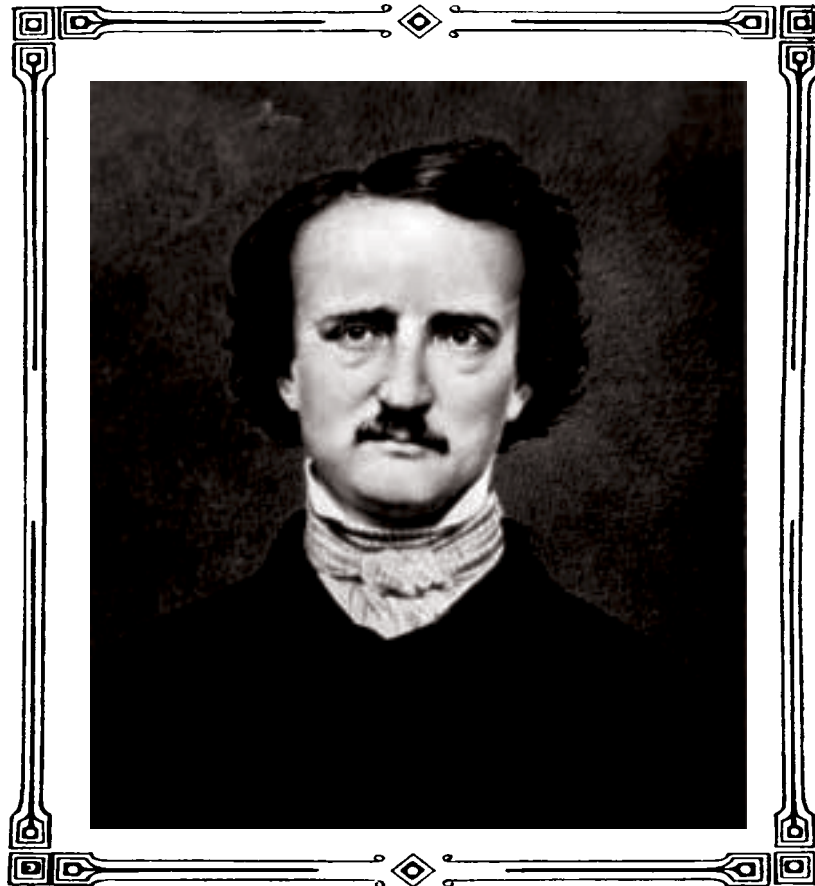




Teacher's Handbook



**Edgar Allan Poe
National Historic Site**

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

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Introduction

Today Edgar Allan Poe is best known for his tales of terror and haunting poetry. The Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site provides educational programs which reveal the many facets of Poe's literary talents and his tumultuous life. The ultimate goal is to inspire students to want to read and learn more about Poe and his works.

This handbook has been designed especially for teachers who schedule ranger led programs at the site. The materials and information included are a result of specific suggestions made by teachers who have participated in previous programs. Many teachers requested background information on Poe's life, his literary career, and the sources of inspiration for his works. Primary sources of information, such as letters and contemporary journal articles, have been included whenever possible to provide an authentic voice to the life and times of Edgar Allan Poe.

The handbook is divided into sections pertaining to aspects of Poe's life and family, and his literary works. All the material may be useful as background information to the teacher. However, some of the material may be adapted for use in classroom activities for students at the 8th grade and higher levels. Suggested classroom activities are noted in the Table of Contents. A bibliography of the sources used are included at the end of each section.

This teachers' handbook was funded by the National Park Service through the Parks-as-Classrooms program.



"...Literature is the most noble of professions...I shall be a 'litterateur' at least, all my life; nor would I abandon the hopes which still lead me on for all the gold in California.."

Poe to Frederick W. Thomas,
February 14, 1849.

Daguerreotype of Edgar Allan Poe taken on
November 14, 1848

Brown University Library
photo by John M. Miller

The Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site

Edgar Allan Poe resided in Philadelphia between the years of 1838 and 1844. The years Poe lived in Philadelphia were his most productive and probably happiest years of his life. He wrote some of his most famous and influential works during this period, including “The Fall of the House of Usher,” the first modern detective story “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” and the horror tale “The Tell-Tale Heart.”

Of the several Philadelphia homes Poe lived in, this national historic site is the only one that survives. It serves as a tangible link with Poe and his life in the city. Poe rented the house sometime in early 1843. During the year or more he lived in the house, he published his popular mystery “The Gold Bug,” his time travel story “A Tale of the Ragged Mountains,” and the horror stories “The Tell-Tale Heart” and “The Black Cat.” The cellar of the house resembles the one depicted in “The Black Cat.”

Extensive research and investigation of the house have revealed how the exterior of the property appeared, but there is little information to show what the interior of the house looked like when it served as Poe’s residence. Whatever furnishings the Poes used have disappeared without a trace. The interior of the historic home remains unfurnished.

The house was preserved through the efforts of Richard Gimbel who purchased the site in 1933, and maintained it as a museum. After Gimbel’s death in 1970, the property was donated to the City of Philadelphia. The city donated the site to the National Park Service in 1978.

In recognition of Edgar Allan Poe’s contribution to American literature, the National Park Service protects and preserves his Philadelphia home for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

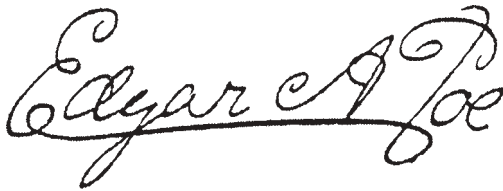


Section 1

Life and Times
of

Edgar Allan

Poe



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.

Chronology of Edgar Allan Poe's Life and Times

Date	Poe's Life	Other Writers	Events
1809	Edgar Poe born.	Lord Alfred Tennyson born. Oliver Wendell Holmes born.	Charles Darwin born. Abraham Lincoln born.
1811	Poe's mother dies. Poe joins the John Allan household.		"Luddites" destroy industrial machines in North England.
1812		Charles Dickens born. Lord Byron: <i>Child Harold's Pilgrimage</i> . J. & W. Grimm: <i>Fairy Tales</i>	War of 1812 begins.
1814		Lord Byron: <i>The Corsair</i>	British soldiers burn the White House. War of 1812 ends. <i>Savannah</i> first steamship to cross the Atlantic Ocean (26 days).
1815	Allans move to England. Poe attends boarding school there.		L.J. Prout: hypothesis on the relation between specific gravity and atomic weight.
1816		Jane Austen: <i>Emma</i> Samuel Coleridge: <i>Kubla Khan</i>	Baltimore becomes the first American city to charter a gas company to light its streets.
1817		Mary Shelley: <i>Frankenstein</i> William Cullen Bryant: <i>Thanatopsis</i>	Blackwood's Magazine founded in Edinburgh, Scotland.
1819		Washington Irving: <i>Sketch Book</i> Walt Whitman born. Herman Melville born.	H.C. Oersted discovers electromagnetism.
1820	Allan family return to Richmond. Poe continues his education.	Walter Scott: <i>Ivanhoe</i>	Missouri Compromise. (Maine admitted as free state, Missouri as slave state). T. R. Malthus: <i>Principles of Political Economy</i> .
1821		James F. Cooper: <i>The Spy</i> Thomas deQuincey: <i>Confessions of an English Opium Eater</i>	T. J. Seebeck discovers thermoelectricity.
1822		James F. Cooper: <i>The Pioneers</i>	Monroe Doctrine declared.
1823			First cotton mills established in Lowell, Massachusetts.
1824		Lord Byron dies.	Lafayette begins American tour.

