



Poe Lightly

Curriculum Unit 83.03.06
by Rosemary Hamilton

I Introduction

To introduce my students to the elements of short story fiction I will select readings from Edgar Allan Poe. The Junior High School students of the inner city I teach are poor readers with limited attention spans. For many this will be their first exposure to the short story form and I want it to be positive. We will concentrate mostly on the horror stories of Poe: "The Fall of the House of Usher," "The Tell-Tale Heart," "The Black Cat," "The Cask of Amontillado," and "The Pit and the Pendulum."

Having taught English to seventh and eighth graders for the past six years qualifies me to say that Poe holds a certain appeal for the young reader. He provides high interest and satisfies a natural human interest in the ghoulish and the strange—all within a literate framework that uses rhythms and imagery to create suspense and atmosphere of a kind few have equaled.

The sophisticated vocabulary of Poe will present a problem. One aim of this unit is to help students get the meaning of unfamiliar words as they meet them in their reading. Vocabulary building is essential to the improvement of reading skills. Most of my pupils prefer listening to stories or watching them on television rather than reading them. It is frustrating for them to read when they do not know the words and much easier to be spoon fed. Ideally my performance objectives would be high: that my students should be able to answer questions about the short stories of Poe, define the basics of plot, identify beginning, middle, and end of a short story, demonstrate vocabulary skills by defining words from context, select words with given prefixes and suffixes, and provide antonyms, identify symbolism, list the events of a story in sequence, identify rising action, falling action, and turning point, examine a given story, stating tone, mood, and atmosphere, discuss the importance of setting and character, use context clues and prefix-suffix recognition skills to aid with new vocabulary words, select words that have good and bad connotations, discuss the choice and treatment of point of view. To sum it up to have students name the formal characteristics of the short story; that it focuses on a single character and a single crisis, it involves a short period of time, it deals with a single mood and maintains a single tone.

II Biographical Sketch 1809-1849

For my students to better understand the stories they will read by Poe a biographical sketch might help. Probably more than any other American author, Poe as a personality has appealed to popular imagination. Generally, he is thought of as a figure who might have emerged from one of his stories or poems, mysterious, wild, and abnormal. There are elements of strangeness in the life of this neurotic genius.

Poe's tragic life was a product of bad luck and instability. He was orphaned at two and became the ward of the John Allan family of Richmond, Virginia. Never legally adopted, he could not live quite the normal life of a son in a well-to-do family. He was the product of good schools, reared for the life of a gentleman in an atmosphere of gentility, restraint, and refinement, he emerged a loner-luckless, bitter, quarrelsome, alienated. Although Poe was not always the brooding, gloomy person tradition has painted, his life was on the whole an unhappy one.

In 1835 he married thirteen-year old, Virginia, who died of a burst blood vessel at twenty six. To forget his troubles at home Poe periodically went on drinking sprees. Proud of his aristocratic upbringing and because of the high opinion he had of his abilities, he was bitter about not doing better in the world. When Poe was schooled in England he developed his love for languages and the classics. and for ancient houses and traditions, and the ghostly tales of which the English are so fond. He did not have financial success and died a pauper at age forty.

These are the facts of Poe's life, and seem at first glance to have no connection with his writings. Yet he apparently inherited an artistic temperament which his foster father never recognized. Although as a boy Poe enjoyed all the advantages of a gentleman's son he must have been aware this was not his birthright. His talent was strong enough to direct his life, yet the constant emphasis on ancient family and on rich and costly surroundings in his stories indicate that the expensive tastes nurtured in him when young never changed. His disappointment in love, the loss of a gentleman's estate and the constant recurrence of death in Poe's family undoubtedly heightened Poe's morbid preoccupation. His own vivid sense of the dramatic and his restless nature that craved excitement, account for the startling situations in his stories. ¹

When Poe was about to start his career as a writer of tales, he looked for a formula for marketable fiction. This formula was that of the single effect, set forth in his "Review of Twice-Told Tales" by Hawthorne. "The writer of a tale, Poe held, should subordinate every thing in it to the effect he wanted the narrative to have upon the reader. Two elements in the tales chiefly accounted for their success: the climatic arrangement of happenings in them and a poetic style appropriate to their unfolding." ²

Poe knew how to fascinate the reader from the outset of a story. Here are the first few lines of several of his tales:

"The Pit and the Pendulum" "I was sick-sick unto death with that long agony; and when they at length unbound me, and I was permitted to sit, I felt that my senses were leaving me. The sentence-the dread sentence of death-was the last of distinct accentuation which reached my ears."

