

JULY 20-DECEMBER 5, 2009

# Poe: Man, Myth, or Monster

## Who Was Edgar Allan Poe?

He was America's first internationally influential author, he invented a new literary genre, and he overturned the traditional Gothic tale by creating the modern psychological horror story. Poe was a Virginia gentleman, an amateur scientist, a journalist, and America's first great literary critic and greatest poet. He was also a famously gifted performer who recited his works to large audiences up and down the East Coast.

## Who Is Edgar Allan Poe?

An instantly recognizable American author and historical figure, his name calls to mind spine-chilling stories and melancholy poetry. He evokes the image of the tragic romantic poet, misunderstood and rejected by society. We are so familiar with his life and work that we already know him. Or do we?



*The BURNING of the THEATRE in RICHMOND, VIRGINIA, on the Night of the 26th December 1811, By which awful Calamity upwards of SEVENTY FIVE of its most valuable Citizens suddenly lost their lives, and many others, were much injured. 25 February 1812. B. Tanner, Philadelphia, publisher. Hand-colored aquatint. Prints and Photographs Collection, Library of Virginia.*

## ORPHANED AT A YOUNG AGE, Talented Writer Struggles to Find Fortune, Fame

### A SOCIAL OUTCAST Born in Boston on 19 January 1809,

Poe was the son of actors Elizabeth ("Eliza") Arnold Poe and David Poe. At that time the acting profession was considered immoral. For part of Poe's childhood, acting was banned in his hometown of Richmond, where as a child he bore the stigma of having been the son of "players." John M. Carter noted that despite Poe's being the ward of a prominent Richmonder, one of Poe's classmates "held himself too high to associate with the son of an actress and a pauper, and let the high-strung [Poe] understand it."

Making her American stage debut in Boston in 1796, Elizabeth Arnold performed more than two hundred roles in theaters from Boston to Charleston. Norfolk, Richmond, and Alexandria were regular stops for companies. Abandoned by her husband, David Poe, she was left with three young children. When Eliza Poe died in Richmond on 8 December 1811, at age 24, she was buried beside the east wall of the cemetery at St. John's Church because her profession prevented her from being buried near the respectable citizens.

*Theatre on Fire. AWFUL CALAMITY! 1812. Boston? Broadside. Library of Virginia.*

ON 26 DECEMBER 1811, A DISASTROUS FIRE destroyed the Richmond Theatre and claimed the lives of more than seventy of the city's most prominent citizens, including the governor. News of the fire shocked Americans and Europeans alike. Richmond plunged into a period of public mourning and banned acting for eight years. Other cities postponed dancing assemblies and cancelled balls. The tragedy led to the publication of sermons and tracts condemning theatrical performances, but in some other cities theater managers adopted new building regulations.



**Clergymen and civic leaders reacted to the BURNING OF THE RICHMOND THEATRE FIRE AND THE LOSS OF LIFE BY CONDEMNING THEATRICAL PERFORMANCES, BALLS, AND OTHER ENTERTAINMENTS.**

A COLLABORATIVE EXHIBITION PRESENTED BY THE LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA AND THE POE MUSEUM



With my  
theatrical  
background,

I gave wildly popular  
dramatic readings of  
my poems and stories.

In Poe's day, poetry was written to be recited as well as read. Authors like Poe and Charles Dickens drew large audiences for readings of their work. Poe could earn one hundred dollars in one night for reading his poetry. In the last years of his life, he performed in the major eastern cities. Eighteen hundred people attended one of his readings in Massachusetts, and newspapers frequently praised his dramatic recitations. One witness, Susan Archer Talley, later wrote that at one of his performances the servants fled the room in terror.

Not everyone enjoyed Poe's writings or dramatic performances. Ralph Waldo Emerson dismissed him as the "jingle man" whose works lacked any moral lessons. Poe, on the other hand, believed that a poem or story succeeded only if it was able to create an emotional impact on its reader.

