage. [The simile is the comparison of the heartbeat to a drumbeat.]

His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness. . . . [The simile is the comparison of the darkness to pitch.]

Alliteration

Hearken! and observe **how** **healthily**, **how** **calmly**, **I** can tell you the **whole** story.

Meanwhile, the **hellish** **tattoo** of the **heart** increased.

It is the beating of **his** **hideous** **heart!**

Irony

I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him.

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Student Exercises for "The Tell-Tale Heart"

I. Vocabulary Words

Define the following words taken from the short story *The Tell-Tale Heart*.

1. conceived:
2. vulture:
3. dissimulation:
4. vexed:
5. courageously:
6. profound:
7. sagacity:
8. hearkening:
9. stifled:
10. unperceived:
11. stealthily:
12. acuteness:
13. pulsation:
14. dismembered:
15. suavity:
16. audacity:
17. vehemently:
18. gesticulations:
19. mockery:
20. dissemble:

II. Answer the following questions?

1. Re-read the first paragraph of "The Tell-Tale Heart." What does it tell us about the narrator? What later event does it foreshadow?
2. Look through the story and find 4 times when the narrator insists he is not mad. How does he seem to define madness?
3. Is the reader meant to agree with the narrator when he says he is not mad? How do you know?
4. In paragraph 18 the narrator says the officers "chatted pleasantly, and smiled." Do you think the officers would agree with this description? If you were an officer on a call at 4 A.M., listening to this narrator, what might you be thinking?
5. List two things that would be different if this story had been told by the murder victim, speaking from the afterlife.

Student Exercises for "The Tell-Tale Heart" continued

III. Circle the correct answer:

1. Why does the narrator kill the old man in "The Tell-Tale Heart"?

- A. The old man insulted him.
- B. The old man tried to kill him.
- C. He cannot stand the sight of the old man's eye.
- D. He wants the old man's money.

2. Where does the narrator hide the old man's body in "The Tell-Tale Heart"?

- A. In a closet
- B. In the ceiling
- C. In his backyard
- D. Under the floorboards

3. On which night does the narrator kill the old man in "The Tell-Tale Heart"?

- A. The eighth
- B. The seventh
- C. The third
- D. The first

4. Why does the old man wake up in "The Tell-Tale Heart"?

- A. Because he hears the narrator attacking him.
- B. He hears the doorknob turn in his room.
- C. Because he hears the policemen knocking at the door.
- D. He hears the sound of the narrator's thumb slipping on the lantern.

5. In "The Tell-Tale Heart," why do the policemen show up at the narrator's door?

- A. They wanted to investigate the old man's murder.
- B. The narrator asked them to come.
- C. A neighbor informed them that a scream was heard from the house.
- D. They were paying him a courtesy call.

6. What does the narrator claim is his weakness in "The Tell-Tale Heart"?

- A. His fear
- B. His oversensitivity
- C. His guilt
- D. His insanity

7. How does the old man die in "The Tell-Tale Heart"?

- A. He is buried alive.
- B. He is suffocated with a mattress.
- C. He is frightened to death.
- D. The narrator puts a dagger in his heart.

Teacher's Answers to “The Tell-Tale Heart” exercises

I. Vocabulary Words

Define the following words taken from the short story *The Tell-Tale Heart*.

1. **conceived:** *to form an idea; think.*
2. **vulture:** *a person or thing that preys, esp. greedily or unscrupulously.*
3. **dissimulation:** *to hide under a false appearance; feigning; hypocrisy.*
4. **vexed:** *irritated; annoyed.*
5. **courageously:** *possessing or characterized by courage; brave.*
6. **profound:** *having deep insight or understanding.*
7. **sagacity:** *acuteness of mental discernment & soundness of judgment; wisdom.*
8. **hearkening:** *to listen attentively; give heed.*
9. **stifled:** *to suppress, curb, or withhold; muffled.*
10. **unperceived:** *not perceived or commented on; not seen.*
11. **stealthily:** *acting with quiet, caution, and secrecy intended to avoid notice.*
12. **acuteness:** *sharp or penetrating in intellect, insight, or perception; sensitive.*
13. **pulsation:** *a beat or throb, as of the pulse.*
14. **dismembered:** *to cut, tear, or pull off the limbs of; to divide into pieces.*
15. **suavity:** *smoothly agreeable and courteous; sophistication.*
16. **audacity:** *boldness or daring, esp. with confident or arrogant disregard for personal safety.*
17. **vehemently:** *strongly emotional; intense or passionate.*
18. **gesticulations:** *a deliberate, vigorous motion or gesture with one's hands.*
19. **mockery:** *ridicule, contempt, or derision; subject of laughter.*
20. **dissemble:** *to give a false or misleading appearance to; conceal the truth or real nature of.*

II. Answer the following questions?

1. Re-read the first paragraph of "The Tell-Tale Heart." What does it tell us about the narrator? What later event does it foreshadow?

