

**EDGAR
ALLAN
POE:
THE MAN OF
IMAGINATION AND
HORROR FROM
PHILADELPHIA**

NAME Michael J. ...

Period 12

Language Arts
Komodo Dragons Team



I n t r o d u c t i o n

MANY OF THE POEMS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE, "ANNABEL Lee" and "The Raven" in particular, are marked by deep sadness over the loss of a loved one. It is a sadness that began in Poe's childhood with his father's desertion and the death of his mother—a dark sadness that continued throughout his life.

In the early 1800s, Americans began to notice a beautiful young actress named Eliza Poe. She was married to David Poe, also an actor, and they had a son, William. Between 1806 and 1809, Eliza's and David's lives were changed by three important events. First, Eliza became a rising star in Boston. Theatergoers loved her beautiful and powerful presence onstage. Then, during the stormy winter of 1809, Eliza gave birth to a second son, Edgar. Finally, in that same year, the people at the Park Street Theater in New York, at the time America's largest and most famous theater, wooed the Poes to their stage. This was the break the Poes had been hoping for, so they moved to New York City.

New York audiences received Eliza with enthusiasm and affection, and it was apparent that she would soon be one of the most famous actresses in America. But her husband had little experience as an actor and, according to New York theater critics, even less talent. He missed performances because of "a sudden illness," which was really drunkenness. After only six weeks, David Poe deserted his wife and two sons and was never heard from again.

Eliza was left to care for her sons while she pursued her acting career. In December 1810, she gave birth to a girl, Rosalie. Although Eliza returned to the stage in the summer of 1811, she was very ill. She was bedridden by October and never performed again. Two months later, Eliza Poe said her last farewell to her children. Edgar was not yet three years old.

John and Frances Allan lived in Richmond, Virginia, and were avid theatergoers. Frances had helped care for Mrs. Poe and had become quite fond of little Edgar. The Allans had no children, so they decided to take Edgar in when his mother died, while William was sent to live with relatives in Baltimore and Rosalie was taken in by another Richmond family. Although he was never formally adopted, Poe lived with the Allans for a long time, and he honored them by taking Allan as his middle name.

John Allan was an independent, self-made merchant who believed in perseverance, hard work, and commitment to duty. He had a reputation for social benevolence, but was also a strict taskmaster. Frances was a dedicated homemaker, and she provided well for Poe. The Allans made sure that he received the benefits of an education, mostly at boarding schools. Allan said that by age six Poe was a "good scholar" and that he had learned to read Latin

FROM: POETRY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: Edgar Allan Poe
Brad Bagert, ed. 4

“pretty sharply.” By age thirteen, Poe read the Latin poets with fluency, and he began to write poetry of his own. He also excelled in athletics: he was a good boxer, a fast runner, and an exceptional swimmer. He once swam six miles in the James River, and he set a school broad-jump record of 21 feet 6 inches.

Although Poe seemed happy, deep inside he was confused. Because he was never formally adopted, he felt uncertain about his position in the Allan family, and his doubt often made him cross and dejected. Allan interpreted Poe’s behavior as a lack of gratitude. When Poe was sixteen and entering the University of Virginia, resentments between Poe and Allan were simmering beneath the surface.

While in college, Poe wrote his first story. Although most of Poe’s stories are rather gloomy, this one was bright and funny. When he read the story to his friends, however, they teased him about it, so he threw it into the fire. Eventually, Poe learned to accept criticism—but it was too late to save his first story.

Poe was an excellent student, but he accumulated large debts. He claimed that Allan did not give him enough money and asked for more. Allan blamed Poe’s lack of money on his drinking, gambling, and expensive tastes. At the end of his first year in college, Poe was several thousand dollars in debt, which Allan refused to pay. As a result, Poe could not return to college.

Poe returned to his birthplace and got a job, using his spare time to write poetry. There he published his first book, *Tamerlane and Other Poems*, but did not use his name, saying instead that it was written by “a Bostonian.” By the time the book appeared, he had enlisted in the army. He was eighteen and a minor, so he should have obtained John Allan’s consent to join. However, he did not want to tell Allan of his plans, so he enlisted under the name Edgar A. Perry and said he was twenty-two.

Poe did well in the army. A lieutenant said that he performed his duties “promptly and faithfully” and that he was “entirely free from drinking.” On New Year’s Day, 1829, Poe was made a sergeant major, the highest rank for a noncommissioned officer. But Poe was unhappy, so he told the truth about his age and requested an early discharge. The lieutenant agreed only if Poe would reconcile with John Allan. Poe sent Allan three letters, but Allan ignored them until eventually, softened by the death of his wife, he agreed to the reconciliation.

Poe had planned to be discharged so that he could attend the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. It took him a year to gain admission, and during that time he continued to write poetry. In November 1829, he published *Al Aaraaf*, using his real name. Although the book received mixed reviews, it did not go unnoticed.

About this time Poe and Allan began to quarrel again. Allan continued to provide less money than Poe thought he needed. Allan remarried, which made Poe feel rejected. Poe decided to leave West Point, but Allan refused to sign the required resignation papers, so Poe vowed that he would get himself dishonorably discharged, which he did in January 1831. After that, Poe and Allan had little contact, and when Allan died in 1834, there was no mention of Poe in his will.

After leaving West Point, Poe lived in New York for two years. There he published a new book that received little notice, much of it unfavorable. Hungry and disappointed, he went to Baltimore to live with his widowed aunt, Maria Poe Clemm, who was already caring for Poe's brother, William, an alcoholic. William died a few months later, leaving Poe alone with Maria and her daughter, Virginia.

In 1834 Poe got a job in Baltimore with a magazine, first as a contributor (in a single year he contributed eighty-three reviews, four essays, six poems, and three stories) and eventually as an editor. Poe made the magazine one of the nation's most respected publications. But three years later, he was fired because his alcoholism interfered with his job. It was obvious that Poe could no longer control his drinking. While sober, Poe wrote the words that made him famous, but he could not stop drinking completely. Poe once wrote to a friend, "During these long fits of absolute unconsciousness I drank—God only knows how often or how much."

Poe's frustration with his addiction is reflected in his story "The Cask of Amontillado," in which a victim is lured by his murderer's promise of a drink of wine into dark underground passages. The murderer places the victim in chains and begins to seal him behind a brick wall. As he places the last brick, the victim screams out for the wine he was promised. As in the story, Poe's addiction led him into dark places.

In 1837, Poe, age twenty-seven, married his first cousin Virginia, age thirteen, perhaps to secure his place in the Clemm household. Two years later, Poe's first collection of short stories, *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, was published. While some thought it was particularly gloomy, the book was generally received as the most powerful collection of short fiction ever published in America. Unfortunately, it was published during a recession, so only seven hundred fifty copies were printed, and those took three years to sell. Although Poe was becoming more famous, he was still poor, and both he and his wife were ill.

Poe's skill as a storyteller continued to grow. In 1841, he penned a detective story called "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." Although detective stories are common today, Poe wrote the first one, inventing a new literary form. In 1845, *The Raven and Other Poems* was published, a collection that includes "The Raven," one of the most popular poems ever written.

The Poes were married for ten years until, after a long illness, Virginia passed away. After she died, Poe collapsed and was nursed back to health by Marie Louise Shew, who inspired "The Beloved Physician," the lost poem of which a part appears in this book.

Poe once wrote that "the death of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world." It is a topic that Poe knew all too well: in his short lifetime, he had lost his mother, his foster mother, and his wife. There is little wonder why so many of his poems are about the death of a loved one.

In the years that followed, Poe pursued a number of women. In each instance, either his reputation or his drinking kept the women from marrying him. At one point, he even returned to Richmond and became reacquainted with his old girlfriend, Elmira Royster, who was now wealthy and recently widowed. On September 27, 1849, he left Richmond

for Baltimore, the first stop on a business trip. No one knows what went on during the next week of Poe's life. On October 3, a printer named Joseph Walker noticed Poe, whom he described as "rather worse for wear," in a Baltimore tavern. Walker immediately notified a friend of Poe's, Joseph Snodgrass, who promptly had Poe admitted to a hospital.

For days Poe slipped in and out of consciousness. Just when he seemed to be improving, his condition would take a turn for the worse. He became delirious, ranting and raving for several hours. At three o'clock on the morning of Sunday, October 7, 1849, Poe said, "Lord help my poor soul!" and died. He was only forty years old.

Edgar Allan Poe was a master storyteller and a great poet. Three of his poems, "Annabel Lee," "The Raven," and "The Bells," are among the most beautiful and moving poems in the English language. All three were written in the last five years of his life. Like his mother, Poe was brilliantly talented. Like his father, Poe was destroyed by alcoholism. Sadly, Poe died when he was just beginning to achieve his full power as a great poet.

great but poor
lots of deaths in stories + death
83 reviews for magazines (lots)
part of loved wife-cousin
was orphan
lots of alcohol
wrote while sober
1 detective

A NOTE TO PARENTS

What we have done in this volume is a little unusual, and we'd like to explain why and how we did it. You will not find the last eight "poems" in this book in any of Poe's other collections. This is because Poe did not actually write them as poems; they were originally part of larger prose works.

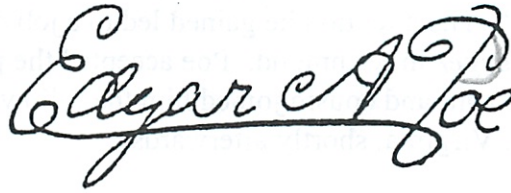
Beautiful poetic passages can often be found in longer prose works. These powerful moments gleam like diamonds in the silver setting of the surrounding prose. Such gems are often the poetic equal of the author's "official" poems. This seems especially true of nineteenth-century American writers, and Poe is no exception. So we searched his stories to find passages which, although published as prose, stand out as poetry. The idea is to give the full range of Poe's poetic voice, so children can feel the full power of his poetry.

When we found one of these passages, we faced the task of presenting it in poetic form. This required us to "tinker" with the work of a great writer, so we were as delicate as possible. While some words and phrases were omitted and the text was rearranged into verses, what remains is entirely the work of Edgar Allan Poe. But still we wondered: "Would Mr. Poe have approved?"

We decided he would. Poe believed a poem was a communication between the poet and the reader, and he put the needs of the reader first. In his essay "The Poetic Principle," he wrote, "A poem deserves its title only inasmuch as it excites, by elevating the soul." Since Poe defined poetry in terms of its ability to excite the soul of the reader, we think he would probably approve of our approach. We suspect that he might even feel gratified to know that, in this way, the children of our generation can hear the full beauty of his poetic voice and come to love his poetry.

A Brief Biography

Writer
horror stories?
heard about him
really scary stories
poems?



