

A black and white portrait of Edgar Allan Poe, showing his face from the nose up, with a prominent mustache and dark hair. The portrait is on the left side of the page.

POE
MUSEUM

Richmond, Virginia

Educator Information Packet

Educator Information Packet

Edgar Allan Poe Museum

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Who is Edgar Allan Poe?

“I think Edgar Poe is the most original American genius.”

~Alfred, Lord Tennyson

“Poe is the supreme short story writer of all time.”

~Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

“The prince of American Literature.”

~Victor Hugo

“This marvelous lord of rhythmic expression.”

~Oscar Wilde

“What a strange, though enormously talented writer, that Edgar Poe!”

~Fyodor M. Dostoevsky

“...he had the advantage of being a genius, and his intelligence was frequently great.”

~Henry James

“Poe’s genius has yet conquer’d a special recognition for itself, and I too have come to fully admit it, and to fully appreciate it and him.”

~Walt Whitman

“You might call him the Leader of the Cult of the Unusual.”

~Jules Verne

“He was the greatest journalistic critic of his time...His poetry is so exquisitely refined that posterity will refuse to believe that it belongs to the same civilization as Mrs. Julia Ward Howe’s lilies or the honest doggerel of Whittier...Poe’s supremacy in this respect has cost him his reputation.”

~George Bernard Shaw

“It’s because I liked Edgar Allan Poe’s stories so much that I began to make suspense films.”

~Alfred Hitchcock

Edgar Allan Poe's Life and Times

Poe's Life

1809

Born in Boston, Massachusetts, January 19, second of three children, to actors David and Eliza Arnold Hopkins Poe. Eliza Poe, born in England, is a well-known ingenue and comedienne whose mother, Elizabeth Smith Arnold, was also prominent in early American Theater. David Poe, son of an Irish-born Revolutionary War patriot, abandons the family the following year; Eliza, with children, continues touring.

1811

Mother dies December 8 in Richmond, Virginia. Children William Henry, Edgar and Rosalie become wards of different foster parents. John Allan, a prosperous Richmond merchant born in Scotland, and his wife Frances, informally adopts Edgar. He is renamed Edgar Allan.

1815

John Allan, planning to set up a branch office abroad, moves family to Scotland briefly, then to London. Edgar attends school in London and in suburban Stoke-Newington.

1820

Allan family returns to Richmond via New York, July 1820. Edgar resumes schooling in private academies, shows aptitude for Latin, acting, swimming, and poetry.

1824

Serves on the junior honor guard that escorts Revolutionary War hero Lafayette through Richmond on the latter's return to the United States. Allan's firm dissolves in 1824, but an inheritance he receives two years later leaves him a rich man.

World Events

1809

Abraham Lincoln and Alfred, Lord Tennyson born; Madison becomes President



Left: Washington Irving, one of the most popular writers in the United States during Poe's childhood. Among his best-known tales are "Rip Van Winkle" (1819) and "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow." (1820)

1812

War of 1812 begins, Louisiana becomes a state.

1814

Washington burned by the British, 1814.

1815

Napoleon defeated; Walt Whitman born.

1817

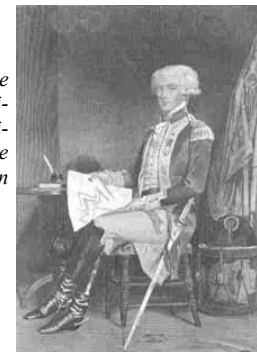
Monroe becomes President; Henry Thoreau born.

1820

Missouri admitted as slave state.

1823

Monroe Doctrine proclaimed.



Right: General Lafayette, the Frenchman who aided the Continental Army during the American Revolution. He visited the United States to great fanfare in 1824.

1825

Poe becomes devoted to Jane Stith Craig Stanard, mother of a schoolmate, later immortalized in Poe's lyric "To Helen."

1826

Enters the University of Virginia and distinguishes himself in ancient and modern languages. Allowed insufficient funds by Allan, resorts to gambling and loses \$2,000. Allan refuses to back the debts, and Poe returns to Richmond to find that John Allan and the Roysters have quashed his engagement to Elmira

1827

Quarrels with Allan and sails for Boston. Enlists in U.S. Army as "Edgar A. Perry" and is assigned as an artilleryman to Fort Independence in Boston Harbor.



Persuades a young printer to issue his first book, *Tamerlane and Other Poems* ("By a Bostonian"), which goes unreviewed. Transfers with his artillery unit to Fort Moultrie in Charleston, South Carolina.

Left: Cover of Poe's first book *Tamerlane*, published in 1827.

Right: Poe's drawing of Elmira Royster, copied by Nora Huston.



1825

John Q. Adams becomes President.

1826

Deaths of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, July 4, 1826. James Fenimore Cooper publishes The Last of the Mohicans



Above: *The University of Virginia as it appeared in Poe's time.*

1827

Death of Ludwig van Beethoven



Above: *Poe's room at the University of Virginia.*

1828

Poe is appointed an artificer. Transfers with his unit to Fort Monroe in Virginia

1829

Attains rank of Sergeant Major. Foster mother Frances Allan dies February 28, 1829. Poe reconciles with John Allan, is honorably discharged, and seeks appointment to United States Military Academy at West Point. Awaiting word, lived with various Poe relatives in Baltimore and asks Allan to subsidize second volume of poems. Allan refuses, but *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane and Minor Poems* is published under Poe's name in December 1829. It sells poorly, but advance sheets of the volume receive encouraging notice.

1830

Enters West Point; excels in languages and lampoons officers in verse. John Allan remarries, severs relations with Poe.

1831

Edgar deliberately absents himself from classes and roll calls, and is court-martialed and expelled in February 1831. In New York, publishes *Poems: Second Edition* with subscriptions raised from fellow cadets. Resides in Baltimore with paternal aunt, Maria Clemm, and her daughter Virginia. Household includes paternal grandmother and Poe's brother, William Henry, who dies of tuberculosis in August 1831. Submits five tales to Philadelphia *Saturday Courier*.

1832

Lives in Baltimore in the home of his paternal grandmother. Also present are Poe's aunt Maria Clemm and her children Virginia and Henry.

1833

Submits tales and poems in *Baltimore Saturday Visitor* contest; "MS. Found in a Bottle" wins first prize for best tale, and "The Coliseum" places second for poetry. Both appear in *Visitor* in October 1833.

1834

His tale "The Visionary" appears in January 1834 issue of *Godey's Lady's Book*, a national publication. John Allan dies in March 1834 and leaves Poe nothing.

1828

Birth of Jules Verne; construction begins on first American railroad.

1829

Andrew Jackson becomes President.

1830

Revolution forces France's Charles X to abdicate; Emily Dickinson is born.

1831

Nat Turner leads unsuccessful slave rebellion; William Lloyd Garrison helps launch abolitionist movement.



Above: West Point in Poe's day.

1833

Slavery abolished in British Empire.



Above: Baltimore in Poe's day.

1835

In March 1835, he begins contributing to Richmond's *Southern Literary Messenger*, which prints "The Unparalleled Adventure of One Hans Pfaall," the first modern science fiction story. Moves to Richmond, joins *Messenger* staff, and dramatically increases magazine's circulation and national reputation. Returns to Baltimore to court his cousin Virginia; admonished for his drinking by *Messenger* proprietor Thomas W. White. Returns to Richmond with Mrs. Clemm and Virginia.

Right: Portrait representing Poe as he would have appeared while he was working at the *Southern Literary Messenger*.



1836

Marries Virginia Clemm in May, shortly before her fourteenth birthday. Moves wife and Mrs. Clemm to Richmond. As its new editor, writes book reviews, stories, and poems for *Messenger*, borrows money from relatives for a boarding house to be run by Mrs. Clemm. Fails to find publisher for his early *Tales of the Folio Club*, despite assistance from established authors.



Left: The offices of the *Southern Literary Messenger* in Richmond, Virginia. Poe's office was on the second floor of this building.

1835

Death of John Marshall, longest serving Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

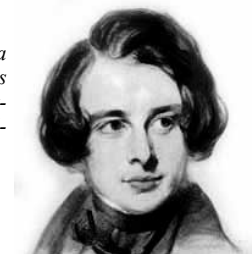


Above: John Marshall attended Monumental Episcopal Church in Richmond, which Poe and his foster parents also attended. Today he is best known as the Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court who established the Court's use of judicial review, the power to overrule laws it deems violate the Constitution.

1836

Dickens' *Pickwick Papers* published. Texas gains independence from Mexico. Ralph Waldo Emerson publishes *Nature*.

Right: Charles Dickens, a British author whose works Poe admired. Poe and Dickens would meet in Philadelphia in 1842.



Left: Ralph Waldo Emerson, Transcendentalist writer who disliked Poe's works almost as much as Poe disliked his. Emerson derided Poe for writing poetry without a moral, and Poe called the Transcendentalists "ignoramuses."

1837

Resigns from *Messenger* in January 1837. Takes family to New York to seek employment but is unable to find editorial post.

1838

Publishes poems and tales, including "Ligeia." Mrs. Clemm manages a boarding house to help make ends meet. In July 1838, Harper's publishes *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, Poe's only completed novel. Moves family to Philadelphia, continues to freelance but considers giving up literary work.

1839

In financial straits, agrees to let name appear as author of a cut-price naturalists' manual, *The Conchologist's First Book*. "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "William Wilson" appear in William Burton's *Gentleman's Magazine*. Late in 1839, Lea and Blanchard publish *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (two volumes).

1840

Poe attempts to lay groundwork for *The Penn Magazine*, to be under his own editorial control. Quarrels with Burton and is dismissed from the magazine. George Rex Graham buys *The Gentleman's Magazine*, merges it with own to create *Graham's Magazine*, to which Poe contributes "The Man of the Crowd" for the December issue.

1841

Becomes editor of *Graham's Magazine*; contributes "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," the first modern detective story, with new stories and poems, and articles on cryptography and autography; by year's end, *Graham's* subscriptions more than quadruple. Inquires after a clerkship in Tyler administration. Revives plans for *The Penn Magazine*.

1842

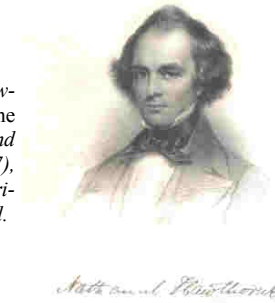
In January 1842, Virginia bursts a blood vessel, exhibits signs of tuberculosis. Poe meets Dickens. Publishes "The Masque of the Red Death" and the short story-defining review of Hawthorne's *Twice Told Tales*. Resigns from *Graham's* in May 1842 and is succeeded by Rufus Wilmot Griswold (later Poe's literary executor). Fall publications include "The Pit and the Pendulum."

1837

Victoria becomes queen of Great Britain; Van Buren becomes President of United States; Michigan joins Union, "Panic of 1837" causes a depression, Mob kills Elijah P. Lovejoy, Illinois abolitionist publisher.

1838

Frederick Douglass escapes from slavery..



Right: Nathaniel Hawthorne, author of The Scarlet Letter (1850) and Twice-Told Tales (1837), was one of the few American authors Poe admired.

1840

"Log Cabin and Hard Cider" campaign of 1840; William Henry Harrison elected president.

1841

President Harrison dies one month after inauguration, April 1841; John Tyler becomes President.

1842

"Great Migration" to Oregon begins.

1843

Contributes “The Tell-Tale Heart,” “Lenore,” and an essay later titled “The Rationale of Verse” to James Russell Lowell’s short-lived magazine *The Pioneer*. Goes to Washington D.C. to be interviewed for minor post in Tyler administration and to solicit subscriptions for his own journal, retitled *The Stylus*; gets drunk and ruins his chances for the job. Resumes writing satires, poems and reviews but is pressed to borrow money from Griswold and Lowell. “The Gold Bug” wins \$100 prize in newspaper contest and is reprinted widely, then dramatized on the Philadelphia stage, making Poe famous as a popular writer. The first and only number of a pamphlet series, *The Prose Romances of Edgar A. Poe*, appears in July and includes “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.” Enters the lecture circuit with “The Poets and Poetry of America.” Fall publication of “The Black Cat.”

1844

Moves family to New York, creates a sensation with newspaper publication of “The Balloon Hoax,” which purports a transatlantic crossing by air. Works on never-completed *Critical History of American Literature* and contributes articles on the literary scene and the lack of international copyright law.



Right: Poe in 1845 from an engraving published in *Graham's Magazine* in 1845.

1845

Poe’s “miracle year.” “The Raven” appears in the January *Evening Mirror* and creates a national sensation; Poe enters New York literary society. *Graham's* publishes Poe’s portrait with a laudatory profile by Lowell, Wiley and Putnam publishes Poe’s *Tales*, then *The Raven and Other Poems*. Borrows money from Griswold, Greeley, and others to acquire controlling interest in *The Broadway Journal*. Conducts literary courtship in verse with poet Frances Sargent Osgood. Initiates the “Little Longfellow War,” a private campaign against plagiarism, with Longfellow the most eminent of those accused. Campaign brings notoriety and alienates friends such as Lowell. Negative publicity from his reading at the Bos-

1843

Elizabeth Barrett Browning publishes Poems.



Right: Poe as he appeared in 1843.

1844

Democratic convention calls for the annexation of Texas and acquisition of Oregon; Samuel F. B. Morse demonstrates the telegraph.



Right: Circa 1846 illustration for “The Raven” by British artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti. In 1848, Rossetti became a founder of the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood of artists.

1845

Polk becomes President; Congress adopts joint resolution to annex Texas; Florida enters the Union; Frederick Douglass publishes Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass.



Left: Title page for Poe’s *The Raven and Other Poems* (1845) the poet’s final and best-known collection of poetry. The book is dedicated to Elizabeth Barrett Browning. It was reprinted the following year in London, where it earned Poe more European admirers.

ton Lyceum, and the insulting jibes against Boston with which Poe responds, further damage his reputation and increase his fame. In the fall, Virginia Poe's illness becomes acute.

1846

Illness, nervous depression, and hardship force Poe to stop publication of *The Broadway Journal*. Moves family to cottage in Fordham, New York, where Virginia, now a semi-invalid, is nursed by family friend Marie Louise Shew. Poe and family mentioned as pitiable charity cases in the New York press. Poe manages to publish "The Cask of Amontillado," "The Philosophy of Composition," book reviews, and "Marginalia" in various magazines. Begins series of satirical sketches of "The Literati of New York City" in *Godey's*. The one on Thomas Dunn English, whom Poe had known in Philadelphia, draws a vicious attack by English on Poe's morality and sanity. Poe sues *The Evening Mirror*, publisher of the piece, and collects damages the following year. Hears rumors of his nascent fame in France, where translations and a long analysis of *Tales* appear.



Right: Poe as he appeared in 1846.

1847

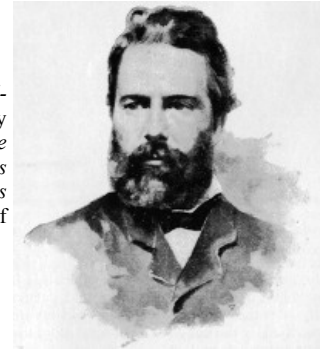
Virginia Poe dies of tuberculosis January 30. Poe falls gravely ill. Nursed back to health by Mrs. Clemm and Mrs. Shew, once more seeks support for literary magazine and fails again. Completes revised versions of Hawthorne review and "The Landscape Garden" and writes "Ulalume." Increasing interest in cosmological theories leads to preliminary notes for *Eureka*.