"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 calmly I can tell you the whole story."

“The Black Cat” “For the most wild, yet most homely narrative which I am about to pen, I neither expect nor solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence. Yet, mad am I not-and very surely do I not dream. But tomorrow I die, and today I would unburden my soul. My immediate purpose is to place before the world, plainly, succinctly, and without comment, a series of mere household events. In their consequences, these events have terrified-have tortured-have destroyed me.”

“The Cask of Amontillado” “The men Fortunate had done me a thousand wrongs. I bore them as best I could. But when he began to insult me, I vowed revenge. You do understand my nature, will know that I spoke no threats aloud. But to myself I vowed to be avenged, sometime.”

“The Fall of the House of Usher” “During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length, found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was-but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit.”³

Though Poe could create immediate interest in a story, there are aspects of his style that will be difficult for my students. In Poe’s time simplicity of diction was not in style. Poe seemed compelled to display his knowledge of words, sometimes sacrificing communication with the reader. Harry Levin, a critic, has pointed out another reason for this fault: “Working under pressure, he could not afford to become a devotee of the single precise word; instead, he seems to grope for several approximate synonyms, so that his writing smells of the thesaurus.”⁴

III Style

Another characteristic of his style is his generous use of Latin and French words and phrases. In Poe’s day using foreign words enhanced the writer’s reputation, but they may confuse modern students. In addition to this, Poe uses many dashes, capitals, and other devices that often interfere with clarity.

Poe’s best stories have only the essentials, the minimum of characterization, plot, and atmosphere. By ridding himself of everything except what is precisely to the point, he achieves this unity of effect. He was interested in the strange experiences of individuals rather than in the individuals themselves. Poe is best known for the chilling mood and macabre atmosphere he builds so carefully in his stories.

Just fifty years ago, a great master of the supernatural H. P. Lovecraft, decreed that “the appeal of the macabre tale is generally narrow because it demands from the reader a certain degree of imagination and a capacity for detachment from everyday life.”⁵ Times have changed. Interest in the tales of horror is at an all time high.

The great impact of present day movies; *Poltergeist*, *E.T.*, *Damion*, *The Exorcist*, *Halloween*, *The Legacy*, *The Prophecy*, and *Psycho II* reinforce this. Perhaps my students will share in a period in which imagination is experiencing a rebirth.

Because of his relevance Poe deserves to be examined again now. His works are eagerly reproduced; interest in his personality continues high. Perhaps there is something enticing about his ghoulish characters.

Generations have become fascinated by the terrifying dream world fashioned by his imagination. We know revulsion from the horrors he portrays, yet his originality is noteworthy. Others have tried to imitate him—to capture in poetry and the short story the effect of grotesque horror which was his hallmark. He has an awesome uniqueness.

He has helped to sketch the popular image that derives from such works as “The Raven,” “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “The Pit and the Pendulum,” “The Tell-tale Heart,” and “The Black Cat.” When these titles monopolize the attention, it is only natural that the central body of Poe’s work should seem to “be a tissue of nightmares—a literary fabric shot with diseases, madness, death, hideous murders, ghastly exhumations, shrieks in the night. It is only natural that the sanity of the author should become suspect, and that he should appear to be a gifted psychopath describing his personal instabilities and abnormalities.”⁶ Hence the ideas—old, persistent and widespread—that the somber figure of Edgar Allan Poe stalks forever through the pages of his stories and poems persists. He is declared to have only one endlessly repeated male character—himself. He is pictured as appearing and reappearing under the guises of his melancholic, mad, protagonists: Roderick Usher, Egaeus, William Wilson, Cornelius Wyatt, Montresor, Hop-Frog, Metzengerstein. This conception of Poe is not merely popular in the sense that it appeals to the reading public at large, it has been alive among literary critics ever since Walt Whitman gave it his support in a passage that never ceases to be quoted:

“In a dream I once had, I saw a vessel on the sea, at midnight, in a storm. It was no great full-rigg’d ship, nor majestic steamer, steering firmly through the gale, but seem’d one of those superb little schooner yachts I had often seen lying anch or’d, rocking so jauntily, in the waters around New York, or up Long Island sound—now flying uncontrolled with torn sails and broken spars through the wild sleet and the winds and the waves of the night. On the deck was a slender, slight, beautiful, figure, a dim man apparently enjoying the terror, the murk, and the dislocation of which he was the centre and the victim. That figure of my lurid dream might stand for Edgar Allan Poe, his spirit, his fortunes, and his poems—themselves all lurid dreams.”⁷

The early nineteenth century was beguiled by things Gothic— quaint folklore, macabre legends, supernatural events, medieval history, forgotten tombs, ruined abbeys. Around these interests grew a whole body of literature profoundly influential in America and in England. The gothic element provided Poe with a literary milieu perfectly adapted to his taste and talent. The elements of the strange, the abnormal, and the weird that Poe singled out for his own purposes, he assimilated into his experience of age-old, legendary, half-forgotten European antiquities.

IV Suspense

One element of the short story that Poe is famous for is his use of suspense. Edgar Allan Poe has the ability to keep an audience in one sitting. His stories scare and mystify. As a superb story teller Poe can chill your blood and widen your eyes. Maybe my students will even be held on the edge of their seats. His pages are worth reading and remembering and they do not take much time. Suspense makes our lives exciting by provoking increasingly intense feelings of anticipation, impatience, and even anxiety until at last the suspense is dispelled and the secret has been revealed.

Without suspense, it is hard to imagine that fiction of any kind could exist. Even the dullest, most predictable novels contain some suspense. The writer gives and withholds, gives and withholds, until he finally chooses to

give all. To make effective use of suspense, the writer must understand the psychology of the reader. The reader becomes concerned about what's going to happen. They stew, they sweat, they try to guess. The trick of the writer is to organize the plot so that it unfolds in such a way and at such a pace as to keep them guessing. The thrillers, mysteries, and horror stories of Poe are the kinds of things that could keep us on the edge of our seats, because suspense is never greater than when linked with fear. Suspense often means the question of life and death as seen in murder mysteries. But there is suspense in all good fiction. Suspense can be anything from a little girl rescued from danger to "will girl get boy?" But suspense often comes in waves. Having satisfied our curiosity about what that something is we now turn our thoughts to wondering what's going to happen next.

V Theories On Writing

The credit for formulating a set of principles governing short story writing belongs to Edgar Allan Poe. In a review of Hawthorne's "Twice-Told Tales," published in Graham's Magazine in 1842, he specified these requirements:

1. The story must aim at one predetermined effect:
2. It must rigorously exclude everything which does not contribute to that effect and thus possess complete unity;
3. It must be short, but not so short that the pre-established design cannot be realized." ⁸

Students need to note that Poe included no single word, no detail which was not necessary to the design. Such economy is important to the short story, and while students have observed it elsewhere, it is probably most obvious in "The Cask of Amontillado."

VI "Cask of Amontillado"

In "The Cask of Amontillado" Poe uses the first person where the narrator is the protagonist who is deeply involved. We are no longer just observers; we see with Montresor's eyes, hear with his ears, react as he reacts. In the short story, identification with the main character is imperative. Why has Poe used the first person in this fashion? My students need to think about this carefully, for it will lead them to some important discoveries about purpose, subject, and form, as well as about point of view.