## POE USED REALISTIC DETAILS TO CHANGE FANTASY INTO SCIENCE FICTION.

During his lifetime, Poe's best-selling work was *The Conchologist's First Book*, a textbook on shells. His last book, which he considered his most important work, is *Eureka*, a long philosophical essay in which he tries to explain the mysteries of the universe. Here he proposes an early version of the "Big Bang" theory of the origin of the universe—eighty years before the scientific community embraced it. Poe's other scientific interests included astronomy, biology, and modern technology. He was fascinated by the recent invention of photography and by the possibility of the creation of the electric light bulb, which was invented almost forty years after his death. Poe proposed replacing the expensive typeset printing of his day with a form of anastatic printing similar to the modern photocopier. He hoped this technology would allow books to be published inexpensively so that a wider audience could afford them.

## Still Carrying Flame for Edgar ON AGAIN, OFF AGAIN ROMANCE HEATS UP ONCE MORE

*"And this maiden she lived with no other thought . . . Than to love and be loved by me."* —ANNABEL LEE

Poe became engaged to Elmira Royster Shelton before he left Richmond to attend the University of Virginia, but her disapproving father broke off their relationship by intercepting Poe's letters. The incident that Poe scholars believe inspired this poem occurred ten years later, when Poe and his new wife, Virginia Clemm Poe, encountered Shelton and her husband at a party. Shelton's

description of the encounter survives in one of her letters: "I remember seeing Edgar & his lovely wife, very soon after they were married. . . . I shall never forget my feelings at the time—They were indescribable, almost agonizing—However in an instant, I remembered I was a married woman, and banished them from me."



Virginia Clemm Poe



"I am a Virginian."



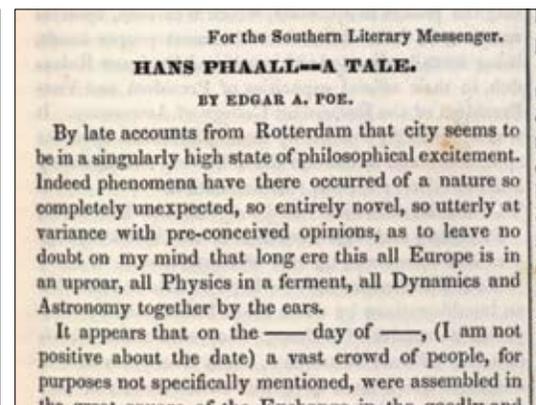
Poe identified himself with the state in which he had been reared, educated, and begun his career in journalism. When the actress Eliza Poe died in Richmond in 1811, she left three young children. William Henry Leopold Poe grew up with his grandparents in Baltimore. Rosalie Poe grew up in the Richmond family of William MacKenzie and his wife. John Allan and his wife Frances Keeling Valentine Allan took Edgar, age two, into their household and gave him the name Allan when he was baptized. A successful merchant, Allan ensured that Poe received a good education but never adopted him. According

to Poe, Allan showed him little affection, and tensions between the two increased as Poe grew older. In the Allan household, Poe learned the characteristics of a southern gentleman—proper etiquette, chivalry towards women, and a sense of class distinction. Poe grew up accustomed to the fine furnishings with which the Allans decorated their homes. As an adult, he lived in poverty in a succession of sparsely furnished rented rooms and houses, but the characters in his fictional works, such as "The Raven" and "The Fall of the House of Usher," live in the kind of opulent manors Poe knew in his childhood.



*The Conchologist's First Book*. 1848. Bound volume. Library of Virginia.

**The *Conchologist's First Book* reveals something of Poe's scientific interests and also demonstrates that Poe had to take on an uncreative piece of hackwork as he struggled to make a living as the first American writer to support himself solely through his writing. The work might not have fulfilled Poe's need for creative expression, but the fifty dollars it brought him were very much needed to supplement the income he received from magazine work.**



*Hans Phaall--A Tale*. Southern Literary Messenger. June 1835.

**Poe published his early science fiction story "Hans Phaall, A Tale" while he was editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger* in Richmond. He incorporated scientific details to make the account of a trip to the moon sound plausible. In fact, he claimed that some readers thought this was a true story. Poe's science fiction inspired the French writer and "Father of Science Fiction" Jules Verne, who also wrote stories of space travel and futuristic technology.**

## THE FIRST AMERICAN AUTHOR TO LIVE BY HIS WRITINGS



Many American authors of Poe's day were able to devote themselves to writing because they had access to family fortunes or because they had comfortable positions at universities. Left entirely out of John Allan's will (which made provisions for illegitimate children Allan had never seen), Poe became the first American writer to make a living from his writing.