The narrator admits to being nervous. He says his senses are very keen, especially his hearing, which is so keen that he hears things in heaven and hell. This tells us he doesn't think he is crazy, and it suggests strongly that he is hallucinating. This foreshadows his later hallucination of the beating heart.

2. Look through the story and find 4 times when the narrator insists he is not mad. How does he seem to define madness?

The narrator insists he is not mad in paragraphs 1, 3, 10, and 12. He seems to define madness as dull senses, foolishness, or not paying careful attention to details.

3. Is the reader meant to agree with the narrator when he says he is not mad? How do you know? Once the narrator admits to hearing things in heaven and in hell in paragraph 1, the reader knows he is hallucinating and that his observations may not be accurate.

Teacher's Answers to "The Tell-Tale Heart" exercises continued

4. In paragraph 18 the narrator says the officers "chatted pleasantly, and smiled." Do you think the officers would agree with this description? If you were an officer on a call at 4 A.M., listening to this narrator, what might you be thinking?

The fact that the officers were willing to sit down and chat with a stranger at 4 in the morning suggests that they already suspected him, especially since he invited them to sit in an upstairs bedroom instead of in the living room. By the time he started talking loudly and making a lot of noise, the officers were probably just waiting for enough evidence to arrest him.

5. List two things that would be different if this story had been told by the murder victim, speaking from the afterlife.

Answers will vary. Students might mention that the old man seemed to trust the narrator; otherwise, he would have fired him. They might also mention his indecision, not knowing what to do when he heard the noise and saw the light from the doorway.

III. Circle the correct answer:

1. Why does the narrator kill the old man in "The Tell-Tale Heart"?

C. He cannot stand the sight of the old man's eye.

2. Where does the narrator hide the old man's body in "The Tell-Tale Heart"?

D. Under the floorboards

3. On which night does the narrator kill the old man in "The Tell-Tale Heart"?

A. The eighth

4. Why does the old man wake up in "The Tell-Tale Heart"?

D. He hears the sound of the narrator's thumb slipping on the lantern.

5. In "The Tell-Tale Heart," why do the policemen show up at the narrator's door?

C. A neighbor informed them that a scream was heard from the house.

6. What does the narrator claim is his weakness in "The Tell-Tale Heart"?

B. His oversensitivity

7. How does the old man die in "The Tell-Tale Heart"?

B. He is suffocated with a mattress.

2009-10 Study Guide on "*Stories From Poe*"

for the film screening

Designed and Published by TENNESSEE THEATRE COMPANY

Synopsis of "The Premature Burial"

["The Premature Burial"](#) text

<http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/PoePrem.html>

Plot Summary

Writing fictional tales about extremely terrifying or extremely disgusting events is in poor taste, the narrator says. But writing stories about appalling events that actually happened—events that caused immeasurable suffering, such as the great earthquake in Lisbon or the devastating plague in London—is necessary and useful. Such stories serve the cause of truth. Of course, the type of horrifying event that most unsettles readers is one that happens to a single person rather than to a multitude.

"The ghastly extremes of agony are endured by man the unit, and never by man the mass," the narrator observes. The most unspeakably terrifying event that a single human can undergo is to be buried alive. Yet it has happened many times after mysterious diseases rendered living persons seemingly lifeless, rigid, dead.

Records exist attesting that victims of such diseases have been buried alive. One such victim was the wife of a Baltimore lawyer and member of the U.S. Congress. After she exhibited no signs of life, she was pronounced dead. A funeral was held, and she was entombed in a vault. Three years later, the vault was opened to receive a sarcophagus. At this time, the woman's coffin was found in pieces on the floor. It had fallen from a ledge where it was placed. An investigation revealed that the woman revived after her entombment and struggled to free herself, causing the coffin to fall and break up. She apparently beat on the iron door of the vault—to no avail, of course—then died. Her skeleton, free of the coffin, attested to her "resurrection."