This story is about murder yet the subject is not murder but revenge. It is a study of emotions, one that invites response. Considering this intent, Poe's use of the first person becomes clearer. Without it the unity of effect he desired would have been impossible. It is not the murder Poe wants us to witness, but Montresor's emotions as he commits it. It is fortunate as Montresor sees him that Poe wants us to see, not our own view of him. It will be helpful if students can select passages which, while revealing some action that propels the story forward, reveal more deeply Montresor's state of mind. Perhaps the first person stresses Montresor's unreliability as a narrator?

The plot, as such, might be summed up briefly: the invitation/ the walk/ and the murder. With every step that Fortunato takes, Montresor's elation increases. When Fortunato screams, Montresor savors every note. The last sentence is necessary, both subjects are satisfactorily completed: the act of murder, and revenge with impunity.

Poe's stories generally achieve an enviable unity of effect. From the very first sentence which sets the theme, defines the conflict, and creates the mood "The thousand and one injuries of Fortunato I had borne as best I could, but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge"-the reader is allowed no rest.

Poe believed in a preconceived design for a story; plot, setting, characters, every word, every action, direct or indirect, must fit into that design. The dank catacombs of "The Cask of Amontillado" complement the dark doings, certainly, but the setting lends unity to the total effect in an even more subtle fashion. The contrast in Montresor's character, are reflected in the mad gaiety of the carnival set against the gloomy catacombs.

(See the Lesson Plan Section for more details)

VII "The Tell-Tale Heart"

The subject of "The Tell-Tale Heart" is insane fear, dramatically presented through the use of a first person narrative. By narrowing the focus of the story so that all of the action is seen through the character of the insane man himself, Poe gives us a shocking glimpse into the warped mind of a murderer driven by abnormal fear to the planning and execution of a hideous crime.

The opening sentence establishes the tone of the story. The murderer is speaking, trying to prove that he is not mad, although the reader is quickly made aware of his insanity. The emphasis upon his acute hearing "I heard all things in heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell." ⁹ foreshadows the end of the story.

By careful use of metaphor and simile, and words and phrases of death, such as "the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow," the author builds a mood of fear, each detail adding to the suspense. The action takes place at midnight, and is repeated nightly for several days until finally the "vulture eye" is open, and the crime is committed after the fear has mounted to an unendurable pitch. The horror of the murder is accented by the murderer's complete lack of remorse, as he recounts with detached calmness the details of disposing of the body. The "evil eye" had been extinguished, so the murderer asks himself, as he opens the door to the investigating officers, "what do I fear?"

Once again the suspense mounts as fear builds up, beginning with a ringing in the narrator's ears, increasing to a low, dull, quick, sound—a repetition of his experience just before he murdered the old man. In his agony of terror, he confesses the crime, for he believes it to be "the beating of his hideous heart."

The story ends abruptly, with his shouted confession "tear up the planks: here, here:" Anything after this would have spoiled the dramatic effect of the climax toward which everything in the story has been directed.

(Refer to the Lesson Plan for more details)

VIII “The Fall of the House of Usher”

Poe often drew upon his memory of growing up in England for his settings, as in “The Fall of the House of Usher,” which concerns the fate of a decayed aristocratic family and its moldering Gothic mansion. Having seen the movie and read the story several times it is by far my favorite of Poe’s work. This story is a masterpiece of mood. This story is filled with symbolism; a web of cause and effect. The Usher family and mansion are analogous-stained with time, used up, crumbling from within, awaiting collapse. Roderick and his sister Madeline, identical twins, are almost sharing the same soul, and they can be interpreted together as the soul of which their mansion is the body. All three decline together, and the inference is that the disappearance of one means the disappearance of the others, which in fact comes to pass.