After publishing three volumes of poetry, Poe turned to magazines as a ready market for his work. He began his career in journalism as an editor at Richmond's *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1835, when he was twenty-six. In addition to the first appearances of Poe's early horror tales "Berenice" and "Morella," the pages of this magazine also featured the scathing literary reviews that first brought Poe national attention. With biting humor, he attacked the northern literary establishment and made personal attacks on some of his colleagues. Within seventeen months, Poe had increased circulation seven times, but his salary remained so low that he moved to New York and then to Philadelphia to work at a series of magazines in those cities.

The experience Poe gained working at the *Southern Literary Messenger* allowed him to pursue a writing career and to edit journals in New York and Philadelphia before he returned to Richmond in 1848 to contribute to the *Messenger* again. He continued to supply articles for the magazine until his death in 1849.

During Poe's life, books were expensive, but, thanks to new developments in printing, magazines and newspapers were cheaper and more readily available. Poe knew how to write stories and articles that sold magazines and he became editor of some of the most popular magazines in the country.

**HIS STORIES WERE NOT MERELY ACTS OF SELF-EXPRESSION BUT ALSO DEVICES CALCULATED TO ENTERTAIN AN AUDIENCE.**

If his narrators sound insane, it is not necessarily because Poe was exorcising his own demons. It's more likely that he was writing the kinds of stories that he knew would attract and hold readers.

# LITERARY QUACKS!

## Southern Critic Attacks Self-Aggrandizing Northern Writers, Accusing Them of "Puffery"



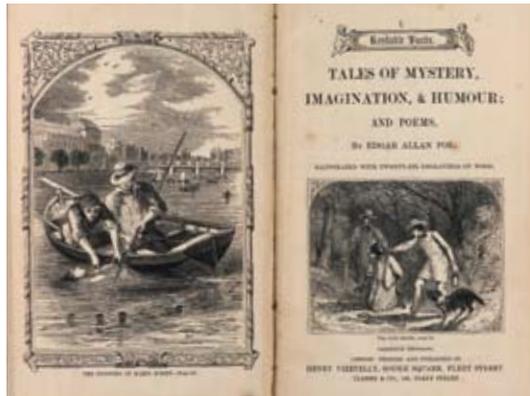
As proud as Poe was to call himself a Virginian, he felt slighted by the northern literary establishment, which tended to look down on southern writers. As a literary critic, Poe attacked the northern establishment and exposed its practice of "puffery" in which authors hired their friends to write positive reviews of their work in order to boost advance book sales.

Boston and New York were the center of the American publishing industry and home to many of the nation's most popular authors. In his reviews, Poe termed the Boston literary group surrounding

the poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow a "legion of literary quackery" and criticized Longfellow for his lack of originality. Poe's antagonism toward northern writers made him unwelcome in literary circles and hindered his own career. Thirty years after Poe's death, another southern writer, William Hand Browne, wrote, "Some of the old vindictiveness against Poe still crops up occasionally in the Northern papers—partly because they hate the South and everything Southern, and partly because some of the old 'mutual-admiration' set still survives, and have never yet forgiven the man who told them the truth about themselves."

## RIPPED FROM THE HEADLINES

### Cigar Girl's Death Becomes Fiction Fodder for Poe



"The Mystery of Marie Roget." From *Tales of Mystery, Imagination, & Humour; and Poems*. London: Clarke, Beeton & Co., 1853.

*"The death . . . of a beautiful woman is, unquestionably, the most poetical topic in the world."* —POE

Today's most popular television shows, like *Law and Order*, frequently draw inspiration from the sensational murder cases that capture newspaper headlines, but Poe perfected the practice in the 1840s. When he read that a popular New York City "cigar girl," Mary Rogers, had been murdered and that the police were unable to find the murderer, Poe announced that he would solve the

## REVENGE:

### "The Cask of Amontillado"

During his lifetime, Poe's critics often attacked the lack of moral content in his stories. His tales did not attempt to teach a lesson or edify his readers. In "The Cask of Amontillado," Poe presented two unsympathetic characters, Montresor and Fortunato. In this tale of revenge, Montresor lures Fortunato into a wine cellar by feigning friendship and then buries him alive.