Another victim of an illness that mimics death was a young French heiress, Victorine Lafourcade. A poor Parisian journalist, Julien Bossuet, loved her—and apparently she loved him—but she rejected him because of his low social standing and instead married a banker and eminent diplomat, Monsieur Renelle. However, he mistreated her and, after several years of marriage, she died—or appeared to—and was buried in a grave in the village where she was born. Devastated by her death, Bossuet traveled to the village and opened the grave and coffin at midnight to cut off her beautiful hair as a memento. But just as he was about to snip away the hair, Victorine opened her eyes. She was alive but remained in a stupor. After Bossuet carried her to his lodgings, he revived her. Realizing that she truly loved Bossuet, she fled with him to America. Twenty years later, they returned to France in the belief that no one would recognize her. But Monsieur Renelle did recognize her and tried to reclaim her. However, a court ruled that he had no hold on her after so long a time.

A German medical journal reported a case of a military officer who died—apparently—after falling from a horse and suffering a blow to the head. Three days after his burial in a shallow grave, a cemetery visitor noticed movement of the earth while sitting on the grave. The officer was disinterred and revived in a hospital, where he spoke of the horror of awakening beneath the earth. It seems that the shallow grave admitted air to keep him alive. Unfortunately, even though the officer seemed on his way to recovery, doctors performed experiments on him with a galvanic battery, causing his death.

Oddly, the use of such a device in London revived a "dead" man—one exhumed from a grave three days after his burial. Curious doctors wanted to dissect the body to determine the cause of death, presumed to be typhus. A student who decided to conduct an experiment on his own attached a wire from the battery to a muscle. In a moment, the patient stood up and uttered several words. Later, he made a full recovery.

The narrator notes that the cases he has discussed are but a few of many. Premature burial probably happens frequently, he says, and he can think of nothing more horrible than finding oneself inside a grave while still alive. He then discusses his own risk of premature burial, for he suffers from catalepsy. Catalepsy, he says, is an affliction that causes a human to enter a deathlike trance. A sufferer can reduce his risk of being declared dead if he informs everyone he knows about his condition.

The Premature Burial continued

The narrator says the affliction often caused him to fall into “half-swoon” in which he could not move or think but was vaguely aware of his surroundings. “At other times I was quickly and impetuously smitten,” he says. I grew sick, and numb, and chilly, and dizzy, and so fell prostrate at once. Then, for weeks, all was void, and black, and silent, and Nothing became the universe.” The illness appeared not to affect his general physical health. However, he did notice a strange symptom upon awakening from a night’s sleep: For several minutes, he would lapse into a state of confusion, lacking memory and other mental abilities.

Eventually, he could think only morbid thoughts, and he talked “of worms, of tombs, and epitaphs.” Fear of being buried alive possessed his mind. He was afraid to go to sleep, for he worried that he would awaken inside a grave. After falling asleep on one occasion, he dreamed about being in a cataleptic trance. This dream and others like it unnerved the narrator. Soon, he was reluctant to keep company with anyone except those who were aware of his condition—those would not bury him prematurely in the event that he fell into a cataleptic fit. As a further precaution, he redesigned the family vault so that it admitted air and could be opened from inside. A rope through the hole of the coffin lid was attached to a bell on the roof. If he were prematurely buried, he could ring for help.

The time came when, upon awakening in the morning, it took him longer to come to his senses. When he reached full consciousness, an eyelid would quiver and a pang of terror would shoot through his body when he remembered his catalepsy.

One morning, deep despair overwhelmed him as he awoke from another stupor. Mustering courage, he opened his eyes to face the new day, but everything was dark. He tried to shriek but could not. When he noticed that he was lying on something hard, he threw up his arms. They struck solid wood. “I could no longer doubt that I reposed within a coffin at last,” he says.

However, remembering the alterations he made in the vault, he took heart. First, he pushed on the coffin lid. It would not move. Then he reached for the rope to ring the bell. It was not there. When he noticed that he could smell moist earth, he realized he was not in the family vault. He concluded that he must have suffered a cataleptic fit while away from home, surrounded by strangers, and was buried in the earth in a common coffin. He again tried to shriek. This time he succeeded, giving out a long cry of agony.

Someone answered. Then three others spoke, one saying “Get out o’ that!” One of them shook him, and he was restored to the world of light and the living. The incident took place when he went on a “shooting expedition” with a friend along the James River near Richmond, Va. When a storm came up in the evening, they took shelter in the cabin of a small boat, where they spent the night. The narrator slept in a berth 18 inches wide and 18 inches high. In the morning upon awakening, he assumed he was in a coffin. The smell of the earth had come from cargo on the boat. Those who shook him to his senses were crewmen.