Date	Poe's Life	Other Writers	Events
1825	Allan inherits his uncle's fortune.		Thomas Jefferson founds University of Virginia. Erie Canal Opens. Six hundred Boston carpenters strike for a ten hour work day.
1826	Poe enters University of Virginia and leaves same year.	James F. Cooper: <i>The Last of the Mohicans</i>	Andre Ampere: <i>Electrodynamics</i> Steam engine pioneer John Stevens demonstrates first U.S. steam locomotive on 1/2 mile track in Hoboken, New Jersey.
1827	Poe enlists in U.S. Army. <i>Tamerlane</i> published	John Aubodon: <i>Birds of North America</i>	George Ohm formulates Ohm's law defining electrical current potential and resistance. Joseph Niepce produces photographs on asphalt coated metal plate.
1828		Nathaniel Hawthorne: <i>Fanshawe</i> Noah Webster: <i>American Dictionary</i> Jules Verne born. Thomas Carlyle: <i>Essay on Goethe</i> (draws English readers attention to German Literature)	Construction begins on the the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad, the first railroad to provide regular service in the U.S. Workingman's Party is formed in Philadelphia. Andrew Jackson elected President.
1829	Mrs. Allan dies. Poe leaves the Army. <i>Al Araaf,</i> <i>Tamerlane and Other</i>	Washington Irving: <i>The Conquest of Granada</i> Alfred Tennyson: <i>Timbuctoo</i>	Joseph Henry constructs an early version of electromagnetic motor.
1830	<i>Poems</i> Poe enters U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Mr. Allan remarries.	Wendell Oliver Holmes: <i>Old Ironsides</i> Alfred Tennyson: <i>Poems, Chiefly Lyrical</i> Emily Dickinson born.	U.S. government begins moving American Indians to lands west of the Mississippi River. Daniel Webster: <i>Speeches</i>
1831	Poe court-martialed from West Point. Moves to Baltimore and lives with Aunt Maria Clemm and cousin Virginia. <i>Poems</i>		Nat Turner Rebellion. Charles Darwin sails as naturalist on a surveying expedition to South America, New Zealand, and Australia.
1832	"Metzengertein," "Bon Bon," "The Duc De L'Omelette," "A Tale of Jeruselem," "Loss of Breath"	William Cullen Bryant: <i>Poems</i>	First horse-drawn trolleys in New York City. W. E. Weber & K. F. Gauss construct the needle telegraph at Gottingen.
1833	Wins \$50 prize for short story "Ms. Found in a Bottle."	Henry Longfellow: "Outre-Mer"	American Anti-Slavery Society founded in Philadelphia. Sir James Ross returns from second Arctic expedition (discovery of magnetic North Pole).

Date	Poe's Life	Other Writers	Events
1834	John Allan dies. "The Assigination"	Samuel Taylor Coleridge dies.	Invention of McCormick reaper. Whig Party founded.
1835	Poe accepts editor job with <i>The Southern Literary Messenger</i> . Moves to Richmond, VA.	Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) born.	Halley's comet re-appears.
1836	Marries Virginia. Writes many critical reviews.	Ralph Waldo Emerson: <i>Nature</i>	Battle of Alamo.
1837	Poe leaves <i>The Southern Literary Messenger</i> . Moves to New York City, but is unable to find work.	Nathaniel Hawthorne: <i>Twice-Told Tales</i> Ralph Waldo Emerson: <i>The American Scholar</i> Charles Dickens: <i>Oliver Twist</i>	Financial panic begins seven year depression. Samuel Morse builds his first electro- magnetic telegraph. Queen Victoria ascends to British throne.
1838	Moves to Philadelphia. Only novel published, <i>The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym</i> . "Ligeia"	Elizabeth Barrett (Browning): <i>The Seraphim and Other Poems</i>	Steamships connect England and U.S. The Daguerre-Niepcé method of photography presented in Paris.
1839	Editor of <i>Burton's Gentlemen's Magazine</i> . "Fall of the House of Usher" "William Wilson"	Henry Longfellow: <i>Hyperion</i> ; <i>Voices of the Night</i>	Liberty Party (abolitionist) founded. Charles Goodyear discovers "vulcanization" for processing rubber for commercial use. First baseball game played in Cooperstown, New York.
1840	Poe leaves <i>Burton's Gentlemen's Magazine</i> . Plans his own journal. <i>Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque</i>	James F. Cooper: <i>The Pathfinder</i> Charles Dickens: <i>The Old Curiosity Shop</i>	2,816 miles of railroad in operation in U.S. Cotton textiles become leading U.S. industry with 1,778,000 spindles and 75,000 workers. 207,381 people leave Ireland for U.S.
1841	Editor of <i>Graham's Magazine</i> . "Murders in the Rue Morgue"	James F. Cooper: <i>The Deerslayer</i> Henry Longfellow: <i>Ballads and Other Poems</i>	Amistad Case. P.T. Barnum opens American Museum in New York. College degrees granted to women in the U.S.
1842	Poe resigns from <i>Graham's Magazine</i> . Virginia becomes ill with tuberculosis. "The Mask of the Red Death" "The Pit and the Pendulum" "The Mystery of Marie Roget" "The Oval Portrait"	Rufus Wilmot Griswold: <i>Poets and Poetry of America</i> Henry Longfellow: <i>Poems on Slavery</i> Charles Dickens: <i>American Notes</i>	Massachusetts passes a law limiting the length of time children can work each day. Children under 12 are allowed to work only ten hours each day.

