



TEACHER'S GUIDE

Nightfall with Edgar Allan Poe

October 16, 2023

10:30 AM



Welcome to Staley Class Acts at the University of Illinois Springfield! We hope this guide will help you expand on concepts found in this particular performance and incorporate them into your classroom teaching, both before and after the performance. We want students to think of the arts as an integral part of their lives – not just a one-time event.

Before arriving, you can prepare your students by helping them understand the story or by sharing basic information about the art form they are going to see. We also ask you to review the theater etiquette information with your students (found on pages 2-3 of this guide) to help prepare them for attending a live performance.

After the performance you can talk to your students about their experience. Did they enjoy the performance? What did they learn? How was the performance different than what they expected? We hope the information and activities included in this guide will help your students gain a deeper understanding of the performance.

We look forward to seeing you! If you have any questions about these materials or about the performance, please contact me at (217) 206-8289 or jmose4@uis.edu.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Moser'.

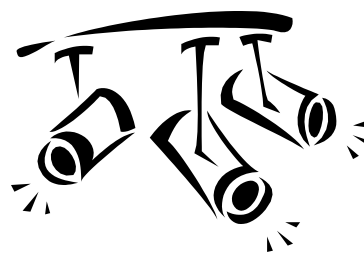
Justine Moser
Education Connections Program Coordinator
UIS Performing Arts Center



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Going to a live theatrical performance is different than watching a movie or TV show – the members of the audience are very important, and the way they behave will affect the performance. Therefore, theaters have their own special rules about behavior.

- **Ask the ushers if you need help with anything** – The people who wear red coats are volunteer ushers, and they want to make sure everyone is able to enjoy the performance. They will guide you to your seat, and they can help you find a restroom. In any emergency situation, the ushers will help guide your class to safety. There may be as many as 1700 people coming to see the performance! Please follow the instructions of the ushers at all times.
- **Turn off and put away cell phones and anything else that can light up or make noise** – These can be very distracting to the performers and your fellow audience members.
- **Do not eat, drink, or chew gum in the auditorium** – Even the quietest chewers and slurpers can be distracting to the performers and to the other people around you. Also, even if you are very careful, food and drinks can sometimes make a mess in the auditorium. We try to keep the auditorium as clean as possible so that it will be just as nice for the next audience.
- **Never throw anything in the auditorium** – This is distracting and dangerous for the performers and people in the audience.
- **Do not put your feet on the back of the seat in front of you**
- **Please do not wear a hat inside the auditorium** – It is difficult for the people behind you to see the stage if you're wearing a hat.
- **Use the restroom before the performance begins** – As soon as your class arrives and is seated in the auditorium, the teacher can arrange visits to the restroom before the performance begins. The ushers will help you find the closest restroom. Of course, if you *must* use the restroom during the performance, please be as quiet as possible about leaving your seat. Once you get to the aisle, an usher will help you find the way.
- **When the lights begin to dim, the performance is beginning** – This tells the audience to stop conversations, get settled in their seats, and focus their attention on the stage. A person will come out and make an announcement before the performance begins. Pay close attention to the announcement because it might include special instructions that you will need to remember.



- **The overture (music at the beginning of the show) is part of the performance** – If the performance has music in it, there might be an opening piece of music called an overture before any actors appear on stage. Give this piece of music the same respect you give the performers by being quiet and attentive while the overture is played.

- **Do not take pictures or recordings during the performance** – The flashes can be distracting to performers, and it is against the law to take pictures or recordings of many performances.



- **Refrain from talking, whispering, and making noise during the performance** – Remember that live performers can see and hear you from the stage. It is very distracting to the performers and the other audience members if you talk during the performance. After all, the audience came to hear the professionals perform!

- **It's ok to react to the performance** – Spontaneous laughter, applause, and gasps of surprise are welcome as part of the special connection between the performers and the audience during a live show. However, shouts, loud comments, and other inappropriate noises are distracting to the actors and your fellow audience members.

- **Clap at the appropriate times** – If you are enjoying the performance, you can let the performers know by clapping for them. During a play or musical, you can clap between scenes (during a blackout) or after songs. During a music concert or dance performance, you can clap after each piece is performed. In a jazz music concert, it is ok to clap in the middle of a song when a musician has finished a solo. If a music ensemble plays a piece with several sections, called movements, the audience will usually only clap at the very end of all the movements.