1848

Begins year in better health. Gives lectures and readings to raise capital for *The Stylus*. February lecture on "The Universe" in New York surveys thematic material elaborated in *Eureka*, published by Putnam in June. While lecturing in Lowell, Massachusetts, forms deep attachment to "Annie" (Mrs. Nancy Richmond), who becomes

1846

Failure of potato crop causes famine in Ireland. United States declares war on Mexico; annexes New Mexico and California; Herman Melville publishes Typee.



Right: Herman Melville, author of *Moby Dick*, which some Poe scholars claim was influenced by Poe's novel *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*.



Left: Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, writer of such poems as *The Song of Hiawatha* (1855) and *Paul Revere's Ride* (1861). Poe considered him unoriginal and thought his high literary reputation was the result of his personal contacts.

1847

Mormons establish Salt Lake City; Henry Wadsworth Longfellow publishes Evangeline.

1848

Revolutions throughout Europe; Marx and Engels publish The Communist Manifesto. Gold discovered in California.

his confidante; subsequently, in Providence, Rhode Island, begins three-month courtship of widowed poet Sarah Helen Whitman, to whom he proposes marriage. When she delays answering him because of reports of his “unprincipled” character, Poe provokes a crisis, and their brief engagement is broken off. Reads “The Poetic Principle” as lecture to an audience of 1,800 in Providence. Writes “The Bells.”



Right: Photograph of Poe taken in Providence, Rhode Island in 1848.

1849

Active as writer and lecturer. In June, leaves for Richmond to seek Southern support for *The Stylus*. Stops in Philadelphia, sick, confused and apparently suffering from persecution mania. Friends care for him and see him off to Richmond. Recovers during two-month stay in Richmond, visits sister Rosalie, joins temperance society, and becomes engaged to boyhood sweetheart Elmira Royster Shelton, now a widow. Possibly intending to bring Mrs. Clemm to Richmond from New York, sails for Baltimore where, a week after arrival, he is found semiconscious and delirious outside a tavern and polling place on October 3. Dies October 7. “The Bells” and



Left: The last photograph of Poe, taken September 1849 in Richmond, Virginia.

“Annabel Lee” appear posthumously late in the year. Slanderous obituary notice by Griswold blackens Poe’s reputation for many years.



Above: Poster drawing people west for California gold.

1849

Death of Chopin. California gold rush begins.



Right: Elmira Royster Shelton

Compiled by Norman George, Courtesy G.R. Thompson

Poe's Family

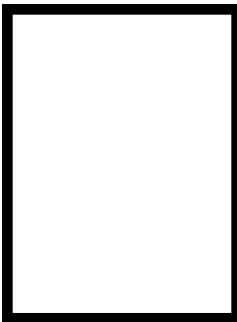
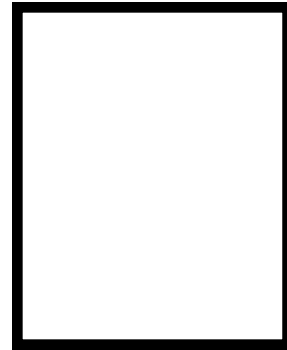


Poe's Mother
Elizabeth Arnold Poe
1787-1811

The British-born actress Elizabeth Poe was a popular performer in theaters from Boston to Charleston. She died when Edgar was only two years old and is buried Saint John's Church in Richmond, Virginia.

Poe's Father
David Poe, Jr.
1784-1811?

Poe's father was also an actor. His last known performance was held in New York in 1809. His whereabouts are unknown after he left his wife sometime before July 1811. No portrait of him is known to exist.



Poe's Brother
William Henry L. Poe
1807-1831

As an infant Edgar's older brother, known as Henry, was taken in by his grandparents in Baltimore. Henry published a few poems during his brief life. No portrait of him exists.

Poe's Sister
Rosalie Poe
1810-1874

When Edgar's mother died, he was taken in by the Allans while his sister went to live with the Mackenzie family of Richmond. Rosalie never married. After the Civil War, the Mackenzies could no longer care for Rosalie, and she died in a charity home.



The Allans

Poe's Foster Father

John Allan

1779-1834

The Scottish-born tobacco merchant Allan took in the orphaned Edgar without ever legally adopting him or including Poe in his will. In a letter, Allan once referred to Poe as "quite miserable, sulky & ill-tempered to all the Family." The Allans are buried at Shockoe Cemetery in Richmond, Virginia.



Poe's Foster Mother

Frances Allan

1785-1829

Frances Allan was one of the Richmond ladies who, in response to an advertisement in the local paper, brought Poe's mother meals during her final illness. After Mrs. Poe's death, Mrs. Allan took Edgar into her home. She had no other children and treated Edgar as her own. Mrs. Allan died of tuberculosis while Poe was serving in the army at Fort Monroe, Virginia. He returned to Richmond a day late for her funeral.



John Allan's Second Wife

Louisa Allan

1800-1881

After the death of Frances Allan in 1829, John Allan married on October 5, 1830 in New York. Poe was at West Point and did not know about the wedding until after the fact. Allan and his second wife soon had three sons who became the heirs to the Allan fortune.



The Allans' Homes in Richmond

All the homes in which Poe lived with the Allans have all been demolished. The photos below show some of these houses and the dates in which Poe lived in them.



Second and Franklin Streets, 1820



Fourteenth Street, 1822-1825



Fifth and Main Streets, 1825-1827

Home Life of Poe

Poe's Mother-in-Law

Maria Poe Clemm
1790-1871



The sister of Edgar Poe's father, Maria Clemm also became Poe's mother-in-law when he married her daughter Virginia. Poe sought refuge in her Baltimore home in early 1831 after his expulsion from West Point. Already living with her were Edgar's brother William Henry Leonard Poe (who would die of tuberculosis later that year), his grandmother Mrs. David Poe, Maria's son Henry, and her daughter Virginia. Mrs. Clemm had lost her husband five years earlier. "Muddy," as Poe called her, cared for the household while Poe sought employment. In 1835, Poe was hired as assistant editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger* and returned to Richmond. After the deaths of William Henry Leonard Poe, Mrs. David Poe, and Henry Clemm, Edgar Poe brought Maria and Virginia

with him to Richmond.

Poe's Wife

Virginia Clemm Poe
1822-1847

Edgar's cousin Virginia Clemm and her mother Maria Clemm moved to Richmond in 1836. On May 16, 1836, a marriage bond was signed between Edgar and Virginia. She was thirteen years old, and Poe still referred to her as "Sissy." At first, their marriage was a happy one. A friend of the Poes, Francis Osgood described Virginia as Edgar Poe's "young, gentle, and idolized wife" and stated, "I believe she is the only woman he ever truly loved." Another friend, Mrs. Mary Grove wrote of Virginia, "Her pale face, her brilliant eyes, and her raven hair gave her an unearthly look." When Virginia was nineteen, she began to show signs of tuberculosis, of which she would die at the age of twenty four, the same age at which Edgar Poe's mother and brother had died.



Left: The home in which Poe's wife died in Fordham (now The Bronx), New York. When Poe left Manhattan in 1846, he moved with his dying wife and his mother-in-law to this humble cottage in the countryside fourteen miles outside the city. Mrs. Mary Gove, a visitor to the cottage described it as "a little cottage at the top of a hill...The house had three rooms—a kitchen, a sitting-room, and a bed chamber over the sitting room...The cottage had a air of taste and gentility that must have been lent to it by the presence of its inmates. So neat, so poor, so unfurnished, and yet so charming a dwelling I never saw." When Poe left on his lecture tours after the death of his wife, his mother-in-law remained in the cottage. It was here that she learned of his death from the newspapers.

Poe as Seen by his Contemporaries

According to his enlistment papers from the time he entered the army in 1827, Poe was five feet, eight inches tall, and had brown hair, grey eyes, and a fair complexion. Poe was very thin and was said to have weighed between 130 and 140 pounds. Basil Gildersleeve, who saw Poe during his 1849 visit to Richmond described Poe as “a poetical figure, if there ever was one, clad in black as was the fashion then—slender—erect—the subtle lines of his face fixed in meditation. I thought him wonderfully handsome, the mouth being the only weak point.” In reviewing one of Poe’s 1849 lectures for Richmond’s *Semi-Weekly Examiner*, John M. Daniel wrote, “Mr. Poe is a small, thin man, slightly formed, keen visaged, with a dark complexion, dark hair, and we believe dark eyes. His face is not an ordinary one. The forehead is well developed, and the nose somewhat more prominent than usual.” Daniels said that Poe’s voice was “soft and distinct, but neither clear nor sonorous.” *Right: Poe in 1849.*



At right is caricature of Poe published during his lifetime. The profile exaggerates Poe’s forehead, which was considered unusually large. He is represented as the “Tomahawk Man,” a nickname Poe earned for his merciless literary reviews. Long before the publication of “The Raven” made him a household name, Poe was best known as a literary critic. The text under the drawing reads:

“With tomahawk upraised for deadly blow,
Behold our literary Mohawk, Poe!
Sworn tyrant he o’er all who sin in verse—
His own the standard, damns he all that’s worse;
And surely not for this shall he be blamed—
For worse than his deserves that it be damned!”



Anna Charlotte Lynch (pictured at left) was a New York socialite who hosted weekly literary soirees while Poe was living in that city. She described him as having “always the bearing and manners of a gentleman. . . He was always elegant in his toilet, quiet and unaffected, unpretentious, in his manner.” Elizabeth Oakes Smith, who encountered Poe at Lynch’s parties wrote that Poe “had an exquisite perception of all the graces of manner, and shades of expression. He was an admiring listener and an unobtrusive observer.” This image of Poe, as seen by his peers, stands in sharp contrast against more popular images of Poe as an antisocial outcast.

Common Poe Myths

Much of what we think we know about Poe is wrong. In fact, many erroneous details are still included in text books to this day. Below are some common Poe myths:

He was an opium addict.

Poe's enemy Thomas Dunn English once wrote: "Had Poe the opium habit when I knew him I should both as a physician and a man of observation, have discovered it during his frequent visits to my rooms, my visits at his house, and our meetings elsewhere—I saw no signs of it and believe the charge to be a baseless slander." English is the man Poe sued for libel so English would certainly not have defended the poet's reputation out of loyalty.

Poe wrote under the influence of opium or alcohol.

Given the above statement as well as the fact that excessive alcohol consumption left Poe bedridden for days at a time, he does not seem to have written while under the influence of drugs. His manner of composition is methodical, and his handwriting is meticulous even in his rough drafts. These observations would lead one to believe that he did not write in the heat of passion but in a more calculated manner. Although his essay "The Philosophy of Composition" is generally viewed as exaggerating the methodical nature of his composition of "The Raven," the essay does still give us insight into the approach to writing that Poe valued and hoped to emulate. Mrs. Osgood, a frequent visitor to the Poe home described Poe sitting "hour after hour, patient, assiduous and uncomplaining" as he wrote.

He was expelled from the University of Virginia.

He was not allowed to return because he had not paid all his expenses from the first semester. This is from Poe's letter to John Allan dated January 3, 1830.

Sir,

I suppose (altho' you desire no further communication with yourself on my part,) that your restriction does not extend to my answering your final letter.

Did I, when an infant, solicit *[[sic]]* your charity and protection, or was it of your own free will, that you volunteered your services in my behalf? It is well known to respectable individuals in Baltimore, and elsewhere, that my Grandfather (my natural protector at the time you interposed) was wealthy, and that I was his favourite grand-child — But the promises of adoption, and liberal education which you held forth to him in a letter which is now in possession of my family, induced him to resign all care of me into your hands. Under such circumstances, can it be said that I have no *right* to expect any thing at your hands? You may probably urge that you have given me a liberal education. I will leave the decision of that question to those who know how far liberal educations can be obtained in 8 months at the University of Va. Here you will say that it was my own fault that I did not return — You would not let me return because bills were presented you for payment which I never wished nor desired you to pay. Had you let me return, my reformation had been sure — as my conduct the last 3 months gave every reason to believe — and you would never have heard more of my extravagances. But I am not about to proclaim myself guilty of all that has been alledged against me, and which I have hitherto endured, simply because I was too proud to reply. I will boldly say that it was wholly and

entirely your own mistaken parsimony that caused all the difficulties in which I was involved while at Charlottesville [[sic]]. The expences of the institution at the lowest estimate were \$350 per annum. You sent me there with \$110. Of this \$50 were to be paid immediately for board — \$60 for attendance upon 2 professors — and you even then did not miss the opportunity of abusing me because I did not attend 3. Then \$15 more were to be paid for room-rent — remember that all this was to be paid *in advance*, with \$110. — \$12 more for a bed — and \$12 more for room furniture. I had, of course, the mortification of running in debt for public property — against the known rules of the institution, and was immediately regarded in the light of a beggar. You will remember that in a week after my arrival, I wrote to you for some more money, and for books — You replied in terms of the utmost abuse — if I had been the vilest wretch on earth you could not have been more abusive than you were because I could not contrive to pay \$150 with \$110. I had enclosed to you in my letter (according to your express commands) an account of the expences incurred amounting to \$149 — the balance to be paid was \$39 — You enclosed me \$40, leaving me one dollar in pocket. In a short time afterwards I received a packet of books consisting of, Gil Blas, and the Cambridge Mathematics in 2 vols: books [for] which I had no earthly use since I had no means of attending the mathematical lectures. But books must be had, if I intended to remain at the institution — and they were bought accordingly *upon credit*. In this manner debts were accumulated, and money borrowed of Jews in Charlottesville at extravagant interest — for I was obliged to hire a servant, to pay for wood, for washing, and a thousand other necessaries. It was then that I became dissolute, for how could it be otherwise? I could associate with no students, except those who were in a similar situation with myself — altho' from different causes — They from drunkenness, and extravagance — I, because it was my crime to have no one on Earth who cared for me, or loved me. I call God to witness that I have never loved dissipation — Those who know me know that my pursuits and habits are very far from any thing of the kind. But I was drawn into it by my companions[.] Even their professions of friendship — hollow as they were — were a relief. Towards the close of the session you sent me \$100 — but it was too late — to be of any service in extricating me from my difficulties — I kept it for some time — thinking that if I could obtain more I could yet retrieve my character — I applied to James Galt — but he, I believe, from the best of motives refused to lend me any — I then became desperate, and gambled — until I finally i[n]volved myself irretrievably. If I have been to blame in all this — place yourself in my situation, and tell me if you would not have been equally so. But these circumstances were all unknown to my friends when I returned home — They knew that I had been extravagant — but that was all — I had no hope of returning to Charlottesville, and I waited in vain in expectation that you would, at least, obtain me some employment. I saw no prospect of this — and I could endure it no longer. — Every day threatened with a warrant &c. I left home

He was expelled from West Point for attending drill in the nude.

Although Poe was expelled from West Point, the nudity legend has its origins in the 1920's, and references to it from Poe's time cannot be found. Poe was actually charged with "Gross Neglect of Duty" for "absenting himself from parades and roll calls, between the 15th and 27th of January 1831" as well as for "Disobedience of Orders" for refusing to attend church after having been directed to do so by an officer on January 23, 1831 and for another direct defiance of orders on January 25. Poe pleaded "not guilty" to the first charge and "guilty" to the remaining charges but was found guilty on all charges. In this excerpt from Poe's January 3, 1830 letter to John Allan, Poe explains why he feels he must leave West Point and threatens to get himself expelled if Allan will not allow him to resign.