Edgar Allan Poe was born in Boston in 1809. Both of his parents were actors. His mother, the much admired Elizabeth Arnold Poe was a talented actress. His father, David Poe was considered less talented. The Poes performed at theaters throughout the Eastern seaboard, from Boston to Virginia. In 1811, Elizabeth Poe died of tuberculosis in Richmond, Virginia, leaving orphaned Edgar, his infant sister Rosalie, and his older brother Henry. David Poe, apparently had abandoned his wife and children earlier and was not present when she died.

The three children were separated and raised by different families. Edgar was taken in by the successful Richmond merchant John Allan, and his frail wife Frances. The Allans had no children of their own. They raised Edgar as part of the family and gave him their middle name, but never legally adopted him.

In 1815, Edgar traveled with the Allans to England and Scotland, where John Allan planned to expand his tobacco business. Edgar attended boarding schools throughout the five years the family lived overseas. After John Allan's business venture failed, he moved the family back to Richmond, Virginia in 1820.

Edgar continued his studies in Richmond. He entered the University of Virginia in 1826 at the age of 17. During the year he attended the university, Edgar excelled in his studies of Latin and French. He was unable to complete his studies at the university because Allan refused to pay debts Edgar had incurred during the school year. Allan and Edgar quarreled over the debts, of which a large portion was incurred from gambling.

Shortly after his quarrel with his foster father, Edgar Allan Poe left Richmond for Boston where he hoped to pursue a literary career. His first book of poetry, *Tamerlane and Other Poems* was published there. Unable to support himself, and receiving little assistance from his foster father, Poe enlisted as a private in the U.S. Army. In the two years he served he attained the rank of Sergeant Major. A brief reconciliation between Poe and Allan occurred upon the death of Frances Allan in 1829. Allan assisted Poe in obtaining a discharge from the regular Army and an appointment as a cadet at the U.S. Military Academy in West Point.

While at West Point, Poe received very little financial support from Allan. The financial hardship along with the realization that literature was his true vocation, led to Poe's decision to resign from the Academy. Allan, as Poe's guardian, refused to give him permission to resign. Poe determined to leave the Academy one way or the other. He was court-martialed and dismissed for not reporting to duty or classes.

After leaving West Point, Poe eventually moved to Baltimore where he lived with his impoverished Aunt Maria Poe Clemm and her young daughter, Virginia. Poe continued to write poetry and prose. In 1833, he won a \$50 prize and attention for his short story "Ms. Found in a Bottle." The attention he gained led to a job offer as an editor for the *Southern Literary Messenger* in Richmond. Poe accepted the position and moved to Richmond in 1835. His aunt and cousin joined him the following year. Poe married his thirteen year old cousin, Virginia, shortly afterwards.

The Poes and Mrs. Clemm moved to New York City in 1837 with the hope of Edgar finding work in the literary field. The city, as well as the rest of the country was in the midst of a depression caused by the financial "Panic of '37." Unable to find work, Poe moved to Philadelphia in 1838. The six years he spent in Philadelphia proved to be his most productive, and perhaps the happiest years of his life. He worked as an editor and critic for one of the nation's largest magazines, *Graham's Magazine*. Some of his most famous stories were written in Philadelphia, including the "Fall of the House of Usher," "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," "The Gold-Bug," "The Mask of the Red Death," and "Ligeia." In 1842, his beloved wife became ill with tuberculosis. Her illness and the constant strain of financial problems, caused Poe to sink into deep bouts of depression.

The Poes and Mrs. Clemm moved to New York City in 1844. Poe continued to work as an editor and critic. He gained his greatest fame as a poet after his poem "The Raven" was published in 1845. In the same year, he achieved his lifelong dream of owning a literary journal. Unfortunately, the journal failed within a few months. The Poes and Mrs. Clemm moved outside of New York City to a small cottage in 1846. Virginia died of tuberculosis the following year.

For the next two years Poe continued to write poetry, short stories, criticism and plan for his own literary journal. After a successful lecture tour in the South and an extended visit in Richmond, Poe seemed to be finally recovering from the loss of Virginia, and making plans for the future. On his way back to New York City, Poe stopped in Baltimore where he died of "acute congestion of the brain." The day was October 7, 1849; Edgar Allan Poe was 40 years old.

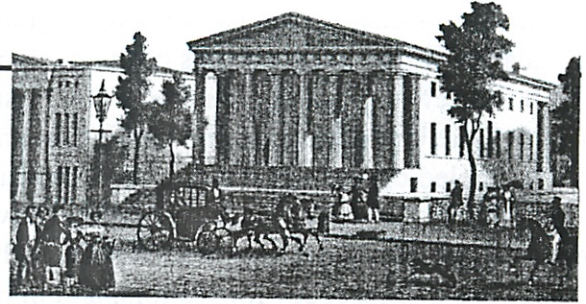
Sources:

Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography. Arthur Hobson Quinn. New York: Cooper Square Publishers. 1941

Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance. Kenneth Silverman. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc. 1992

Poe's Philadelphia

A city of artisans and merchants, of church steeples, graceful public buildings and tidy rowhouses, Philadelphia was called the "Athens of America" by Gilbert Stuart, the famous portraitist. Philadelphia had led the nation in politics, commerce, medicine, science, and finance. It was a city which could offer much to a talented man like Edgar Allan Poe, especially since it was one of the nation's publishing centers. By the time Poe arrived in 1838, it was also a city in transition.

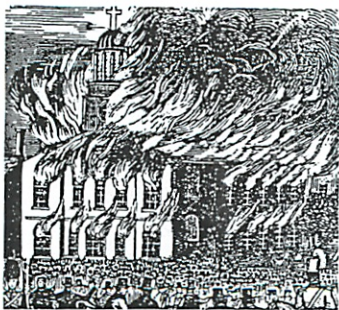


Second Bank of the United States
located on Chestnut Street.

Philadelphia began to experience changes brought on by the industrial revolution. Despite the financial panic of 1837, caused in part by President Jackson's refusal to re-charter the Second Bank of the United States, Philadelphia continued to grow. Canals transported coal from the state's interior to Philadelphia where it fueled the city's factories. Textile factories, machine shops, iron works, and sugar refineries made Philadelphia the nation's manufacturing center. Although some individuals prospered, a fundamental change began to occur in the workingman's life. The day when a man could start out as an apprentice and work his way up to master tradesman began to fade. Home industry was quickly being replaced by factories, and the factories required many laborers to tend the machines. Men, women, and children worked from dawn to dusk, six days a week, bringing home wages from \$2 to \$4 a week depending on gender and age.

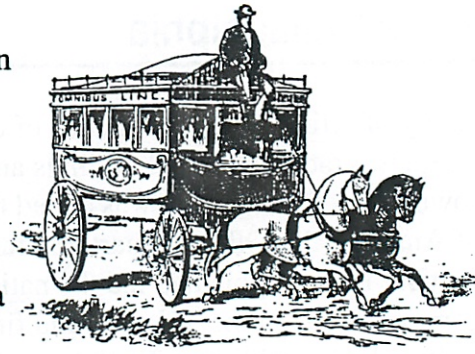
As the 19th century progressed, Philadelphia's free African-Americans would see themselves increasingly segregated and barred from economic opportunities. Free African-American men had had the right to vote since 1790. They saw that right taken away by the state's 1838 constitution. In the early 1800s Philadelphia's free African-Americans had worked in many trades and held a variety of jobs. Now, trade guilds began to exclude African-American membership. African-Americans competed with the newly arrived Irish immigrants for jobs. The intense competition for jobs coupled with abolition activities led to racial riots in 1838 and 1842. Despite the increasing discrimination, an African-American middle class continued to grow, establishing the Philadelphia Library Company for Colored Persons, debating societies, lyceums and literary clubs, and many churches.

The increase in manufacturing attracted large numbers of immigrants, many from Ireland. Most of the Irish immigrants had suffered greatly from the great potato famine in their homeland. They were desperately poor and were willing to work for lower wages. This applied pressure on those who were trying to maintain their living wages. Some city residents feared and disliked



the newcomers' religion—Catholicism. The Irish immigrants built several new churches. Anti-Catholic and anti-foreigner sentiment, which had simmered for some time, exploded into riots in the spring and summer of 1844. St. Michael's Catholic Church on 2nd and Jefferson Streets, the Female Seminary of the Sisters of Charity at 2nd and Phoenix Streets, and St. Augustine's Church and a school on 4th Street below Vine Street were all burned during the riots. The riots tarnished the city's once proud reputation for religious tolerance.

Philadelphia's classically inspired architecture served as a physical reminder to its citizens of the democratic values upon which the new nation was founded. The First and Second Banks of the United States, and the Fairmount Water Works were modeled on the architecture of Greece and Rome. The impressive water works on the Schuylkill River resembles a series of ancient Greek temples. A visit to the Water Works was always a "must see" for visitors, and in Poe's day it was a short ride by a horse drawn omnibus. The Fairmount Water



Works with its park-like setting was more than just a serene place to visit, it provided the city with an abundance of water. Visitors often marveled at the ample supply of water with which Philadelphians so extravagantly used to wash their marble steps and brick sidewalks. In the mid-1830s a gas works was built which provided gas to light homes, market houses, and streets. For better or worse, Philadelphia was well on its way to becoming a modern, industrial city.

During his 1842 tour of the United States, the popular British author Charles Dickens visited Philadelphia. He found the city to be handsome, but the grid patterned streets were "distractingly regular" to provide much interest. However, bustling Chestnut Street with its many shops and activity must have been of some interest. Nearly anything one wanted could be purchased in the area—from boots to parasols. Poe met with Dickens at the United States Hotel located on Chestnut Street. The two men discussed literature and particularly the need for an international copyright law to protect the works and rights of all authors.

Before he left Philadelphia, Dickens wished to visit the city's internationally known Eastern State Penitentiary. The prison was designed with the latest in prison reform—known as the "Pennsylvania System." The system called for prisoners to work and live in solitary confinement. After his visit, Dickens found the effects of the new system to be "cruel and wrong."

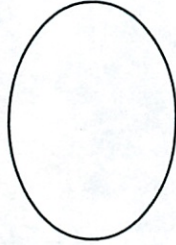
Entertainment and recreation was readily available in Philadelphia. Several theaters gave audiences many choices with productions as varied as Shakespeare to vaudeville acts—dancers, singers, jugglers, acrobats, and trained animals. The Walnut Street Theatre produced a short play based on Poe's popular mystery story "The Gold Bug." The Musical Fund Society produced operas and concerts. Lectures sponsored by educational institutions attracted some interest. Poe spoke to large crowds several times on the "Poetry of America." Nathan Dunn's Chinese Museum at Ninth and Sansom Streets shared exhibit space with the Peale family's popular natural history and portrait collection. Horseracing was a favored past time of some Philadelphians. Rowing clubs held races on the Schuylkill River just as they continue to do so today. Poe, like many other city residents enjoyed walking along the scenic Wissahickon Creek. He wrote about the beautiful Wissahickon in a short article titled "Morning on the Wissahickon."