- **The performers will bow when the performance ends** – This is called a curtain call. You should applaud to thank the performers for their hard work, but you should not begin to leave the auditorium until the curtain call is over and the lights become brighter. If you really enjoyed the performance, you are welcome to give a standing ovation while you applaud. This is reserved for performances you feel are *truly outstanding!*

- **Respect the hard work of the performers** – You may not enjoy every performance you see, but I hope you will recognize that each performance requires a tremendous amount of dedication on the part of the performers and those who work backstage. It is polite to keep any negative comments to yourself until you have left the building.



Staley Class Acts and Learning Standards

Attendance at any Staley Class Acts event can help teachers meet **Common Core Standards**. The clearest example can be found in the Standard for Speaking and Listening, #2:

Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally.

Additionally, in the Common Core Standards for Reading, the definition of the word "text" can be expanded to include non-printed works such as dance, music, theater, and visual arts. This makes the arts an important part of all standards in the Reading category, at every grade level.

Staley Class Acts attendance can also help your students meet elements of the new **Illinois Arts Learning Standards**, which went into effect starting with the 2018-2019 school year. These standards reflect best practices and identify what is important for students to know and be able to do in dance, media arts, music, theatre, and visual arts. You can learn more at www.illinoisartslearning.org.



Write to Us!

We would love to hear from you and your students! If your students write about the performance they saw or create artwork related to it, you are welcome to send it to us via email to eobri4@uis.edu or through the mail to:

Justine Moser
UIS Performing Arts Center
One University Plaza, MS PAC 397
Springfield, IL 62703

We love sharing student work with our donors and Staley Class Acts sponsors, so they can see the impact of their donations.

Background Information

Edgar Allan Poe

Edgar Poe was born in Boston on January 19, 1809 to two traveling stage actors, David Poe, Jr. and Elizabeth Arnold Hopkins. Both of Poe's parents died before Edgar reached the age of three. Some reports state they died within days of each other, others that David died in 1810. Elizabeth likely died Dec. 8, 1811. Orphaned, Poe was separated from his brother and sister and went to live with

John and Frances Allan of Richmond. In 1812, Poe was christened Edgar Allan Poe (with the Allans presumably serving as godparents). Poe's early education consisted of schooling in London as well as America. In 1826, Poe began studying at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville (a school founded by Thomas Jefferson). He later left the University of Virginia over a matter of gambling debts and enlisted in the United States Army. After brief service in the army, Poe spent a few months at West Point. By the age of 22, Poe had already published three books of poetry.

In 1836, Poe married his 13-year-old cousin Virginia. They remained married until her death in 1847. During this time, Poe continued to write and work for several publications as both editor and contributor, producing such works as *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, *The Fall of the House of Usher*, *The Tell-Tale Heart* and *The Raven*. When Virginia died in 1847, Poe was devastated by his loss and wrote, "Deep in

the earth my love is lying and I must weep alone." Poe sank into depression after Virginia's death. He wrote less frequently and turned to alcohol. In 1849, he was found on the streets of Baltimore in a feverish stupor, wearing clothes that were not his. The last moments of his life were spent drifting in and out of consciousness in the

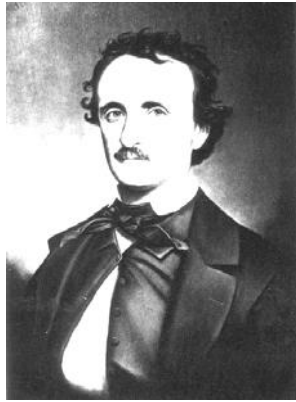


Photo courtesy of www.poedecoder.com/Qrisse/pics/index.php?pic=halling_portrait

Poe's Influence on Literature

Edgar Allan Poe was an American poet, short story writer and literary critic. His influence on literature has been immense, affecting writers such as Jules Verne, Charles Baudelaire, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Fyodor Dostoyevsky, Robert Louis Stevenson and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, among others.

His short story *Murders in the Rue Morgue* and his three tales featuring Auguste Dupin created the detective story **genre**. Poe is also credited with mastering the short story, especially psychological horror stories. It has even been argued that Poe was the father of modern science fiction.

Poe defined poetry as the "rhythmical creation of beauty." In poetry, he displayed a **propensity** for rhythmic effect, particularly in poems such as *The Bells*, *The Raven* and *Annabel Lee*. The first line of *The Raven* is a good example: "Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered weak and weary..." He also frequently made use of alliteration and onomatopoeia.

