

UNIT 2 Expressing a National Spirit
American Renaissance 1800 to 1850

A GEM School
FROEBEL
BILINGUAL SCHOOL
Home of the Space Generation



THE RAVEN
& ALONE

with **Jim Soto**

SPEAK YOUR MIND

Everyone is afraid of something. Think about the worse thing you believe could happen to you. If you wanted to use an image from the natural world to create a mood of terror and loss in a poem, what image would you select? Explain.

Take a minute to consider and answer the question.

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PSYCHOLOGICAL CRITICISM

Psychological criticism in literature refers to the way in which the work of a particular writer is analyzed through a psychological lens. This approach psychologically analyses the author of the work or a character in his work. It helps the readers understand the motivations of the writer. As you read on, remember the events in Poe's life and the effect they could have on his writing. The poem "The Raven" deals with the grief of having lost a wife. Could this tell us anything about Poe's state of mind in this period of his life?



READING SKILL/STRATEGY

As you read works of Poe during the next days compare them. In other words, look for similar characteristics in the body of work reveal his style.

VOCABULARY

Take 12 min. to look up these vocabulary words before engaging the poem.

rapping • surcease • entreating • stately • Pallas • obeisance • beguiling
• craven • velvet • ungainly • dirges • ominous • gaunt • censer •
respite • quaff • nepenthe • balm • Gilead/Aidenn



LITERARY ELEMENTS

Mood

or atmosphere, is the emotion created in the reader by a literary work.

Alliteration

the repetition of initial consonant sounds, as in “weak and weary” (“The Raven,” line 1). The term also can apply to the repetition of sounds within words, as in “silken sad uncertain rustling” (line 13).



THE RAVEN

PAGE 1

By Edgar Allan Poe

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
"Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door—
Only this, and nothing more."

Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.
Eagerly I wished the morrow;— vainly I had sought to borrow
From my books surcease of sorrow— sorrow for the lost Lenore—
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
Nameless here for evermore.

And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me— filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating,
"Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door—
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;—
This it is, and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you"— here I opened wide the
door;—
Darkness there, and nothing more.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering,
fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortals ever dared to dream
before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,

And the only word there spoken was the whispered word,
"Lenore!"
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word,
"Lenore!"—
Merely this, and nothing more.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.
"Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice:
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore—
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;—
'Tis the wind and nothing more."

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,
In there stepped a stately raven of the saintly days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed
he; But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber
door—
Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door—
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore.
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure
no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient raven wandering from the Nightly
shore—
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning— little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blest with seeing bird above his chamber door—
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,
With such name as "Nevermore."



Enjoy the poem
as read by James
Earl Jones.

THE RAVEN

PAGE 2

But the raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing further then he uttered- not a feather then he fluttered-
Till I scarcely more than muttered, "other friends have flown
before-
On the morrow he will leave me, as my hopes have flown before."
Then the bird said, "Nevermore."

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
"Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock and store,
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore-
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
Of 'Never- nevermore.'"

But the Raven still beguiling all my fancy into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and
door;
Then upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore-
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt and ominous bird of
yore
Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core;
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamplight gloated o'er,
But whose velvet violet lining with the lamplight gloating o'er,
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then methought the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen
censer
Swung by Seraphim whose footfalls tinkled on the tufted floor.
"Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee- by these angels he
hath sent thee

Respite- respite and nepenthe, from thy memories of Lenore!
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil- prophet still, if bird or devil!
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here
ashore,
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted-
On this home by horror haunted- tell me truly, I implore-
Is there- is there balm in Gilead?- tell me- tell me, I implore!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil- prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us- by that God we both adore-
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore-
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Be that word our sign in parting, bird or fiend," I shrieked,
upstarting-
"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!- quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my
door!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

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 lamplight 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!



[Click Here!](#)

Now as read by
Christopher Lee.

ALONE

Poe's choice of topic for "Alone" was melancholy. In this poem, Poe describes his feelings of emotional isolation from other people and from the natural world. He wrote this poem, presumed to be about his own troubled childhood, in 1829, at the age of twenty. Literary scholars speculate that he provided several handwritten "facsimiles" of the poem to an editor at Scribner's Magazine over the years but asked that it not be published. Scribner's finally did publish the poem in 1875.

From childhood's hour I have not been
As others were; I have not seen
As others saw; I could not bring
My passions from a common spring.
From the same source I have not taken
My sorrow; I could not awaken
My heart to joy at the same tone;
And all I loved, I loved alone.
Then- in my childhood, in the dawn
Of a most stormy life- was drawn
From every depth of good and ill
The mystery which binds me still:
From the torrent, or the fountain,
From the red cliff of the mountain,
From the sun that round me rolled
In its autumn tint of gold,
From the lightning in the sky
As it passed me flying by,
From the thunder and the storm,
And the cloud that took the form
(When the rest of Heaven was blue)
Of a demon in my view.

ALONE

BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

BONUS: LETTER TO JOHN ALLAN

Both "The Raven" and "Alone" vividly portray Poe's emotional distress, especially his loneliness and sense of loss. In this letter to John Allan, the man who raised Poe, the writer expresses another source of despair: He tells Allan, who apparently does not respect Poe's lifestyle, that he is broke. Various reasons have been offered to explain the estrangement (angry separation) between both men, which seems to have occurred when Poe was about twenty years old. Allan never legally adopted Poe, but Poe took his surname as a middle name.

ASSESSMENT

After reading pages 139 - 148 in your book, complete the activities:

1. REFER TO TEXT &
2. REASON WITH TEXT
3. & ANALYZE LITERATURE
 - **Mood and Alliteration** - How does Poe create the mood, or atmosphere, in "The Raven" and "Alone"? What descriptive and narrative details express this feeling of sadness and desolation?
 - What examples of alliteration did you identify in "The Raven"? How does repeating these sounds create a musical effect in the poem? How does the use of alliteration help create the tone?



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