After Madeline had been buried alive for days, her return to Roderick’s study is orchestrated by a clever device, the reading aloud of a legendary tale, the plot of which describes precisely the sounds she makes as she draws near. The door swings open, Madeline collapses against her brother, and they fall dead to the floor together. The narrator escapes just in time to look back and see the house disintegrate. As mentioned Poe’s theory of the short story demands unity of effect, and here he achieves it as nowhere else. He sustains the atmosphere to the end after his celebrated opening. Poe specializes in great openings and endings. As always variety is one of his strong points. The concluding line matches the opening in visual imagery. The narrator, looking back, sees the moon shining through a crack in the mansion’s wall:

“While I gazed, the fissure rapidly widened—there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind—the entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sightly brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing as under there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the

“House of Usher.” ¹¹

IX “The Black Cat” and “The Pit and the Pendulum”

The last two stories I would like to conclude with are “The Black Cat” and “The Pit and the Pendulum.” Where “The Black Cat” “The Tell-Tale Heart” and “The Cask of Amontillado,” have narrators who show different degrees of madness, the narrator of “The Pit and the Pendulum” differs in that he struggles against the threat of insanity and succeeds in evading it. We seldom find this type of happy ending in Poe’s stories. In “The Black Cat” the narrator persecutes his haunting cat by gouging out one of its eyes in a fit of rage and later unsuccessfully trying to hang the cat. Then after killing his wife with an axe originally intended for the cat, he seals his wife’s body behind a brick wall. He becomes the victim of his own persecution in the end because detectives find the body of his wife by heeding the cries of the cat what the narrator had unwittingly imprisoned with the corpse. ¹²

“The Tell-Tale Heart” and “The Black Cat” demonstrate how varied Poe can be within narrow limits. The former is a direct account by a maniac of how he committed murder because of a deceptive compulsion to carefully conceal the crime, and then was driven by a further thrust of his compulsion to reveal it to the police. “The Black Cat” portrays a maniac wavering in his attitudes, killing his wife in one insane outburst when what he really hates is his cat, and causing the truth to come to light by an insane act of false courage. ¹³

Persecution appears again as a theme in “The Pit and the Pendulum,” where the victim eventually escapes his tormentor. Death and decay is the theme of “The Fall of the House of Usher.”

To represent the major themes of life, death, and purity, Poe uses the colors red, black, and white. The pendulum and the heartbeat show the passing of time and life, while the pit represents the inevitable descent into the abyss that we must all experience when we die.

In short, Poe’s appeal lies to a great extent in his ability to frighten us. Poe cannot be taken lightly. It is this awesome uniqueness that he finds his place in literature.

Classroom Activities

Lesson Plan 1

“Quoth the Raven Evermore”

Rent either “The Fall of the House of Usher” or “The Pit and the Pendulum” movies. Show the movie first. Then sit around informally as you read out loud either story. To have your students on the edge of their seats darken the classroom and create sound effects. In a paper bag put the following items: wet grapes, ham, wet spaghetti, boneless chicken breast. Pass the bag around in the dark room as you read and describe in great detail, “The Black Cat’s” eye, or the beating heart, or nerves, or the tongue.

Include the oral reading of my favorite “The Raven.” This poem has the tone of sadness. This poem like his others are famous for the sound of the words he used. Have the students read it silently first and then out loud. Is it better when you hear it, or when you just read it? Several kinds of birds can be trained to mimic human speech. Why do you think Poe chose to use a raven instead of a parrot? Would the tone of sadness remain if you used a parrot instead of a raven in the poem?

The sad atmosphere of the poem derives from what Poe’s theory considers to be the most poetic of subjects—the death of a beautiful woman. Poe, who is fond of repeating female names gives to this dead woman the name Lenore. The poem turns on the questioning of the raven by the bereaved lover, and the answer to every question is “Nevermore.” The climax of the poem comes when the question of a future reunion between these two lovers comes up? This is one meaning of the poem. Another is interpreted through symbols. The raven is the main symbol. With its jet black feathers and harsh croak, represents fate. It is, as Poe says, a “bird of ill omen.” The symbolism reveals itself in the last stanza, which Poe wrote first since it is the culmination of the effect he wants to achieve:

“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 lamplight 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-evermore!" 15

The bust of Pallas is a symbol representing the Greek goddess of wisdom. It also represents the life of learning into which the narrator of the poem has plunged in order to drown his sorrow. The sculpture meanwhile contrasts white against the black raven. The raven symbolizes crushing fate and the status serene wisdom. The word nevermore is a symbol because as the poem progresses, the word sounds more like the booming of a gong; reminding us that death awaits all of us. On a lighter note some lines of the poem are often musical:

"And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain.

