

The poem



The Raven

by Edgar Allan Poe




1. Listen and read

1. 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."
2. 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.
3. 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."
4. 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.

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5. 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.
6. 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."
7. 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.
8. 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."
9. 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."
10. 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."
11. 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'."

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12. 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."
13. 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!
14. 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."
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15. "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."
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16. "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."
17. "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."
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18. 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!

Your Tasks

2. Read and analyse

The content of the poem:

- What is the mood of the poem? Find words and sentences that support your opinion.
- What are the feelings of the man in the poem? Find words and sentences that support your opinion.
- Why is he feeling this way? How do you know this? Quote from the poem.
- Tell the story described in this poem in 5-8 sentences, more precisely than when you were listening to it. Use ordinary words instead of the old-fashioned and very fancy words used by Poe.
- Were there any uses of English in the poem that you thought were unusual? Please give some examples.
- Why do you suppose he uses such vocabulary? What impression does it make on you?

Background information on poetry

The sound of the poem:

Poets use tricks of poetry to create an impression, rather than relying only on the meaning of the words. The sound of the words also tell the reader a lot.

The most common trick used by poets is **rhyme**. Not all poems rhyme, but the reader often finds that it increases his enjoyment of a poem if there is a good rhyme scheme. Just to be clear on what we're talking about, let's look at a fairly simple example by the poet Robert Frost.

Fire and Ice

by: Robert Frost

*Some say the world will end in fire,
Some say in ice.
From what I've tasted of desire
I hold with those who favor fire.
But if I had to perish twice,
I think I know enough of hate
To say that for destruction ice
Is also great
And would suffice.*

Here the first, third, and fourth lines end in the same sound, which we will designate „a“. The ends of the second, fifth, seventh and ninth lines also sound alike, so we will designate that sound „b“. Finally, lines 6 and 8 have the same ending sound, which we will call „c“. So the rhyme scheme of this poem is:

abaabcbcb

In **The Raven** the rhyme scheme is more complicated than is usual, and makes it particularly enjoyable to listen to the poem.

One of the most effective tricks besides rhyme is the use of **alliteration**, in which the poet uses successions of words most of which begin with the same, or a similar sound. **Alliteration** is where several words start with the same consonant sound. They don't have to have the same spelling – they just have to **sound** the same.

Another common trick to make a poem more gripping is the use of **rhythm**, or beat. As you know from the first and second assignments in this project, rhythm is important when a poem becomes the text of a song.

Rhythm is a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in a line of text. A common rhythm in English poetry, used much by Shakespeare, keeps repeating an unstressed syllable, followed by a stressed one, for example :

*"For **never** was a **story** of more **woe**
Than **this** of **Juliet** and her **Romeo**."*

where the red word fragments are the stressed syllables. They are the ones that get the most emphasis. The pattern in **The Raven** is different, though.

Read and listen to the poem one more time, and this time concentrate on how the poem sounds!

3. Look at the first verse of the poem. Which words rhyme? Does the rhyme always come at the end of the lines? Say what the rhyme scheme is!
4. Look at the third verse. Underline the words that alliterate in verse #3. What impression does it give you? Why do you think the poet uses that sound?
5. You listened to Vincent Price recite the poem. Read a couple of verses to yourself aloud. What do you think its rhythm is? **If you can, send a sound file of your reading to the teacher.**
6. Choose 10 unfamiliar words from the poem that sound interesting. Look them up (www.m-w.com) and write the definition.
Make up your own sentences using each one, or even write a single text out of all of the words, if you can! (It's fun!)

Please send your self-assessment on parts one and two of the Poe assignment WITH your answer to this one. Use the assessment rubric to do it!