At the time that Poe wrote this short story, he was engaged in a literary feud with the writer Thomas Dunn English, who had written a novel in which a caricature of Poe appeared as the drunken author of a poem entitled "The Crow." Some critics believe "The Cask of Amontillado" is Poe's answer to English's attack and that the victim in this story is a caricature of English.

crime in his tale "The Mystery of Marie Roget." The story was published in three installments in *Godey's Ladies' Book*, a journal that had covered the real murder case. CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3 Poe knew that the public's interest in the actual murder would guarantee an audience for his fictional version.

From the newspapers' vivid descriptions of the corpse and crime scene, Poe deduced that a single murderer had committed the crime. Details in the case continued to reach the newspapers even after Poe published the first installment of his story. Afraid of having his solution proved wrong, Poe changed the ending at least twice.

Although the story is not one of Poe's best, it helped Poe develop the detective genre he had begun with "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." In his story, Poe foreshadowed today's blurring of the line between news and entertainment. He demonstrated that the public craved stories "ripped from the headlines." By claiming to have solved the crime, Poe became a part of the case.

## TAMERLANE

Poe published *Tamerlane* at the age of eighteen but claimed that he wrote much of it by the time he was fourteen. Other major poets of Poe's period—Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and William Cullen Bryant, who were all older than Poe—would not issue their first volumes of poetry until the 1830s. The only information known about *Tamerlane's* distribution is a reference by Poe stating that its publication was "suppressed through circumstances of a private nature." So rare is the book that no copies were believed to exist until one was found ten years after Poe's death, and Poe's first biographer, Rufus W. Griswold, having never seen a copy, considered it a hoax. Only twelve copies are now known to survive.

Poe used his fascination with the Middle East as the basis not only for *Tamerlane*, a real-life warlord whose empire stretched from the Mediterranean to India, but also for the poems "Al Aaraaf" and "Israfel" and for his parody of *The Arabian Nights*, "The Thousand and Second Tale of Scheherazade." Because *Tamerlane* had not been distributed widely, Poe released a revised version of the poem with a new long poem, "Al Aaraaf," and some minor poems. This volume became the first of Poe's works to be reviewed when John Neal of the *Yankee* published a favorable notice of it. Poe considered this the first praise he had received, and the book's moderate success encouraged Poe to continue writing poetry.

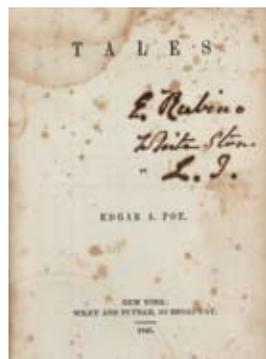


**I was only  
nineteen when  
I published  
*Tamerlane*, although I  
had written most of it  
when I was fourteen.**



## POE WAS THE FATHER OF AMERICAN LITERATURE.

At the time that Poe published his first book, writers in the United States were trying to start an American literary tradition independent of British literature. Poe's taste for writing about distant lands and exotic cultures was different from his slightly older contemporaries, such as Washington Irving (author of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow") and James Fenimore Cooper (author of *The Last of the Mohicans*), who were trying to define American literature by writing traditional works about American subjects and settings. In contrast, Poe valued innovation and originality in literature. Poe would complain that Cooper relied too heavily on American subject matter at the expense of plot development and originality.



*Tales*. New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845. Library of Virginia.

**"THE FIRST AND THE GREATEST, THE  
CORNERSTONE OF CORNERSTONES . . .  
THE HIGHSPOINT OF HIGHSPOINTS."**

—ELLERY QUEEN, DETECTIVE FICTION WRITER

*Tales* includes the stories that defined the modern detective story. With "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," Poe became the first American author to initiate a new literary genre. British author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle based his Sherlock Holmes mysteries on Poe's detective stories, and Robert Louis Stevenson wrote tales of pirates and buried treasure influenced by Poe's treasure-hunt mystery, "The Gold Bug."