But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,

And the only word there spoken was the whispered word "Lenore:"

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer,

Swung by seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted Moor."

This is not the end but only the beginning:

"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." 17

Lesson Plan 2

"The Tell Tale Heart"

The following are sample questions which can be applied to all of Poe's stories.

Word Hunt locate these eight words in the story. Guess at the meaning from context clues and then double check your answers with this list B

- | A | B |
|-------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. dissimulation | 1. pretend |
| 2. sagacity | 2. hiding under false appearance |
| 3. suavity | 3. passionately |
| 4. audacity | 4. scorn |
| 5. vehemently | 5. wisdom |
| 6. gesticulations | 6. body movements |
| 7. derision | 7. polish |

8. dissemble 8. boldness

tattoo—as in the “tattoo of the heart increased” is borrowed from the Dutch, *tattoo*. Literally, it means “taps shut:” It means a rhythmic beating and usually refers to a drum beat.

waned—as in “The night waned, and I worked hastily” . . . Waned is an Old English word meaning ebbed. The antonym met elsewhere is waxed. Waxed and waned usually apply to the phases of the moon.

hypocritical—comes from the Greek word meaning an actor, or one who plays a part on the stage. Review some of the “ph” spellings of the “f” sound in recognizing Greek words: philosophy, phobia, phrase, phenomena, Philadelphia

Thought Questions:

1. Explain the evil eye. Why did the speaker call it the eye of the vulture? Do you think the old man was evil?
2. What does the first paragraph tell you? Why is this important?
3. What kind of mood does the first paragraph create?
4. You will notice that the story is written in the first person. Is the speaker the author?
5. Why did the story end so abruptly? Do you think it would have been better if you had been told more about what happened later?
6. Poe uses foreshadowing as a device. Can you identify clues which he has planted early in the story that point out later developments?

Lesson Plan 3

“The Cask of Amontillado”

Locate column A in the story and then double check your answers after you match the words in column B.

- | A | B |
|----------------|----------------------|
| 1. precluded | a. prevented |
| 2. impunity | b. skilled technique |
| 3. unredressed | c. expertness |
| 4. retribution | d. destruction |
| 5. immolation | e. punishment |
| 6. connoisseur | f. not set right |
| 7. virtuoso | g. consequence free |

Careful reading of Poe will help the student figure out new vocabulary from context clues. What is said before and after the new word often times helps you unlock the meaning.

“Poetic Relief”

Introduce your students to humor. Everyone needs a good laugh. Poe is known for his irony and puns. The kind of humor that derives from a double meaning of the same word is called a pun. A p. u. is not as funny as it is two thirds of a p.u.n. In this story Fortunato referred to the secret society of Masons. Montresor, had his own

secret at this point in the story. Later we see when the wall is being built that we fully appreciate this grim joke.

Riddles and jokes are good warm up activities for the students: If April showers bring May flowers what do Mayflowers bring? pilgrims How many letters in the alphabet? 23 E. T. went home

The tortoise taught us or the porpoise's purpose

What is black and white and red all over? newspaper or Poe symbolism

Review prefixes

sur- as in surmounted

ab- as in absconded (*separate prefixes and then define*)

- | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|
| 1. surface | 6. surtax | 11. surpass | 16. abrogate |
| 2. surfeit | 7. surname | 12. surrealism | 17. abdicate |
| 4. surplus | 8. surprise | 13. survey | 18. abject |
| 4. surrender | 9. surveillance | 14. abnormal | 19. absorb |
| 5. survive | 10. surcharge | 15. abstract | 20. absent |

Have students select words from the story to identify mood.

What is the moral of the story?

How does Montresor keep Fortunato in the catacombs?