While Edgar Allan Poe is widely associated with **grotesque** and **gothic** themes, he also shows evidence of humor and **satire** in his short stories and literary criticism (e.g., *The Devil in the Belfry*, *The Duc de l'Omelette*, *Never Bet the Devil Your Head*). His personal experiments with writing contributed to the development of his literary theories and criticism. The latter was at times quite scathing. Poe is quoted as saying the purpose of literature is "to amuse by arousing thought." Certainly many of his writings are thought-provoking while amusing and suspenseful. Popular association of Poe's work is entrenched in the complexity of the human mind, particularly in the darkness of fear, guilt and obsession. Stories such as *The Tell-Tale Heart*, *The Cask of Amontillado* and *The Fall of the House of Usher* have been reinterpreted and reproduced in films and popular television programs such as *Star Trek*, *Homicide: Life on the Street* and *The Simpsons*. Thus, Edgar Allan Poe's legacy as a master of suspense lives on two centuries after his birth.

Information courtesy of www.mysterynet.com/edgar-allan-poe/main.shtml, www.kirjasto.sci.fi/eapoe.htm, www.eapoe.org/geninfo/poechrom.htm, www.economicexpert.com/a/Edgar:Allan:Poe.htm, www.classiccrimefiction.com/historydf.htm, http://encarta.msn.com/text_761568650_0/Edgar_Allan_Poe.html



Poe's wife Virginia
Drawing courtesy of:
www.poedecoder.com

Washington College Hospital.

Background Information

Literary Forms and Devices

A **short story** is a condensed work of fiction that generally has a small number of characters engaged in a single action with a specific thematic focus. It can be read at one sitting. During the 1800s, many writers began to consider the short story as a separate form of literature. Edgar Allan Poe was perhaps the most important writer to analyze short stories as a distinct literary form. One of the elements of a short story particularly important to him was “unity of effect.” It was imperative to Poe that all elements of a story contribute to a single emotional impact. The first book about writing short stories, *The Philosophy of the Short Story* (1901) by Brander Matthews, an American critic, contained many of Poe’s ideas.

Romanticism is a style in the fine arts and literature. It emphasizes passion rather than reason, and imagination and intuition rather than logic or science. Romanticism favors full expression of the emotions, and free or spontaneous action rather than restraint and order. **The Romantic Movement** usually refers to the period from around 1750 to 1870. During this movement, most writers were discontented with a commercial, inhuman and standardized world. To escape from modern life, the romantics turned their interest to remote and faraway places, the **medieval** past, folklore and legends, nature, common people and the supernatural. Romantic literature allowed a freer style of expression and more flexible form. It encouraged the mingling of genres (e.g., tragi-comedy) and favored convoluted, fast-paced plots and complex characters. By using first-person narration in his stories, Poe draws us into the state of mind of his characters, allowing us to identify more effectively with them, adding to the horror effect and intensity of the story.

One of Poe’s finest talents was his brilliant use of words or **diction** to describe or set the **tone** he desired. Two techniques that he used were **alliteration** and **onomatopoeia**. Alliteration occurs when two or more words in a sentence begin with the same sound. A “crawling, long and horrible snake” can become more terrifying with alliteration as a “slithering, slippery and slimy snake.” Examples from Poe’s *The Raven* are: “While I nodded nearly napping” (note the “n” sound) and “And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain” using “s.” This line about the rustling purple curtain is also a fine example of onomatopoeia, which is the use of a word or words whose sound imitates the sound represented.

The repetitive “s” sounds in the line suggest the sound of rustling curtains. The “ur” sound in “purple” and

“curtain” suggests a darker, more foreboding atmosphere. Tapping and rapping are also examples of onomatopoeia in the following lines from *The Raven*:

“...suddenly there came a tapping,
As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.”

Another example is the word “buzz,” which suggests, as well as refers to, the sound made by bees.

Poe was a master at employing rhythm and sound to advantage. In *The Bells*, his poetry mimics the chiming of instruments:

To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells
From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells...

Irony is another device appreciated by Poe. For example, in *The Cask of Amontillado*, Montresor ironically shows concern for Fortunato’s health, even though he intends to kill him. He also appears to try to talk Fortunato out of trying the Amontillado (sherry), even though Montresor clearly wants to get Fortunato drunk. Even Fortunato’s name is ironic, since death by starvation and dehydration as a result of being buried alive in a wall does not coincide with his “fortunate” name.

Hyperbole (exaggeration) is another device used in *The Cask of Amontillado* when Montresor refers to “The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as best I could.” The injuries may have been many, but one thousand is clearly not a factual count.