Sources:

Philadelphia: A 300-Year History. Edited by Russell F. Weigley. W.W. Norton & Co.: New York

Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography. Arthur Hobson Quinn. New York: Cooper Square Publishers. 1941.

Meet the Family



Biographers read through a variety of written materials in their search to understand the life, motivations and personal relationships of their subject. Edgar Allan Poe's life story was early on obscured and falsified by his first official biographer, Rufus Wilmot Griswold. Many of the allegations by Griswold have been disproved, but still find their way into present day biographies.

Although these are a small sampling of the contemporary letters, excerpts of letters, newspaper articles, and poetry related to Poe's life and family, some light is shed on his personal history and relationships.

***Note:** The primary resources are reproduced with the spelling as it was originally written or appeared in print. A dictionary may be useful to students while reading some of the primary materials.

Classroom Activities:

Divide students into groups of five. Each group reads the primary and secondary sources associated with a person related to Poe. The group lists the person's relationship and role in Poe's life. What was that person's attitudes, feelings, beliefs, occupation, hardships, etc.? What are some conclusions about Poe's life that can be drawn from these letters, reviews, and poetry? Each group reports to the rest of the class on their person. Or students could roleplay the individual or play a "Who am I?" game where each group provides hints to the rest of the class about the individual. Or students could roleplay as reporters interviewing each individual.

Students read Poe's January 3, 1831 letter to John Allan. List the grievances made by Poe against his foster father. What conclusions can be made about Poe's relationship to his foster father? What was the most important point Poe wanted to make in his letter?

Sources:

The Letters of Edgar Allan Poe. Edited by John Ward Ostrom. New York: Gordian Press, Inc., 1966.

Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography. Arthur Hobson Quinn. New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1941..

Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance. Kenneth Silverman. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc., 1991.

Mother

Elizabeth Arnold Poe



Elizabeth Arnold Poe was a beautiful and talented actress who charmed theatergoers of her day. Born in England, she traveled with her mother, who was also an actress, to the United States in 1796. From the age of 9 until her death at 24, Elizabeth made her living as an actress in theaters from Boston to Charleston. She never failed to delight audiences with her singing, dancing, and comic and dramatic performances. Little is known of her personal life, but the theater advertisements, newspaper reviews and notices shed some light on her life.

Boston Gazette, March 21, 1808.

"If industry can claim from the public either favor or support, the talents of Mrs. Poe will not pass unrewarded. She has supported and maintained a course of characters, more numerous and arduous than can be paralleled on our boards, during any one season. Often she has been obliged to perform three characters on the same evening, and she has always been perfect in the text, and has well comprehended the intention of her author. In addition to her industry, however, Mrs. Poe has claims for other favors, from the respectability of her talents. Her *Romps* and *Sentimental* characters have an individuality which has marked them peculiarly her own. But she has succeeded often in the tender personations of tragedy; her conceptions are always marked with good sense and natural ability...."

Ramblers' Magazine and New-York Theatrical Register, November, 1810. Review of Elizabeth's performances in the plays *Pizarro* and *John Bull* at Fontainebleau:

"In the afterpiece, *mrs. Poe* was excellent. It is in this line of characters she particular [sic] delights and to which she should bend her chief attention. It is difficult to be sprightly without being fantastic, and to act the hoyden, without being gross and mawkish. Mrs. Poe has hit the happy medium; and let her cultivate it with assiduity. It is one of the most difficult and most important departments of female comedy."

Advertisement in the *Richmond Enquirer*, November 29, 1811, Richmond, Virginia.



TO THE HUMANE HEART,

On this night, *Mrs. Poe*, lingering on the bed of disease and surrounded by her children, asks your assistance; and *asks it perhaps for the last time*. The Generosity of a Richmond Audience can need no other appeal.

For particulars, see the Bills of the day."

Richmond Enquirer, December 10, 1811, Richmond, Virginia.

Died, on last Sunday morning [December 8] *Mrs. Poe*, one of the Actresses of the Company at present playing on the Richmond Boards. By the death of this lady the Stage has been deprived of one of its chief ornaments. And to say the least of her, she was an interesting Actress, and never failed to catch the applause and command the admiration of the beholder."

Elizabeth Poe's husband, David Poe, was not present at the time of her death. He had apparently abandoned his family. Edgar, his older brother Henry, and infant sister Rosalie were orphaned and left to the charity of the Richmond community. Henry was sent to Baltimore to his grandfather's [David Poe, Sr.] home. Rosalie was adopted by the William Mackenzie family, and Edgar was cared for by the John Allan family. Both families resided in Richmond.

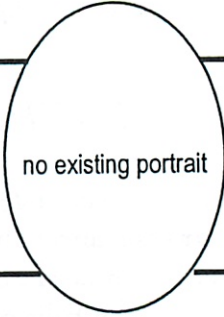
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bad actor + father

I am grand father

Father

David Poe, Jr.



no existing portrait

David Poe's family was of Irish descent. His father David Poe, Sr. distinguished himself during the American Revolution. As Deputy-Quartermaster General of the City of Baltimore, he supplied the soldiers in his area with food, clothing, and transportation, sometimes at his own expense. David, Jr. studied law for a time. At the age of 19 he became an actor. His family was displeased with his career choice. Acting was not considered a respectable, nor, a profitable profession. David Poe married the popular English born actress Elizabeth Arnold in March 1806. Little is known of his personal life, but the theater advertisements, newspaper reviews and notices, and one letter shed some light on his life.

left family
Became
Bad actor

Needs money

Charleston Courier, December 10, 1803. Regarding a variety of theatrical parts played by David.

"He is also extremely diffident; indeed so much so, that the slightest lapse in his speech throws him from the little confidence he has acquired, back into his first night's trepidation. We hope he will excuse our suggesting to him, that speaking slower will not only help him to get rid of those fears more quickly, by making him less subject to lapses, but will improve his delivery, and give meaning and effect to his words. He ought to practise before some judicious friends, and beg of them candidly to set him right, when he is wrong."

They
hate
him

Charleston Courier, February 29, 1804. Regarding David's portrayal of Don Pedro in Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*.

"Young Poe being less than usual under the dominion of that timid modesty which so depresses his powers, acted Don Pedro so respectably as to animate the hopes we have entertained of his future progress."

David Poe, Jr.'s letter to his cousin George Poe, Jr. March 6, 1809.

Sir, *You promised me on your honor to meet me at the Mansion house on the 23d—I promise you on my word of honor that if you will lend me 30, 20, 15 or even \$10 I will remit it to you immediately on my arrival in Baltimore. Be assured I will keep my promise at least as well as you did yours and that nothing but extreme distress would have forc'd me to make this application—Your answer by the bearer will prove whether I yet have "favour in your eyes" or whether I am to be despised by (as I understand) a rich relation because when a wild boy I join'd a profession which I then thought and now think an honorable one. But which I would most willingly quit tomorrow if it gave satisfaction to your family provided I could do any thing, else that would give bread to mine—Yr. Politeness will no doubt induce you to answer this note from Yrs &c.*

D. Poe Jr.

Ramblers' Magazine and New-York Theatrical Register, September 1809. Review of David's performance in *Pizarro*.

"By the sudden indisposition of mr. Robertson, the entertainments announced for the evening necessarily gave place to the preceding. Mr. Poe was mr. R's substitute in Alonzo; and a more wretched Alonzo have we never witnessed. This man was never destined for the high walks of the drama;--a footman is the extent of what he ought to attempt: and if by accident like that of this evening he is compelled to walk without his sphere, it would bespeak more of sense in him to read the part than attempt to act it:--his person, voice, and non-expression of countenance, all combine to stamp him— *poh! Et praeterea nihil.**

*The editor of *Ramblers' Magazine* added his comment to the review:

"Here, as well as in some other passages of the *Theatrical Register*, our correspondent it [is] too acrimonious; and I must take the liberty to differ from him, in some measure, respecting mr. Poe's talents, who, *if he would take pains*, is by no means contemptible."

David made his last appearance on the stage on October 18, 1809 in *Grieving's a Folly*. On October 20, 1809 he was billed to perform in *Castle Spectre*, but was unable to perform due to an "indisposition." The term "indisposition was used in theatrical notices of the day to indicate drunkenness.

Ramblers' Magazine and New-York Theatrical Register, October 20, 1809.

Castle Spectre— Blue Devils— and Don Juan. It was not until the curtain was ready to rise that the audience was informed that, owing to the sudden indisposition of mr. Robertson and Mr. Poe, the *Castle Spectre* was necessarily substituted for *Grieving's a Folly*."

David Poe's activities over the next two years of his life are unknown. He was not with his wife and children at the time of her death on December 8, 1811. With the death of their mother and the disappearance of their father, the three young children were left to the charity of relatives and two families of Richmond. Henry was sent to Baltimore to his grandfather's [David Poe, Sr.] home, Rosalie was adopted by the William Mackenzie family, and Edgar was cared for by the John Allan family in Richmond.

Foster Father

John Allan



John Allan was born in Scotland. In 1794, at the age of 14, John moved to Richmond, Virginia, to live with his uncle who was very a successful merchant. John worked several years as a clerk for his uncle before he started his own business as a tobacco merchant. He married the “much admired” Frances Keeling Valentine. John and Frances never had children of their own. Edgar Poe was two years old when he was brought into the Allan household. He was well cared for, provided a good education, and at most times treated as a member of the family. Although Edgar’s middle name comes from the Allan family, he was not legally adopted by John Allan.

Excerpt from schoolmaster William Ewing's letter to John Allan (in England). November 27, 1817.

“I trust Edgar continues to be well and to like his School as much as he used to do when he was in Richmond. He is a charming boy and it will give me great pleasure to hear how he is, and where you have sent him to school, and also what he is reading...Let me now only beg of you to remember me respectfully to your lady Mrs. Allan and her sister, who I hope are well, and also do not forget to mention me to their august attendant Edgar.”

Excerpt from John Allan's letter to schoolmaster William Ewing. England March 21, 1818.

“Accept my thanks for the solicitude you have so kindly expressed about Edgar and the family. Edgar is a fine Boy and I have no reason to complain of his progress.”

Excerpt from John Allan's letter to his uncle William Galt. England. September 28, 1818.

“Edgar is growing wonderfully and enjoys a good reputation as both able and willing to receive instruction.”

John Allan's letter to Edgar’s brother Henry who was living in Baltimore. November 1, 1824.