From that time forward, he became a new man—traveling, exercising, avoiding morbid thoughts and burning medical books he had been reading. In time, his symptoms of catalepsy disappeared. He realized that the human imagination, like a cavern, cannot be explored to its fullest without risking dangerous results. And, although terrifying thoughts may have some basis in reality, “they must sleep, or they will devour us—they must be suffered to slumber, or we perish.

Settings

The action takes place in the middle of the 19th Century at the narrator’s home in Richmond, Va., and on a small, single-mast sailing vessel (sloop) on the James River. The narrator takes shelter on the boat during a storm.

Characters

Narrator: A man who says he suffers from catalepsy, an illness which temporarily incapacitates a person in a condition mimicking death. The narrator lives in abnormal fear that he will be pronounced dead during a cataleptic trance and buried alive.

Unnamed Friend: This friend accompanies the narrator on a “gunning expedition” along the James River.

Boat Crewmen: Men on a sloop providing shelter for the narrator and his friend when a storm interrupts their expedition.

The Premature Burial continued

Type of Work and Publication Date

"The Premature Burial" is a short story of in the horror genre written in first-person point of view. It was first published on July 31, 1844, in the *Philadelphia Dollar Newspaper*.

Themes

Terror

The central theme of "The Premature Burial" is extreme terror and its effects on the human mind. The narrator's terror is the result of his dwelling obsessively on morbid thoughts.

Isolation

Being cut off, being isolated from the world of the living, is in part the cause of the narrator's abnormal fear of being buried alive. The thought of being alone and abandoned, without hope of ever seeing another human being, petrifies the narrator. Ironically, to avoid the possibility of premature burial, he avoids leaving his home to be among people. "I hesitated to ride, or to walk, or to indulge in any exercise that would carry me from home," he says.

Let the Sleeping Mind Lie

At the end of the story, the narrator says the deep recesses of the human mind, where reside unknown and inscrutable terrors, are better left alone, unexplored. "The imagination of man is no Carathis," he says, "to explore with impunity its every cavern." The "demons" in the mind "must sleep, or they will devour us—they must be suffered to slumber, or we perish." Here, Poe seems to be saying that it is unhealthful to dwell on morbidity and vague fears. If one focuses incessantly on an imagined illness, he will become ill. If he focuses incessantly on what could go wrong, nothing will go right. The mind has its own secret hell; to awaken its demons is to awaken bale and bane.

Use of Anaphora

As in his other short stories, Poe frequently uses anaphora in "The Premature Burial." Anaphora is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is repeated at the beginning of a clause or another group of words. Anaphora imparts emphasis and balance. Here are boldfaced examples from the story:

No care—**no** hope—**no** effort.

And now the first positive effort to think. **And now** the first endeavor to remember. **And now** a partial and evanescent success. **And now** the memory has so far regained its dominion, that, in some measure, I am cognizant of my state..

Despair—such as no other species of wretchedness ever calls into being—**despair** alone urged me, after long irresolution, to uplift the heavy lids of my eyes. I uplifted them. It was dark—all dark. **I knew** that the fit was over. **I knew** that the crisis of my disorder had long passed. **I knew** that I had now fully recovered the use of my visual faculties—and yet it was dark—all dark—the intense and utter raylessness of the Night that endureth for evermore.

Student Exercises for “The Premature Burial”

I. Fill in the blanks with the correct word:

coffin	obsessed	rope
London	bell	arms
symptoms	pronounced	cataplexy
head	hair	earth

1. The narrator had an illness called _____ .
2. Because of his disease the narrator was _____ with being buried alive.
3. The narrator woke up and thought he was in a _____.
4. When the narrator woke up he smelt _____.
5. The soldier who fell off of his horse had a blow to his _____.
6. The woman who had no signs of life was _____ dead.
7. Bossuet unburied his love and was cutting her _____ when she opened her eyes.
8. A devastating plague happened in _____.
9. The narrator had a coffin built with a hole for a _____ to come inside.
10. The narrator wanted a _____ placed outside his grave to alert people if he woke.
11. When the narrator awoke in a dark place he threw his _____ and hit wood.
12. In time the narrator’s _____ disappeared.

II. Research and Writing:

1. **Cataplexy** - is a condition that causes muscle rigidity and temporary loss of consciousness and feeling for several minutes, several hours, and, in some cases, more than a day. Generally, it is not an illness in itself but a symptom of an illness, such as schizophrenia, epilepsy, hysteria, alcoholism or a brain tumor. Certain drugs, too, can trigger a cataleptic episode. The victim does not respond to external stimuli, even painful stimuli such as a pinch on the skin.