Date	Poe's Life	Other Writers	Events
1843	Moves to house on 7th Street in Spring Garden (now Edgar Allan Poe National Historic Site). <i>The Prose Romances of Edgar A. Poe.</i> "The Tell-Tale Heart" "The Black Cat" Wins prize for "The Goldbug."	Charles Dickens: <i>A Christmas Carol</i>	First telegraph line built in U.S. between Baltimore and Washington, D.C.
1844	Moves to New York City. Joins the staff of <i>The Evening Mirror</i> . "The Purloined Letter" "A Tale of the Ragged Mountains" "The Balloon Hoax" "The Premature Burial"	James Russell Lowell: <i>Poems</i> Elizabeth Barrett (Browning): <i>Poems</i>	The New York Hotel becomes the first U.S. establishment to offer private baths.
1845	Editor and for a few months owner of <i>The Broadway Journal</i> . "The Raven" <i>The Raven and Other Poems</i>	Frederick Douglass: <i>Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass; An American Slave</i> Margaret Fuller: <i>Woman in the Nineteenth Century</i>	Texas annexed. "Manifest Destiny" coined. Knickerbocker Baseball Club codifies rules of baseball.
1846	Moves to Fordham (near New York City) after failure of <i>The Broadway Journal</i> .	Herman Melville: <i>Typee</i> Nathaniel Hawthorne: <i>Mosses from an Old Manse</i>	Mexican War begins. Elias Howe receives first patent for a sewing machine.
1847	Virginia dies. "Ulalume"	Ralph Waldo Emerson: <i>Poems</i> Herman Melville: <i>Omoo</i> Charlotte Bronte: <i>Jane Eyre</i> Emily Bronte: <i>Wuthering Heights</i>	Thomas Edison born. Alexander Graham Bell born.
1848	Engaged to Sarah Helen Whitman. Gives lectures. "The Poetic Principle" "Eureka"	Thackeray: <i>Vanity Fair</i> James Russell Lowell: <i>The Bigelow Papers</i>	Mexican War ends. California "Gold Rush" begins. Pennsylvania outlaws the hiring of children under 12 in mills.
1849	Engaged to Elmira Shelton. Dies in Baltimore. "Annabel Lee" and "The Bells" published posthumously.	Henry Thoreau: <i>Civil Disobedience</i> Herman Melville: <i>Mardi</i>	Maryland slave Harriet Tubman escapes to the North along the Underground Railroad. Elizabeth Blackwell becomes the first female doctor in the U.S. Armand Fizeau measures the velocity of light.

Sources:

Chronology of the Modern World 1793-1992. Neville Williams & Phillip Waller. Simon & Schuster New York, 1994. Second Edition

The Timetables of History. Bernard Grun. Simon and Schuster: New York, 1982.

Edgar Allan Poe: The Complete Stories. Alfred A. Knopf: New York, 1992.

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.

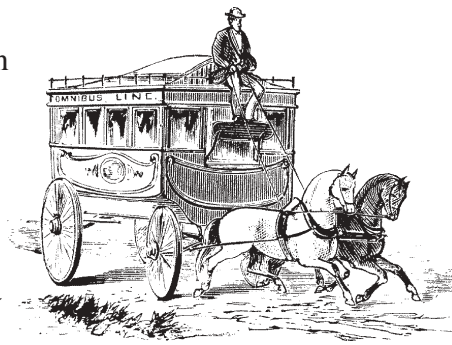
As the 19th century progressed, Philadelphia’s free African-Americans would see themselves increasingly segregated and barred from economic opportunities. Free African-American men had had the right to vote since 1790. They saw that right taken away by the state’s 1838 constitution. In the early 1800s 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, 1982.

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

Poe's Philadelphia

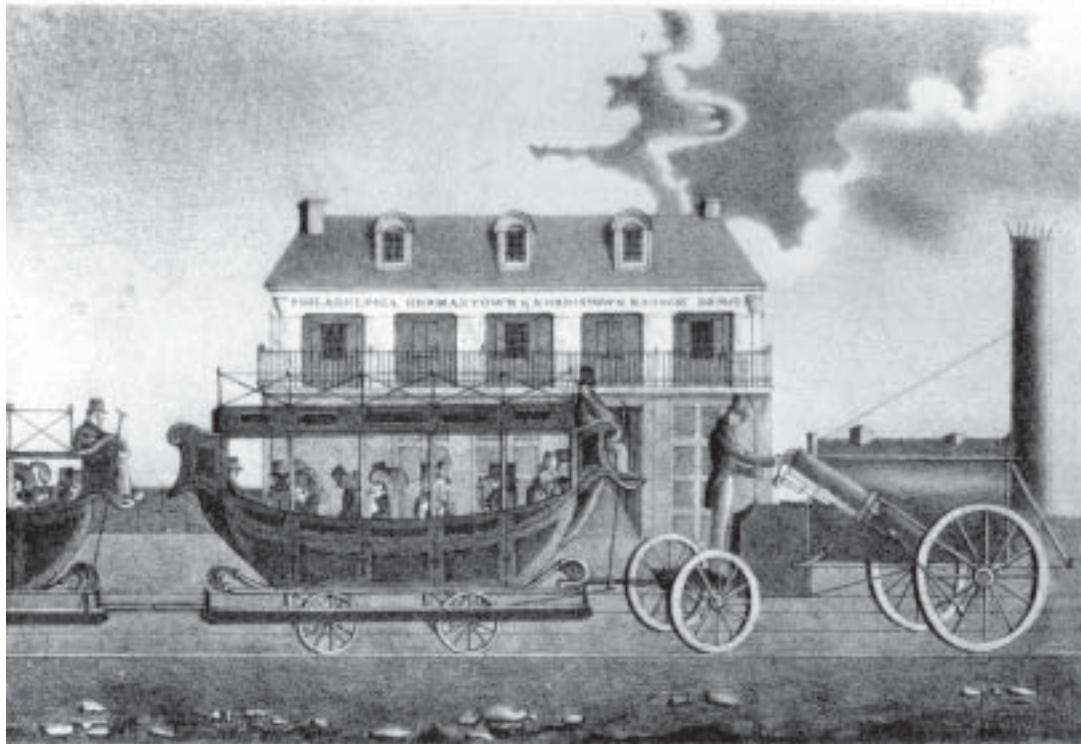
Classroom Activity:

During Poe's life there were many changes in the society, and rapid developments in technology and science. As in Poe's time we live during a period where there are significant and swift changes taking place in our society. The exercise below suggests that students read the short history of Poe's Philadelphia.

Students then list three changes in society, technology, or science that had an impact on the lives of people during Poe life time.