*Poe . . . knew that the function of creative fiction is . . . to express and interpret events and sensations as they are, regardless of how they tend or what they prove—good or evil, attractive or repulsive, stimulating or depressing, with the author always acting as a vivid and detached chronicler rather than as a teacher, sympathizer, or vendor of opinion . . . His elevation of disease, perversity, and decay to the level of artistically expressible themes was likewise infinitely far-reaching in effect . . . —H. P. Lovecraft*

### Detective Fiction: "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"

The first modern detective story, Poe's immensely influential novella, "The Murders in the Rue Morgue," laid the foundations for the mystery genre and initiated the "locked door" mystery. This now-familiar subgenre centers on a murder that has taken place within a room that is locked from the inside. "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" was first published in the April 1841 issue of Graham's Magazine. Its success encouraged Poe to write two sequels, both featuring the same detective, C. Auguste Dupin. Poe's detective was the prototype for Sherlock Holmes, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's character created four decades later.

**You can thank  
me for science  
fiction and the  
detective story!**



# POE AND POETRY

Poe used the sounds of words, and sometimes made up words, to create his poetry. 

Poe thought that the sounds and rhythms of his poetry reflected emotional states. For example, he thought the letter “O” sounded melancholy, so he repeated the word “nevermore” throughout his poem “The Raven” in order to enhance the mood.

## THE RAVEN

“The Raven” catapulted Poe to international fame and ensured his place among the greatest poets in the English language. He received only fifteen dollars when he sold his most famous poem to the *American Review*. Parodied, put to music, and frequently performed, the poem remains one of the most popular in the English language.



“The Raven” first appeared in the February 1845 issue of *American Review*, a political journal. Poe published the poem anonymously, and he may also have written the glowing introduction stating that he did not know the English language was capable of such beauty until he read that poem.

Two magazines reprinted “The Raven” in February, but Poe received no compensation. Without the protection of effective copyright laws, Poe saw his most popular works printed in magazines throughout the United States and Europe without his consent. Magazine publishers, knowing that they could print authors’ works without paying for them, were unwilling to pay high prices to recompense the authors. That is one reason why Poe remained poor even at the height of his fame, but he used his position as a popular magazine editor to champion the cause of an international copyright law. Poe’s works were immensely popular in Europe, especially in France, where translations sometimes appeared within months of their first printings in America. In 1875 the renowned French poet Stephan Mallarmé issued a new French translation of “The Raven” with illustrations by his friend Edouard Manet.

Better known as a painter who inspired the Impressionists, Manet rarely experimented with book illustration. This work is a particularly

innovative example. Here, Manet has deviated from traditional book illustration and covered only parts of the page, sketching with a loose technique that borders on abstraction. Manet’s illustrations dispense with the demons and angels found in illustrations of the poem by his contemporaries in favor of restrained representations of a scholar in his study.

The French artist Gustave Doré (1832–1883) was the most famous illustrator of the late nineteenth century. His illustrations for the Bible, Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, and Milton’s *Paradise Lost* are still in print today. “The Raven” was the only work by an American author that he illustrated and the last work he produced.

The Anglo-American artist James Carling created forty-three illustrations for a proposed volume of “The Raven.” Believing that other artists’ illustrations failed to capture the spirit of Poe’s work, Carling described his drawings as “stormier, wilder, and weirder.” Perhaps too “weird” for the 1880s, these drawings were not published until nearly a century later.

In contrast to the more-detailed illustrations of Carling’s famous contemporary Gustave Doré, these drawings feature expressive distortion and bizarre imagery that bear a resemblance to the work of Odilon Redon, Edvard Munch, and the most advanced Symbolist artists of his day. Carling died at twenty-nine, and his reputation today rests primarily on his illustrations for “The Raven.”



*Le Courbeau*. 1875. Illustrated by Edouard Manet. Translated by Stéphane Mallarmé. Courtesy of the Susan Jaffe Tane Collection.



*The Raven*. Illustrated by Gustave Doré. New York: Harper & Brothers, 1884.

## DECIPHER A SECRET CODE

Edgar Allan Poe had a fascination with secret writing called cryptography. In fact, one story, “The Gold Bug,” used a coded secret message, or a cipher, to tell an intriguing tale about a search for a pirate’s hidden treasure. Poe even challenged his readers to send cryptographs to him, telling them he could solve them all.