Dear Henry,

I have just seen your letter of the 25th ult. to Edgar and am afflicted, that he has not written you. He has had little else to do for me he does nothing & seems quite miserable, sulky & ill-tempered to all the Family. How we have acted to produce this is beyond my conception—why I have put up so long with his conduct is little less wonderful. The boy possesses not a Spark of affection for us not a particle of gratitude for all my care and kindness towards him. I have given him a much superior Education than ever I received myself. If Rosalie has to relie on any

affection from him God in his mercy preserve her—I fear his associates have led him to adopt a line of thinking & acting very contrary to what he possessed when in England. I feel proudly the difference between your principles & his & have my desire to Stand as I ought to do in your Estimation. Had I done my duty as faithfully to my God as I have to Edgar, then had Death come when he will had no terrors for me, but I must end this with a devout wish that God may yet bless him & you & that Success may crown all your endeavors & between you your poor Sister Rosalie may not suffer.

At least She is half your Sister & God forbid my dear Henry that We should visit upon the living the Errors & frailties of the dead. Believe me Dear Henry we take an affectionate interest in your destinies and our United Prayers will be that the God of Heaven will bless & protect you. Rely on him my Brave & excellent Boy who is willing & ready to save to the uttermost. May he keep you in Danger preserve you always is the prayer of your Friend & Servant.

John Allan

Edgar's letter to John Allan. Baltimore, Maryland. August 10, 1829

Dear Pa,

I received yours this morning which relieved me from more trouble than you can well imagine—I was afraid that you were offended & although I knew that I had done nothing to deserve your anger, I was in a most uncomfortable situation—without one cent of money—in a strange place & so quickly engaged in difficulties after the serious misfortunes which I have just escaped—My grandmother is extremely poor & ill (paralytic). My aunt Maria if possible is still worse & Henry entirely given up to drink & unable to help himself, much less me—

I am unwilling to appear obstinate as regards the substitute so will say nothing more concerning it—only remarking that they will no longer enlist men for the residue of anothers' enlistment as formerly, consequently my substitute was enlisted for 5 years not 3—

I stated in my last letter (to which I refer you) that Mr. Eaton gave me strong hopes for September at any rate that the appointment could be obtained for June next—I can obtain decent board lodging & washing with other expenses of mending &c for 5 & perhaps even 4 ½ \$ per week—

If I obtain the appointment by the last of September the amount of expense would be at most \$30—If I should be unfortunate & not obtain it until June I will not desire you to allow as much as that per week because by engaging for a longer period at a cheap boarding house I can do with much less—say even 10 even 8 \$ per month—any thing with which you think it possible to exist—I am not so anxious of obtaining money from your good nature as of preserving your good will—

I am extremely anxious that you should believe that I have not attempted to impose upon you—I will in the meantime (if you wish it) write you often, but pledge myself to apply for no other assistance than what you shall think proper to allow—

I left behind me in Richmond a small trunk containing books & some letters—will you forward it on to Baltimore to the care of H-W. Bool, Jr. & if you think I may ask so much perhaps you will put in it for me some few clothes as I am nearly without—

Give my love to Miss Valentine—

I remain Dear Pa
Yours affectionately
Edgar A. Poe

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 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 favorite grandchild—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. 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 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 involved 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—and after nearly 2 years conduct with which no fault could be found—in the army, as a common soldier—I earned, myself, by the most humiliating privations—a Cadet's warrant which you could have obtained at any time for asking. It was then that I thought I might venture to solicit your assistance in giving me an outfit—I came home, you will remember, the night after the burial—If she [Frances Allan] had not have died while I was away there would have been nothing for me to regret—Your love I never valued—but she I believed loved me as her own child. You promised me to forgive all—but you soon forgot your promise. You sent me to W. Point like a beggar. The same difficulties are threatening me as before at Charlottesville—and I must resign. As to your injunction not to trouble you with farther communication rest assured, Sir, that I will most religiously observe it. When I parted from you—at the steam-boat, I knew that I should never see you again.

As regards Sergt. Graves—I did write him that letter. As to the truth of its contents, I leave it to God, and your own conscience.—The time in which I wrote it was within a half hour after you had embittered every feeling of my heart against you by your abuse of my family, and myself, under your own roof—and at a time when you knew that my heart was almost breaking.

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.

E A Poe

*John Allan commented on back of the letter:

"I received this on the 10th & did not from its conclusion deem it necessary to reply. I make this note on the 13th & can see no Reason to alter my opinion. I do not think the Boy has one good quality. He may do or act as he pleases, tho' I would have saved him but on his own terms & conditions since I cannot believe a word he writes. His letter is the most barefaced one sided statement."

Edgar's letter to John Allan. Baltimore, April 12, 1833

It has now been more than two years since you have assisted me, and more than three since you have spoken to me. I feel little hope that you will pay any regard to this letter, but still I cannot refrain from making one more attempt to interest you in my behalf. If you will only consider in what a situation I am placed you will surely pity me—without friends, without any means, consequently of obtaining employment, I am perishing—absolutely perishing for want of aid. And yet I am not idle—nor addicted to any vice—nor have I committed any offence against society which would render me deserving of so hard a fate. For God's sake pity me, and save me from destruction.

E A Poe

Foster Mother

Frances "Fanny" Valentine Allan



The beautiful and "much admired Miss Fanny Valentine" married John Allan in 1803. A Richmond socialite, Frances enjoyed attending the theater where she saw Edgar's mother perform on stage. The Allans had no children of their own. When Edgar was orphaned by his mother's death from tuberculosis, Fanny brought Edgar into her home. The Allans raised and educated Edgar as if he were their own son. She was devoted to him and he to her.

Frances Allan's letter to John Allan. October 15, 1818. Dawlish, England. During the period the Allans' and Edgar lived in England. Mrs. Allan was on a holiday.

My dear hubby

Your kind letter of the 13 was received this morning and you will perceive I have lost no time in replying to it, however pleasant a duty it may be I fear it will be long ere I shall write with any facility or ease to myself, as I find you are determined to think my health better contrary to all I say it will be needless for me to say more on that subject but be assure I embrace every opportunity that offers for taking air and exercises but at this advanced seasons of the year we cant expect the weather to be very good I am this moment interrupted with a message from Mrs. Dunlop requesting I would accompany her in a ride which I shall accept the Carriage is now at the door

Friday morning October 16

we had a very long and pleasant ride we started at two o'clock and did not return until six the day was remarkably fine we had a beautifull view of the surrounding Cuntry we had a smart Beau with us who arrived here from London a few days ago I was very much pressed to go to the ball last night and nothing prevented me from going but the want of a little finery so you and the Doctor may lay aside some of your consequence for I really think you have a great deal of Vanity to immagien you are the cause of ally my misery, I only wish my health would admit of my entering into all the gaieties of this place I would soon let you see I could be as happy and contented without you as you appear to be in my absence as I hear of nothing but partyes at home and abroad but long may the Almighty grant my dear husband health and spirits to enjoy them

now I must request my dear hubby to get me a nice piece of sheeting and a piece of shirting Cotton as they will be much wanted when I return tell Nancy she must get Abbatt to put up the tester and drapery to my bed and the parlour window Curtains to have the bedroom floors well cleaned before the Carpets are put down Miss G is very well and joins me in kind love to you the girls the Doctor Mrs. Rennolds & all friends and believe me my

*dear old man yours truly
Frances K. Allan*

Poe + wife loved
Wife

Virginia Clemm Poe



Described as having bright eyes, and dark brown hair, Virginia's face was "always animated and vivacious." Born on August 15, 1822 Virginia lived in Baltimore with her grandmother, mother, and cousin William Henry Poe (Edgar's brother). Virginia's father died when she was four years old. Afterwards the family depended on the grandmother's small government pension of \$240, which she received each year for her husband's service during the American Revolution. Edgar moved in with the family in early 1831 and would remain with them until he moved to Richmond, Virginia in 1835. Virginia's grandmother died in the same year leaving her and her mother Maria, without a steady source of income.

Virginia and Maria joined Edgar in Richmond in 1835. Edgar and Virginia were married in 1836. She was 13 years old and he was 27 years old.

In 1842, Virginia became ill with tuberculosis. She died of the disease on January 30, 1847, at the age of 24.

On Valentine's Day in 1846, Virginia wrote this acrostic poem to her husband. Note that the first letter of each line spells out his name.

Ever with thee I wish to roam—
Dearest my life is thine.
Give me a cottage for my home
And a rich old cypress vine,
Removed from the world with its sin and care
And the tattling of many tongues.
Love alone shall guide us when we are there—
Love shall heal my weakened lungs;
And Oh, the tranquil hours we'll spend,
Never wishing that others may see!
Perfect ease we'll enjoy, without thinking to lend
Ourselves to the world and its glee—
Ever peaceful and blissful we'll be.

Edgar's letter to Virginia. New York City. June 12, 1846.

My Dear Heart, My dear Virginia! Our Mother will explain to you why I stay away from you this night. I trust the interview I am promised, will result in some substantial good for me, for your dear sake, and hers—Keep up your heart in all hopefulness, and trust yet a little longer—In my last great disappointment, I should have lost my courage but for you—my little darling wife you are my greatest and only stimulus now. To battle with this uncongenial, unsatisfactory and ungrateful life—I shall be with you tomorrow P.M. and be assured until I see you, I will keep in loving remembrance your last words and your fervent prayer!

Sleep well and may God grant you a peaceful summer, with your devoted

Edgar

Edgar's letter to Marie L. Shew. Fordham, New York. January 29, 1847.

Kindest—dearest friend—My poor Virginia still lives, although failing fast and now suffering much pain. May God grant her life until she sees you and thanks you once again! Her bosom is full to overflowing—like my own—with a boundless—inexpressible gratitude to you. Lest she may never see you more—she bids me say that she sends her sweetest kiss of love and will die blessing you. But come—oh come to-morrow! Yes, I will be calm—everything you so nobly wish to see me. My mother sends you, also, her "warmest love and thanks." She begs me to ask you, if possible, to make arrangements at home so that you may stay with us tomorrow night. I enclose the order to the Postmaster.

Heaven bless you and farewell

Edgar A Poe

Excerpt from Edgar's letter to George W. Eveleth. Fordham, New York January 4, 1848.

"Six years ago, a wife, whom I loved as no man ever loved before, ruptured a blood-vessel in singing. Her life was despaired of. I took leave of her forever & underwent all the agonies of her death. She recovered partially and I again hoped. At the end of a year the vessel broke again—I went through precisely the same scene. Again in about a year afterward. Then again—again—again & even once again at varying intervals. Each time I felt all the agonies of her death—and at each accession of the disorder I loved her more dearly & clung to her life with more desperate pertinacity. But I am constitutionally sensitive—nervous in a very unusual degree. I became insane, with long intervals of horrible sanity. During these fits of absolute unconsciousness I drank, God only knows how often or how much. As a matter of course, my enemies referred the insanity to the drink rather than the drink to the insanity. I had indeed, nearly abandoned all hope of a permanent cure when I found one in the death of my wife. This I can & do endure as becomes a man—it was the horrible never-ending oscillation between hope & despair which I could no longer have endured without the total loss of reason. In the death of what was my life, then, I receive a new but—oh God! How melancholy an existence."

was like a mother + care-taker.