Poe sometimes wrote of fears that were common to his time. For instance, medicine often could not distinguish between a deep coma and death, and so premature burials were not uncommon. Poe suffered from cataplexy. If Poe were writing today, what might some of his subjects be? How do the things we fear change from one era to another? If you were to write in the manner of Edgar Allan Poe, what subjects might you find fearful?

2. At a time when psychology was not even a field of study, *The Tell-Tale Heart* demonstrates Poe’s keen understanding of the human mind and the powerful effect of guilt upon the main character. What other examples from the stories and poems of *Tales of Edgar Allan Poe* illustrate Poe’s grasp of how the human mind works? What dominant emotion do each of his characters experience? Do you believe that Poe’s characters feel emotions in the same way that you do, or are they too extreme? Do you think that life 150 years after Poe’s time has changed how we experience and express emotions?

Teacher's Answers to “The Premature Burial” exercises

I. Fill in the blanks with the correct word:

1. The narrator had an illness called cataplexy .
2. Because of his disease the narrator was obsessed with being buried alive.
3. The narrator woke up and thought he was in a coffin .
4. When the narrator woke up he smelt earth .
5. The soldier who fell off of his horse had a blow to his head .
6. The woman who had no signs of life was pronounced dead.
7. Bossuet unburied his love and was cutting her hair when she opened her eyes.
8. A devastating plague happened in London .
9. The narrator had a coffin built with a hole for a rope to come inside.
10. The narrator wanted a bell placed outside his grave to alert people if he woke.
11. When the narrator awoke in a dark place he threw his arms and hit wood.
12. In time the narrator's symptoms disappeared.

2009-10 Study Guide on "*Stories From Poe*"

for the film screening

Designed and Published by TENNESSEE THEATRE COMPANY

Synopsis of "The Raven"

["The Raven"](http://loudlit.com/works/raven.htm) (<http://loudlit.com/works/raven.htm>)

Follow links for a downloadable audio file or to listen and read at the same time.

Summary

A lonely man tries to ease his "sorrow for the lost Lenore," by distracting his mind with old books of "forgotten lore." He is interrupted while he is "nearly napping," by a "tapping on [his] chamber door." As he opens up the door, he finds "darkness there and nothing more." Into the darkness he whispers, "Lenore," hoping his lost love had come back, but all that could be heard was "an echo [that] murmured back the word 'Lenore!'"

With a burning soul, the man returns to his chamber, and this time he can hear a tapping at the window lattice. As he "flung [open] the shutter," "in [there] stepped a stately Raven," the bird of ill-omen (Poe, 1850). The raven perched on the bust of Pallas, the goddess of wisdom in Greek mythology, above his chamber door.

The man asks the Raven for his name, and surprisingly it answers, and croaks "Nevermore." The man knows that the bird does not speak from wisdom, but has been taught by "some unhappy master," and that the word "nevermore" is its only "stock and store."

The man welcomes the raven, and is afraid that the raven will be gone in the morning, "as [his] Hopes have flown before"; however, the raven answers, "Nevermore." The man smiled, and pulled up a chair, interested in what the raven "meant in croaking, 'Nevermore.'" The chair, where Lenore once sat, brought back painful memories. The man, who knows the irrational nature in the raven's speech, still cannot help but ask the raven questions. Since the narrator is aware that the raven only knows one word, he can anticipate the bird's responses. "Is there balm in Gilead?" - "Nevermore." "Can Lenore be found in paradise?" - "Nevermore." "Take thy form from off my door!" - "Nevermore." Finally the man concedes, realizing that to continue this dialogue would be pointless. And his "soul from out that shadow" that the raven throws on the floor, "Shall be lifted -- Nevermore!"

Date of Publication

Jan. 29, 1845, in *The New York Mirror* from a copy prepared for *The American Review*.

Symbols

In this poem, one of the most famous American poems ever, Poe uses several symbols to take the poem to a higher level. The most obvious symbol is, of course, the raven itself. When Poe had decided to use a refrain that repeated the word "nevermore," he found that it would be most effective if he used a non-reasoning creature to utter the word. It would make little sense to use a human, since the human could reason to answer the questions (Poe, 1850). In "The Raven" it is important that the answers to the questions are already known, to illustrate the self-torture to which the narrator exposes himself. This way of interpreting signs that do not bear a real meaning, is "one of the most profound impulses of human nature" (Quinn, 1998:441).