You sent me to W. Point like a beggar. The same difficulties are threatening me as before at Charlottesville — and I must resign.

I have no more to say — except that my future life (which thank God will not endure long) must be passed in indigence and sickness. I have no energy left, nor health. If it was possible, to put up with the fatigues of this place, and the inconveniences which my absolute want of necessaries subject me to, and as I mentioned before it is my intention to resign. For this end it will be necessary that you (as my nominal guardian) enclose me your written permission. It will be useless to refuse me this last request — for I can leave the place without any permission — your refusal would only deprive me of the little pay which is now due as mileage.

From the time of writing this I shall neglect my studies and duties at the institution — if I do not receive your answer in 10 days — I will leave the point without — for otherwise I should subject myself to dismissal.

Poe died drunk in a gutter.

He actually died in Washington College Hospital. His attending physician was John Moran. Unfortunately, Poe's medical records do not survive. In a letter Moran wrote to Maria Clemm on November 15, 1849, Moran did not say the cause of Poe's death but cryptically stated "you are already aware of the malady of which Mr. Poe died." The newspapers in the days immediately following his death described his condition as "an attack of mania a potu" (drunkenness), "congestion of the brain," and a chronic condition from which Poe had been suffering "for some years past." Most of the confusion about Poe's cause of death derives from two feuding camps of Poe biographers. On one side Poe's enemies Griswold, Snodgrass, and Stoddard used Poe's death as a morality tale to demonstrate the evils of alcohol. They portrayed Poe as a drunk who died after a drinking binge. On the other side, Poe's defenders Moran, Elizabeth Oakes Smith, and John R. Thompson came up with alternative theories to explain Poe's death without portraying Poe as a drinker, which would have been considered a moral weakness. The latter group perpetuated theories that Poe had been beaten or drugged. Both camps embellished their accounts of Poe's death over the course of the next few decades. Snodgrass, Moran, and Thompson gave lectures and wrote articles about Poe well into the 1860s.



Above: Washington College Hospital where Poe died.

Below are a few theories about Poe's death and dates they were published.

- 1857 Beating
- 1860s Cooping
- 1874 Epilepsy
- 1921 Dipsomania
- 1926 Heart
- 1970 Toxic Disorder
- 1970 Hypoglycemia
- 1977 Diabetes
- 1984 Alcohol Dehydrogenase Deficiency
- 1989 Porphyria
- 1992 Delirium Tremens
- 1996 Rabies
- 1997 Heart
- 1998 Murder (Beating)
- 1999 Epilepsy
- 1999 Carbon Monoxide Poisoning



Above: John R. Thompson, who lectured on Poe's life and death. He popularized the theory that Poe had been drugged and taken from one polling place to the next to vote multiple times before being left for dead at Ryan's Fourth Ward Polls.

Problems with Poe's Biography

Many of the most common myths about Poe's life began with his first biographer Rufus W. Griswold. An admitted enemy of Poe's, Griswold was asked by Poe's mother-in-law Maria Clemm to compile an anthology of Poe's work after the latter's death. Griswold, the editor of such popular anthologies as *The Poets and Poetry of America* and *The Prose Writers of America* seemed to be the most qualified person to compile a collection of Poe's works. In fact, the versions of Poe's stories that Griswold selected for his anthology are still the versions that appear in most Poe anthologies to this day.

As part of Griswold's anthology of Poe's works, he would also write a biographical sketch of the author. Apparently, however, Mrs. Clemm was unaware that Griswold had already published an obituary of Poe under the pseudonym "Ludwig." The infamous "Ludwig" biography began: "[Word of Poe's death] will startle many, but few will be grieved by it," and continued to portray Poe as a scoundrel. Now that he had the authority of being Poe's authorized anthologist and biographer, Griswold set out to tell the world what he really thought of Poe. The resulting biography contained many factual errors, exaggerations, and outright lies. Griswold even went so far as to forge some of Poe's letters in an effort to portray Poe as a morally depraved madman whose tales of terror were probably based on first-hand experience. The intended purpose was apparently to destroy Poe's reputation in hopes that his name would be forgotten, but the biography actually increased sales of Poe's works. Suddenly this collection sold better in one year than any of Poe's other books had sold during the author's lifetime.

Several authors came to Poe's defense, but Griswold's characterization of Poe was the one that most people remembered. By the twentieth century, scholars were able to discredit most of Griswold's stories. Documents such as Poe's military records and contemporary letters disproved some of the claims, and the biographer Arthur Hobson Quinn discovered that Griswold had added entire sentences to letters he was supposedly quoting.

Rufus Wilmot Griswold Poe's Biographer

Although primarily remembered as Poe's biographer, Griswold was a popular anthologist during his lifetime. He also served as Poe's successor as editor of *Graham's Magazine*. His most important work was the collection *The Poets and Poetry of America* (1842). Only a few of Poe's poems were included in this book, but several poems by mediocre writers were included. Poe initially wrote a positive review of the book, but ridiculed it in lectures. Poe also attacked Griswold by portraying a character in his tale "The Angel of the Odd" getting "more stupid" by reading one of Griswold's books.

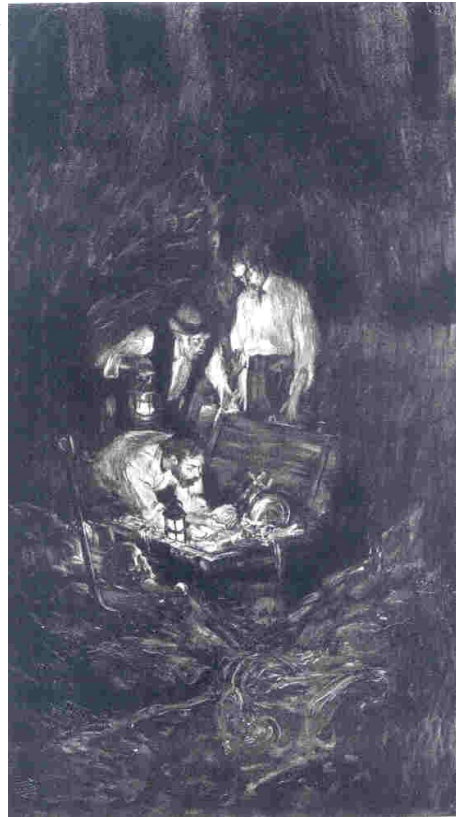
Naturally, Griswold was deeply angered by Poe's repeated attacks and sought revenge by defaming Poe's character after his death. Griswold was not the only author Poe had offended in his reviews and lectures. Thomas Dunn English was one of the authors who had the courage to attack Poe in the press during the author's lifetime, but Poe sued him for libel. Once Poe was dead, Griswold knew he could write whatever he wanted about Poe without fear of lawsuits. In spite of his resentment of Poe, Griswold kept an oil painting of the author in his home.



Poe's Literary Contributions

Inventor of the Detective Story

In 1841, before the word “detective” had entered the English language, Poe published the first modern detective story “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.” In this tale, Poe established the prototype future mystery writers would follow. First, there would be a seemingly impossible crime, in this case a double murder occurring inside a room still locked from the inside. Then the detective character analyzes the clues in order to solve the mystery. To explain to the audience just how intelligent the detective is, the narrator is not the detective but his slightly dim-witted side-kick. “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” was so well received that Poe decided to follow it with two sequels also featuring his detective Dupin. So assured of his own powers of analysis was Poe that in his tale “The Mystery of Marie Roget,” Poe claimed to have solved a real-life crime that had baffled the New York City police. This would be the first detective story based on a true crime. Poe’s “Thou Art the Man” became the first comic detective story and the first mystery in which the culprit turned out to be “the least likely suspect.” During the author’s lifetime, “The Gold Bug” was so popular it was adapted into a stage play. In this tale, an eccentric detective and his confused side-kick/narrator decode an encrypted treasure map in order to find Captain Kidd’s gold.



Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of the Sherlock Holmes mysteries, once wrote, “Where was the detective story before Poe breathed the breath of life into it?” He considered Poe the father of the detective genre. In fact, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes is so closely based on Poe’s character C. Auguste Dupin that early filmmakers looking for more Holmes mysteries to adapt to the screen merely changed the names of Poe’s characters to turn “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” into “Sherlock Holmes and the Great Murder Mystery.”

In honor of Poe’s contributions to the mystery story, the Mystery Writers of America awards an Edgar statuette each year to a distinguished mystery writer.

Pioneer of Science Fiction

In 1835, Poe published Hans Pfaal the story of a trip to the moon. Although other writers had written fantastic stories, Poe added realistic scientific details to make his stories more believable. Thus the modern science fiction story was born. Throughout his career Poe wrote stories about the limits of technology. In “The Man who was used Up,” a man injured in a war, has his body parts replaced with synthetic ones. “Melona Tauta” is the tale of a future in which regular, trans-Atlantic air travel is possible. In “The Facts in the Case of M. Vademar” a doctor is able to communicate with a man whose body had already died. This tale was so realistic that it was reprinted in a medical journal in England. Poe’s science fiction tales were so believable that he once reported in the New York Sun that someone had crossed the Atlantic Ocean in a balloon—decades before it would actually happen. Eager to learn all about this fantastic voyage, New Yorkers rushed to buy the paper, only later to discover they had been fooled. The story is now called “The Balloon Hoax.”

Jules Verne, who was only about seven-years-old when “Hans Phaall” was published, grew up considering Poe his favorite author. Verne would later become the first writer to specialize in the science fiction genre. His tales of balloon trips and space travel borrowed themes already seen in Poe’s works. In *The Sphinx of the Ice Fields* Verne showed his admiration of Poe by writing a sequel to Poe’s novel *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*.



Right: Headline of Poe’s
“Balloon Hoax” article.

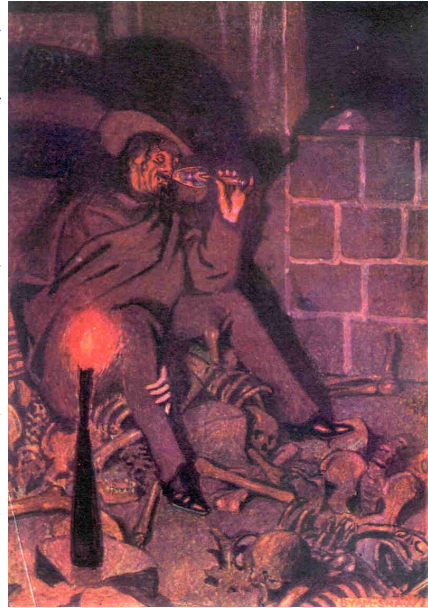
Left: Illustration for Poe’s tale
“MS Found in a Bottle”



[Poe’s] tales of the future lead to H.G. Wells, his adventure stories to Jules Verne and Stevenson.”
~W.H. Auden

Master of the Psychological Horror Story

Much of Poe's popular appeal rests on a few of his tales of terror, but the horror genre has frequently been ignored or derided by critics. This was the case even in Poe's day. When Poe's critics complained about his "German" (or "Gothic") tales, Poe answered, "terror is not of Germany, but of the soul." Poe believed terror was a part of life and therefore a legitimate subject for literature.



By Poe's time, Gothic fiction had already been popularized by Horace Walpole and Charles Brockman Brown. Their tales typically centered around family curses and haunted castles. Poe's first published tale "Metzengerstein" falls into this genre, but in Poe's next horror tales he would move the action away from a remote castle and into an everyday setting like a home ("The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Black Cat") or a school ("William Wilson"). Even when Poe set his horror tale in a distant land he focused less on the location than on the psychology of his characters. Poe also wrote about the subjects that were generating newspaper headlines in his day—murders, premature burials, and grave robberies.

Author H.P. Lovecraft devoted an entire chapter of his book *Supernatural Horror in Literature* (1935) to Poe. In the passage excerpted below Lovecraft explains why Poe's tales of terror were so revolutionary:

Before Poe the bulk of weird writers had worked largely in the dark; without an understanding of the psychological basis of the horror appeal, and hampered by more or less conformity to certain empty literary conventions such as the happy ending, virtue rewarded, and in general a hollow moral didacticism, acceptance of popular standards and values, and striving of the author to obtrude his own emotions into the story and take sides with the partisans of the majority's artificial ideas. Poe, on the other hand, perceived the essential impersonality of the real artist; and knew that the function of creative fiction is merely to express and interpret events and sensations as they are, regardless of how they tend or what they prove -- good or evil, attractive or repulsive, stimulating or depressing, with the author always acting as a vivid and detached chronicler rather than as a teacher, sympathizer, or vendor of opinion. He saw clearly that all phases of life and thought are equally eligible as a subject matter for the artist, and being inclined by temperament to strangeness and gloom, decided to be the interpreter of those powerful feelings and frequent happenings which attend pain rather than pleasure, decay rather than growth, terror rather than tranquility, and which are fundamentally either adverse or indifferent to the tastes and traditional outward sentiments of mankind, and to the health, sanity, and normal expansive welfare of the species.

As a magazine editor, Poe knew what kinds of stories sold magazines. Since he was the first American author to try to live entirely from his writing, he needed to write things that would sell. After having submitted a particularly gory tale "Berenice" to *The Southern Literary Messenger*, Poe wrote the magazine's owner Thomas White on April 30, 1835 to explain why he had written the story.

A word or two in relation to Berenice. Your opinion of it is very just. The subject is by far too horrible, and I confess that I hesitated in sending it you especially as a specimen of my capabilities. The Tale

originated in a bet that I could produce nothing effective on a subject so singular, provided I treated it seriously. But what I wish to say relates to the character of your Magazine more than to any articles I may offer, and I beg you to believe that I have no intention of giving you *advice*, being fully confident that, upon consideration, you will agree with me. The history of all Magazines shows plainly that those which have attained celebrity were indebted for it to articles *similar in nature -- to Berenice --* although, I grant you, far superior in style and execution. I say similar in *nature*. You ask me in what does this nature consist? In the ludicrous heightened into the grotesque: the fearful coloured into the horrible: the witty exaggerated into the burlesque: the singular wrought out into the strange and mystical. You may say all this is bad taste. I have my doubts about it... But whether the articles of which I speak are, or are not in bad taste is little to the purpose. To be appreciated you must be *read*, and these things are invariably sought after with avidity. They are, if you will take notice, the articles which find their way into other periodicals, and into the papers, and in this manner, taking hold upon the public mind they augment the reputation of the source where they originated... Thus the first men in [England] have not thought writings of this nature unworthy of their talents, and I have go[od] reason to believe that some very high names valued themselves *principally* upon this species of literature. To be sure originality is an essential in these things -- great attention must be paid to style, and much labour spent in their composition, or they will degenerate into the turgid or the absurd... In respect to *Berenice* individually I allow that it approaches the very verge of bad taste -- but I will not sin quite so egregiously again. I propose to furnish you every month with a Tale of the nature which I have alluded to. The effect -- if any -- will be estimated better by the circulation of the Magazine than by any comments upon its contents. This much, however, it is necessary to premise, that no two of these Tales will have the slightest resemblance one to the other either in matter or manner -- still however preserving the character which I speak of.