Gave love + care

Someone who cared

Aunt and Mother-in-Law

Maria Poe Clemm



After Edgar's final break with his foster father, he sought refuge in the Baltimore home of his aunt, Maria Poe Clemm. She would be a guiding and stabilizing influence on Edgar for the rest of his life. After his marriage to her daughter Virginia, Edgar referred to his Aunt Maria as mother or "Muddy."

Described by acquaintances as a "rather ordinary, uncultivated woman" with an "almost masculine aspect" Muddy served as the "ever vigilant guardian of the house." Devoted to Virginia and Edgar, she kept the house clean and neat, cooked the meals, and "served as messenger, doing the errands, making pilgrimages between the poet and his publishers...."

Edgar's letter to Muddy. April 7, 1844.

New York City, Sunday Morning just after Breakfast

My dear Muddy,

We have just this minute done breakfast, and I now sit down to write you about everything. I can't pay for the letter, because the P.O. won't be open today. In the first place, we arrived at Walnut St. wharf. The driver wanted to make me pay a dollar, but I wouldn't. Then I had to pay a boy a levy to put the trunks in the baggage car. In the meantime I took Sis in the Depot Hotel. It was only a quarter past 6, and we had to wait till 7. We saw the Ledger & Times—nothing in either—a few words of no account in the Chronicle.—We started in good spirits, but did not get here until nearly 3 o'clock. We went in the cars to Amboy about 40 miles from N. York, and then took the steamboat the rest of the way.—Sissy coughed none at all. When we got to the wharf it was raining hard. I left her on board the boat, after putting the trunks in the Ladies' Cabin, and set off to buy an umbrella and look for a boarding-house. I met a man selling umbrellas and bought one for 62 cents. Then I went up Greenwich St. and soon found a boarding-house. It is just before you get to Cedar St. on the west side going up—the left hand side. It has brown stone steps, with a porch with brown pillars. "Morrison" is the name on the door. I made a bargain in a few minutes and got a hack and went for Sis. I was not gone more than ½ an hour, and she was quite astonished to see me back so soon. She didn't expect me for an hour. There were 2 other ladies waiting on board—so she was'nt very lonely.—When we got to the house we had to wait about ½ an hour before the room was ready. The house is old & buggy, but the landlady is a nice chatty ol [section missing] gave us the back room on the [section missing] night & day & attendance, for 7 \$--the cheapest board I ever knew, taking into consideration the central situation and the living. I wish Kate [the family cat] could see it—she would faint. Last night, for supper, we had the nicest tea you ever drank, strong & hot—wheat bread & rye bread—cheese—tea-cakes (elegant) a great dish (2 dishes) of elegant ham, and 2 of cold veal, piled up like a mountain and large slices—3 dishes of the cakes, and

every thing in the greatest profusion. No fear of starving here. The landlady seemed as if she couldn't press us enough, and we were at home directly. Her husband is living with her—a fat good-natured old soul. There are 8 or 10 boarders—2 or 3 of them ladies—2 servants.—For breakfast we had excellent-flavored coffe, hot & strong—not very clear & no great deal of cream—veal cutlets, elegant ham & eggs & nice bread and butter. I never sat down to a more plentiful or a nice breakfast. I wish you could have seen the eggs—and the great dishes of meat. I ate the first hearty breakfast I have eaten since I left our little home. Sis is delighted, and we are both in excellent spirits. She has coughed hardly any and had no night sweat. She is now busy mending my pants which I tore against a nail. I went out last night and bought a skein of silk, a skein of thread, & 2 buttons a pair of slippers & a tin pan for the stove. The fire kept in all night.—We have now got 4 \$ and a half left. Tomorrow I am going to borrow 3 \$--so that I may have a fortnight to go upon. I feel in excellent spirits & have 'nt drank a drop—so that I hope soon to get out of trouble. The very instant I scrape together enough money I will send it on. You ca 'nt imagine how much we both do miss you. Sissy had a hearty cry last night, because you and Catterina [family cat] weren't here. We are resolved to get 2 rooms the first moment we can. In the meantime it is impossible we could be more comfortable or more at home than we are.—It looks as if it was going to clear up now.—Be sure and go to the P.O. & have my letters forwarded. As soon as I write Lowell's article, I will send it to you, & get you to get the money from Graham. Give our best loves to Catterina.

Be sure & take home the Messenger, to Hirst. We hope to send for you very soon.

In 1849, Poe wrote this poem as a tribute to both Muddy and his deceased wife.

To My Mother

Because I feel that, in the Heavens above,
 The angels, whispering to one another,
 Can find, among their burning terms of love,
 None so devotional as that of "Mother,"
 Therefore by that dear name I long have called you—
 You who are more than mother unto me,
 And fill my heart of hearts, where Death installed you.
 In setting my Virginia's spirit free.
 My mother—my own mother, who died early,
 Was but the mother of myself; but you
 Are mother to the one I loved so dearly,
 And thus are dearer than the mother I knew
 By that infinity with which my wife
 Was dearer to my soul than its soul—life.

Excerpt from Muddy's letter to Neilson Poe (Poe's cousin). Fordham, New York. October 9, 1849.

"I have heard this moment of the death of my dear son Edgar—I cannot believe it, and have written to you, to try and ascertain the fact and particulars—he has been at the South for the last three months, and was on his way home—the paper states he died in Baltimore yesterday—If it is true God have mercy on me, for he was the last I had to cling to and love, will you write the instant you receive this and relieve this dreadful uncertainty—My mind is prepared to hear all—conceal nothing from me."

Poe won a \$100 prize for his popular mystery story "The Gold-Bug." The story featured a golden colored bug, a secret coded message, and a search for a pirate's hidden treasure. Poe chose Sullivan's Island, off the coast of Charleston, South Carolina, as the setting of his story. As a young man he had served with the U.S. Army in the area and probably spent many hours exploring the island.

One intriguing aspect of the story was the solution of the pirate's secret coded message, or cryptograph. Poe had written earlier an article titled "A Few Words on Secret Writing." Readers were so fascinated with his discussion that many challenged Poe with their own cryptographs. Poe deciphered the messages, and then published the solutions in *Graham's Magazine*. This surely increased the circulation of the magazine, but Poe found it a time consuming activity. In 1843, he wrote to a friend, "You will hardly believe me when I tell you that I have lost, in time, which to me is money, more than a thousand dollars in solving ciphers."

Below is an excerpt from Poe's essay "A Few Words on Secret Writing," *Graham's Magazine*, July, 1841, describing the methods of creating a cryptographic code.

Were two individuals, totally unpractised in cryptography, desirous of holding by letter a correspondence which should be unintelligible to all but themselves, it is most probable that they would at once think of a peculiar alphabet, to which each should have a key. At first it would, perhaps, be arranged that *a* should stand for *z*, *b* for *y*, *c* for *x*, *d* for *w*, &c., &c; that is to say, the order of the letters would be reversed. Upon second thoughts, this arrangement appearing too obvious, a more complex mode would be adopted. The first thirteen letters might be written beneath the last thirteen, thus:

n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m;

and, so placed, *a* might stand for *n* and *n* for *a*, *o* for *b* and *b* for *o*, &c., &c. This, again, having an air of regularity which might be fathomed, the key alphabet might be constructed absolutely at random.

Thus,	a	might stand for	p
	b	"	x
	c	"	u
	d	"	o, &c."

Source:

Edgar Allan Poe: Essays and Reviews. Notes and selections made by G. R. Thompson.
New York: The Library of America, 1984

Decipher a Cryptograph!

Below is a cryptograph or secret coded message, using Poe's scrambled alphabet method.

iwsb

jsbsubzls vbwak ztlstbwa

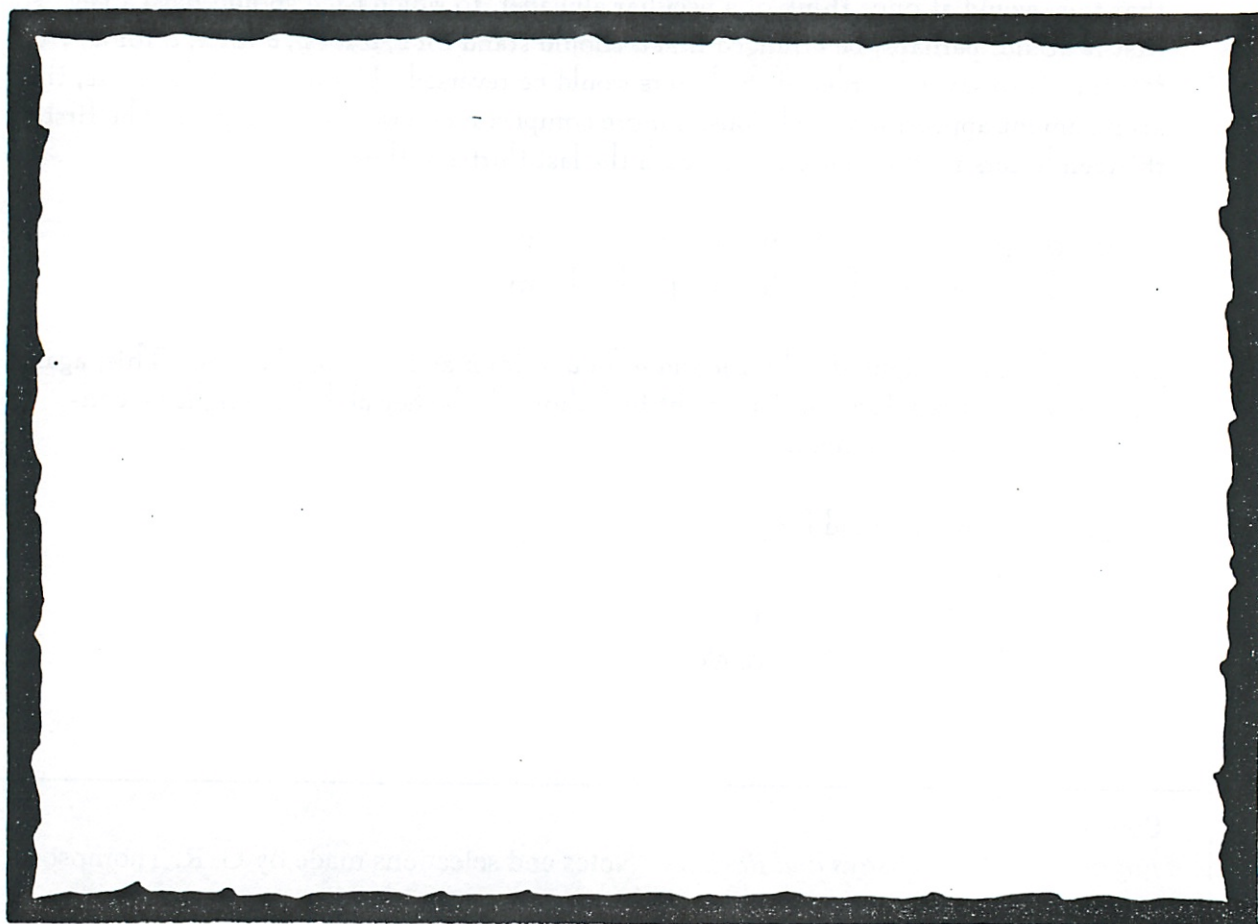
ezbsapak uazbzu

cpvbsa wm qwaawa



Use this key to decipher the message.

p y u j s m x q z n o e c t w i d a v b h l r f k g
a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z



Poe first came to the attention of the literary world as a magazine editor and critic. He wrote nearly one thousand essays, reviews, articles, columns, and critical notices, which appeared in magazines, newspapers, or annuals. His often witty critical reviews helped increase the circulation of the magazines for which he worked. The following is a sample from the opening paragraph of Poe's review of a book by George B. Cheever:

"He is much better known, however, as the editor of 'The Commonplace Book of American Poetry,' a work which has at least the merit of not belying its title, and is exceedingly commonplace."