Poe also considered a parrot as the bird instead of the raven; however, because of the melancholy tone, and the symbolism of ravens as birds of ill-omen, he found the raven more suitable for the mood in the poem (Poe, 1850). Quoth the Parrot, "Nevermore?"

Another obvious symbol is the bust of Pallas. Why did the raven decide to perch on the goddess of wisdom? One reason could be, because it would lead the narrator to believe that the raven spoke from wisdom, and was not just repeating its only "stock and store," and to signify the scholarship of the narrator. Another reason for using "Pallas" in the poem was, according to Poe himself, simply because of the "sonorousness of the word, Pallas, itself" (Poe, 1850).

A less obvious symbol, might be the use of "midnight" in the first verse, and "December" in the second verse. Both midnight and December, symbolize an end of something, and also the anticipation of something new, a change, to happen. The midnight in December, might very well be New Year's eve, a date most of us connect with change. This also seems to be what Viktor Rydberg believes when he is translating "The Raven" to Swedish, since he uses the phrase "årets sista natt var inne, " ("The last night of the year had arrived"). Kenneth Silverman connected the use of December with the death of Edgar's mother (Silverman, 1992:241), who died in that month; whether this is true or not is, however, not significant to its meaning in the poem.

The Raven continued

The chamber in which the narrator is positioned, is used to signify the loneliness of the man, and the sorrow he feels for the loss of Lenore. The room is richly furnished, and reminds the narrator of his lost love, which helps to create an effect of beauty in the poem. The tempest outside, is used to even more signify the isolation of this man, to show a sharp contrast between the calmness in the chamber and the tempestuous night.

The phrase "from out my heart," Poe claims, is used, in combination with the answer "Nevermore," to let the narrator realize that he should not try to seek a moral in what has been previously narrated (Poe, 1850).

By referring to the Raven as a "Prophet" from the "Plutonian shore," Poe represents this creature as a mythical God from the underworld with a prophetic, dark omen. In this case, his message "Nevermore" concerns the narrator's lost love, "Lenore."

The Raven perches upon the bust of the mythical Goddess of Wisdom, Athena, extending Poe's symbol that this creature carries some prophetic message of wisdom from the underworld concerning "Lenore" – or at least that is what the narrator thinks.

Poe could have used ANY color to describe these curtains, yet he chose purple. Purple is often seen in literature as a symbol for royalty, a rising of status, or even blood. In this case, we could potentially see this as Poe commenting that "Lenore" is no longer of the human world, therefore "rising" away - OR it could be a symbol of blood, referencing his own lost love, Virginia, and her death by consumption (i.e. coughing blood).

Words

Poe had an extensive vocabulary, which is obvious to the readers of both his poetry as well as his fiction. Sometimes this meant introducing words that were not commonly used. In "The Raven," the use of ancient and poetic language seems appropriate, since the poem is about a man spending most of his time with books of "forgotten lore."

Seraphim - in the fourteenth verse, "perfumed by an unseen censer / Swung by seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled..." is used to illustrate the swift, invisible way a scent spreads in a room. A seraphim is one of the six-winged angels standing in the presence of God.

Nepenthe - from the same verse, is a potion, used by ancients to induce forgetfulness of pain or sorrow.

Balm in Gilead - from the following verse, is a soothing ointment made in Gilead, a mountainous region of Palestine east of the Jordan river.

Aidenn - from the sixteenth verse, is an Arabic word for Eden or paradise.

Plutonian - characteristic of Pluto, the god of the underworld in Roman mythology.

The Philosophy of Composition

Edgar Allan Poe wrote an essay on the creation of "The Raven," entitled "The Philosophy of Composition." In that essay Poe describes the work of composing the poem as if it were a mathematical problem, and derides the poets that claim that they compose "by a species of fine frenzy - an ecstatic intuition - and would positively shudder at letting the public take a peep behind the scenes." Whether Poe was as calculating as he claims when he wrote "The Raven" or not is a question that cannot be answered; it is, however, unlikely that he created it exactly like he described in his essay. The thoughts occurring in the essay might well have occurred to Poe while he was composing it.

In "The Philosophy of Composition," Poe stresses the need to express a single effect when the literary work is to be read in one sitting. A poem should always be written short enough to be read in one sitting, and should, therefore, strive to achieve this single, unique effect. Consequently, Poe figured that the length of a poem should stay around one hundred lines, and "The Raven" is 108 lines.