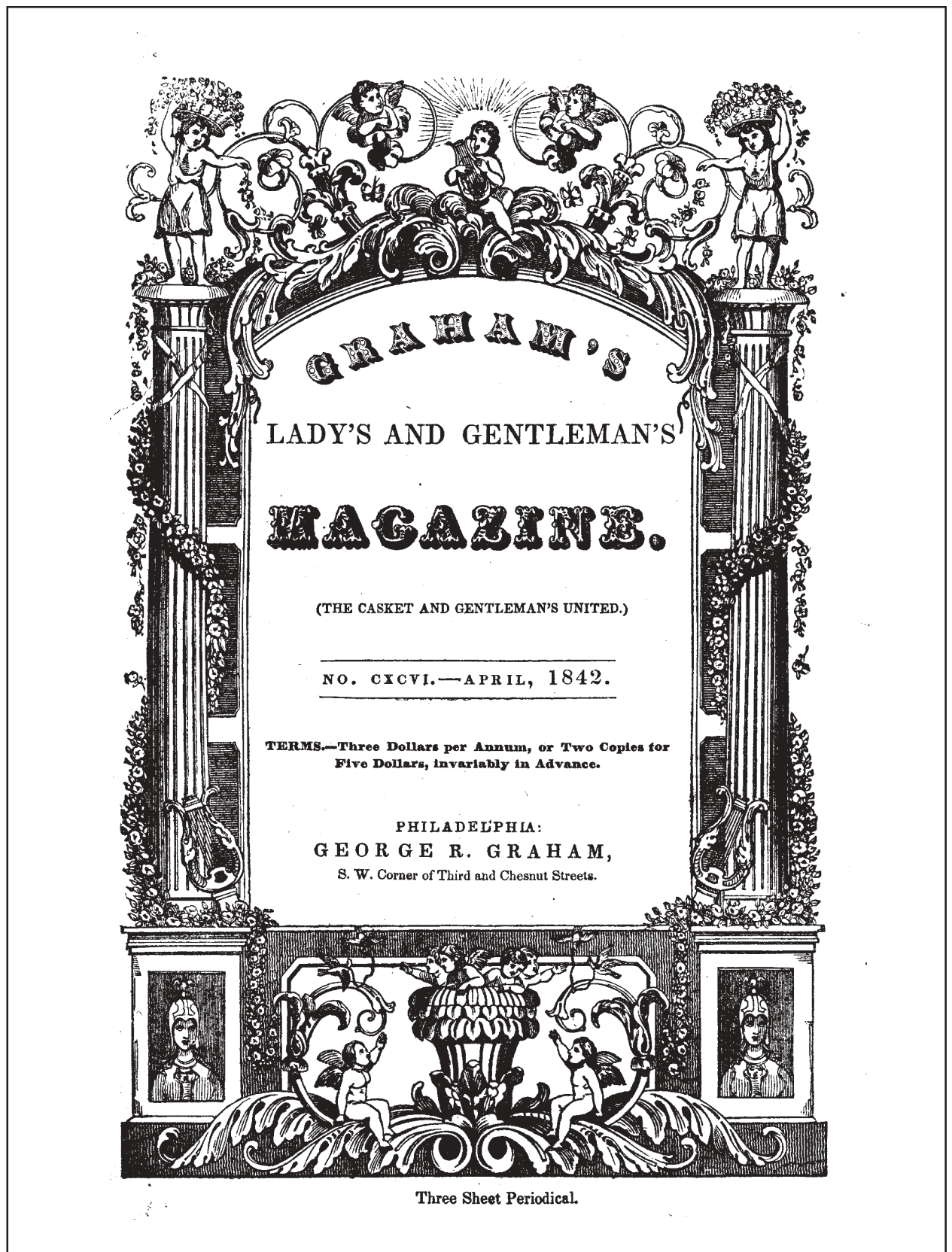
Students choose one of the changes or developments that they believe had the most impact on peoples lives and explain why.

Students list three changes or technological developments that have occurred in their life times and how those changes have impacted peoples lives today.



1832 lithograph of the railroad depot located at Ninth and Green Streets in Philadelphia.

The Library Company of Philadelphia



Three Sheet Periodical.

Cover of *Graham's Lady's and Gentlemen's Magazine*. The magazine featured "every department of literature; embellished with engravings, fashions and music arranged for the piano forte, harp and guitar." Poe served as editor for 18 months providing book reviews and short stories.

The Philadelphia Years

Below is a list of Poe's works published during the years he resided in Philadelphia. The amount of money he earned for particular works is included under the title (if known).

Title	Date Published	Publication
"Ligeia" \$10	September, 1838	<i>American Museum of Science, Literature, & Arts</i>
"The Signora Psyche Zenobia" \$5	November, 1838	<i>American Museum of Science, Literature, & Arts</i>
"The Scythe of Time" \$4	November, 1838	<i>American Museum of Science, Literature, & Arts</i>
"The Haunted Palace" \$5	April, 1839	<i>American Museum of Science, Literature, & Arts</i>
"The Devil in the Belfry"	18 May, 1839	<i>Saturday Chronicle & Mirror of the Times</i>
"The Man That Was Used Up"	August, 1839	<i>Burton's Gentlemen's Magazine</i>
"The Fall of the House of Usher" \$24	September, 1839	<i>Burton's Gentlemen's Magazine</i>
"William Wilson" \$24	October, 1839	<i>Burton's Gentlemen's Magazine</i>
"The Conversation of Eiros and Charmion"	December, 1839	<i>Burton's Gentlemen's Magazine</i>
"The Journal of Julius Rodman" \$69 (unfinished)	Jan., Feb., Mar., Apr., May, Jun. 1840	<i>Burton's Gentlemen's Magazine</i>
"Why the Little Frenchmen Wears His Hand in a Sling"	1840	<i>Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque</i>
"Silence—A Sonnet" \$5	4 January 1840	<i>The Saturday Courier</i>
"Instinct vs. Reason—A Black Cat"	29 January 1840	<i>Alexander's Weekly Messenger</i>

Title	Date Published	Publication
“Peter Pendulum” (The Business Man)	February, 1840	<i>Burton’s Gentlemen’s Magazine</i>
““Philosophy of Furniture”	May, 1840	<i>Burton’s Gentlemen’s Magazine</i>
"The Man of the Crowd"	December, 1840	<i>The Casket</i>
"Eleanora"	Summer, 1841	<i>The Gift: A Christmas & New Year's Present for 1842</i>
“The Murders in the Rue Morgue” \$56	April, 1841	<i>Graham’s Magazine</i>
“A Descent into the Maelstrom”	May, 1841	<i>Graham’s Magazine</i>
“The Island of the Fay”	June, 1841	<i>Graham’s Magazine</i>
“The Colloquy of Monos and Una”	August, 1841	<i>Graham’s Magazine</i>
“Never Bet the Devil Your Head”	September, 1841	<i>Graham’s Magazine</i>
“A Succession of Sundays”	27 November 1841	<i>Saturday Evening Post</i>
“Life in Death” ("The Oval Portrait")	April, 1842	<i>Graham’s Magazine</i>
“The Mask of the Red Death” \$12	May, 1842	<i>Graham’s Magazine</i>
"The Pit and The Pendulum" \$38	Summer, 1842	<i>The Gift: A Christmas & New Year's Present</i>
“The Landscape Garden” \$5	October, 1842	<i>The Lady’s Companion</i> (Snowden’s)
“The Tell- Tale Heart” \$10	January, 1843	<i>The Pioneer</i>
"The Mystery of Marie Roget"	Nov., Dec., 1842 Feb., 1843	<i>The Lady's Companion</i> (Snowden’s)
“The Conqueror Worm” \$5	January, 1843	<i>Graham’s Magazine</i>