1. From what point of view is the story told?
2. Discuss journey narrative first and have students compare the walk down to the catacombs and the depths of Montresor's hatred.
3. How does Poe's use of the carnival setting create a certain atmosphere? Students should note that through contrast Poe heightens the atmosphere of horror because the carnival setting is not what we might expect for a murder tale.
4. Note the irony between Fortunato and Montresor in their conversation after the coughing spell. How is the last sentence ironic? "For half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. In peace requiescat:" (May he rest in peace!)
5. vocabulary investigation-connotation expand literal meanings greatly. For example, the word dark means without light. Yet most of us associate with this word fear, evil, unknown, terror, lack of understanding, even cruelty. What associations do these words conjure up: dusk, filmy, catacombs, damp?

Creative Writing

1. Describe a haunted house. Be very detailed as if it were the main attraction in your chilling story. Paint pictures of it verbally and then with pen and ink. Can you make your classmates draw the house from your vivid descriptions?
2. Have you ever been afraid? Recount an incident that made you afraid. and try to make the reader feel your terror by the details you tell and the tone of the words you choose to describe the situation.

Notes

1. Edgar Allan Poe *Stories* , New York: Platt & Munk Pub. 1961) p. 6.
2. Walter Blair, *The Literature of the United States* (New York: Scott Foresman & Co. 1946) p. 645.
3. Edgar Allan Poe, *Great Tales of Horror* (Bantam Books N.Y: 1964) pp. 23.
4. Ibid., p. 3.
5. William Jacobs, *Edgar Allan Poe* (New York: McGraw Hill Inc. 1975) p. 5.
6. Vincent Buranelli, *Edgar Allan Poe* (Boston: Twayne Pub. 1977) p. 19.
7. Ibid., p. 20.
8. Albert Kitzhaber, *Elements of Literature* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc. 1974) p. 218.
9. Ibid., p. 219.
10. Ibid., p. 219.
11. Ibid., p. 79.
12. Poe, Op. cit., p. 5.
13. Buranelli, Op. cit., pp. 76-77.
14. [MISSING]
15. Buranelli, Op. Cit., p. 102.
16. Ibid., p. 103.
17. Ibid., p. 104.

Bibliography for Students

Depew Ollie *An Edgar Allan Poe Reader* New York: Globe Book Inc. 1979. The stories selected for this collection are grouped under four headings: mystery, horror and fear, psychological, and the humorous. For the younger reader some passages and vocabulary have been modified or omitted. This is an easier edition for the slow reader.

Goodman, Roger *Seventy Five Short Masterpieces* New York: Bantam Books 1961.

This anthology embraces every kind of short story ever written. Spanning the centuries from Boccaccio to Bradbury, the selections include works by the finest authors in the Western world. (difficult collection for low students)

Kitzhaber, Albert *Elements of Literature* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston Inc. 1974.

Short Story: Fomand Point of View pages 213-279 Jr. High text

Kitzhaber, Albert ed. *Patterns of Literature* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. 1974.

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Poe, Edgar Allan *Tales* New York: Dodd, Mead & Co. 1952.

This edition contains forty six of his tales, including all the best known and a number of less familiar ones.

Poe, Edgar Allan *Stories* New York: Platt & Murk Pub. 1961. Juvenile collection of twenty seven thrilling tales by the master of suspense with an added selection of his best poems. There ia an excellent foreword by Laura Benet, biographer of Poe.

Potter, Robert *Tales of Mystery and the Unknown* New York: Globe Book Co. Inc. 1976.

A collection of strange stories that take place in an unreal world where anything can happen. The questions at the end of each story will help students check their understanding.

Sohn, David editor *Ten Modern American Short Stories* New York: Bantom Books 1965. (\$1.75 paperback)

Ten master story tellers explore the world of youth in conflict, rebellion, and love in this collection of stories by some of the outstanding writers of recent years. Students can identify with these adolescent themes.

Sohn David ed. *Ten Top Stories* New York: Bantam Books 1964. (\$1.75) The stories in this book were picked by young adults. The problems and the characters in these stories can be identifiable to young readers. Variety and balance are vital considerations in this anthology; humor, pathos, fantasy, realism, adventure, cruelty, compassion, love, and death.

