

Edgar Allan Poe

Born: January 19, 1809 - Boston, Massachusetts

Died: October 7, 1849 - Baltimore, Maryland

- Edgar was the 2nd of three children
- His father abandoned their family in 1810
- His mother died a year later of "Consumption" (Tuberculosis)
- Poe was taken into the home of John Allan, a successful tobacco merchant in Richmond, Virginia.
- The family traveled to England in 1815.
- He attended school there and came back to Richmond in 1820
- Poe registered at the University of Virginia in 1826, but only stayed one year. He became estranged from his foster father over gambling debts.
- He traveled to Boston in 1827. That same year he released his 1st book, anonymously as "A Bostonian."
- Reduced to destitution, Poe enlisted in the U.S. Army in May 1827. He was discharged in April 1829.
- Poe moved to Baltimore, Maryland to stay with his widowed aunt, Maria Clemm, her daughter Virginia Eliza Clemm and his brother Henry.
- In 1829, Poe's foster mother died.
- Her dying wish was for her husband to reconcile with Edgar. They did reconcile for a short time. John Allan began arranging an appointment for Edgar to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.
- In 1829 Poe published his second book.

- Poe was admitted to West Point in 1830.
- He was court martialed for disobedience in 1831. He also released a third volume of poems.
- He returned to Baltimore, to his aunt, brother and cousin. His brother, Henry, passed away from **Tuberculosis** in August 1831.
- He secretly married his cousin Virginia on September 22, 1835. She was 13 at the time.
- Poe worked as assistant director of the Southern Literary Messenger until 1837.
- During this time the newspaper's circulation increased from 700 to 3,500. He published several poems, book reviews, criticism and stories in the paper.
- On May 16, 1836, he married Virginia Clemm publicly - this time.
- In 1839, the collection of Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque was published in two volumes. Though not a financial success, it was a milestone in the history of American Literature.
- The evening of January 20, 1842, Virginia broke a blood vessel while singing and playing the piano. Blood began to pour from her mouth. It was the first sign of consumption, now more commonly known as **Tuberculosis**. She only partly recovered. Poe began to drink more heavily under the stress of Virginia's illness.
- On January 29, 1845 his poem "The Raven" appeared in the Evening Mirror and became a popular sensation.
- He and his wife moved to a cottage in the Bronx, New York. Virginia died there in 1847.
- Increasingly unstable after his wife's death, Poe attempted to court the poet Sarah Helen Whitman. Their engagement failed, partly due to his drinking and partly due to her mother. He then

returned to Richmond, VA, and resumed a relationship with a childhood sweetheart, Sarah Elmira Royster.

- On October 3, 1849 Poe was found on the streets of Baltimore delirious and "in great distress ...," according to a friend who found him, Dr. E. Snodgrass.
- He died early on October 7, 1849. He was never coherent long enough to explain how he came to be in such a condition.
- The precise cause of Poe's death is disputed.
- Dr. John Moran, the physician who attended Poe, stated that "Edgar Allan Poe did not die under the effect of any intoxicant, nor was the smell of liquor upon his breath or person."
- This is only one of several, contradictory accounts of Poe's death.
- Cholera can not be ruled out. Cholera is also a theme in three of his short stories: "The Masque of the Red Death"; "The Sphinx"; "Bon-Bon."
- Numerous other theories have been proposed over the years, including: a rare brain disease, diabetes, syphilis and rabies.
- All surviving accounts are either incomplete or published years after the event; even Poe's death certificate, if one was ever made out, has been lost. It is likely that the exact cause of Poe's death will never be known.
- Poe is buried on the grounds of Westminster Hall and Burying Ground, now part of the University of Maryland in Baltimore.
- Poe's grave site has become a popular tourist attraction. Beginning in 1949, the grave has been visited every year in the early hours of Poe's birthday, Jan. 19th, by a mystery man known as the Poe toaster. It has been reported that a man draped in black kneels at the grave for a toast of Cognac. He leaves the bottle and three red roses.

- Rufus Griswold wrote a biographical "Memoir" of Poe. He depicted Poe as a depraved, drunk, drug-addled madman. This biography presented a starkly different version of Poe than any other at the time, and included items now believed to have been forged by Griswold. His book was denounced by those who knew Poe well.
- Griswold's account became a popularly accepted one. In part because it seemed to accord with the narrative voice Poe used in much of his fiction. No accurate biography of Poe appeared until John Ingram's of 1875. By then, however, Griswold's depiction was set in the mind of the public, not only in America but around the world. Griswold's madman is still existent in the modern perceptions of the man himself.

Edgar Allan Poe - from the Textbook

- Poe invented the genre of the detective story with his tale "The Murders in the Rue Morgue."
- Like few others, Poe blazed trails for future writers.
- His work helped to define the short story, and his dark imagination helped establish the genre of horror literature now popularized by writers like Stephen King.
- Poe is recognized as a master of the short story.
- Poe believed that a work of fiction has the most impact if it can be read in one sitting and if all the elements work together to create a "single effect."
- He is best known for tales in which the single effect is Horror.

- Poe's room at the University of Virginia has been preserved as a mini-museum. The room number is 13.

Macabre - having death as a subject.

- comprising or including a personalized representation of death
- dwelling on the gruesome
- tending to produce horror in the beholder

Ominous - foreboding or foreshadowing evil.

- Implies having a menacing, alarming character foreshadowing evil or disaster

Consumption - a progressive wasting away of the body especially from pulmonary Tuberculosis.

Shroud - burial garment

Cholera - any of several diseases of humans, usually marked by severe gastrointestinal symptoms.

Symbol - something that stands for or suggests something else by reason of relationship, association, convention, or accidental resemblance. A visible sign of something invisible (the lion is a symbol of courage).

Symbolism - is a writer's use of symbols. A symbol is character, a place, a thing, or an event in a literary work that stands for a larger idea.

To make something into a symbol, a writer may use these strategies:

- Call on traditional associations - a dog is a symbol of loyalty because dogs are often praised for their loyalty.
- Create new associations - if the dog in the story runs away when its owner betrays a friend, a connection is made because both loyalty and the dog "disappear" at the same time.

A story in which all characters, settings, and events are clearly symbolic is called an Allegory.