Poe's harsher reviews created enemies for him among other writers and earned him the nickname "the man with the tomahawk." Although some writers resented Poe's harsh criticism, others felt he was correct in many of his reviews. The following is a contemporary verse supporting Poe's work as a critic:

"A Mirror for Authors"

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!



Holden's Dollar Magazine, January 3, 1849
Illustrated by Felix O. C. Darley

Poe was among the first to propose setting standards by which to judge literary works. He created his own vision of what constituted good literary work from studying the ideas and theories of earlier writers including Plato, Aristotle, Milton, and Coleridge. His influential theory of "unity of effect" states that the author of a short story should construct a tale to fit one overall purpose or effect. In his positive review of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Twice-Told Tales* he outlined his ideas:

"A skilful literary artist has constructed a tale. If wise, he has not fashioned his thoughts to accommodate his incidents; but having conceived, with deliberate care, a certain unique or single 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. If his very initial sentence tend not to the outbringing of this effect, then he has failed in his first step. In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one pre-established design. And by such means, with such care and skill, a picture is at length painted which leaves in the mind of him who contemplates it with a kindred art, a sense of the fullest satisfaction. The idea of the tale has been presented unblemished, because undisturbed; and this is an end unattainable by the novel. Undue brevity is just as exceptionable here as in the poem; but undue length is yet more to be avoided."

Poe believed his role as a critic included exposing poor writing and demanding of American writers a higher standard of writing. His critical reviews often included a detailed technical examination of the literary work at hand. In poorly written works his observations ranged from pointing out grammatical errors to exposing illogical reasoning within the work. A few remarks from Poe's nearly 10,000 word review of Morris Mattson's "Paul Ulric" illustrates his caustic critical style, and his concern about America's place in the literary world.

"In itself, the book before us is too purely imbecile to merit an extended critique—but as a portion of our daily literary food—as an American work published by the Harpers—as one of a class of absurdities with an inundation of which our country is grievously threatened—we shall have no hesitation, and shall spare no pains, in exposing fully before the public eye its four hundred and forty-three pages of utter folly, bombast, and inanity."

"In summing up an opinion of Paul Ulric, it is by no means our intention to mince the matter at all. The book is despicable in every respect. Such are the works which bring daily discredit upon our national literature. We have no right to complain of being laughed at abroad when so villainous a compound, as we now hold in our hand, of incongruous folly, plagiarism, immorality, inanity, and bombast, can command at any moment both a puff and a publisher."

* puffery - The kind of criticism which is the product of literary cliques. Authors who belong to such cliques laud one another's works. To "puff" is to overpraise, to "blow up."

Poe's ideas of literary criticism included the belief that a work should be reviewed for its own worth. Non-literary criteria, such as the background and social status of the author should not be included in the review. Over a century later this approach was adopted by literary critics, such as Allen Tate, John Crowe Ransom, and R.P. Blackmur.

Sources:

Edgar Allan Poe by Vincent Buranelli. Boston: G. K. Hall, 1977

Edgar Allan Poe: Essays and Reviews. Notes and selections made by G. R. Thompson. New York: The Library of America. 1984

A Dictionary of Literary Terms by J. A. Cuddon. Penguin Books. Great Britain. 1977

A Reputation Ruined

The Defamation of Poe's Character



Edgar Allan Poe is known today for his chilling tales of horror and haunting poems. However, in his own day he was best known as an editor and harsh literary critic. Poe's reviews offended many of his colleagues. One of those was Rufus Griswold who sought satisfaction by defaming Poe's character after his death. As a result of Griswold's efforts, many readers believe Edgar Allan Poe was a drunkard and a drug addict who suffered from insanity.

Poe met Rufus Griswold in 1841, when Griswold was planning an anthology, *The Poets and Poetry of America*. Poe provided several works of his own, and recommended other poets for inclusion. Griswold ignored Poe's suggestions and published the work in April, 1842. Poe wrote a favorable review of the anthology for the *Boston Miscellany*, but he criticized the inclusion of some of the poets, remarking that they were "too mediocre to entitle them to particular notice." Griswold, expecting high praise, was displeased by the review.



Griswold was angered further after the publication of an unfavorable review of *The Poets and Poetry of America*, which appeared in the January 1843 edition of *The Philadelphia Saturday Museum*. This unsigned review included a harsh critique of Griswold as a writer and anthologist. Griswold believed that Poe was the author of the critique. Later in the year, Poe presented several lectures on the "Poetry of America." Some reviewers felt his comments on Griswold were "witheringly severe." The owner of *Graham's Magazine* later commented that Poe "gave Mr. Griswold some raps over the knuckles of force sufficient to be remembered."

Poe's sudden death in 1849 gave Griswold the opportunity to damage Poe's reputation. Ironically, at a more congenial point in their relationship, Poe asked Griswold to serve as literary executor in the event of his death. The day after Poe's death Griswold published in the *New York Tribune* a death notice and commentary on Poe's life. It began:

"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 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."

Griswold continued the article with characterizations of Poe as a man whose “harsh experience had deprived him of all faith, in man or woman” and who had “no moral susceptibility...and little or nothing of the true point of honor.”

Griswold as literary executor, published 3 volumes of Poe’s works and a biographical “Memoir” of Poe. In the “Memoir” Griswold depicted Poe as a destitute, uncontrollable drunkard. Griswold claimed that this problem and gambling caused Poe to be expelled from the University of Virginia. He also claimed that Poe deserted the U.S. Army and that Poe’s character flaws were responsible for his departure from West Point Military Academy.

Many of Poe’s friends were outraged by the content of the biography. Shortly after the “Memoir” was published many contributed letters and articles to newspapers and magazines defending Poe’s character. However, as time passed Griswold’s “Memoir” was accepted as the true version of Poe’s life. This “official biography” was used in succeeding editions of Poe’s works, perpetuating Griswold’s falsehoods.

Griswold’s attacks on Poe’s character encouraged others who held resentments against Poe to speculate about his sources of creativity. Some writers implied that Poe was an opium addict, suggesting opium as the source of his creativity and the inspiration for his tales and poems. Citing specific instances of opium use in Poe’s stories, readers have concluded that Poe was much like the opium abusers in his tales.

Research shows allegations of opium abuse, as well as other charges, to be without evidence. Dr. Thomas Dunn English, a Philadelphia physician and poet who had once been Poe’s friend and later bitter enemy, wrote many years after Poe’s death:

“Had Poe the opium habit...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 it to be a baseless slander.”

Poe did in fact have a drinking problem, exasperated by his apparently low tolerance for alcohol. Poe attended the University of Virginia, but did not complete his studies because of financial and family reasons. Poe enlisted in the Army in 1827 as a private and was released in 1829 as a sergeant major, a rank hardly achievable so fast without a good service record. In fact, recommendations from his officers helped him enter West Point, which he left for financial reasons.

This evidence suggests that Poe’s reputation as a degenerate and an opium addict is unfounded. Edgar Allan Poe was a brilliant, inventive and imaginative author and poet. Poe’s contributions to the field of literature rank him as one of America’s greatest writers, as well as gaining him high acclaim throughout the literary world.

Sources:

Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography. By Arthur Hobson Quinn. New York: Cooper Square Publishers. 1941.

Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance. Kenneth Silverman. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, Inc.

Letter Tampering

The outcry of Poe's friends against Rufus Griswold's selection as his literary executor and biographer led Griswold to publish letters between he and Poe to prove they were friends. Nearly a hundred years after Poe's death, a close examination of the letters by Poe biographer Arthur Hobson Quinn, revealed tampering and possible forgery of the letters by Griswold. The following are two letters used by Quinn in his book *Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography*, to illustrate the way Griswold changed the tone and content of one of Poe's letters. The original letter was written by Poe in reference to his providing short stories to Griswold who was compiling an anthology titled "*The Prose Authors of America, and Their Works*." The letter published by Griswold in the preface of his "Memoir" of Poe reveals several additions which changed the tone of the letter.

Classroom Activity:

Students examine the two letters and list the ways the content and impression of the first letter is changed by Griswold in his version.

Two students read the letters to the class. The class discusses how the changes Griswold made to the original letter changes the impression of Poe and his relationship to Griswold. How does Poe appear to the reader in each letter?

Source:

Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography. Arthur Hobson Quinn. New York: Cooper Square Publishers. 1941. pages 446-448

Poe's original letter to Rufus Griswold.

My Dear Griswold,

New-York. Feb. 24. 1845

Soon after seeing you I sent you, through Zeiber, all my poems worth re-publishing, & I presume they reached you. With this I send you another package, also through Zeiber, by Burgess & Stringer. It contains in the way of Essay "Mesmeric Revelation" which I would like to go in, even if something else is omitted. I send also a portion of the "Marginalia," in which I have marked some of the most pointed passages. In the matter of criticism I cannot put my hand upon anything that suits me—but I believe that in "funny" criticism (if you wish any such) Flaccus will convey a tolerable idea of my style, and of my serious manner Barnaby Rudge is a good specimen. In "Graham" you will find these. In the tale line I send you "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Man that was Used Up"—far more than enough, you will say—but you can select to suit yourself. I would prefer having in the "Gold Bug" to the "Murders in the R.M.," but have not a copy just now. If there is no immediate hurry for it, however, I will get one & send it you corrected. Please write & let me know if you get this.—I have taken a 3d interest in the "Broadway Journal" & will be glad if you could send me anything, at any time, in the way of "Literary Intelligence."