Below is a cryptograph, or secret coded message, using Poe’s scrambled alphabet from “The Tell Tale Heart.”

**“TGJJYGLQ!” G QFPGCICB, “BGQQCKZJC  
LM KMPC! G YBKGR RFC BCCB! - RCYP SN  
RFC NJYLIQ! - FCPC, FCPC! - GR GQ RFC  
ZCYRGLE MD FGQ FGBCMSQ FCYPR!”**

Use the key to decipher the message.

CDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ  
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

“ \_\_\_\_\_!” \_\_\_\_\_, “ \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_! \_\_\_\_\_! - \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_! - \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_! - \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_!”

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

“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.” —*Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Letter to E. A. Poe, April 1846*

# THE BELLS

First published shortly after Poe's death, "The Bells" is one of his most popular poems and is considered one of the finest uses of onomatopoeia (defined on page 7) in American poetry. Less well known is the fact that this poem is the first use in the English language of the word "tintinnabulation," one of about a thousand words that Poe invented.



## WORDS CREDITED TO POE

DIDACTICISM 📖 FINICKY  
DUNDERHEADISM 🌀 BUGABOO  
PANTS 📖 TINTINNABULATION  
CRYPTOGRAPH 📖 DIDDLE  
IRREDUCIBLE 🌀 PARFUMERIE  
ODORLESS 📖 PRESUMABLY

I loved the sounds of  
words. I even  
made 'em up!



## Live on Stage: The Raven Rocks!

Poe achieved rock-star status as a poet and lecturer in a time when there were no radios or televisions or films or video games. People attended live theater. Just as today's celebrities seek to control their public image, Poe also manipulated his image. Asked by Rufus W. Griswold to provide an autobiography for an article in the anthology *The Poets and Poetry of America*, Poe supplied an embellished life history. He deliberately distorted the facts to make his life sound more interesting than he thought it really was. He began by lying about his age and claiming that he had graduated with "highest honors" from the University of Virginia. His account of traveling to Europe to fight the Greek Wars of Independence and his subsequent imprisonment in Saint Petersburg was purely fictitious.

Poe's first posthumous biography was a libelous account written by his literary executor, Rufus W. Griswold. Unaware that Griswold and Poe had personally disliked each other, Poe's mother-in-law, Maria Clemm, engaged Griswold to act as Poe's literary executor and to compile Poe's works into a single volume. The brief biography, which appeared in volume three of Griswold's anthology of Poe's works, portrayed Poe as a drunken madman devoid of morals. Perhaps Griswold expected conservative America to dismiss Poe and his works, but, after the appearance of the memoir, Poe's complete works sold out in three editions in one year—better than any of his books had sold during the author's lifetime.

Illustrations by Les Harper, Lightbox Studios, unless otherwise noted

## MYSTERIOUS DEATH!

### Promising Poet, Critic Dies After Being Found in a Tavern

Poe left Richmond for the last time early on the morning of 26 September 1849 en route to Philadelphia, but he disappeared for five days. He was discovered in a Baltimore tavern dressed in ill-fitting clothes so unlike his usual dress that some people assumed that his clothes had been stolen. Poe spent his final four days delirious in Washington College Hospital under the care of Dr. John Moran, who later attributed Poe's death to the vague term "nervous prostration." The newspapers offered varying accounts of Poe's death, and, eight years later, a published account theorized that Poe had been murdered. There was no evidence of a crime, but it became one of several conspiracy theories associated with Poe's mysterious death.

## Death Theories

Beating (1857)  
Epilepsy (1875)  
Dipsomania (1921)  
Heart Disease (1926)  
Toxic Disorder (1970)  
Hypoglycemia (1979)  
Diabetes (1977)  
Alcohol Dehydrogenase (1984)  
Porphryia (1989)  
Delerium Tremens (1992)  
Rabies (1996)  
Heart Disease (1997)  
Murder (1998)  
Epilepsy (1999)  
Carbon Monoxide Poisoning (1999)  
Brain Tumor (2007)

