



Poe Lightly

Guide for Curriculum Unit 83.03.06
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This curriculum unit introduces the elements of the short story to junior high school students. My main focus is the horror stories of Edgar Allan Poe: “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “The TellTale Heart,” “The Black Cat,” “The Cask of Amontillado,” and “The Pit and the Pendulum.” 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. My objective would be 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.

Briefly I have covered the following topics in this paper: introduction, biographical sketch of Edgar Allan Poe, Poe’s style, his use of suspense, his theories of writing, and finally critiques of five of his horror tales, and his poem “The Raven”.

(Recommended for English or Reading grades 6 through 8)

Key Words

Poe Edgar Allen

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