Strickland, Dorothy *Listen Children* New York: Bantam Books 1982. "An Anthology of Black literature" This book celebrates the joys and struggles of being young and black as we discover ourselves; our values, our feelings. (excellent for the inner city adolescent reader)

Books for Classroom Library

Bayne, Sarah *Helping Kids Write* Cambridge: Educators Publishers Service 1980. (\$1.75)

This practical guide for teaching grades five through eight shows students how to express themselves on paper.

Dodd, Anne *Write Now* : New York: Learning Trends of Globe Book, 1973. Here are insights into creative writing. Section five "Exploring the Short Story" is especially helpful in setting the scene, plot, character and dialogue. (pages 49-63)

Goeller, Carl *Writing to Communicate* New York: Mentor Books 1974. (\$1.50) This is a concise and complete guide to effective writing, packed with easy-to-understand examples of "do's" and "don'ts," including basic rules for grammar, punctuation, and sentence construction as well as a day-by-day program of exercise to improve your writing abilities.

Johnson, Eric *How to Achieve Competence in English* New York: Bantam Books, 1976. (\$1.75)

This is a fact-filled, alphabetized, easy-to-use, readable handbook for students and teachers to maintain and improve their basic English skills. Packed with vital information on everything from grammar and punctuation to plays and persuasion, written with flair and humor, illustrated whimsically by Howie Coale, it is as simple to use as a dictionary.

Shefter, Harry *Shefter's Guide to Better Compositions* New York: Pocket Books, 1960. (\$1.95)

Here are tested techniques for improving your writing skills, plus numerous examples and frequent self-testing exercises.

Thornley, Wilson *Short Story Writing* New York: Bantam Books 1976. (\$1.50)

"The Student's Step-by Step Guide to Writing the Effective Short Story" Pages 1-64 are excellent for thinking about the elements of the short story. This book has everything the student needs to know to plan, write, and revise the successful short story.

Bibliography for Teachers

Baker, Augusta and Ellin Greene *Storytelling: Art and Technique* New York: R. R. Bowker Co. 1977.

This book shows you how to prepare yourself and your audience; to select the right material for the right group, to use your verbal, intellectual and physical strengths to create a receptive and interested audience.

Blair, Walter *The Literature of the United States "An Anthology and a History"* New York: Scott Foresman & Co. 1946.

Pages 644-709 contain commentaries on Poe's more popular works.

Buranelli, Vincent *Edgar Allan Poe* second edition Boston: Twayne Pub. 1977.

This book was a great help in doing this paper. It is primarily a critical study on the major aspects of Poe's achievement and influence and his life in so far as it relates to them.

Hidick, Wallace *Thirteen Types of Narrative "A Practical Guide on how to Tell a Story"* New York: Clarkson Potter Inc. 1970.

The author writes a model of every type of narrative and comments on how various famous authors: Poe, Hemingway, Faulkner have

used that particular form.

Jacobs, William *Edgar Allan Poe* New York: McGraw Hill Book Co. 1975. This book was very helpful in doing this paper. This biography discusses Poe's works. It shows how the harrowing events of Poe's life form the background for an examination of his remarkable literary achievements as a reviewer, critic, poet, novelist, and short story writer.

Larrick, Nancy *A Parent's Guide to Children's Reading* New York: Bantam Books, 1975. (\$2.50)

This is a reference book for children's reading from babyhood through adolescence, for every reading level and interest. This is a how to help children of all ages, interests, and abilities want to read more.

Poe, Edgar Allan *Great Tales of Horror* New York: Bantam Books, 1964. (\$1.95)

The introduction of this book pages 1-13 was helpful in doing this paper. Only the grotesque and macabre tales are selected here.

Sheman, Anthony *The Research Paper Guide* West Haven, Ct: Pendulum Press Inc. 1970.

Excellent refresher for the rusty writer. It is a blueprint to plot out your course.

Teacher's guides for *Elements of Literature and Patterns of Literature* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, Inc. 1974.

These gave a more in depth study of what was presented to the students on the short story. (pages 135-161 and pp. 205-233)

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