Title	Date Published	Publication
"Lenore"	February, 1843	<i>The Pioneer</i>
"The Gold Bug" \$100 (prize)	24 June, 1 & 8 July, 1843	<i>Dollar Newspaper</i>
"The Black Cat" \$20	19 August 1843	<i>Saturday Evening Post</i>
"Morning on the Wissahickon"	Summer, 1844	<i>The Opal: A Pure Gift for the Holy Days.</i>
"Raising the Wind: or Considered As One of the Exact Sciences"	14 October 1843	<i>The Saturday Courier</i>
"The Spectacles"	27 March 1844	<i>The Dollar Newspaper</i>
"A Tale of the Ragged Mountains"	April, 1844	<i>Godey's Lady's Book</i>

In addition to these works, Poe published about 60 critical reviews in *Burton's Gentlemen's Magazine* and *Graham's Magazine* between August 1839 and March 1844.

Sources:

"Edgar A. Poe: His Income as Literary Entrepreneur." John Ward Ostrom, *Poe Studies*, Volume 15, Number 15, June 1989.

Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe. Edited by Thomas Ollive Mabbott. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978. 3 volumes..

Section 2

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 Fontainbleau:

"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."



TO THE HUMANE HEART,

On this night, Mrs. Poe, lingering on thr 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 he death. He had appar-
ently 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.

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.

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.”

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 enduce 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*

Edgar's letter to John Allan. West Point Military Academy. January 3, 1831

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 beautyfull 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 gaities 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*

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.”*

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 coffee, 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."*

Section 3

The Poet

Poe the Poet

Poe began and ended his literary career with his first love—poetry. As a young man, Poe read Lord George Byron’s poetry and his influence can be seen in Poe’s first book of poetry, *Tamerlane and Other Poems*. Poe began developing his critical theories of poetry early in his career. He adopted part of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s literary theory when he stated that poetry’s object was to produce pleasure in the reader. He wrote in the preface of his *Poems by Edgar A. Poe, Second Edition* (1831):

“A poem, in my opinion, is opposed to a work of science by having, for its immediate object, pleasure, not truth; to romance, by having for its object an indefinite instead of a definite pleasure, being a poem only so far as this object is attained: romance presenting perceptible images with definite, poetry with indefinite sensations, to which end music is an essential, since the comprehension of sweet sound is our most indefinite conception. Music, when combined with a pleasurable idea, is poetry; music without the idea is simply music; the idea without the music is prose from its very definitiveness.”

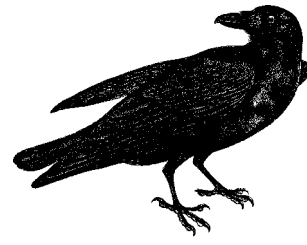
In 1844, Poe repeated his opinion in a letter to James Russell Lowell that poetry should be musical.

“I am profoundly excited by music, and by some poems—those of Tennyson, especially—whom, with Keats, Shelley, Coleridge (occasionally), and a few others of like thought and expression, I regard as the sole poets. Music is the perfection of the soul, or idea, of Poetry. The vagueness of exaltation aroused by a sweet air (which should be strictly indefinite and never too strongly suggestive) is precisely what we should aim at in poetry.”

In the last two years of his life, Poe refined his ideas about the purpose of poetry and presented lectures on the subject of “The Poetic Principle.” Below is an excerpt from a manuscript of the lecture, which was published posthumously in 1850.

“An immortal instinct, deep within the spirit of man, is thus, plainly, a sense of the Beautiful....It is in Music, perhaps, that the soul most nearly attains the great end for which, when inspired with the Poetic Sentiment, it struggles—the creation of supernal Beauty. It *may* be, indeed, that here this sublime end is, now and then, attained *in fact*. We are often made to feel, with a shivering delight, that from an earthly harp are stricken notes which *cannot* have been unfamiliar to the angels. And thus there can be little doubt that in the union of Poetry with Music in its popular sense, we shall find the widest field for the Poetic development....I would define, in brief, the Poetry of words as *The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty.*”

Poe did not gain wide attention as a poet until his poem "The Raven" was published in 1845. The poem became a sensation throughout the United States and was reprinted in England. Elizabeth Barrett (Browning) wrote to Poe about the poem's effects on some readers:



"...Your 'Raven' has produced a sensation, a 'fit horror,' here in England. Some of my friends are taken by the fear of it and some by the music. I hear of persons haunted by the 'Nevermore,' and one acquaintance of mine who has the misfortune of possessing a 'bust of Pallas' never can bear to look at it in the twilight."

One of the last poems Poe wrote was "Annabel Lee." The poem was published shortly after his death in 1849. Although at least two women acquainted with Poe believed they were the inspiration for the poem, the poet's wife is generally accepted as the inspiration for "Annabel Lee." As Poe biographer, Arthur Hobson Quinn pointed out, Poe "struck a similar note of youthful love, lasting beyond death" in the beginning of his career with "Tamerlane" and at the end with "Annabel Lee."

Poe's lifelong dream was to be a poet. In 1845, he expressed his feelings about poetry in the preface of his book *The Raven and Other Poems*.

"Events not to be controlled have prevented me from making, at any time, any serious effort in what, under happier circumstances, would have been the field of my choice. With me poetry has been not a purpose, but a passion; and the passions should be held in reverence; they must not – cannot at will be excited with an eye to the paltry compensations, or the more paltry commendations, of mankind."

Sources:

Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe. Edited by Thomas Ollive Mabbott. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978. 3 volumes.

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

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

The Poe Log: A Documentary Life of Edgar Allan Poe 1809—1849. Dwight Thomas and David K. Jackson. Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1987.

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 the Poet

Classroom Activity:

Provide students with a copy of Virginia Poe's Valentine's Day acrostic poem (in Meet the Family section). Students write their own acrostic poem.

Student Activity: Since its publication Poe's poem "The Raven" has been illustrated by many artists. Students create a poster or booklet illustrating the major points of the poem.

Student Activity: Students complete word search on Poe's poetic works.



*Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door--
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.*

Excerpt from Poe's poem "The Raven."

Gustave Dore's 1884 illustration of Poe's "The Raven."

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

Section 4

The Prose

Writer

Poe the Prose Writer

Master of Horror



Like other American writers, Poe was influenced by the popular “Gothic” style stories written by British and European authors, such as Horace Walpole, Ann Radcliffe, E.T.A. Hoffman, and Ludwig Tieck. Gothic tales involved circumstances of mystery and horror. Decaying castles with secret passageways, dungeons, ghosts, and a general atmosphere of gloom and doom are all features of the Gothic tale. Like Nathaniel Hawthorne and others, Poe adapted some elements of the Gothic stories for use in his horror tales.