Truly yours.

Poe

Griswold's version of Poe's letter as published in the preface of his "Memoir" of Poe. The sections in bold print are the additions and changes made by Griswold.

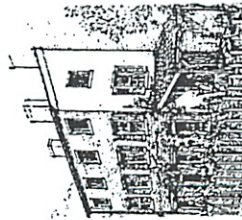
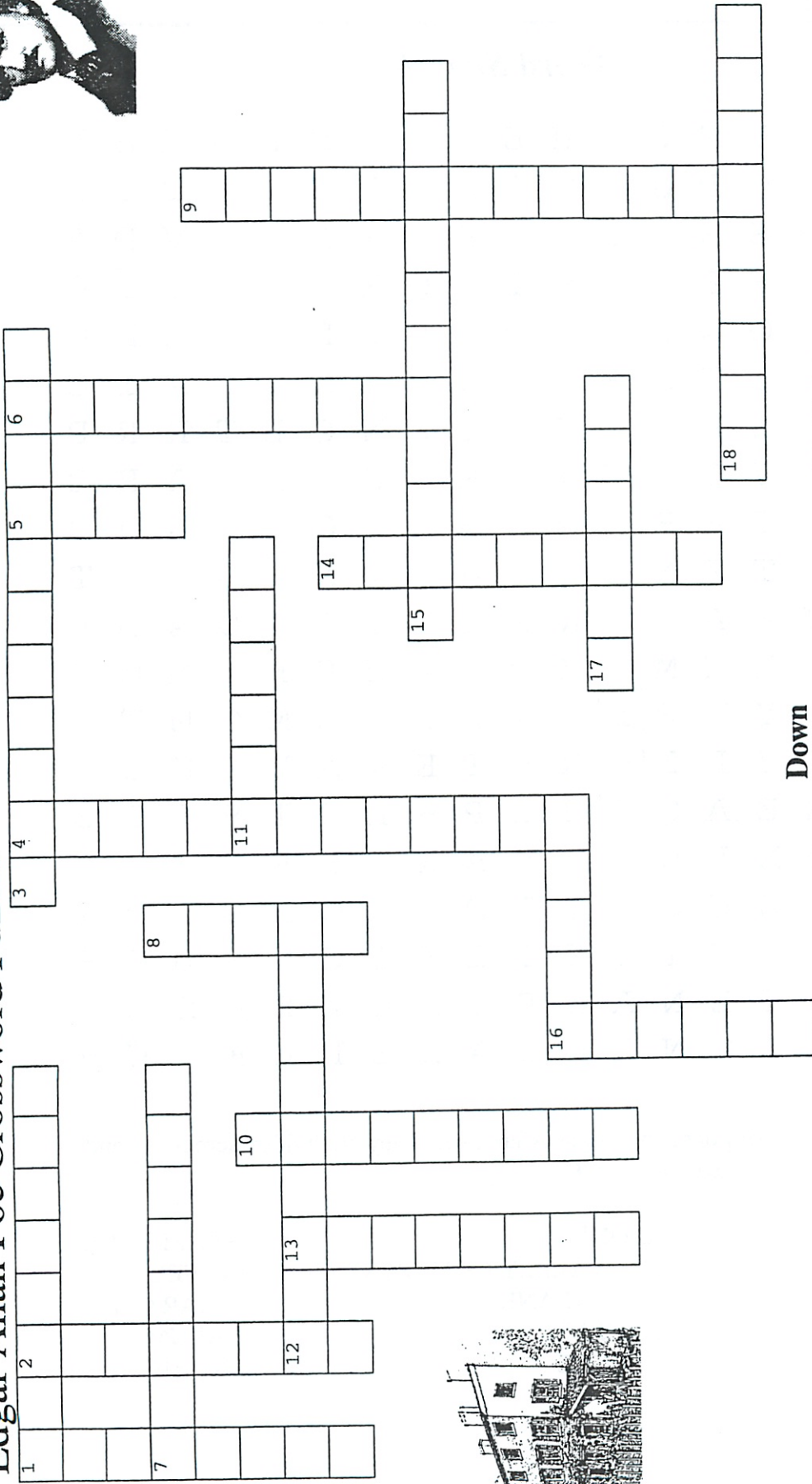
February 24, 1845

My dear Griswold:—A thousand thanks for your kindness in the matter of those books, which I could not afford to buy, and had so much need of. Soon after seeing you, I sent you, through Zieber, all my poems worth re-publishing, and I presume they reached you. I was sincerely delighted with what you said of them, and if you will write your criticism in the form of a preface, I shall be greatly obliged to you. I say this not because you praised me: everybody praises me now: but because you so perfectly understand me, or what I have aimed at, in all my poems: I did not think you had so much delicacy of appreciation joined with your strong sense; I can say truly that no man's approbation gives me so much pleasure. I send you with this another package, also through Zieber, by Burgess & Stringer. It contains, in the way of essay, "Mesmeric Revelation," which I would like to have go in, even if you have to omit the "House of Usher." I send also corrected copies of (in the way of funny criticism, but you don't like this) "Flaccus," which conveys a tolerable idea of my style; and of my serious manner "Barnaby Rudge" is a good specimen. In the tale line, "The Murders of the Rue Morgue," "The Gold Bug," and the "Man that was Used Up,"—far more than enough, but you can select to suit yourself. I prefer the "G.B." to the "M. in the R.M." I have taken a third interest in the "Broadway Journal," and will be glad if you could send me anything for it. Why not let me anticipate the book publication of your splendid essay on Milton?

Truly yours,

Poe

Edgar Allan Poe Crossword Puzzle



Across

- Poe's nickname "the man with the _____."
- Secret coded message.
- This feline is nothing more than a witch in disguise.
- Earlier in his career Poe was best known as a literary _____.
- Quoth the Raven, _____.
- Mysterious killer in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue."
- His name became part of Poe's name.
- Poetry is the "Rhythmical Creation of _____."
- Poe invented this kind of story.

Down

- The tintinnabulation resounds in this later poem.
- Poe's lifelong dream was to own what kind of business?
- Logical thinking.
- The unlikely heroes in "The Pit and the Pendulum."
- Poe moved to Philadelphia because it was a _____ center of the nation.
- When these twins dropped dead, their house fell too!
- The old man's vulture like eye led to his destruction in this story.
- The National Park Service protects and _____ Poe's Philadelphia home.
- Poe wrote "Annabel Lee" in memory of _____.
- The unlucky fellow in "The Cask of Amontillado."
- Poe's natural parents worked as _____.

Poe's Poetry

Word Search

M Z T O M Y M O T H E R R T S P Q K S L
V O H S A Q P J K T L N S F E X X T O L
T N E L R S H J Z B C E N H P S T V D A
S H B M L E F A R S I Z Q R U F H F T C
E B E C M O N P S R Q A E L D O R A D O
R E L R I E T A B D E N O E X I T A I C
N L L M A N R L T H J T Z N C L T R R P
U R S A R V O E M V A R Z X I N J A B C
F S S M T I E E M A H B R C O M T A N D
O Z E I L T Z N E L E H O T X E O L N T
Y P L H J K A L E N R O Y P I K O A L A
E F J A H A K M Y M O T Z H E K L M M M
L K P L A Y U F **E** A N K X P E M O M T P
L B D O F J L Z **O** R E T E R A D P M O X
A C F N E E A Q **P** H L P H E N T B C D E
V Z R E O M L U X E V A R T H E B E X L
E H E O L Z U O Z E I D N T O H E L E X
H J E M X P M T O E T L X E C N E L I S
T O Z A N T E N A X P L E N X Z R E D S
F L N X J T Q N A N N A B E L L E E C B

Find the following titles of poems by Edgar Allan Poe. They are hidden across, up and down, and diagonally. *Example: POE*

THE RAVEN
THE BELLS
TO MY MOTHER
ELDORADO
ANNABEL LEE
TO ZANTE

ALONE
THE VALLEY OF UNREST
TAMERLANE
TO HELEN
SILENCE

DREAM LAND
ISRAFEL
AL AARAAF
ULALUME
LENORE

From *The Gold Bug and
Other Tales*.
Edgar Allan Poe.

The Tell-Tale Heart

TRUE!—NERVOUS—VERY, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses—not destroyed—not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! and observe how healthily—how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture—a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees—very gradually—I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye for ever.

Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen *me*. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded—with what caution—with what foresight—with what dissimulation I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it—oh, so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, so that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly—very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha!—would a madman have been so wise as this? And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously—oh, so cautiously—cautiously (for the hinges creaked)—I

undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights—every night just at midnight—but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone, and inquiring how he had passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night had I *felt* the extent of my own powers—of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea; and perhaps he heard me; for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back—but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers), and so I knew that he could not see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on steadily, steadily.

I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in the bed, crying out—"Who's there?"

I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening;—just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief—oh, no!—it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself—"It is nothing but the wind in the chimney—it is only a mouse crossing the floor," or "it is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp." Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions; but he had found all in vain. *All in vain*; because Death, in approaching him, had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the

victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel—although he neither saw nor heard—to *feel* the presence of my head within the room.

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little—a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it—you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily—until, at length, a single dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and full upon the vulture eye.

It was open—wide, wide open—and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness—all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot.

And now have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-acuteness of the senses?—now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew *that* sound well too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eye. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man's terror *must* have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment!—do you mark me well? I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me—the sound would be heard by a neighbor! The old man's hour had come! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once—once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more.

If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.

I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye—not even *his*—could have detected any thing wrong. There was nothing to wash out—no stain of any kind—no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all—ha! ha!

When I had made an end of these labors, it was four o'clock—still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart,—for what had I *now* to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbor during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises.

I smiled,—for *what* had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search—search *well*. I led them, at length, to *his* chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room, and desired them *here* to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim.

The officers were satisfied. My *manner* had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears; but still they sat and still chatted. The ringing became more distinct:—it continued and became more distinct: I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained definitiveness—until, at length, I found that the noise was *not* within my ears.

No doubt I now grew *very* pale;—but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased—and what could I do? It was a *low, dull, quick sound—much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton*. I gasped for breath—and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly—more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations, but the noise steadily increased. Why *would* they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observation of the men—but the noise steadily increased. Oh God! what *could* I do? I foamed—I raved—I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder—louder—*louder!* And still the

men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God!—no, no! They heard!—they suspected!—they *knew!*—they were making a mockery of my horror!—this I thought, and this I think. But any thing was better than this agony! Any thing was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die!—and now—again!—hark! louder! louder! louder! *louder!*—

“Villains!” I shrieked, “dissemble no more! I admit the deed!—tear up the planks!—here, here!—it is the beating of his hideous heart!”