# POE GOES POP!

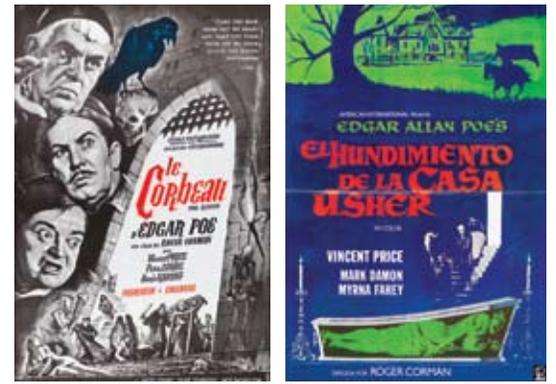
He has battled crime alongside Batman. He has his own action figure and comic book. Poe has appeared in film, television, and other people's novels. His name has become inseparable from the revolutionary horror tales he wrote. Is this Poe purely the creation of popular culture, or is there something of the real Poe behind the reputation?

Poe has become an icon of American popular culture. Just as his literary works continue to be read and adapted into films and music, Poe's life also inspires today's writers, artists, and advertisers. Although the melancholy, tormented Poe of popular culture is as much a creation of the media as a representation of Poe's own life, it is fitting that he should appear as a fictional character in other authors' works, like the recent novels *The Poe Shadow* and *The Pale Blue Eye* or in the graphic novel *Batman Nevermore*, in which Poe joins forces with the superhero to battle evil.



Poe created a new form of psychological tale in which the character's descent into madness becomes the central theme.

In spite of his numerous contributions to lyric poetry, science fiction, and mystery, Poe's reputation as the Master of the Macabre remains secure. More than merely continuing in the tradition of Gothic literature with its roots in the



British Horace Walpole and the German E. T. A. Hoffman, Poe replaced the supernatural element in Gothic literature with the demons of the character's tormented imagination. Poe discarded the moral lesson, the happy ending, and the theme of virtue rewarded in favor of creating an emotional impact on the audience. He brings the reader into the mind of the insane and, decades before Sigmund Freud, explores the darkest recesses of the subconscious.

Poe's universal appeal has seen his work translated into every media, including film.



Movie posters courtesy of the Poe Museum

"IT'S BECAUSE I LIKED EDGAR ALLAN POE'S STORIES SO MUCH THAT I BEGAN TO MAKE SUSPENSE FILMS." —ALFRED HITCHCOCK

## ACROSTIC POEM ACTIVITY

On Valentine's Day in 1846, Edgar Allan Poe's wife, Virginia, wrote an acrostic poem to her husband. An acrostic poem can be written about any subject and is most often formed by using the letters that spell the subject down the side of the page. Below is Virginia's acrostic poem.

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.

Now it is your turn to write an acrostic poem! Write your name vertically below. It can be your first name, your last name, or both (or you can choose another subject, such as your favorite sport, pet, etc.). Next, using those letters, write a word or phrase that describes you or your subject—and have fun!



## VOCABULARY

**AR·A·BESQUE:** a tale of wonder or of the supernatural.

**GEN·RE:** a category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content.

**GO·THIC:** a genre of fiction that uses setting and diction to build suspense and a sense of unease in the reader. Common subject matter includes the supernatural, family curses, mystery, and madness.

**GRO·TESQUE:** in literature, a strange, fantastic, ugly, or bizarre character eliciting empathy or disgust.

**ON·O·MA·TO·POE·IA:** the naming of a thing or action by a vocal imitation of the sound associated with it (as buzz, hiss).

**TIN·TIN·NAB·U·LA·TION:** the ringing or sounding of bells or a jingling or tinkling sound as if of bells.

## Poe Exhibition Events

All events are free unless otherwise noted. Check our Web site, [www.lva.virginia.gov/events](http://www.lva.virginia.gov/events), for the latest information.