The opinion Poe expressed in the letter about increasing magazine circulation was correct. The *Messenger's* circulation increased by seven times while Poe was employed there.

Poe's tales of terror remain among his most popular and have influenced later horror writers like Steven King and H.P. Lovecraft. Filmmakers Alfred Hitchcock and Dario Argento have acknowledged that Poe's horror tales were among their initial inspirations.



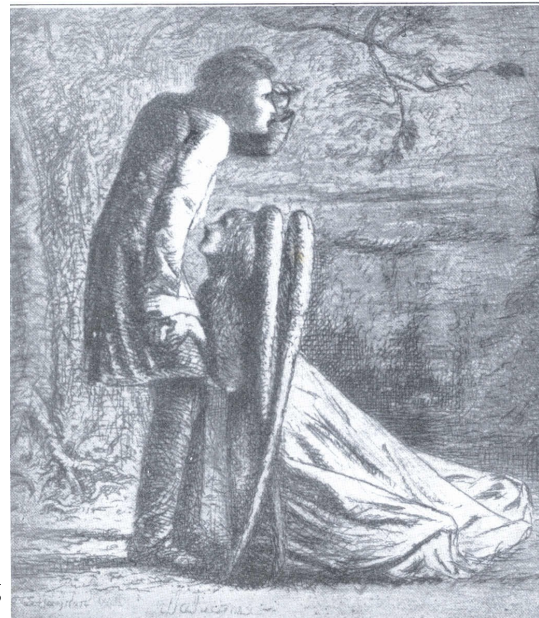
Above: A film still and movie posters from cinematic adaptations of Poe's works "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Raven," and "The Black Cat."

America's First Great Lyric Poet

“If the volume [of Poe’s poetry] of 1829 contained poetry unlike any that had as yet appeared in the United States, the volume of 1831 gave us in “To Helen,” “Israfel,” “The Doomed City,” “The Valley of Nis” and “Irene,” poetry of a kind that had not yet been written in the English language.”

~Arthur Hobson Quinn, *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography*

Poe’s America was still young and struggling to establish its literary identity. Readers across the Atlantic considered American literature inferior to their own. Then Europeans discovered Poe’s poetry. British Poet Laureate Alfred, Lord Tennyson called Poe “the most original American genius.” Oscar Wilde called him “marvelous lord of rhythmic expression,” and poets Dante Gabriel Rossetti and Algernon Swinburne were also among the British admirers of his work. In France the poets Charles Baudelaire and Stephan Mallarme revered Poe and his work. Poe wrote only about forty-five poems, but these include some of the best-known in the English language: “The Raven,” “Annabel Lee,” and “The Bells.”



Even though Poe made a living writing short stories and magazine articles he considered poetry his true calling. He described poetry as “the rhythmical creation of beauty.” He thought the sound of the poetry should do as much as the words to convey the meaning of the poem, and for him a poem had no other purpose than to be beautiful. Some of his poems sounded so much like music that he included words like “hymn,” “song,” or “ballad” in the titles. It is said that when he gave public readings he almost sang his poetry. To fully appreciate the musical quality of Poe’s poetry, one must read it aloud. The poetry lends itself so well to performance that after Poe’s death many composers, including Sergey Rachmaninoff and John Philip Sousa, adapted Poe’s poems to music.

Some of the devices Poe used to make his poetry sound more musical were:

Alliteration: use of a series of words starting with the same sound

Assonance: use of a series of words with the same vowel sound

Meter: the number of accented and unaccented syllables in each line of the same length

Onomatopoeia: words that sound like the sounds they represent

Refrain: a word or phrase repeated at the end of each stanza

Rhyme: the use of words that sound alike

Rhythm: the audible pattern created by alternating accented and unaccented syllables

Stanza: a grouping of verses in a poem or song

To learn more about this, see page 28.

As opposed to many other poets of his day like Ralph Waldo Emerson, who derided Poe as the “jingle man” for his musical poems, Poe did not feel that a poem should instruct or edify the reader. In his essay “The Philosophy of Composition,” Poe wrote that he began each poem by considering the emotion “effect” or mood he wished to evoke with the poem. After determining the proper mood, Poe chose words, rhymes, and rhythms he thought would best convey that effect.

America's First Great Literary Critic

Poe is considered America's first great literary critic. During his lifetime American authors were generally considered inferior to their British counterparts, and many American authors imitated British literature. As a critic, Poe frequently attacked authors he considered guilty of imitation, and he was often the first to accuse an author of plagiarism if their work too closely resembled that of another author. The popular American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was a favorite target. In a review of Longfellow's poetry, Poe wrote, "A few insist on his imagination—thus proving the extent of their own—and showing themselves to be utterly unread in the Old English and modern German literature of which, the author of "Outre Mer" is unquestionably indebted for whatever imagination or traces of invention his works may display."

Many critics in Poe's time knew the authors whose work they were reviewing, and, instead of writing honest critiques, these critics used their reviews to exaggerate the merits of a book in hopes of boosting sales. Poe called this practice "puffery." In a December 1835 *Southern Literary Messenger* review of the anonymously published novel *Norman Leslie*, Poe ridiculed the *New York Mirror's* excessively flattering review before revealing that the author worked at the *New York Mirror*.

Poe also thought that many American critics praised American novels written about American subjects merely because they had been written about those subjects. James Fenimore Cooper (right), author of such novels as *The Last of the Mohicans*, was one of these writers. In a November 1843 *Graham's Magazine* review of Cooper's *Wyandotte*, Poe wrote that "the interest, as usual, has no reference to plot, of which, indeed, our novelist seems altogether regardless, or incapable, but depends, first, on the nature of the theme...It will be seen that there is nothing original in this story."

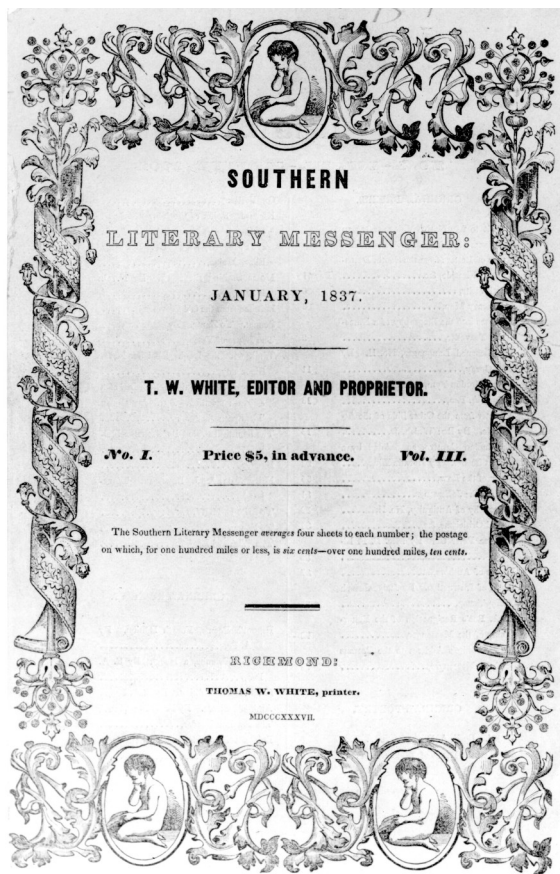
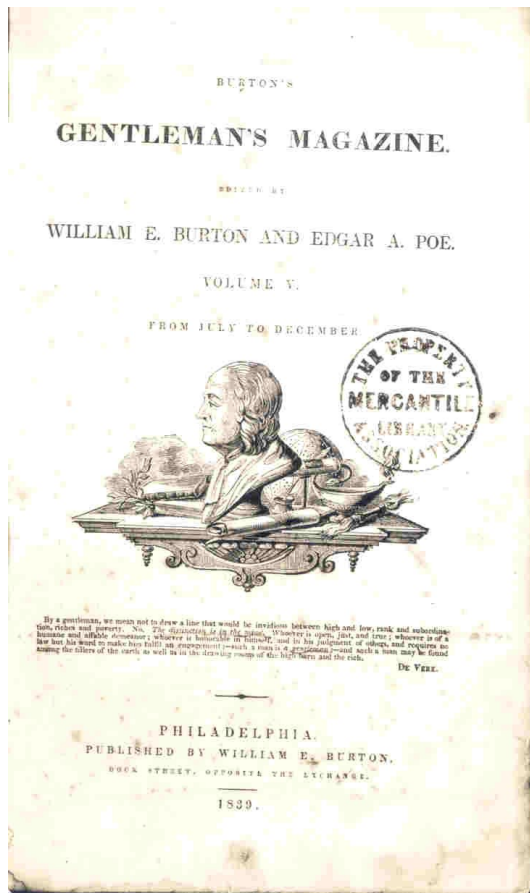
Poe's tendency to ridicule what he considered inferior writers offended many of the most important authors and editors of his day, including Rufus Griswold, who would later write Poe's biography. Poe's reviews were not, however, all negative. He called a young Nathaniel Hawthorne "a man of the truest genius" (Review of *Twice-Told Tales*, *Graham's Magazine*, May 1842), and he wrote that "it is scarcely possible to speak of ["The Old Curiosity Shop" by Charles Dickens] too well." Poe so admired the poetry of Elizabeth Barrett Browning that he dedicated his book *The Raven and Other Poems* to her.



J. Fenimore Cooper

When judging the quality of an author's work, Poe also explained his definition of good writing. In his May 1842 review of Hawthorne, Poe defined the criteria by which he reviewed a short story. He said such a work should be original and should have an emotional impact on the reader. Poe thought that the entire story should be composed with that emotional impact in mind. He wrote

that when a great writer composes a tale “he has not fashioned his thoughts to to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or singular effect to be wrought out, he then invents such incidents—he then combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect.” in other words, Poe believes a great writer begins his story by determining how it will end and what emotional effect the end should have on the reader. Every event in a story should maintain the desired emotional effect, and all unnecessary details should be eliminated. For this reason he thought a short story or poem should be brief, “requiring from a half-hour to one or two hours in its perusal.” Poe considered a short story superior to a novel because “as it cannot be read in one sitting, it deprives itself, of course, of the immense force derivable from totality.” If one were to take breaks in the middle of reading, the emotional impact the story is intended to evoke would be diluted by all the distractions of the real world. With this review, Poe helped to define the modern short story for years to come.



Above: Burton's Gentlemen's Magazine and The Southern Literary Messenger, two of the magazines for which Poe worked.

Poe's Technique

Poe's Use of Literary Devices in a Short Story

(English SOL 7.4b, 7.5a,b, and c)

Even critics who object to Poe's subject matter tend to concede that Poe was a master craftsman. The theories he explained as a literary critic are put into practice in his short stories and poems. Poe's primary concern was "unity of effect," which means that every element of a story should help create a single emotional impact. Poe's 1846 tale "The Cask of Amontillado" is one of Poe's best known works. It is the story of a revenge-obsessed man Montressor who tricks his enemy Fortunato into following him into a catacomb in search of a pipe of Amontillado (a kind of sherry). Over the course of their journey, Montressor gradually reveals his plan to his victim, who is too drunk to notice. Finally, the murderer chains his victim to a wall and bricks him up alive in a compartment. In the following excerpt from the opening paragraphs of "The Cask of Amontillado," Poe quickly and effectively foreshadows the gruesome conclusion of the story with a minimum of unnecessary detail. Notice the ironic details possibly intended for humorous effect. For instance, even the victim's name Fortunato is ironic because he is, in fact, very unfortunate. At the time Poe wrote this story he was engaged in a literary feud with writer Thomas Dunn English, who Poe would eventually sue for libel.

From "The Cask of Amontillado"

The thousand injuries¹ of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge.² You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that gave utterance to a threat.³ At length I would be avenged; this was a point definitely settled --but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. 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.

He had a weak point --this Fortunato --although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine.⁴ Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity, to practice imposture upon the British and Austrian millionaires. In painting and gemmary, Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack, but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially; --I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival seasons, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him that I thought I should never have done wring-

1. Hyperbole: "the thousand injuries"

* Poe does not tell us exactly what Fortunato has done to deserve Montressor's wrath, but Poe deliberately exaggerates the number and severity of Fortunato's offenses only say that those offenses pale in comparison to the way in which Fortunato has most recently insulted Montressor.

2. Conflict: The narrator Montressor has been offended by Fortunato and must have his revenge. Montressor does not want to be caught or punished for what he will do, so he must conceive of a plan that will allow him to "punish with impunity." The first paragraph establishes the conflict.

3. Point of View: The story is told from first-person point of view who directly addresses a listener. Some critics believe the narrator is on his deathbed confessing to a priest.

4. Foreshadowing: Poe reveals that Fortunato has a weakness for wine, and this will play a major part in Montressor's plan.

ing his hand. I said to him --"My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to-day. But I have received a pipe of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts."

"How?" said he. "Amontillado, A pipe? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!"

"I have my doubts," I replied; "and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain."

"Amontillado!"

"I have my doubts."

"Amontillado!"

"And I must satisfy them."

"Amontillado!"

"As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchresi. If any one has a critical turn it is he. He will tell me --"

"Luchresi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry."

"And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own. "Come, let us go."

"Whither?"

"To your vaults."

"My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchresi--"

"I have no engagement; --come."

"My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with nitre."

"Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon. And as for Luchresi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado." Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm; and putting on a mask of black silk and drawing a roquelaire closely about my person ⁵, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo. ⁶

There were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry in honour of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

I took from their sconces two flambeaux, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. 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 upon the damp ground of the catacombs of the Montresors. ⁷

The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.

"The pipe," he said.

"It is farther on," said I; "but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls."

He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled the rheum of intoxication. ⁸

"Nitre?" he asked, at length.

"Nitre," I replied. "How long have you had that cough?" "Ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh! --ugh! ugh! ugh!" My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes. "It is nothing," he said, at last.

"Come," I said, with decision, "we will go back; your health is precious. ⁹

5. Setting: The story begins in a carnival. Montresor may have waited until carnival time to have an excuse to wear a mask in public so that no one would recognize him as he walked with his victim. He might have also waited until then to insure that his servants would all leave the house to attend the festivities so that he would have a private setting for his crime. Poe has set the story in an Italian city, mostly likely Venice, where such carnivals were common. He also chose a European locale because he needed a culture, unlike America, in which catacombs were common.

6. Irony: This term describes a contrast between the appearance of something and its reality. In this case, Fortunato thinks Montresor is trying to talk him out of trying the Amontillado, but the reader knows this is exactly what Montresor wants him to do.

7. Setting: Instead of going to a wine cellar, the murder takes his victim to a catacomb. Notice how Poe describes not only the appearance but the smell and the texture of the catacombs.

8. Metaphor: "two filmy orbs..." Poe uses this image to describe Fortunato's eyes in such a way that tells the reader how drunk Fortunato already is.

9. Irony: "Your health is precious." The murderer pretends to show concern for his victim's health.

How Poe used poetic techniques to convey mood in his poetry: (English SOL 7.5c and d)

In his essay "The Philosophy of Composition" Poe explained that he was attempting to create a melancholy mood with his poem "The Raven." He believed the long "o" sound in the word "nevermore" had a very sad sound, so he repeated that sound at the end of each stanza. Poe also noted that the saddest subject in the world was the death of a beautiful young woman, so he chose that as the subject of his poem. He then concluded that the narrator of the poem should be her lover, the one he believed would be most deeply affected by her death. Throughout the poem Poe uses imagery that conveys a sense of sorrow over the death of the narrator's lover Lenore. For example, he describes the dark night outside his room as a "Plutonian shore," making an allusion to god of the underworld Pluto. Poe also devoted a great deal of attention to the lyrical qualities of his poetry in order to convey a sense of beauty, the contemplation of which, he believed, "invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears."