Although Poe began his literary career as a poet, he soon recognized the higher demand for short fiction by magazine publishers. Initially, Poe wrote burlesques of the Gothic story, but soon began to seriously write in the Gothic vein. In a letter to the owner of the *Southern Literary Magazine* he discussed his reasons for writing his unsavory horror story “Berenice.”

*“A word or two in relation to Berenice...The subject is by far too horrible, and I hesitated in sending it you especially as a specimen of my capabilities. The tale originated in a bet that I could produce nothing effective on a subject so singular, provided I treated in seriously....The history of all Magazines shows plainly that those which have attained celebrity were indebted for it to articles similar **in nature—to Berenice**--...in what does this nature consist? In the ludicrous heightened into the grotesque: The fearful coloured into the horrible: the witty exaggerated into the burlesque: the singular wrought out into the strange and mystical....But whether the articles of which I speak are, or are not in bad taste is little to the purpose. To be appreciated you must be **read**, and these things are invariably sought after with avidity. They are, if you will take notice, the articles which find their way into other periodicals, and into the papers, and in this manner, taking hold upon the public mind they augment the reputation of the source where they originated....To be sure originality is an essential in these things—great attention must be paid to style, and much labour spent in their composition.”*

Charged by many of his contemporaries as writing too much in the "Germanic" or "Gothic" vein, Poe explained his use of horror in the preface of his book *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque* (1840):

“If in many of my productions terror has been the thesis, I maintain that terror is not of Germany, but of the soul,—that I have deduced this terror only from its legitimate sources, and urged it only to its legitimate results.”

Poe was very much a man of his day. He perceived the public's fascination with sensational events and amazing scientific discoveries. His stories were written to capitalize on that interest. Newspaper reports of the victims of premature burial, both horrified and frightened the public. *The New York Observer* newspaper reported an event on March 11, 1843.

'An inhabitant of the commune of Eymet (Dordogne),' says the *Presse*, 'being attacked with a constant inability to sleep, applied to a medical man, who ordered him a sleeping potion. He soon fell asleep, but the next day, remaining in the same state of repose, his family got alarmed, and some one attempted to bleed him. No blood following the lancet, a more minute examination was instituted, and it was declared that he was dead. He was buried but, some days after, it was suspected that the potion might have caused his apparent death. The coffin in consequence opened, and the body was found turned completely around. The man had been buried in a trance, and had evidently attempted to free himself from his horrible prison.'

Poe used the subject of premature burial in his stories "The Premature Burial" and "The Cask of Amontillado." The possibility of being accidentally buried alive terrified many people which led to the invention of the "life-preserving coffin." The following excerpt was taken from an article in the *New Mirror*, November 18, 1843.

"The 'life-preserving coffin,' lately exhibited at the fair of the Institute, is so constructed as to fly open with the least stir of the occupant, and made as comfortable within as if intended for a temporary lodging. The proprietor recommends... a corresponding facility of exit from the vault, and arrangements for privacy, light and fresh air – in short all that would be agreeable to the revenant on first waking... In Frankfort, Germany, the dead man is laid in a well-aired room, and his hand fastened for three days to a bell-pull."

Poe read extensively as an editor and critic. Undoubtedly, he found inspiration in the works of others. In his book *Edgar Allan Poe* (1916), Gunnar Bjurman pointed out a possible inspiration for Poe's story "The Tell-Tale Heart" in Daniel Webster's description of a real life crime committed in Massachusetts in 1830. Webster had served as the special prosecutor in the murder trial. He published a pamphlet of his closing arguments titled "Argument on the Trial."

"An aged man, without an enemy in the world, in his own house, and in his own bed, is made the victim of a butcherly murder, for mere pay. Truly, here is a new lesson for painters and poets. Whoever shall hereafter draw the portrait of murder, if he will show it...where...last to be looked for... let him not give it the grim visage of Moloch... Let him draw, rather, a decorous, smooth-faced, bloodless demon; a picture in repose, rather than in action; not so much an example of human nature in its depravity, and in its paroxysms of crime, as an infernal being, a fiend, in the ordinary display and development of his character."

Webster continued his closing arguments with:

“...True it is, generally speaking, that ‘murder will out’... the guilty soul cannot keep its own secret. It is false to itself; or rather it feels an irresistible impulse to be true to itself. It labors under its guilty possession and knows not what do with it. The human heart was not made for the residence of such an inhabitant... The secret, which the murderer possesses soon comes to possess him; and like the evil spirits of which we read, it overcomes him, and leads him whithersoever it will. He feels it beating at his heart, rising to his throat, and demanding disclosure. He thinks the whole world sees it in his face, reads it in his eyes, and almost hears it working in the very silence of his thoughts. It has become his master... It must be confessed, it will be confessed.”

Webster's speech was quoted in an article on the murder case of Mary Rogers in *Brother Jonathan*, August 21, 1841. Poe based his second detective story "The Mystery of Marie Roget" on the Mary Rogers murder case. He avidly followed the case in the newspapers of the day. "The Tell-Tale Heart" was first published in January, 1843.

Sources:

Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe. Edited by Thomas Ollive Mabbott. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978. 3 volumes. Volume 3, pages 789-791.

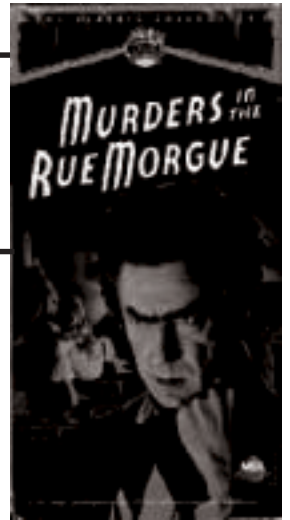
Edgar Allan Poe: A Critical Biography. Arthur Hobson Quinn. New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1941.

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

Poe the Prose Writer

Poe and the American Cinema

Poe has received much attention in the movies, and the cinematic interpretations of his works are varied. Unfortunately few movies accurately follow Poe's story lines. In 1932, the Hungarian actor Bela Lugosi starred in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*. Lugosi plays Dr. Mirakle, a deranged scientist who kidnaps a beautiful young woman as a prospective bride for his gorilla. Besides the title, there are few similarities between this film and Poe's classic tale of detection.