Poe uses **metaphor** when he refers to the drunken Fortunato’s eyes as “two filmy orbs...” In *The Raven*, he also refers to the night as a “Plutonian shore,” referring to the god of the underworld (Pluto).

Foreshadowing is another favorite device used by Poe. The appearance of the raven as the narrator ponders the death of his beloved Lenore is one example. The beating of the dead man’s heart in *The Tell-Tale Heart* is another. When Fortunato states (in *The Cask of Amontillado*), “I shall not die of a mere cough,” it foreshadows his death of starvation and dehydration, buried alive.

Poe was a master at using these and other literary devices to increase the impact of his writing.

Information courtesy of http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761559304_2/Short_Story.html, http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761573164/Romanticism.html, http://encarta.msn.com/text_761559304_0/Short_Story.html, http://encarta.msn.com/text_761568650_0/Edgar_Allan_Poe.html, www.associatedcontent.com/article/360964/poe_and_hawthornes_literary_technique..., www.123helpme.com/view.asp?id=74799, www.poe200th.com/teachers-poes-technique.php

Vocabulary

Terms from the Background Information

Genre—a particular type or category (of literary work, art, etc.)

Propensity—an innate inclination

Grotesque—characterized by ludicrous or incongruous distortion

Gothic—a style that emphasizes the grotesque and mysterious

Short Story—a relatively brief fictional prose composition that usually develops a single theme or mood

Romanticism/Romantic Movement—an artistic and intellectual movement that originated in the late 18th century and stressed strong emotion, imagination, freedom from classical correctness in art forms and rebellion against social conventions

Diction—the choice and use of words in speaking and writing

Tone—a general quality or atmosphere

Alliteration—the repetition of the same initial consonant sound in two or more words in a line of speech or writing for poetic or emphatic effect

Onomatopoeia—the formation or use of words that imitate what they denote

Satire—a literary composition, in verse or prose, in which human folly and vice are held up to scorn

Rhythmic effect—effect of the use of a uniform or patterned recurrence of a beat, accent, or the like

Hyperbole—obvious and intentional exaggeration

Irony—in literature, a technique of indicating, as through character or plot development, an intention or attitude opposite to that which is actually or ostensibly stated

Metaphor—a figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest a resemblance

Expanding the Classroom through Discussion

Pre-Performance Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever seen a movie or a play based on a book? What kinds of challenges do actors and playwrights have to overcome to successfully portray imaginative or supernatural occurrences (for example: walking through mirrors, having no shadow, or flying)?
2. What words come to mind when you hear the name: Edgar Allan Poe? Even if you haven't read one of his stories, what do you imagine he wrote about?
3. What is one of your favorite stories you'd like to see produced as a play? What kinds of changes would you make to the story to make it come to life with actors, sets and costumes?
4. What are some stories today that seem to have been influenced by Edgar Allan Poe? What themes of romanticism do these current stories share?