From "The Raven"

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,¹
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,³
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.³
"Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door-
Only this, and nothing more."⁵

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow;- vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow- sorrow for the lost Lenore-
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore-
Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain⁶
Thrilled me- filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;⁷
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating,
"Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door-
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;-
This it is, and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,⁸
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you"- here I opened wide the door;-
Darkness there, and nothing more.

1. Rhyme: "...dreary....weary."

2. Alliteration:
"...nodded, nearly napping..."

3. Onomatopoeia:
"tapping"

4. Repetition: "...rapping, rapping..."

5. Stanza: "Once...more." *This selection includes three stanzas from the poem. Each stanza ends with a word that rhymes with "nevermore."

6. Personification:
"...sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain..." *The rustling of the curtains sounds sad as if the curtains themselves share the misery of the narrator. Later in the poem a raven will be given human attributes.

7. Assonance:
"...terrors never felt before..."

8. Figurative Language: "...my soul grew stronger..." *It means he overcame his fear.

Meter: octameter acatalectic, alternating with heptameter catalectic repeated in the refrain of the fifth verse, and terminating with tetrameter catalectic (a long syllable followed by a short one, the first line consisting of sixteen syllables, the second line of fifteen, the third of sixteen, the fourth of fifteen, the fifth of sixteen, and the sixth of seven).

Suggested Reading

(* Indicates the most important sources of information.)

I. Biography

- Mary Phillips. Edgar Allan Poe, The Man. Chicago: John Winston and Co., 1926. (This book contains several inaccuracies but has many excellent illustrations.)
- *Arthur Hobson Quinn. Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography. 1941; rpt. New York. Cooper Square Publishers, 1969; rpt. Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press, 1998. (This is the best researched and least biased Poe biography to date)
- Kenneth Silverman. Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-Ending Remembrance. New York, Harper Collins, 1991. (This book is more readable than Quinn's but is very negatively biased against Poe.)
- Dawn B. Sova. Edgar Allan Poe: A to Z. New York, Checkmark Books, 2001. (Though useful for general information, this book contains too many blatant inaccuracies to allow us to recommend it.)
- *Dwight Thomas and David K. Jackson. The Poe Log. A Documentary Life of Edgar Allan Poe. 1809-1849. New York: G.K. Hall and Co., 1987; rpt. New York. Simon and Schuster Macmillan. 1995. (This day-by-day account of Poe's life directly quotes many contemporary documents. It is a good source of documentation on Poe's life but is not very readable.)

II. Works*Edgar Allan Poe. Essays and Reviews. New York: Library of America, 1984.

- *Edgar Allan Poe. Poetry and Tales. New York: Library of America, 1984.
- *Edgar Allan Poe. The Unabridged Edgar Allan Poe. Philadelphia, PA: Running Press Book Publishers, 1983. (This contains the earliest published versions of Poe's works. The later versions are the ones normally contained in anthologies.)
- *Thomas O. Mabbott, ed. The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe. Volume 1. Poems. Cambridge, Belknap Press, 1969. (Each poem is introduced with excellent documentation about possible inspirations, the publishing history, and the changes Poe made to it over time.)
- *Thomas O. Mabbott, ed. The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe- Tales and Sketches 1831- 1842. Cambridge, Belknap Press, 1978.
- *Thomas O. Mabbott, ed. The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe-Tales and Sketches 1843- 1849. Cambridge, Belknap Press, 1978.
- *John Ward Ostrom, ed. The Letters of Edgar Allan Poe. New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1966. 2 vols.
- *Stephen Peithman. The Annotated Tales of Edgar Allan Poe. New York: Doubleday, 1980. (Each tale contains extensive annotations including definitions of words and explanations of certain allusions.)
- Burton R. Pollin, ed. Collected Writings of Edgar Allan Poe. Boston: Twayne. v.1 The Imaginary Voyages..., v. 2 The Brevities..., v. 3 The Broadway Journal pt. 1 and pt. 2, v. 4 The Southern Literary Messenger. 1981-v.2-4, New York Gordian Press, 1986-1997.
- Mary Newton Stanard, ed. Edgar Allan Poe Letters Till Now Unpublished in the Valentine Museum, Richmond, Virginia. Philadelphia: J.B. Lippencott Co., 1925. (This is a collection of Poe's early letters to John Allan. It reveals many details about their difficult relationship.)

III. Works Illustrations

- *Roscoe Brown Fisher. The James Carling Illustrations of The Raven. Charlotte: Delmar Publishers, 1982.
- *Edgar Allan Poe. The Raven. Illustrated by Gustav Dore. New York: Harper and Brother, 1884.
- *Burton R. Pollin. Images of Poe's Works. A Comprehensive Catalogue of Illustrations. New York. Greenwood Press, 1989.

IV. Miscellaneous

- *Agnes M. Bondurant. Poe's Richmond. Richmond: Garrett and Massie, 1941. rpt. Richmond: Poe Associates, 1978; rpt. Richmond: Edgar Allan Poe Museum, 1999. (This book provides a good deal of useful information about Richmond as Poe would have known it.)
- Lasley Dameron and Irby B. Cauthen Jr. Edgar Allan Poe, A Bibliography of Criticism 1827-1967. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1974.
- *Michael J. Deas. The Portraits and Daguerreotypes of Edgar Allan Poe. Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1989.
- Robert D. Jacobs. Poe, Journalist and Critic. Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1969.
- *David K. Jackson. Poe and the Southern Literary Messenger. Richmond: The Dietz Press Co., 1934.
- Richard Kopley, ed. Poe's Pym: Critical Explorations. Durham: Duke University Press, 1992.
- Richard Kopley. Edgar Allan Poe and The Philadelphia Saturday News. Baltimore, MD: Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore...1991.
- *Burton R. Pollin. Poe Creator of Words. Bronxville, NY: Rev. ed. Nicholas T. Smith, 1980.

V. Web Resources

- Poe Museum in Richmond, VA: www.poemuseum.org
- Poe Historic Site in Philadelphia: parec.com/natnl_parks
- Poe House and Society in Baltimore, MD: www.eapoe.org
- Poe Studies Association: www.lv.psu.edu/PSA
- Other sites of interest:
- www.poedecoder.com
- www.poedecoder.com/PreciselyPoe
- www.astin-poe/links.html



Classroom Activities

“The Tell-Tale Heart” Lesson Plan

Virginia Standards of Learning Covered:

English SOL 6.1a, c, d; 6.2 a, c, d, e; 7.1 a, b, c, d, 7.5 e, f; 8.1 a, b, c, 8.2d, f)

Purpose:

Students will use a literary source in support of a planned oral presentation. Afterwards the students will judge the persuasiveness of the presentations.

Materials:

Text of Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart,” audio recording of “The Tell-Tale Heart,” device to play audio recordings for the class

Procedure:

The class will be divided into two groups for a mock trial. The groups will be the prosecution, the defense, and the jury. The teacher will serve as the judge. The prosecution will argue that the narrator of “The Tell-Tale Heart” is guilty of first-degree murder, and the defense will argue that the narrator is not guilty by reason of insanity. Based on the testimony (a reading of the story) and the arguments made by the defense and the prosecution, the jury will determine whether or not the murderer was insane. Either “The Black Cat” or “The Imp of the Perverse” could be substituted for “The Tell-Tale Heart.”

Day 1: Class will be divided into two groups. The entire class will read “The Tell-Tale Heart.”

Day 2: The prosecution and the defense teams will compose their arguments to be delivered by one member of each team. Either team may appoint members to be “Expert Witnesses” to testify in support of their position. The “Expert Witness” will need to conduct research in order to present an educated opinion. The teams should research online to determine the legal definition of insanity and whether or not the murderer fits that description. Using the text as their evidence, the teams will decide whether or not the murderer understood the consequences of his actions.

Day 3: A recording of “The Tell-Tale Heart” will be played for the class. Afterwards, the defense and prosecution will present their arguments to the jury. After class, the students will compose brief essays explaining which team made a more convincing argument and why.

Day 4: The teacher will collect the essays have the class vote on whether or not the murderer is insane.

Poe Biography Lesson Plan

Virginia Standards of Learning Covered

English 7.6b,c,e,f,g; 7.7a,b,c,d; 8.6b,d,e,f,g,h,i

Purpose:

Students will analyze texts to distinguish between fact and opinion. Many of the essays and biographies about Edgar Allan Poe are strongly biased for or against Poe. Most of the people who knew Poe either loved or hated the author, and, after Poe's death, either tried to defend or attack his character. By studying three essays written about Poe by people who knew him, the students will learn how each essay attempts to persuade the reader to think a certain way about Poe.

Materials:

Texts of three 1849 articles written about Poe (included in this packet) and either *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography* by Arthur Hobson Quinn or *The Poe Log*, edited by Dwight Thomas and David K. Jackson (Edgar Allan Poe: Mournful and Neverending Remembrance by Kenneth Silverman is not recommended because it is heavily biased against its subject, and neither *Poe* by Ken Hutchinson nor *Edgar Allan Poe: A to Z* by Dawn Sova is recommended because they contain important factual errors.)

Procedure:

Pre-writing:

Teacher will distribute copies of the three Poe essays to the class. Each student will compile two lists for each essay. One list will contain facts given in the essay, and the other list will contain opinions presented in that essay. After compiling lists for each essay, the students will use the reliable biographies listed above to check the accuracy of the statements that have been listed as facts in the essays. Each student will compare and contrast the lists he or she has compiled. The student should be able to answer the following questions:

What is the main idea of each essay?

Which essays were the most or the least accurate?

Did each author think of Poe as basically a good or bad person?

What facts or opinions did each author use to convince us that Poe was a good or bad person?

Writing:

Each student will write an essay comparing and contrasting the three essays. The essays should tell what message each writer was trying to convey about Poe and how the authors tried to convey that message. Based on the three essays, the student should be able to tell which author presents the most accurate picture of Poe's life and character.

Additional Activities:

After completing the initial assignment, the class may watch the A&E Biography of Edgar Allan Poe or some other widely-available biographical video of the author. During the video, the students will once again compile lists of facts and opinions in order to determine how accurate the video is and what message the filmmaker is trying to convey about Poe.

DEATH OF EDGAR A. POE

By Rufus W. Griswold

EDGAR ALLAN POE is dead. He died in Baltimore the day before yesterday. This announcement will startle many, but few will be grieved by it. The poet was well known, personally or by reputation, in all this country; he had readers in England, and in several of the states of Continental Europe; but he had few or no friends; and the regrets for his death will be suggested principally by the consideration that in him literary art has lost one of its most brilliant but erratic stars.

The family of Mr. Poe — we learn from Griswold's "Poets and Poetry of America," from which a considerable portion of the facts in this notice are derived — was one of the oldest and most respectable in Baltimore. David Poe, his paternal grandfather, was a Quartermaster-General in the Maryland line during the Revolution, and the intimate friend of Lafayette, who, during his last visit to the United States, called personally upon the General's widow, and tendered her acknowledgments for the services rendered to him by her husband. His great-grandfather, John Poe, married in England, Jane, a daughter of Admiral James McBride, noted in British naval history, and claiming kindred with some of the most illustrious English families. His father and mother, — both of whom were in some way connected with the theater, and lived as precariously as their more gifted and more eminent son — died within a few weeks of each other, of consumption, leaving him an orphan, at two years of age. Mr. John Allan, a wealthy gentleman of Richmond, Virginia, took a fancy to him, and persuaded his grandfather to suffer him to adopt him. He was brought up in Mr. Allan's family; and as that gentleman had no other children, he was regarded as his son and heir. In 1816 he accompanied Mr. and Mrs. Allen [*sic*] to Great Britain, visited every portion of it, and afterward passed four or five years in a school kept at Stoke Newington, near London, by Rev. Dr. Bransby. He returned to America in 1822, and in 1825 went to the Jefferson University, at Charlottesville, in Virginia, where he led a very dissipated life, the manners of the college being at that time extremely dissolute. He took the first honors, however, and went home greatly in debt. Mr. Allan refused to pay some of his debts of *honor*, and he hastily quitted the country on a Quixotic expedition to join the Greeks, then struggling for liberty. He did not reach his original destination, however, but made his way to St. Petersburg, in Russia, when he became involved in difficulties, from which he was extricated by the late Mr. Henry Middleton, the American Minister at that Capital. He returned home in 1829, and immediately afterward entered the Military Academy at West-Point. In about eighteen months from that time, Mr. Allan, who had lost his first wife while Mr. Poe was in Russia, married again. He was sixty-five years of age, and the lady was young; Poe quarreled with her, and the veteran husband, taking the part of his wife, addressed him an angry letter, which was answered in the same spirit. He died soon after, leaving an infant son the heir to his property, and bequeathed Poe nothing.

The army, in the opinion of the young cadet, was not a place for a poor man; so he left West-Point abruptly, and determined to maintain himself by authorship. He printed, in 1827,

a small volume of poems, most of which were written in early youth. Some of these poems are quoted in a review by Margaret Fuller, in *The Tribune* in 1846, and are justly regarded as among the most wonderful exhibitions of the precocious development of genius. They illustrated the character of his abilities, and justified his anticipations of success. For a considerable time, however, though he wrote readily and brilliantly, his contributions to the journals attracted little attention, and his hopes of gaining a livelihood by the profession of literature were nearly ended at length in sickness, poverty and despair. But in 1831, the proprietor of a weekly gazette, in Baltimore, offered two premiums, one for the best story in prose, and the other for the best poem. — In due time Poe sent in two articles, and he waited anxiously for the decision. One of the Committee was the accomplished author of “Horseshoe Robinson,” John P. Kennedy, and his associates were scarcely less eminent than he for wit and critical sagacity. Such matters are usually disposed of in a very off hand way: Committees to award literary prizes drink to the payer’s health, in good wines, over the unexamined MSS, which they submit to the discretion of publishers, with permission to use their names in such a way as to promote the publisher’s advantage[.] So it would have been in this case, but that one of the Committee, taking up a little book in such exquisite calligraphy as to seem like one of the finest issues of the press of Putnam, was tempted to read several pages, and being interested, he summoned the attention of the company to the half-dozen compositions in the volume. It was unanimously decided that the prizes should be paid to the first of geniuses who had written legibly. Not another MS. was unfolded. Immediately the ‘confidential envelop’ was opened, and the successful competitor was found to bear the scarcely known name of Poe.

The next day the publisher called to see Mr. Kennedy, and gave him an account of the author that excited his curiosity and sympathy, and caused him to request that he should be brought to his office. Accordingly he was introduced: the prize money had not yet been paid, and he was in the costume in which he had answered the advertisement of his good fortune. Thin, and pale even to ghastliness, his whole appearance indicated sickness and the utmost destitution. A tattered frock-coat concealed the absence of a shirt, and the ruins of boots disclosed more than the want of stockings[.] But the eyes of the young man were luminous with intelligence and feeling, and his voice, and conversation, and manners, all won upon the lawyer’s regard. Poe told his history, and his ambition, and it was determined that he should not want means for a suitable appearance in society, nor opportunity for a just display of his abilities in literature. Mr. Kennedy accompanied him to a clothing store, and purchased for him a respectable suit, with changes of linen, and sent him to a bath, from which he returned with the suddenly regained bearing of a gentleman.