MANY YEA
He was of
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forefathers,
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tible creek,
favorite resc
scant, or at
the western
miserable fr
from Charle
metto; but th
line of hard
undergrowth
England. Th
and forms a
fragrance.

In the inn
remote end of
occupied whi
soon ripened

interest and esteem. I found gold color—about the size of a nut, but infected with mits near one extremity of the alternate enthusiasm and mother. The *antennæ* are—rarely employed them. His ceep a tellin on you,” here sauntering along the beach lid, ebery bit of him, inside entomological specimens;—by a bug in my life.”

panied by a Swammerdamnsomewhat more earnestly, it panied by an old negro, calit any reason for your letting the reverses of the family, bld to me—“is really almost by promises, to abandon whw a more brilliant metallic the footsteps of his young not judge till to-morrow. In relatives of Legrand, conceihe shape.” Saying this, he had contrived to instil thi pen and ink, but no paper. supervision and guardianshne.

The winters in the latitucanswer”; and he drew from and in the fall of the year it be very dirty foolscap, and necessary. About the middl/hile he did this, I retained day of remarkable chillinde design was complete, he through the evergreens to thit, a loud growl was heard, several weeks—my residerer opened it, and a large tance of nine miles from tin, leaped upon my shoul-repassage were very far behshown him much attention hut I rapped, as was my cuover, I looked at the paper, where I knew it was secrete puzzled at what my friend was blazing upon the hea ungrateful one. I threw off a minutes, “this is a strange logs, and awaited patientlyw anything like it before—

Soon after dark they arh it more nearly resembles Jupiter, grinning from earservation.”

hens for supper. Legrand—yes—well, it has some-them?—of enthusiasm. HeThe two upper black spots genus, and, more than tbottom like a mouth—and Jupiter’s assistance, a *scar*

in respect to which he wishu are no artist. I must wait “And why not to-night?” any idea of its personal wishing the whole tribe of

“Ah, if I had only known!” I draw tolerably—*should* since I saw you; and how catter myself that I am not very night of all others? As

the fort, and, very foolish!” said I, “this is a very you to see it until mornings a very excellent skull, it at sunrise. It is the lovéimens of physiology—and “What?—sunrise?” in the world if it resembles



ANNABEL LEE

In this poem a man tells of his love for a girl named Annabel Lee. The poem is happy at first, but turns sad when we learn that Annabel Lee has died. Then we realize that the man has gone mad when he accuses the angels of killing Annabel Lee out of jealousy. This is a great poem to read out loud, for in it Poe has made the English language sound very musical.

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.

seraphs—angels coveted—wanted to take from

from:
poetry for
young people
edgar Allan Poe.
Brod Bngert, ed.

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 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 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 the sepulchre there by the sea,
In her tomb by the sounding sea.

THE RAVEN

This is probably Poe's most famous poem. "The Raven" is a great poem to read out loud. It's a bit long, but with some practice you can read it with the kind of expression that will give your friends goosebumps.

The poem opens on a man alone in his house. He is very sad over the death of Lenore, the woman he loved, and he is reading to relieve his sorrow. He hears what he thinks is a person knocking at his door. Eventually he learns that it is not a person at all but a bird—a raven. At first he is amused, but soon grows sad. The bird can say only one word, "Nevermore," and that word reminds him that nothing can bring back his lost Lenore.

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

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 curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
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,
"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.

lore—legend surcease—an end entreating—requesting

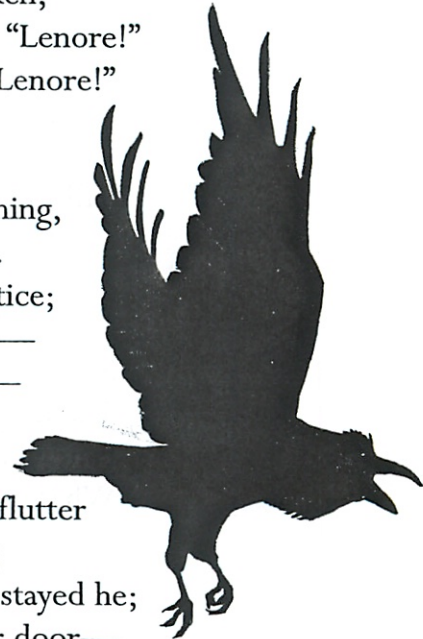
Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore!"
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word "Lenore!"
Merely this and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.
"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice;
Let me see, then what thereat is, and this mystery explore—
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;—
'Tis the wind and nothing more!"

Open here I flung the shutter, when with many a flirt and flutter
In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door—
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door—
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
But the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore—
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

Much I marveled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
With such name as "Nevermore."



token-clue lattice-window covering made from strips of crossed wood yore-long ago
obeisance-sign of obedience mien-appearance Pallas-Athena, goddess of wisdom
ebony-black beguiling-charming decorum-dignity countenance-facial expression craven-coward
Plutonian-deathly ungainly-clumsy discourse-speech relevancy-importance

But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing further then he uttered—not a feather then he fluttered—
Till I scarcely more than muttered, “Other friends have flown before—
On the morrow *he* will leave me, as my hopes have flown before.”

Then the bird said “Nevermore.”

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
“Doubtless,” said I, “what it utters is its only stock and store
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore—
Till the dirges of his Hope the melancholy burden bore
Of ‘Never—nevermore.’”

But the Raven still beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore—
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking “Nevermore.”

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom’s core;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion’s velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o’er,
But whose velvet violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o’er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by Seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.
“Wretch,” I cried, “thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he hath sent thee
Respite—respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore;
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

dirges—burial songs ominous—spooky divining—coming to a conclusion denser—thicker
censer—incense burner seraphim—angel nepenthe—drink that causes forgetfulness quaff—to drink

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!—
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted—
On this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly, I implore—
Is there—is there balm in Gilead?—tell me—tell me, I implore!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore—
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

"Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!" I shrieked, upstarting—
"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, *still* is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore!



tempter—*devil* tempest—*storm* desolate—*alone* undaunted—*unafraid* balm—*soothing oil*
Gilead—*ancient place in the Middle East known for its balm* Aidenn—*Aidin, a rich province of Turkey*
plume—*feather* pallid—*pale*

A DREAM WITHIN A DREAM

In poetry, there are a few ideas we hear over and over again. It is as though certain thoughts live in the soul of every poet. This poem contains one of those ideas. In the second stanza, Poe tells us that the days of life slip through his fingers like grains of sand, and no matter how he tries, he cannot stop the passage of time. It is an idea that was repeated a hundred years later by another American, a man named Thornton Wilder, who wrote, "Do any human beings ever realize life while they live it? Every minute? No, the Saints and Poets, maybe they do some."

Take this kiss upon the brow!
And, in parting from you now,
This much let me avow—
You are not wrong, who deem
That my days have been a dream;
Yet if Hope has flown away
In a night, or in a day,
In a vision, or in none,
Is it therefore the less gone?
All that we see or seem
Is but a dream within a dream.

I stand amid the roar
Of a surf-tormented shore,
And I hold within my hand
Grains of the golden sand—
How few! yet how they creep
Through my fingers to the deep,
While I weep—while I weep!
O God! can I not grasp
Them with a tighter clasp?
O God! can I not save
One from the pitiless wave?
Is *all* that we see or seem
But a dream within a dream?



To _____

Poe addresses this poem to an unnamed woman. He tells her that she is wonderful, so if she wants to be loved, she should simply be herself, and the world will take it as its "duty" to love her. This poem appears in several versions, each dedicated to a different lady. Perhaps Poe used this poem to meet girls. The text was never published, but appears in an undated but clearly authentic manuscript.

Thou wouldst be loved?—then let thy heart
From its present pathway part not!
Being everything which now thou art,
Be nothing which thou are not.
So, with the world, thy winning ways,
Thy truth, thy youth, thy beauty,
Shall be a daily theme of praise,
And love, no more than duty.

From "THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF USHER"

The narrator of this story receives a letter from his boyhood friend, Roderick Usher. Roderick complains of a mysterious illness, so the narrator decides to visit him to see if he can help. In this passage we see for the first time the mysterious House of Usher. The house gives us a strange feeling and sets the stage for what is about to be a very strange story.

During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day
In the autumn of the year,
When clouds hung low in the heavens,
I had been passing on horseback through dreary country
And found myself,
As shades of evening drew,
Within view of the melancholy House of Usher.
With an utter depression of soul
I looked upon the house...
 The bleak walls,
 The vacant eye-like windows,
 A few white trunks of decayed trees.
There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart,
An unredeemed dreariness of thought.
I paused to think
What was it that so unnerved me in the House of Usher?
It was a mystery all insoluble.

insoluble—unable to be solved

From "THE TELL-TALE HEART"

"The Tell-Tale Heart" is a story about an insane murderer. This passage describes how he prepares to commit his ghastly crime.

You fancy me mad.
Madmen know nothing.
But you should have seen *me*.
You should have seen how wisely I proceeded,
With what caution,
With what foresight.
Every night, about midnight,
I turned the latch of his door
And opened it—oh, so gently!
And then,
When I had made an opening sufficient for my head,
I put in a dark lantern,
All closed so that no light shone out,
And then I thrust in my head.
How cunningly I thrust it in!
I moved it slowly—very, very slowly,
So that I might not disturb the old man's sleep.
It took me an hour.
Ha! Would a mad man have been so wise as this?
And then
I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye.
This I did for seven long nights,
Every night just at midnight,
But I found the eye always closed;
And so it was impossible to do the work
For it was not the old man who vexed me,
But his evil eye.



From "THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO"

With the promise of Amontillado wine, the villain of this story leads his victim to a dead end deep in the underground passages of his family tomb. What happens next is perhaps one of the most haunting crimes in the body of English literature.

We continued in search of the Amontillado.
We passed through low arches
And descending again,
Arrived at a deep crypt
In which the foulness of the air
Caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.
At the most remote end of the crypt
There appeared another...less spacious.
Its walls had been lined with human bones
Piled to the vault overhead in the fashion of the catacombs.
Within the wall we perceived a still interior recess,
In depth about four feet,
In width three,
In height six or seven.
It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use,
The interval between two colossal supports of the roof,
And backed by one circumscribing wall of solid granite.
He stepped unsteadily forward,
While I followed immediately at his heels.
In an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche,
And finding his progress arrested by the rock,
Stood stupidly bewildered.
A moment more and I had fettered him to the granite.
"The Amontillado!" ejaculated my friend.

crypt-underground passage flambeaux-torches catacombs-underground cemetery with spaces for corpses
colossal-giant circumscribing-enclosing niche-hollow place in a wall
fettered-bound with chains ejaculated-spoke out suddenly