The most important thing to consider in "Philosophy" is the fact that "The Raven," as well as many of Poe's tales, is written backwards. The effect is determined first, and the whole plot is set; then the web grows backwards from that single effect. Poe's "tales of ratiocination," e.g. the Dupin tales, are written in the same manner. "Nothing is more clear than that every plot, worth the name, must be elaborated to its denouement before anything be attempted with the pen" (Poe, 1850).

It was important to Poe to make "The Raven" "universally appreciable." It should be appreciated by the public, as well as the critics. Poe chose Beauty to be the theme of the poem, since "Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem" (Poe, 1850). After choosing Beauty as the province, Poe considered sadness to be the highest manifestation of beauty. "Beauty of whatever kind in its supreme development invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears. Melancholy is thus the most legitimate of all the poetical tones" (Poe, 1850).

Of all melancholy topics, Poe wanted to use the one that was universally understood, and therefore, he chose Death as his topic. Poe (along with other writers) believed that the death of a beautiful woman was the most poetical use of death, because it closely allies itself with Beauty.

The Raven continued

After establishing subjects and tones of the poem, Poe started by writing the stanza that brought the narrator's "interrogation" of the raven to a climax, the third verse from the end, and he made sure that no preceding stanza would "surpass this in rhythmical effect." Poe then worked backwards from this stanza and used the word "Nevermore" in many different ways, so that even with the repetition of this word, it would not prove to be monotonous.

Poe builds the tension in this poem up, stanza by stanza, but after the climaxing stanza he tears the whole thing down, and lets the narrator know that there is no meaning in searching for a moral in the raven's "nevermore". The Raven is established as a symbol for the narrator's "Mournful and never-ending remembrance." "And my soul from out that shadow, that lies floating on the floor, shall be lifted - nevermore!"

Notes on "The Raven" by Edgar Allan Poe: February 1845

"...the death, then, of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world – and equally is it beyond doubt that the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover." – Edgar Allan Poe -

Edgar Allen Poe Notes:

1. Virginia, Poe's love at the time, was dying of Consumption (Tuberculosis).
2. Poe found the word "Nevermore" to be his inspiration towards this particular poem, finding that this word created "the utmost conceivable amount of sorrow and despair."
3. By choosing this as his final word, he began at the end in order to construct this mysterious story.
4. New England poets criticized Poe saying "The Raven's" purpose was to teach moral lessons. Poe did not agree in saying "that Beauty is the sole legitimate province of the poem."
5. Poe's belief when it came to poetry was that it was not the time to teach moral lessons rather it was the medium for expressing truth and passion, and best of all, beauty.

Glossary for The Raven

Aidenn – Heaven

balm in Gilead – "something that heals or soothes" in "an Old Testament city and mountain that was a destination for Moses and others (i.e., Heaven).

craven – 1) beggar; 2) coward.

mien – {meen} one's appearance, bearing or manner.

obeisance – {o-'bay-suns} a song of joy or triumph.

plutonian – having to do with the god of the underworld.

Student Exercises for “The Raven”

Give your thoughts on these questions:

1. Do you think this poem is supposed to be funny? Do you find the speaker's tale intense and dramatic, or ridiculous and over-the-top?
2. Do you talk to animals? Do you ever imagine them saying something back?
3. On that note, do you think the speaker of this poem has really lost his mind, or does he just seem very, very sad to you?
4. Do you trust the speaker? Do you think he gives us an accurate version of reality, or is it possible that he is making up or distorting some of these things?
5. Have you ever known someone (or been someone) whose love turned into obsession? Does this poem make you think about that experience?

Answer the following questions

1. What was the narrator doing to help himself forget about his pain?
2. What month did she die?
3. What was her name?
4. Our narrator tries to convince himself that the noise he heard is something explainable. This happens twice. What are these two things?
5. When the raven comes in, what does it perch on?
6. Who is Pallas?
8. What might this represent (referring to the previous two questions)?
9. What is our narrator's first impression of the bird?
10. Where does he think the bird came from? What is the exact term used?
11. “...as my hopes have flown before”. What hopes?
12. “...Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking/fancy unto fancy”. Explain fancy unto fancy.
13. “Then me thought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer” Explain.
14. Explain “is there balm in Gilead?”

*“Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore-
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore.
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore”*

15. Explain what our narrator is asking here and how this adds to our narrator's depression and anger.
16. “Be that word out sign of parting...” What is he talking about?
17. “Take thy beak from out my heart and take thy form from off my door” Explain.
18. Explain the ending of the poem. What becomes of our poor narrator?