The late Mr. Thomas W. White had then recently established *The Southern Literary Messenger*, at Richmond, and upon the warm recommendation of Mr. Kennedy, Poe was engaged, at a small salary — we believe of \$500 a year — to be its editor. He entered upon his duties with letters full of expressions of the warmest gratitude to his friends in Baltimore, who in five or six weeks were astonished to learn that with characteristic recklessness of consequences, he was hurriedly married to a girl as poor as himself. Poe continued in this situation for about a year and a half, in which he wrote many brilliant articles, and raised the *Messenger* to the first rank of literary periodicals.

He next moved to Philadelphia, to assist William E. Burton in the editorship of the *Gentleman's Magazine*, a miscellany that in 1840 was merged in *Graham's Magazine*, of which Poe became one of the principal writers, particularly in criticism, in which his papers attracted much attention, by their careful and skillful analysis, and generally caustic severity. At this period, however, he appeared to have been more ambitious of securing distinction in romantic fiction, and a collection of his compositions in this department, published in 1841, under the title of "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque," established his reputation for ingenuity, imagination and extraordinary power in tragical narration.

Near the end of 1844 Poe removed to New-York, where he conducted for several months a literary miscellany called "The Broadway Journal." In 1845 he published a volume of "Tales" in Wiley and Putnam's Library of American Books, and in the same series a collection of his poems. Besides these volumes he was the author of "Arthur Gordon Pym," a romance: "A New Theory of Versification;" "Eureka," an essay on the spiritual and material universe: a work which he wished to have "judged as a poem;" and several extended series of papers in the periodicals, the most noticeable of which are "Marginalia", embracing opinions of books and authors; "Secret Writing," "Autography," and "Sketches of the Literati of New-York."

His wife died in 1847, at Fordham, near this City, and some of our readers will remember the paragraphs in the papers of the time, upon his destitute condition. His wants were supplied by the liberality of a few individuals. We remember that Col. Webb collected in a few moments fifty or sixty dollars for him at the Union Club; Mr. Lewis, of Brooklyn, sent a similar sum from one of the Courts, in which he was engaged when he saw the statement of the poet's poverty; and others illustrated in the same manner the effect of such an appeal to the popular heart.

Since that time Mr. Poe has lived quietly, and with an income from his literary labors sufficient for his support. A few weeks ago he proceeded to Richmond[[,]] in Virginia, where he lectured upon the poetical character, &c.; and it was understood by some of his correspondents here that he was this week to be married, most advantageously, to a lady of that city: a widow, to whom he had been previously engaged while a student in the University.

The character of Mr. Poe we cannot attempt to describe in this very hastily written article. We can but allude to some of its more striking phases.

His conversation was at times almost supra-mortal in its eloquence. His voice was modulated with astonishing skill, and his large and variably expressive eyes looked repose *[[sic]]* or shot fiery tumult into theirs who listened, while his own face glowed, or was changeless in pallor, as his imagination quickened his blood or drew it back frozen to his heart. His imagery was from the worlds which no mortal can see but with the vision of genius. Suddenly starting from a proposition exactly and sharply defined in terms of utmost simplicity and clearness, he rejected the forms of customary logic, and by a crystalline process of accretion, built up his ocular demonstrations in forms of gloomiest and ghastliest grandeur, or in those of the most airy and delicious beauty — so minutely, and distinctly, yet so rapidly, that the attention which was yielded to him was chained till it stood among his wonderful creations

— till he himself dissolved the spell, and brought his hearers back to common and base existence, by vulgar fancies or by exhibitions of the ignoblest passion.

He was at all times a dreamer — dwelling in ideal realms — in heaven or hell — peopled with creatures and the accidents of his brain. He walked the streets, in madness or melancholy, with lips moving in indistinct curses, or with eyes upturned in passionate prayers, (never for himself, for he felt, or professed to feel, that he was already damned), but for their happiness who at the moment were objects of his idolatry — or, with his glances introverted to a heart gnawed with anguish, and with a face shrouded in gloom, he would brave the wildest storms; and all night, with drenched garments and arms wildly beating the winds and rains, he would speak as if to spirits that at such times only could be evoked by him from the Aidenn close by whose portals his disturbed soul sought to forget the ills to which his constitution subjugated him — close by that Aidenn where were those he loved — the Aidenn which he might never see, but in fitful glimpses, as its gates opened to receive the less fiery and more happy natures whose destiny to sin did not involve the doom of death.

He seemed, except when some fitful pursuit subjected his will and engrossed his faculties, always to bear the memory of some controlling sorrow. The remarkable poem of *The Raven* was probably much more nearly than has been supposed, even by those who were very intimate with him, a reflexion and an echo of his own history. He was that bird's

—Unhappy master,
Whom unmerciful disaster
Followed fast and followed faster,
Till his songs the burden bore —
Till the dirges of his hope, the
Melancholy burden bore
Of "Nevermore," of "Nevermore."

Every genuine author in a greater or less degree leaves in his works, whatever their design, traces of his personal character: elements of his immortal being, in which the individual survives the person. While we read the pages of the *Fall of the House of Usher*, or of *Mesmeric Revelations*, we see in the solemn and stately gloom which invests one, and in the subtle metaphysical analysis of both, indications of the idiosyncrasies, — of what was most remarkable and peculiar — in the author's intellectual nature. But we see here only the better phases of this nature, only the symbols of his juster action, for his harsh experience had deprived him of all faith in man or woman. He had made up his mind upon the numberless complexities of the social world, and the whole system with him was an imposture. This conviction gave a direction to his shrewd and naturally unamiable character. Still, though he regarded society as composed altogether of villains, the sharpness of his intellect was not of that kind which enabled him to cope with villainy, while it continually caused him by overshoots to fail of the success of honesty. He was in many respects like Francis Vivian in Bulwer's novel of "The Caxtons." "Passion, in him, comprehended many of the worst emotions which militate against human happiness. You could not contradict him, but you raised quick choler; you could not speak of wealth, but his cheek paled with gnawing envy. The astonishing natural advantages of this poor boy — his beauty, his readiness, the daring spirit that breathed around him like a fiery atmosphere — had raised his constitutional self-confidence

into an arrogance that turned his very claims to admiration into prejudice against him. Irascible, envious — bad enough, but not the worst, for these salient angles were all varnished over with a cold repellent cynicism, his passions vented themselves in sneers. There seemed to him no moral susceptibility; and, what was more remarkable in a proud nature, little or nothing of the true point of honor. He had, to a morbid excess, that desire to rise which is vulgarly called ambition, but no wish for the esteem or love of his species; only the hard wish to succeed — not shine, not serve — succeed, that he might have the right to despise a world which galled his self conceit.”

We have suggested the influence of his aims and vicissitudes upon his literature. It was more conspicuous in his later than his earlier writing. Nearly all that he wrote in the last two or three years — including much of his best poetry — was in some sense biographical; in draperies of his imagination, those who had taken the trouble to trace his steps, could perceive, but slightly concealed, the figure of himself.

There are perhaps some of our readers who will understand the allusions of the following beautiful poem. Mr. Poe presented it in MS. to the writer of these paragraphs, just before he left New-York recently, remarking that it was the last thing he had written:

ANNABEL LEE.

It was many and many a year ago,
In a kingdom by the sea
That a maiden there lived whom you may know
By the name of ANNABEL LEE;
And this maiden she lived with no other thought
Than to love and be loved by me.

I was a child and *she* was a child,
In this kingdom by the sea.
But we loved with a love that was more than love —
I and my ANNABEL LEE —
With a love that the winged seraphs of heaven
Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,
In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
My beautiful ANNABEL LEE;
So that her highborn kinsmen came
And bore her away from me,
To shut her up in a sepulchre
In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in heaven,
Went envying her and me —
Yes! — that was the reason (as all men know,

In this kingdom by the sea)
That the wind came out of the cloud by night,
Chilling and killing my ANNABEL LEE.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love
Of those who were older than we —
Of many far wiser than we —
And neither the angels in heaven above,
Nor the demons down under the sea,
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful ANNABEL LEE:

For the moon never beams, without bringing me dreams
Of the beautiful ANNABEL LEE;
And the stars never rise but I feel the bright eyes
Of the beautiful ANNABEL LEE,
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling — my darling — my life and my bride,
In her sepulchre there by the sea —
In her tomb by the sounding sea.

We must omit any particular criticism of Mr. Poe's works. As a writer of tales it will be admitted generally, that he was scarcely surpassed in ingenuity of construction or effective painting. As a critic, he was more remarkable as a dissector of sentences than as a commentator upon ideas: he was little better than a carping grammarian. As a poet, he will retain a most honorable rank. Of his "Raven," Mr. Willis observes, that in his opinion "it is the most effective single example of fugitive poetry ever published in this country, and is unsurpassed in English poetry for subtle conception, masterly ingenuity of versification, and consistent sustaining of imaginative lift." In poetry, as in prose, he was most successful in the metaphysical treatment of the passions. His poems are constructed with wonderful ingenuity, and finished with consummate art. They illustrate a morbid sensitiveness of feeling, a shadowy and gloomy imagination, and a taste almost faultless in the apprehension of that sort of beauty most agreeable to his temper.

We have not learned of the circumstance of his death. It was sudden, and from the fact that it occurred in Baltimore, it is to be presumed that he was on his return to New-York.

"After life's fitful fever he sleeps well."

LUDWIG.

[Originally Published October 9, 1849 in the *New-York Daily Tribune*]

DEATH OF EDGAR POE.

By Nathaniel Parker Willis

THE ancient fable of two antagonistic spirits imprisoned in one body, equally powerful and having the complete mastery by turns — of one man, that is to say, inhabited by both a devil and an angel — seems to have been realized, if all we hear is true, in the character of the extraordinary man whose name we have written above. Our own impression of the nature of Edgar A. Poe differs in some important degree, however, from that which has been generally conveyed in the notices of his death. Let us, before telling what we personally know of him, copy a graphic and highly finished portraiture, from the pen of Dr. Rufus W. Griswold, which appeared in a recent number of the *Tribune*: —

“EDGAR ALLAN POE is dead. He died in Baltimore on Sunday, October 7th. This announcement will startle many, but few will be grieved by it. The poet was well known, personally or by reputation, in all this country; he had readers in England, and in several of the states of Continental Europe; but he had few or no friends; and the regrets for his death will be suggested principally by the consideration that in him literary art has lost one of its most brilliant but erratic stars.”

* * * * *

“His conversation was at times almost supra-mortal in its eloquence. His voice was modulated with astonishing skill, and his large and variably expressive eyes looked repose or shot fiery tumult into theirs who listened, while his own face glowed, or was changeless in pallor, as his imagination quickened his blood or drew it back frozen to his heart. His imagery was from the worlds which no mortal can see but with the vision of genius. Suddenly starting from a proposition, exactly and sharply defined, in terms of utmost simplicity and clearness, he rejected the forms of customary logic, and by a crystalline process of accretion, built up his ocular demonstrations in forms of gloomiest and ghastliest grandeur, or in those of the most airy and delicious beauty — so minutely and distinctly, yet so rapidly, that the attention which was yielded to him was chained till it stood among his wonderful creations — till he himself dissolved the spell, and brought his hearers back to common and base existence, by vulgar fancies or exhibitions of the ignoblest passion.

“He was at all times a dreamer — dwelling in ideal realms — in heaven or hell — peopled with creatures and the accidents of his brain. He walked the streets, in madness or melancholy, with lips moving in indistinct curses, or with eyes upturned in passionate prayer, (never for himself, for he felt, or professed to feel, that he was already damned, but) [[. . . damned), but]] for their happiness who at the moment were objects of his idolatry; — or, with his glances introverted to a heart gnawed with anguish, and with a face shrouded in gloom, he would brave the wildest storms; and all night, with drenched garments and arms wildly beating the winds and rains, would speak as if to spirits that at such times only could be evoked by him from the Aidenn close by whose portals his disturbed soul sought to forget the ills to which his constitution subjugated him — close by that Aidenn where were those he loved — the Aidenn which he might never see, but in fitful glimpses, as its gates opened to receive the less fiery and more happy natures whose destiny to sin did not involve the doom of death.

“He seemed, except when some fitful pursuit subjugated his will and engrossed his faculties, always to bear the memory of some controlling sorrow. The remarkable poem of *The Raven* was probably much more nearly than has been supposed, even by those who were very intimate with him, a reflexion and an echo of his own

history. *He* was that bird's

‘——unhappy master,
whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster,
till his songs the burden bore —
Till the dirges of his hope, the
Melancholy burden bore
Of ‘Never — nevermore.’

“Every genuine author in a greater or less degree leaves in his works, whatever their design, traces of his personal character: elements of his immortal being, in which the individual survives the person. While we read the pages of the *Fall of the House of Usher*, or of *Mesmeric Revelations*, we see in the solemn and stately gloom which invests one, and in the subtle metaphysical analysis of both, indications of the idiosyncrasies — of what was most remarkable and peculiar — in the author's intellectual nature. But we see here only the better phases of this nature, only the symbols of his juster action, for his harsh experience had deprived him of all faith, in man or woman. He had made up his mind upon the numberless complexities of the social world, and the whole system with him was an imposture. This conviction gave a direction to his shrewd and naturally unamiable character. Still, though he regarded society as composed altogether of villains, the sharpness of his intellect was not of that kind which enabled him to cope with villainy, while it continually caused him by overshoots to fail of the success of honesty. He was in many respects like Francis Vivian in Bulwer's novel of ‘The Caxtons.’ ‘Passion, in him, comprehended many of the worst emotions which militate against human happiness. You could not contradict him, but you raised quick choler; you could not speak of wealth, but his cheek paled with gnawing envy. The astonishing natural advantages of this poor boy — his beauty, his readiness, the daring spirit that breathed around him like a fiery atmosphere — had raised his constitutional self-confidence into an arrogance that turned his very claims to admiration into prejudice against him. Irascible, envious — bad enough, but not the worst, for these salient angles were all varnished over with a cold repellent cynicism, his passions vented themselves in sneers. There seemed to him no moral susceptibility; and, what was more remarkable in a proud nature, little or nothing of the true point of honor. He had, to a morbid excess, that desire to rise which is vulgarly called ambition, but no wish for the esteem or the love of his species; only the hard wish to succeed — not shine, not serve — succeed, that he might have the right to despise a world which galled his self conceit.

“We have suggested the influence of his aims and vicissitudes upon his literature. It was more conspicuous in his later than his earlier writings. Nearly all that he wrote in the last two or three years — including much of his best poetry — was in some sense biographical; in draperies of his imagination, those who had taken the trouble to trace his steps, could perceive, but slightly concealed, the figure of himself.”

“There are, perhaps, some of our readers who will understand the allusions of the following beautiful poem. Mr. Poe presented it in MS. to the writer of these paragraphs, just before he left New-York, recently, remarking that it was the last thing he had written:

ANNABEL LEE.