© MCA Universal Home Video

The director whom most people associate with Poe's works is Roger Corman, whose humorous, often entertainingly bad adaptations of Poe's work became enormously popular in the 1960s. Horror film heroes Boris Karloff and Peter Lorre appeared in a number of these films. However, the actor most often associated with Corman's films was Vincent Price who starred in twelve films. Some of these films include *Tomb of Ligeia*, *The Masque of the Red Death*, and *Cry of the Banshee*. Although popular among horror film enthusiasts, the serious artistic intentions of Poe are lost among low cost special effects, and mediocre dialogue. As entertaining as some of these movies are, they are not substitutes for the literary art of Edgar Allan Poe.

Classroom Activity:

Students read one of Poe's stories and then watch a movie purportedly based on the story. The students compare and list the differences between the two works. Students describe how the story's theme was changed or elaborated on in its movie adaptation.

The Pit and the Pendulum starring Vincent Price. Videotape. Orion Pictures Corporation, 1961.

The Mask of the Red Death starring Vincent Price. Videotape. Orion Pictures Corporation, 1961.

Murders in the Rue Morgue starring Bela Lugosi. Videotape. Universal Pictures Corporation, 1932.

Poe the Prose Writer

Inventor of the Modern Detective Story



Poe created a new literary genre when he wrote “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.” Although mysteries were not a new literary form, Poe was the first to introduce a character that solved the mystery by analyzing the facts of the case. In 1846, Poe wrote to a friend about the popularity of (as he referred to them) his “tales of ratiocination.”

*“These tales of ratiocination owe most of their popularity to being something in a new key. I do not mean to say that they are not ingenious—but people think them more ingenious than they are—on account of their method and **air** of method. In the ‘Murders in the Rue Morgue,’ for instance, where is the ingenuity of unravelling a web which you yourself (the author) have woven for the express purpose of unravelling? The reader is made to confound the ingenuity of the supposititious Dupin with that of the writer of the story.”*

In “Murders in the Rue Morgue” Poe outlined the elements which future detective story authors would later adapt and elaborate upon. Poe’s fictional detective C. Auguste Dupin is a reclusive character who is contacted by the police when they are unable to solve the crime. Dupin has keen powers of observation. He points out to his companion, “The necessary knowledge is of *what* to observe.” The narrator of the story is a friend of Dupin, and through him the reader follows along with the detective as he solves the mystery. Poe made the clues to the mystery available throughout the story, thereby offering the reader an opportunity to solve the mystery. Dupin was featured in three of Poe’s stories, establishing another feature of the detective genre – the recurring character.

Nearly forty-five years after Poe’s death, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle popularized the detective story when he created his fictional detective, Sherlock Holmes, a character who shares similar peculiarities with Poe’s character C. Auguste Dupin. Doyle acknowledged Poe’s contribution to the genre when he said:

“Edgar Allan Poe...was the father of the detective tale, and covered its limits so completely that I fail to see how his followers can find any fresh ground which they can confidently call their own. For the secret of the thinness and also of the intensity of the detective story is that the writer is left with only one quality, that of intellectual acuteness, with which to endow his hero. Everything else is outside the picture and weakens the effect. The problem and its solution must form the theme, and the character-drawing is limited and subordinate. On this narrow path the writer must walk and he sees the footmarks of Poe always in front of him.”

In 1845, Poe described his method of creating his tales of ratiocination (logical reasoning) to Dr. Thomas Dunn English. In his review of Poe's work, English wrote, "The author, as in the case of 'Murders in the Rue Morgue,' the first written, begins by imagining a deed committed by such a creature, or in such a manner, as would most effectually mislead inquiry.... Like all the rest, it is written backwards."

Although Poe claimed the incidents in "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" were "purely imaginary," some possible sources of inspiration for the story may have been found in newspapers and the theater. Poe scholar Thomas O. Mabbott pointed out an 1834 newspaper story which reported an incident of theft by a monkey trained to burglarize houses. Mabbott also noted that there was a tradition of comic skits about a pet monkey wielding a shaving razor in imitation of its master, a barber.



Wood engraving circa early 1800s by Thomas Bewick.

Mabbott also pointed out that by 1831, orangoutangs were a popular attraction in America. The following advertisement appeared in the *Philadelphia Gazette*, August 20, 1839:

The Chimpanzee,
A Superior Order of the Ourang Outang.

NOW exhibiting at the Masonic Hall, Chestnut street, from 8 o'clock, AM. To 6 o'clock, PM., the only living CHIMPANZEE, lately brought from Africa. This animal is the genuine "Troglydites Niger" of Naturalists, or "Wild Man of the Woods," and is the finest specimen ever seen in this country. It bears a most striking resemblance to the human form, and in natural sagacity far exceeds the descriptions of Naturalists.

Admittance 25 cents; Children half price.
Tickets to be had at the door.

Sources:

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

Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe. Edited by Thomas Ollive Mabbott. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1978. 3 volumes..

Edgar Allan Poe. 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.

"The Gold-Bug" and "A Few Words on Secret Writing"

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

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	"	"
	c	"	"
	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