### EXHIBITION TOURS

every Tuesday and Thursday | 2:00–2:45 PM  
(except Sept. 8 and Nov. 27)

### CURATOR'S GALLERY TALKS

Space limited. RSVP 804.692.3592  
Thursday, July 23 | Noon–12:45 PM  
Thursday, August 6 | Noon–12:45 PM  
Wednesday, September 23 | Noon–12:45 PM  
Wednesday, October 7 | Noon–12:45 PM  
Thursday, November 19 | Noon–12:45 PM  
Tuesday, December 1 | Noon–12:45 PM

### POE BOOK TALK SERIES

*The Riesling Retribution:*

*A Wine Country Mystery*

Tuesday, August 11 | 6:00–7:00 PM

*Virginia in Verse: The Poetry of Michelle Boisseau and John Casteen*

Tuesday, September 29 | 6:00–7:00 PM

*The Long Division by Derek Nikitas*

Tuesday, October 27, 6:00–7:00 PM

### EDUCATORS' OPEN HOUSE

Friday, August 14 | 4:00–6:00 PM  
RSVP by August 7 to 804.371.2126  
or [tameka.hobbs@lva.virginia.gov](mailto:tameka.hobbs@lva.virginia.gov)

### "I KNOW POE" FAMILY DAY

Saturday, August 15 | 10:00 AM–2:00 PM

### SPECIAL EVENT: POE MANIA!

Presented by Haunts of Richmond  
Thursday, September 10 | 7:00–8:30 PM,  
Lecture Hall  
Fee \$7. Call 804.371.2126 for details.



## LIBRARY OF VIRGINIA

800 East Broad Street | Richmond, Virginia 23219  
[www.lva.virginia.gov](http://www.lva.virginia.gov) | 804.692.3500

The Library of Virginia and the Poe Museum thank the

**Richmond Times-Dispatch**

[TimesDispatch.com](http://TimesDispatch.com)  
for their media sponsorship.



**IKNOWPOE.COM**

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| T | S | F | B | R | A | R | E | M | R | C | O | A | A | A | C | A | W | F | G | BUGABOO          |
| H | G | G | O | E | M | L | U | T | Z | P | M | X | V | H | C | E | W | M | U | DREARY           |
| I | E | R | E | O | S | L | U | H | B | M | E | L | A | N | C | H | O | L | Y | DUNDERHEADISM    |
| C | M | K | R | L | F | Q | K | B | F | C | Z | H | O | U | T | R | E | I | J | FETID            |
| K | S | E | J | M | V | N | U | U | A | C | D | L | V | V | I | E | T | O | W | FLUMFLUMMERY     |
| U | D | N | U | X | G | D | R | E | F | N | F | B | Q | L | M | D | J | N | K | GHASTLY          |
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| D | I | L | L | A | P | H | A | N | A | R | D | Y | T | N | P | D | H | O | A | HORROR           |
| A | N | E | T | H | K | S | D | L | L | O | J | R | Z | N | P | I | B | H | A | HYSTERIA         |
| L | P | Z | R | R | F | M | E | B | Y | T | G | G | E | S | I | A | J | Z | K | MELANCHOLY       |
| I | J | K | P | E | C | H | K | A | N | E | G | W | Q | A | G | T | R | B | C | NEVERMORE        |
| G | H | E | H | M | T | N | Y | W | G | S | S | D | C | U | R | L | M | V | L | OUTRE            |
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## Genre Game

The term GENRE (pronounced zhahn-ruh) means a class, category, or style of an art form. It also applies to styles of writing. The work of Edgar Allan Poe covers several genres, including mystery, science fiction, and horror. As you walk through the *Poe: Man, Myth, or Monster* exhibition, try to determine the GENRES for each of Poe's works. Place the correct GENRE sticker next to the titles of Poe's literature in the space provided. See how many you can get correct. Sticker sheets are available at the information desk on the first floor.

**MYSTERY OR DETECTIVE STORY** – deals with solving a crime, often featuring a detective

**SCIENCE FICTION** – involves the use of science and technology and can also include references to the future or space.

**HORROR** – involves elements of death and suspense.

**GOthic** – uses elements in the story to build suspense and to make the reader uneasy, often involving curses and madness.

|                             |                                      |   |                                       |   |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|
| <b>The Black Cat</b>        | <b>The Murders in the Rue Morgue</b> | <b>The Raven</b>  | <b>The Cask of Amonfillado</b>        | <b>The Unparalleled Adventures of One Hans Pfaall</b> |
| <b>MS Found in a Bottle</b> | <b>The Mystery of Marie Roget</b>    | <b>Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque Mystery Tales</b> | <b>The Fall of the House of Usher</b> | <b>The Pit and the Pendulum</b>                       |