"It was many and many a year ago,
 In a kingdom by the sea
 That a maiden there lived whom you may know
 By the name of Annabel Lee;
 And this maiden she lived with no other thought
 Than to love and be loved by me.
 "I was a child and *she* was a child,
 In this kingdom by the sea.
 But we loved with a love that was more than love —
 I and my Annabel Lee —
 With a love that the winged seraphs of heaven
 Coveted her and me.
 "And this was the reason that, long ago,
 In this kingdom by the sea,
 A wind blew out of a cloud, chilling
 My beautiful Annabel Lee;
 So that her highborn kinsmen came
 And bore her away from me,
 To shut her up in a sepulchre
 In this kingdom by the sea.
 "The angels, not half so happy in heaven,
 Went envying her and me —
 Yes! — that was the reason (as all men know,
 In this kingdom by the sea)
 That the wind came out of the cloud by night,
 Chilling and killing my Annabel Lee.
 "But our love it was stronger by far than the love
 Of those who were older than we —
 Of many far wiser than we —
 And neither the angels in heaven above,
 Nor the demons down under the sea,
 Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
 Of the beautiful Annabel Lee:
 "For the moon never beams, without bringing me dreams
 Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
 And the stars never rise but I feel the bright eyes
 Of the beautiful Annabel Lee,
 And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
 Of my darling — my darling — my life and my bride,
 In her sepulchre there by the sea —
 In her tomb by the sounding sea."

Apropos of the disparaging portion of the above well-written sketch, let us truthfully say:

Some four or five years since, when editing a daily paper in this city, Mr. Poe was employed by us, for several months, as critic and sub-editor. This was our first personal acquaintance with him. He resided with his wife and mother at Fordham, a few miles out of town, but was at his desk in the office, from nine in the morning till the evening paper went to press. With the highest admiration for his genius, and a willingness to let it atone for more than ordinary irregularity, we were led by common report to expect a very capricious attention to his duties, and occasionally a scene of violence and difficulty. Time went on, how-

ever, and he was invariably punctual and industrious. With his pale, beautiful and intellectual face, as a reminder of what genius was in him, it was impossible, of course, not to treat him always with deferential courtesy, and, to our occasional request that he would not probe too deep in a criticism, or that he would erase a passage colored too highly with his resentments against society and mankind, he readily and courteously assented — far more yielding than most men, we thought, on points so excusably sensitive. With a prospect of taking the lead in another periodical, he, at last, voluntarily gave up his employment with us, and, through all this considerable period we had seen but one presentment of the man — a quiet, patient, industrious, and most gentlemanly person, commanding the utmost respect and good feeling by his unvarying deportment and ability.

Residing as he did in the country, we never met Mr. Poe in hours of leisure; but he frequently called on us afterwards at our place of business, and we met him often in the street — invariably the same sad-mannered, winning and refined gentleman, such as we had always known him. It was by rumor only, up to the day of his death, that we knew of any other development of manner or character. We heard, from one who knew him well, (what should be stated in all mention of his lamentable irregularities,) that, with a *single glass* of wine, his whole nature was reversed, the demon became uppermost, and, though none of the usual signs of intoxication were visible, his *will* was palpably insane. Possessing his reasoning faculties in excited activity, at such times, and seeking his acquaintances with his wonted look and memory, he easily seemed personating only another phase of his natural character, and was accused, accordingly, of insulting arrogance and bad-heartedness. In this reversed character, we repeat, it was never our chance to see him. We know it from hearsay, and we mention it in connection with this sad infirmity of physical constitution; which puts it upon very nearly the ground of a temporary and almost irresponsible insanity.

The arrogance, vanity and depravity of heart, of which Mr. Poe was generally accused, seem, to us, referable altogether to this reversed phase of his character. Under that degree of intoxication which only acted upon him by demonizing his sense of truth and right, he doubtless said and did much that was wholly irreconcilable with his better nature; but, when himself, and as we knew him only, his modesty and unaffected humility, as to his own deservings, were a constant charm to his character. His letters (of which the constant application for autographs has taken from us, we are sorry to confess, the greater portion) exhibited this quality very strongly. In one of the carelessly written notes of which we chance still to retain possession, for instance, he speaks of “The Raven” — that extraordinary poem which electrified the world of imaginative readers, and has become the type of a school of poetry of its own — and, in evident earnest, attributes its success to the few words of commendation with which we had prefaced it in this paper. It will throw light on his sane character to give a literal copy of the note: —

“FORDHAM, April 20, 1849.

“*My dear Willis:* — The poem which I enclose, and which I am so vain as to hope you will like, in some respects, has been just published in a paper for which sheer necessity compels me to write, now and then. It pays well as times go — but unquestionably it ought to pay ten prices; for whatever I send it I feel I am consigning to the tomb of the Capulets. The verses accompanying this, may I beg you to take out of the tomb, and bring them to light in the Home Journal? If you can oblige me so far as to copy them, I do not think it will be necessary to say ‘From the ——’ — that would be too bad; — and, perhaps, ‘From a late — paper’ would

do.

I have not forgotten how a ‘good word in season’ from you made ‘The Raven,’ and made ‘Ulalume,’ (which, by-the-way, people have done me the honor of attributing to you) — therefore I would ask you, (if I dared,) to say something of these lines — if they please you. Truly yours ever,
EDGAR A. POE.”

In double proof of his earnest disposition to do the best for himself, and of the trustful and grateful nature which has been denied him — we give another of the only three of his notes which we chance to retain: —

“FORDHAM, January 22, 1848.

“*My dear Mr. Willis:* — I am about to make an effort at re-establishing myself in the literary world, and *feel* that I may depend upon your aid.

“My general aim is to start a Magazine, to be called “*The Stylus;*” but it would be useless to me, even when established, if not entirely out of the control of a publisher. I mean, therefore, to get up a Journal which shall be *my own*, at all points. With this end in view, I must get a list of, at least, five hundred subscribers to begin with: — nearly two hundred I have already. I propose, however, to go South and West, among my personal and literary friends — old college and West Point acquaintances — and see what I can do. In order to get the means of taking the first step, I propose to lecture at the Society Library, on Thursday, the 3d of February — and, that there may be no cause of *squabbling*, my subject shall *not be literary* at all. I have chosen a broad text — “The Universe.”

“Having thus given you *the facts* of the case, I leave all the rest to the suggestions of your own tact and generosity. Gratefully — *most gratefully* —

“Your friend always, EDGAR A. POE.

Brief and chance-taken as these letters are, we think they sufficiently prove the existence of the very qualities denied to Mr. Poe — humility, willingness to persevere, belief in another’s kindness, and capability of cordial and grateful friendship! Such he assuredly was *when sane*. Such only he has invariably seemed to us, in all we have happened personally to know of him, through a friendship of five or six years. And so much easier is it to believe what we have seen and known, than what we *hear of* only, that we remember him but with admiration and respect, — these descriptions of him, when morally insane, seeming to us like portraits, painted in sickness, of a man we have only known in health.

But there is another, more touching, and far more forcible evidence that there was *goodness* in Edgar A. Poe. To reveal it, we are obliged to venture upon the lifting of the veil which sacredly covers grief and refinement in poverty; but we think it may be excused, if, so, we can brighten the memory of the poet, even were there not a more needed and immediate service which it may render to the nearest link broken by his death.

Our first knowledge of Mr. Poe’s removal to this city was by a call which we received from a lady who introduced herself to us as the mother of his wife. She was in search of em-

ployment for him, and she excused her errand by mentioning that he was ill, that her daughter was a confirmed invalid, and that their circumstances were such as compelled her taking it upon herself. The countenance of this lady, made beautiful and saintly with an evidently complete giving up of her life to privation and sorrowful tenderness, her gentle and mournful voice urging its plea, her long-forgotten but habitually and unconsciously refined manners, and her appealing and yet appreciative mention of the claims and abilities of her son, disclosed at once the presence of one of those angels upon earth that women in adversity can be. It was a hard fate that she was watching over. Mr. Poe wrote with fastidious difficulty, and in a style too much above the popular level to be well paid. He was always in pecuniary difficulty, and, with his sick wife, frequently in want of the merest necessaries of life. Winter after winter, for years, the most touching sight to us, in this whole city, has been that tireless minister to genius, thinly and insufficiently clad, going from office to office with a poem, or an article on some literary subject, to sell — sometimes simply pleading in a broken voice that he was ill, and begging for him — mentioning nothing but that “he was ill,” whatever might be the reason for his writing nothing — and never, amid all her tears and recitals of distress, suffering one syllable to escape her lips that could convey a doubt of him, or a complaint, or a lessening of pride in his genius and good intentions. Her daughter died, a year and a half since, but she did not desert him. She continued his ministering angel — living with him — caring for him — guarding him against exposure, and, when he was carried away by temptation, amid grief and the loneliness of feelings unreplied to, and awoke from his self-abandonment prostrated in destitution and suffering, begging for him still. If woman’s devotion, born with a first love, and fed with human passion, hallow its object, as it is allowed to do, what does not a devotion like this — pure, disinterested and holy as the watch of an invisible spirit — say for him who inspired it?

We have a letter before us, written by this lady, Mrs. Clemm, on the morning in which she heard of the death of this object of her untiring care. It is merely a request that we would call upon her, but we will copy a few of its words — sacred as its privacy is — to warrant the truth of the picture we have drawn above, and add force to the appeal we wish to make for her: —

* * “I have this morning heard of the death of my darling Eddie. * * Can you give me any circumstances or particulars. * * * Oh ! do not desert your poor friend in this bitter affliction. * * Ask Mr. ——— to come, as I must deliver a message to him from my poor Eddie. * * I need not ask you to notice his death and to speak well of him. I know you will. But say what an affectionate son he was to me, his poor desolate mother.” * * *

To hedge round a grave with respect, what choice is there, between the relinquished wealth and honors of the world, and the story of such a woman’s unrewarded devotion! Risking what we do, in delicacy, by making it public, we feel — other reasons aside — that it betters the world to make known that there are such ministrations to its erring and gifted. What we have said will speak to some hearts. There are those who will be glad to know how the lamp, whose light of poetry has beamed on their far-away recognition, was watched over with care and pain — that they may send to her, who is more darkened than they by its extinction, some token of their sympathy. She is destitute and alone. If any, far or near, will

send to us what may aid and cheer her through the remainder of her life, we will joyfully place it in her hands.

We have occupied so much room that we defer speaking critically of Mr. Poe's writings, as we intended to do when we sat down, and this, and some more minute details of biography, we shall hope to find time for, hereafter.

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THE LATE EDGAR A. POE

By John Reuben Thompson

So much has been said by the newspaper press of the country concerning this gifted child of genius, since his recent death, that our readers are already in possession of the leading incidents of his short, brilliant, erratic and unhappy career. It is quite unnecessary that we should recount them in this place. We feel it due to the dead, however, as editor of a magazine which owes its earliest celebrity to his efforts, that some recognition of his talent, on the part of the Messenger, should mingle with the general apotheosis which just now enrols him on the list of "heroes in history and gods in song."

Mr. Poe became connected with the Messenger during the first year of its existence. He was commended to the favorable consideration of the proprietor, the late T. W. White, by the Honorable John P. Kennedy who, as Chairman of a Committee, had just awarded to Poe the prize for the successful tale in a literary competition at Baltimore. Under his editorial management the work soon became well-known every where. Perhaps no similar enterprise ever prospered so largely in its inception, and we doubt if any, in the same length of time--even Blackwood in the days of Dr. Maginn, whom Poe in some respects closely resembled--ever published so many shining articles from the same pen. Those who will turn to the first two volumes of the Messenger will be struck with the number and variety of his contributions. On one page may be found some lyric cadence, plaintive and inexpressibly sweet, the earliest vibrations of those chords which have since thrilled with so many wild and wondrous harmonies. On another some strange story of the German school, akin to the most fanciful legends of the Rhine, fascinates and astonishes the reader with the verisimilitude of its improbabilities. But it was in the editorial department of the magazine that his power was most conspicuously displayed. There he appeared as the critic, not always impartial, it may be, in the distribution of his praises, or correct in the positions he assumed, but ever merciless to the unlucky author who offended by a dull book. A blunder in this respect he considered worse than a crime, and visited it with corresponding rigor. Among the nascent novelists and newly fledged poetasters of fifteen years ago he came down "like a Visigoth marching on Rome." No elegant imbecile or conceited pedant, no matter whether he made his avatar under the auspices of a Society, or with the *prestige* of a degree, but felt the lash of his severity. *Baccalaurei baculo potius quam laureo digni* was the principle of his action in such cases, and to the last he continued to castigate impudent aspirants for the bays. Now that he is gone, the vast multitude of blockheads may breathe again, and we can imagine that we hear the shade of the departed crying out to them, in the epitaph designed for Robespierre,

Passant! ne plains point mon sort,
Si je vivais, tu serais mort! *

[* We translate it freely,
Traveller! forbear to mourn my lot,
Thou would'st have died, if I had not.]

It will readily occur to the reader that such a course, while it gained subscribers to the review, was not well calculated to gain friends for the reviewer. And so Mr. Poe found it, for during the two years of his connection with the Messenger, he contrived to attach to himself animosities of the most enduring kind. It was the fashion with a large class to decry his literary pretensions, as poet and romancer and scholar, to represent him as one who possessed little else than

th' extravagancy

And crazy ribaldry of fancy--

and to challenge his finest efforts with a chilling *cui bono*; while the critics of other lands and other tongues, the Athenaeum and the *Revue des deux Mondes*, were warmly recognizing his high claims. They did not appreciate him. To the envious obscure. he might not indeed seem entitled to the first literary honors, for he was versed in a more profound learning and skilled in a more lofty minstrelsy, scholar by virtue of a larger erudition and poet by the transmission of a diviner spark.

Unquestionably he was a man of great genius. Among the *litterateurs* of his day he stands out distinctively as an original writer and thinker. In nothing did he conform to established custom. Conventionality he condemned. Thus his writings admit of no classification. And yet in his most eccentric vagaries he was always correct. The fastidious reader may look in vain, even among his earlier poems--where "wild words wander here and there"--for an offence against rhetorical propriety. He did not easily pardon solecisms in others; he committed none himself. It is remarkable too that a mind so prone to unrestrained imaginings should be capable of analytic investigation or studious research. Yet few excelled Mr. Poe in power of analysis or patient application. Such are the contradictions of the human intellect. He was an impersonated antithesis.

The regret has been often expressed that Mr. Poe did not bring his singular capacity to bear on subjects nearer ordinary life and of a more cheerful nature than the gloomy incidents of his tales and sketches. P. P. Cooke, (the accomplished author of the Froissart Ballads, who, we predict, will one day take, by common consent, his rightful high position in American letters,) in a discriminating essay on the genius of Poe, published in this magazine for January, 1848, remarks upon this point,

"For my individual part, having the seventy or more tales, analytic, mystic, grotesque, arabesque, always wonderful, often great, which his industry and fertility have already given us, I would like to read one cheerful book made by his invention, with little or no aid from its twin brother imagination ——a book in his admirable style of full, minute, never tedious narrative—a book full of homely doings, of successful toils, of ingenious shifts and contrivances, of ruddy firesides a book happy and healthy throughout, and with no poetry in it at all anywhere, except a good old English 'poetic justice' in the end."

That such a work would have greatly enhanced Mr. Poe's reputation with the million, we think, will scarcely be disputed. But it could not be. Mr. Poe was not the man to have produced a home-book. He had little of the domestic feeling and his thoughts were ever wandering. He was either in criticism or in the clouds, by turns a disciplinarian and a dreamer. And

in his dreams, what visions came to him, may be gathered to some extent from the revealings he has given--visions wherein his fancy would stray off upon some new Walpurgis, or descend into the dark realms of the Inferno, and where occasionally, through the impenetrable gloom, the supernal beauty of Lenore would burst upon his sight, as did the glorified Beatrice on the rapt gaze of the Italian master.