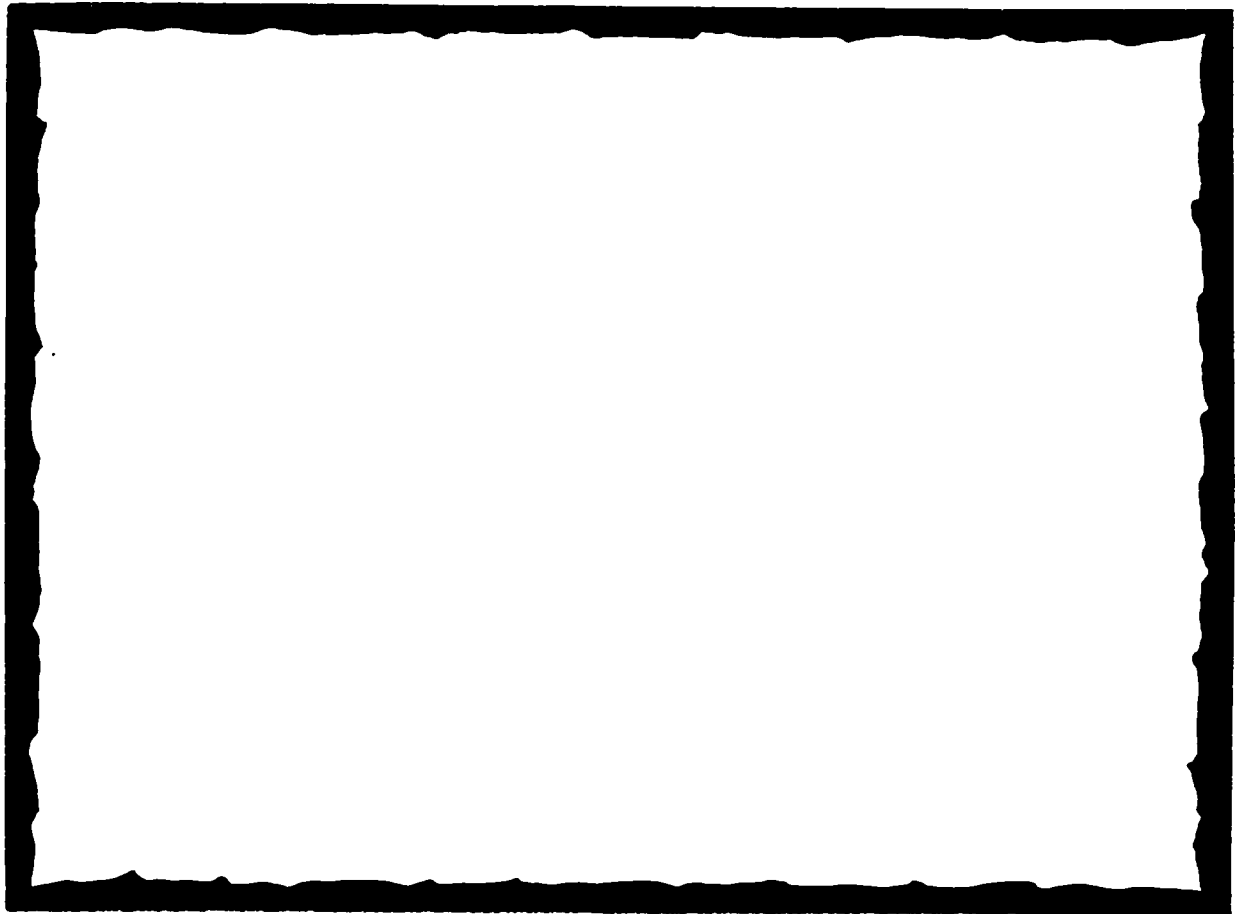
ezbsapak uazbzu

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



Section 5

The Literary Critic

The Man with the Tomahawk

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. 42The idea of the tale has been presented unblemished, because undisturbed; and this is an

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."

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"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.

Section 6

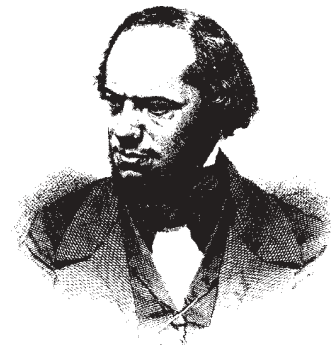
A Reputation
Ruined

A Reputation Ruined



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., 1991.

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

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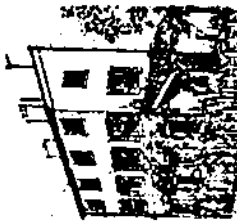
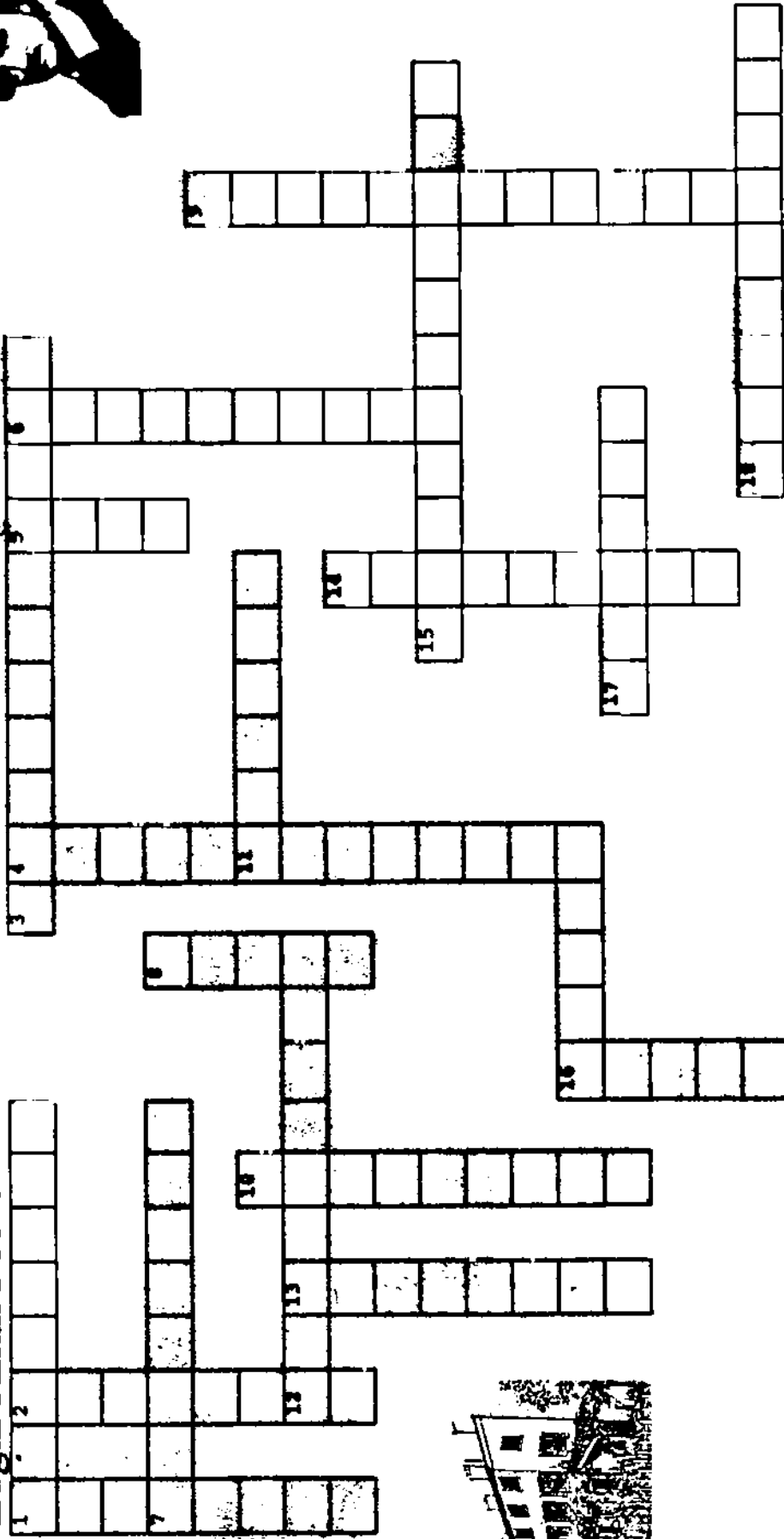
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<i>page 28</i>	Maria Poe Clemm carte de visite; <i>John Ingram-Poe Collection, Special Collections Department, University of Virginia Library</i>
<i>page 44</i>	Rufus Wilmot Griswold engraving; <i>Gimbel Collection, Free Library of Philadelphia</i>



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Edgar Allan Poe Crossword Puzzle



Across

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

Down

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