Teacher's Answers to “The Raven” questions

Answer the following questions

1. What was the narrator doing to help himself forget about his pain? *Reading a book.*
2. What month did she die? *December*
3. What was her name? *Lenore*
4. Our narrator tries to convince himself that the noise he heard is something explainable. This happens twice. What are these two things? *The raven pecking at the front door and window.*
5. When the raven comes in, what does it perch on? *The bust of Pallas*
6. Who is Pallas? *The goddess of wisdom.*
7. What might this represent (referring to the previous two questions)?
It is a symbol that this creature carries some prophetic message of wisdom from the underworld concerning “Lenore” – or at least that is what the narrator thinks.
8. What is our narrator’s first impression of the bird? *He thinks it has a grave and stern decorum.*
9. Where does he think the bird came from? What is the exact term used?
*From the underworld – Plutonian is a reference to Pluto, the god of the Underworld.
Ghastly grim and ancient raven wandering from the Nightly shore
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore*
10. “...as my hopes have flown before”. What hopes? *The hopes that Lenore and he would be together.*
11. “Then me thought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer” Explain.
He believes the air has become heavy because the bird has brought him bad news.
12. Explain “is there balm in Gilead?” **He is asking if there is a cure for his deep depression.**

*“Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore-
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore.
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore”*
13. Explain what our narrator is asking here and how this adds to our narrator’s depression and anger.
He is asking if he will one day see and hold his love again, to which he believes the Raven says “no”.
14. “Be that word out sign of parting...” What is he talking about?
He is telling the Raven to leave because he said “no” when asked by the narrator if he would see his lost love.
15. “Take thy beak from out my heart and take thy form from off my door” Explain.
He is telling the bird to stop saying things that cause the narrator pain and to leave.
16. Explain the ending of the poem. What becomes of our poor narrator?
He is devastated because he believes he will never see Lenore and thinks his spirit will never feel hope or happiness again.

2009-10 Study Guide on the "*Stories From Poe*" film

Film Making Glossary Terms

Familiarize yourself with general terms used by film makers. As you view the film, think how these techniques were utilized during the making of "*Stories From Poe*":

- **Shot:** continuous, unedited piece of film of any length
- **Scene:** a series of shots that together form a complete episode or unit of the narrative
- **Storyboard:** Drawn up when designing a production. Plans AV text and shows how each shot relates to sound track. (Think comic strip with directions - like a rough draft or outline for a film.)
- **Montage:** The editing together of a large number of shots with no intention of creating a continuous reality. A montage is often used to compress time, and montage shots are linked through a unified sound - either a voiceover or a piece of music.
- **Parallel action:** narrative strategy that crosscuts between two or more separate actions to create the illusion that they are occurring simultaneously

Shots

- **Long Shot:** Overall view from a distance of whole scene often used as an establishing shot - to set scene. Person - will show whole body.
- **Medium or Mid Shot:** Middle distance shot - can give background information while still focusing on subject. Person - usually shows waist to head.
- **Close Up:** Focuses on detail / expression / reaction. Person - shows either head or head and shoulders.
- **Tracking shot:** single continuous shot made with a camera moving along the ground
- **Reverse shot:** shot taken at a 180 degree angle from the preceding shot (reverse-shot editing is commonly used during dialogue, angle is often 120 to 160 degrees)
- **Subjective Shot (P.O.V. Shot):** Framed from a particular character's point of view. Audience sees what character sees.

Camera Movement

- **Pan:** Camera moves from side to side from a stationary position
- **Tilt:** Movement up or down from a stationary position
- **Tracking:** The camera moves to follow a moving object or person

Camera Angles

- **Low Angle Camera:** shoots up at subject. Used to increase size, power, status of subject
- **High Angle Camera:** shoots down at subject. Used to increase vulnerability, powerlessness, decrease size

Editing (the way shots are put together)

- **Cut:** The ending of a shot. If the cut seems inconsistent with the next shot, it is called a jump cut.
- **Fade in or out:** The image appears or disappears gradually. Often used as a division between scenes.
- **Dissolve:** One image fades in while another fades out so that for a few seconds, the two are superimposed.

Sound

- **Soundtrack:** Consists of dialogue, sound effects and music. Should reveal something about the scene that visual images don't.
- **Score:** musical soundtrack
- **Sound effects:** all sounds that are neither dialogue nor music
- **Voice-over:** spoken words laid over the other tracks in sound mix to comment upon the narrative or to narrate

From: <http://www.studyguide.org/filmterms.htm>