The poems of Mr. Poe are remarkable above all other characteristics, for the exceeding melody of the versification. "Ulalume" might be cited as a happy instance of this quality, but we prefer to quote "The Bells" from the last number of the Union Magazine. It was the design of the author, as he himself told us, to express in language the exact sounds of bells to the ear. He has succeeded, we think, far better than Southey, who attempted a similar feat, to tell us "how the waters come down at Lodore"

THE BELLS.

I.

Hear the sledges with the bells —
Silver bells!
What a world of merriment their melody foretells!
How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,
In the icy air of night!
While the stars that oversprinkle
All the heavens, seem to twinkle
With a crystalline delight;
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells
From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells —
From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

II.

Hear the mellow wedding-bells
Golden bells!
What a world of happiness their harmony foretells!
Through the balmy air of night
How they ring out their delight! —
From the molten-golden notes,
And all in tune,
What a liquid ditty floats
To the turtle-dove that listens, while she gloats
On the moon!
Oh, from out the sounding cells,

What a gush of euphony voluminously wells!
 How it swells!
 How it dwells
 On the Future! — how it tells
 Of the rapture that impels
 To the swinging and the ringing
 Of the bells, bells, bells —
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
 Bells, bells, bells —
To the rhyming and the chiming of the bells!

III.

 Hear the loud alarum bells —
 Brazen bells!
What tale of terror, now, their turbulency tells!
 In the startled ear of night
 How they scream out their affright!
 Too much horrified to speak,
 They can only shriek, shriek,
 Out of tune,
In a clamorous appealing to the mercy of the fire,
In a mad expostulation with the deaf and frantic fire,
 Leaping higher, higher, higher,
 With a desperate desire,
 And a resolute endeavor
 Now — now to sit, or never,
By the side of the pale-faced moon.
 Oh, the bells, bells, bells!
 What a tale their terror tells
 Of Despair!
How they clang, and clash, and roar!
What a horror they outpour
On the bosom of the palpitating air!
 Yet the ear, it fully knows,
 By the twanging
 And the clanging,
 How the danger ebbs and flows;
Yet, the ear distinctly tells,
 In the jangling
 And the wrangling,
 How the danger sinks and swells,
By the sinking or the swelling in the anger of the bells —
 Of the bells —
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,

Bells, bells, bells —
In the clamour and the clangour of the bells!

IV.

Hear the tolling of the bells —
Iron bells!
What a world of solemn thought their monody compels!
In the silence of the night,
How we shiver with affright
At the melancholy meaning of their tone!
For every sound that floats
From the rust within their throats
Is a groan.
And the people — ah, the people —
They that dwell up in the steeple,
All alone,
And who, tolling, tolling, tolling,
In that muffled monotone,
Feel a glory in so rolling
On the human heart a stone —
They are neither man nor woman —
They are neither brute nor human —
They are Ghouls: —
And their king it is who tolls: —
And he rolls, rolls, rolls, rolls,
Rolls
A pæan from the bells!
And his merry bosom swells
With the pæan of the bells!
And he dances, and he yells;
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the pæan of the bells —
Of the bells: —
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme,
To the throbbing of the bells —
Of the bells, bells, bells —
To the sobbing of the bells: —
Keeping time, time, time,
As he knells, knells, knells,
In a happy Runic rhyme,
To the rolling of the bells —
Of the bells, bells, bells: —

To the tolling of the bells —
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
 Bells, bells, bells —
To the moaning and the groaning of the bells.

The untimely death of Mr. Poe occasioned a very general feeling of regret, although little genuine sorrow was called forth by it, out of the narrow circle of his relatives. We have received, in our private correspondence, from various quarters of the Union, warm tributes to his talent, some of which we take the liberty of quoting, though not designed for publication. A friend in the country writes--

“Many who deem themselves perfect critics talk of the want of *moral* in the writings and particularly the poetry of Poe. They would have every one to write like AEsop, with the moral distinctly drawn at the end to prevent mistake. Such men would object to the meteor, or the lightning’s flash, because it lasts only for the moment--and yet they speak the power of God, and fill our minds with the sublime more readily than does the enduring sunlight. It is thus with the writings of Poe. Every moment there comes across the darkness of his style a flash of that spirit which is not of earth. You cannot analyze the feeling--you cannot tell in what the beauty of a particular passage consists; and yet you feel that deep pathos which only genius can incite-- you feel the trembling of that melancholy chord which fills the soul with pleasant mournfulness-- you feel that deep yearning for something brighter and better than this world can give--that unutterable gushing of the heart which springs up at the touch of the enchanter, as poured the stream from

‘Horeb’s rock, beneath the prophet’s hand.’

I wish I could convey to you the impression which the ‘Raven’ has made upon me. I had read it hastily in times gone by without appreciation; but now it is a study to me--as I go along like Sinbad in the Valley of Diamonds, I find a new jewel at every step. The beautiful rhythm, the mournful cadence, still ring in the ear for hours after a perusal--whilst the heart is bowed down by the outpourings of a soul made desolate not alone by disappointed love, but by the crushing of every hope, and every aspiration.”

In a recent letter the following noble acknowledgement is made by the first of American poets--Henry W. Longfellow--towards whom, it must be said, Mr. Poe did not always act with justice. Mr. Longfellow will pardon us, we trust, for publishing what was intended as a private communication. The passage evidences a magnanimity which belongs only to great minds.

“What a melancholy death,” says Mr. Longfellow, “is that of Mr. Poe--a man so richly endowed with genius! I never knew him personally, but have always entertained a high appreciation of his powers as a prose-writer and a poet. His prose is remarkably vigorous, direct and yet affluent; and his verse has a particular charm of melody, an atmosphere of true poetry about it, which is very winning. The harshness of his criticisms, I have never attributed to anything but the irritation of a sensitive nature, chafed by some indefinite sense of wrong.”

It was not until within two years past that we ever met Mr. Poe, but during that time, and especially for two or three months previous to his death, we saw him very often. When in

Richmond, he made the office of the Messenger a place of frequent resort. His conversation was always attractive, and at times very brilliant. Among modern authors his favorite was Tennyson, and he delighted to recite from "The Princess" the song "Tears, idle tears;" a fragment of which

-- *when unto dying eyes*

The casement slowly grows a glimmering square,--

he pronounced unsurpassed by any image expressed in writing. The day before he left Richmond, he placed in our hands for publication in the Messenger, the MS. of his last poem, which has since found its way (through a correspondent of a northern paper with whom Mr Poe had left a copy) into the newspaper press, and been extensively circulated. As it was designed for this magazine, however, we publish it, even though all of our readers may have seen it before:

ANNABEL LEE.

It was many and many a year ago,
In a kingdom by the sea,
That a maiden lived whom you may know
By the name of Annabel Lee; —
And this maiden she lived with no other thought
Than to love and be loved by me.

She was a child and *I* was a child,
In this kingdom by the sea,
But we loved with a love that was more than love —
I and my Annabel Lee —
With a love that the wingéd seraphs of Heaven
Coveted her and me.

And this was the reason that, long ago,
In this kingdom by the sea,
A wind blew out of a cloud by night
Chilling my Annabel Lee;
So that her high-born kinsmen came
And bore her away from me,
To shut her up, in a sepulchre
In this kingdom by the sea.

The angels, not half so happy in Heaven,
Went envying her and me;
Yes! that was the reason (as all men know,
In this kingdom by the sea)
That the wind came out of the cloud, chilling
And killing my Annabel Lee.

But our love it was stronger by far than the love
Of those who were older than we —
Of many far wiser than we —
And neither the angels in Heaven above
Nor the demons down under the sea
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee: —

For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And the stars never rise but I see the bright eyes
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side
Of my darling, my darling, my life and my bride
In her sepulchre there by the sea —
In her tomb by the side of the sea.

In what we have said of Mr. Poe, we have been considering only the brighter side of the picture. That he had many and sad infirmities cannot be questioned. Over these we would throw in charity the mantle of forgetfulness. The grave has come between our perception and his errors, and we pass them over in silence. They found indeed a mournful expiation in his alienated friendships and his early death.

JRT

[Originally printed in the November 1849 issue of *The Southern Literary Messenger*]

“Who was Edgar Allan Poe” Lesson Plan

Virginia Standards of Learning Covered:

6.1 a-d, 6.6 a-e, 7.1 a-e, 7.8 a-d, 8.7 a-e

Purpose

To explore the life of Edgar Allan Poe through a creative writing exercise.

Materials

Images of historic artifacts from the Poe Museum collection included with the Educator Information Packet: 1) The “McKee” Daguerreotype (before 1843—exact date unknown); 2) The “Ultima Thule” Daguerreotype (1848); 3) Items of Edgar Allan Poe’s clothing (late 1840s); and 4) Edgar Allan Poe’s traveling trunk (late 1840s).

Procedure

The first exercise will help students to learn how to think creatively to develop a fictional character. Encourage students to think about how a person’s belongings or appearance influence the reader’s perception of a character. Is the hero of a story always good looking? What do expensive clothes tell us about a person? Authors use personal experience and cues from their environment to develop fictional characters and situations. This exercise will help students to explore that process.

Day 1

- 1) Divide students into four groups and distribute one image to each group. Encourage them to think creatively as they try to develop an idea for a poem or short story based on the character who is portrayed in the portraits or who owned the personal items featured. Assign a scribe for each group to write down the thoughts and questions
- 2) Have students perform a free association brainstorming exercise. Below are a few suggested questions for consideration but the teacher or students can also develop questions of their own. A few basic questions to consider are:
 - a. What words come to mind about the person in this image or the person who owned these items?
 - b. For the portraits, what impression of this person does the portrait give? Is he happy? Sad? Handsome? Living or dead? What can we assume about this person just from these images?
 - c. For the personal belongings, were these possessions important to the person who owned them? What do they tell us about the person?
 - d. What other questions about the individual in the portraits or the individual who owned the clothing and traveling trunk come to mind as you look at these images?
- 3) Ask a spokesperson for each group (or all of the group members) to address the class and speak about the related words and impressions these images gave them. Discuss with the students whether these impressions are grounded in any reality. For example, the “Ultima Thule” daguerreotype was taken only four days after Poe tried to commit suicide. Does the portrait give that impression? The “McKee” Daguerreotype was taken when Poe was younger and before the complete decline of his wife’s health. Does this image portray a very different person from the Poe photographed in 1848?

Poe traveled frequently the last few years of his life because he lectured in many different towns as a means of earning a living. The trunk held all of his most valued and necessary

belongings. The vest and stockings belonging to Poe were made of silk and, because of their fine quality, may give the viewer the impression that Poe was a wealthy man. In fact, Poe never achieved great material wealth during his lifetime.

Encourage students to think about a fictional character who lives out of a traveling trunk and is not rooted in one place--or to think about a character who would highly value a fine set of clothes because they are not wealthy. What kind of poem or short story can be developed about such a character?

Day 2

- 4) Building on their experience of the Day 1 exercises, have students return to their groups and begin fleshing out a biography of the character about whom they will write. Where does he live? What occupation does he have? Is he a likeable character? A hero? A villain? Ask each group to present their character to the class.
- 5) Follow this last activity with some biographical information about Poe during the relevant time period in his life. What events in his life could have influenced his own fictional works?



The "Mckee" Daguerreotype of Edgar Allan Poe

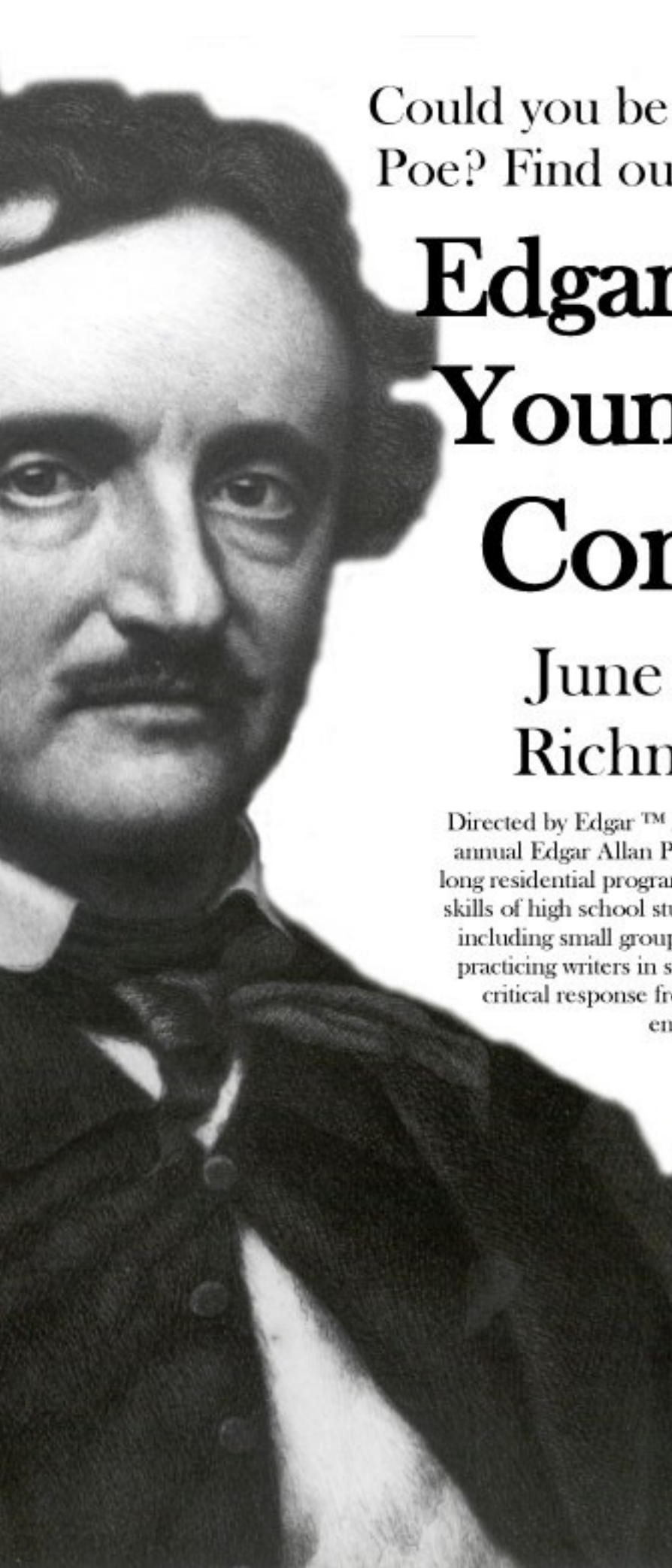


The "Ultima Thule" Daguerreotype of Edgar Allan Poe © Poe Museum, Richmond, Virginia



Left: Edgar Allan Poe's vest © Poe Museum, Richmond, Virginia

Above: Edgar Allan Poe's trunk © Poe Museum, Richmond, Virginia

A black and white portrait of Edgar Allan Poe, showing his face and upper torso. He has dark, wavy hair, a prominent mustache, and is wearing a dark suit jacket over a white shirt and a dark cravat.

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