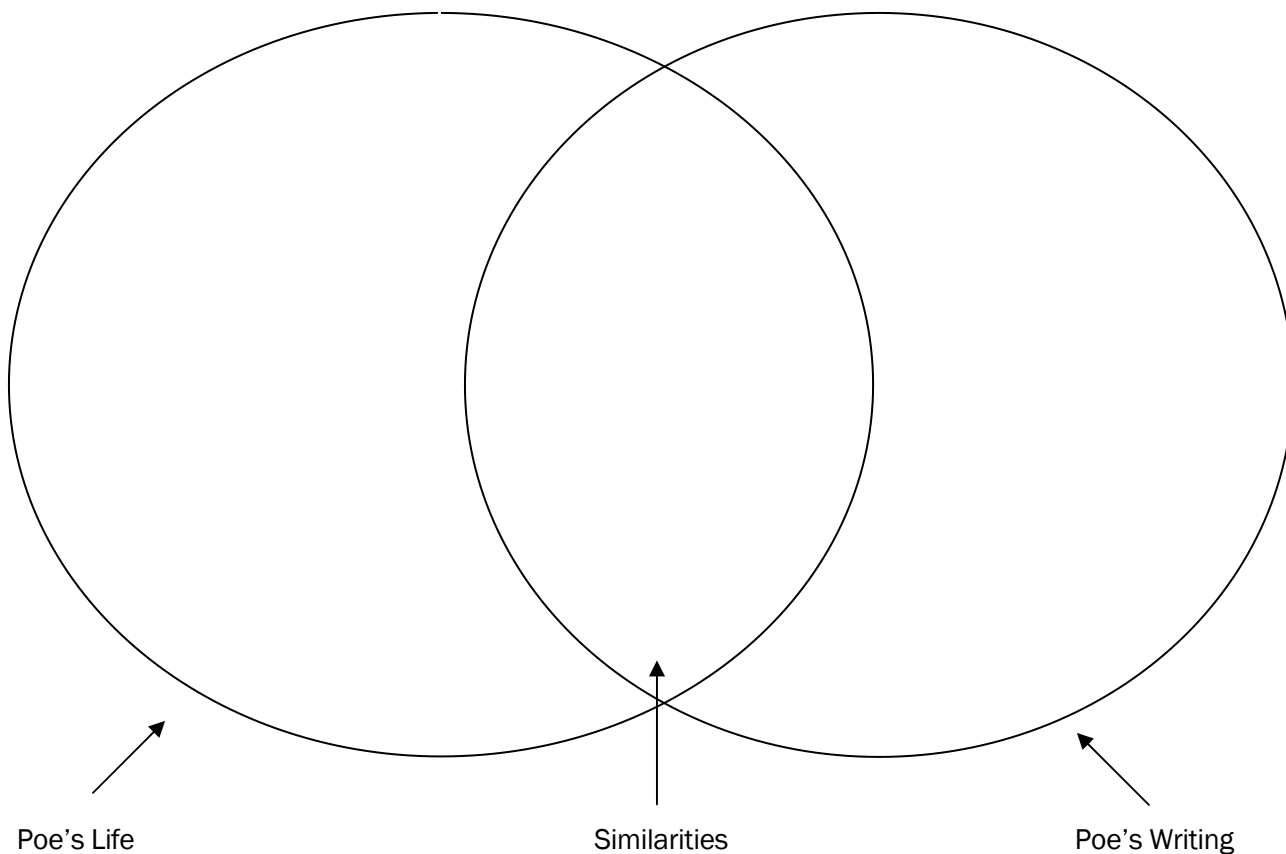
Post-Performance Discussion Questions

1. Before you saw *Nightfall with Edgar Allan Poe*, what words did you use to describe Poe's works in the pre-performance questions? Which of these characteristics did you see in Eckerd Theater Company's performance?
2. How were supernatural or imaginative occurrences portrayed (for example: by specific sound effects, make-up, costumes)? What kinds of pictures or stories did your imagination create when you watched the production?
3. *Nightfall with Edgar Allan Poe* opens with the character of Poe both defending and questioning his own sanity. Most of Poe's stories were written with a first person narrator. What do you think? Would a person have to be mad to write about the complex intricacies of guilt, fear, obsession, and death? Do you think that Edgar Allan Poe was truly mad, or did he just have a fanciful imagination? Explain your response.

Teacher Guided Activities

Compare and Contrast Activity

If you haven't already done so, read the information on Poe's Life provided on page 2 of this study guide. Have students visit the Poe Museum online and read the section titled "Poe's Life." Provide each pupil with a copy of the Venn diagram and ask students to compare and contrast the information they have read about Poe's life with his writing and the characters and events in his stories. Ask students to write their responses in the appropriate areas of the diagram below.



Teacher Guided Activities

Visualization Activity

Below are four pieces from each of the stories depicted in *Nightfall*. Select one of the pieces of text, read it and draw what you see in your mind on the next page. What images, colors and moods stand out to you. Your drawing doesn't have to be perfect, try to focus on how the piece of story you choose makes you feel.

Excerpt from *The Raven*:

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

Excerpt from *The Fall of the House of Usher*

- *“there did stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. For a moment she remained trembling and reeling to and fro upon the threshold—then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and in her violent and now final death-agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had”*

Excerpt from *The Pit and the Pendulum*

- *“A slight noise attracted my notice, and looking to the floor, I saw several enormous rats traversing it. They had issued from the well which lay just within view to my right. Even then, while I gazed, they came up in troops, hurriedly, with ravenous eyes, allured by the scent of the meat. From this it required much effort and attention to scare them away.”*

Excerpt from *The Tell Tale-Heart*

- *“I resolved to open a little—a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it—you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily—until, at length, a single dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and full upon the vulture eye. It was open—wide, wide open—and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness—all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man’s face or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot.”*

Teacher Guided Activities

Use the space below for your Visualization Activity drawing.

What story did you decide to depict? _____

