

The work of Edgar Allan Poe

Open Book

- Burial alive – just one of the squeamish obsessions of Edgar Allan Poe.
- Poe was born 200 years ago; spent most of his life as a literary journalist.
- Poe didn't live long enough to enjoy the rewards of his phenomenal talent.
- Died at the age of 40.
- Spent most of his time begging friends for money.
- His mother died when he was two years old due to tuberculosis; he was adopted by the Allan family. Death of his mother affected him profoundly.
- Had a feeling of doom, of "never-ending mournful remembrance"
- He was a good fantasy writer, because he was deeply and intimately in touch with his anxieties.
- Theme of death runs throughout not only his works, but his life: his mother died of tuberculosis, his foster mother died of tuberculosis, his young bride Virginia died of tuberculosis. "Thread of fatality".
- Reputation for being sarcastic and supercilious as a critic.
- Well known throughout his lifetime for being a critic; his works (except the Raven) were overlooked at the time.
- Poe wanted to be a poet, but discovered horror and burlesque as a side-line.
- The poetry of his imagination migrated into the prose of his journalism.
- His life was punctuated by periods of extreme alcoholism; in general, he was an alcoholic and was bibulous by nature, he drunk desperately and continuously.
- His last few weeks of life are a mystery – he was found in Baltimore in a pub, wearing somebody else's clothes.
- He was in Richmond, trying to raise money for a literary magazine, and was supposed to be going off to New York to see a businessperson. He boarded a steamboat to Baltimore, planning to continue to Philadelphia, but didn't. Over the next few days he was lost in Baltimore and no-one knew anything about him. He was found in a bar, inebriated with his drinking companions. He was taken to hospital, where he died raving at only 40 years old. It was an unfortunate and unhappy end to an unfortunate and unhappy life.
- Poe has a lot of irony in his works and there is plenty of humour. Lots of death, decay and references. In this way, he taps into universal fears.
- Early on, he wrote a short story titled Metzengerstein, but later he said he wanted to write a story not about the terror of Germany but of the soul.
- He was the "first great American *horror* writer"
- Poe's stories are often set in places which you cannot recognise or identify. There is rarely an exterior, most stories are set inside. Often, the stories start with an unreliable narrator. While being terrifying and horrible, the stories are still fun.
- Poe always wanted to be a poet, substituting rhyme for meter in his prose.
- Many people often credit Poe with being the inventor of the traditional genre of *detective fiction*, named Dupin. As a detective, Dupin too is unreliable.
- Poe was fascinated with puzzles and games.
- First full-time writer in America. He is the founder of *southern literature* and *southern gothic* genre.
- Poe referred to himself all his life as a Virginian gentleman.
- Although he is an American writer, he often set his stories in Europe.
- *Poe has an incredibly long cultural afterlife.*

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