



## Elementary

***Today you are going to read interesting facts about Edgar Allan Poe whose poem you read last week.***

- Edgar Allan Poe (January 19, 1809 – October 7, 1849) was an American poet, short story writer, editor, critic and one of the leaders of the American Romantic Movement. He wrote a lot of short story, detective fiction and crime fiction.
- Both his mother and his father were actors.
- His father left them when he was very young, and his mother died of TBC a year later.
- He had a foster father.
- He started university but did not finish it.
- He started gambling and had huge debts.
- He joined the army, but only stayed for two years because they sent him away.
- He was an assistant editor of a magazine but they fired him because he drank too much.
- He married a woman, but shortly after the wedding, she became ill. One evening she was playing the piano when blood started to come out of her mouth. This was the sign of TBC. She never became completely ill again.
- Poe got very stressed because of his wife's illness, and started drinking heavily.
- After Virginia's death, he tried to start another relationship which was not successful because of his drinking, so he went back to his childhood sweetheart.
- On October 3, 1849, they found Poe on the streets of Baltimore. He didn't know much about himself, and he was wearing someone else's clothes. They took him to hospital but he died soon afterwards.
- The cause of his death can be alcohol, drugs, cholera, or rabies.
- He started detective fiction.
- He influenced science fiction very much.
- He wrote mainly about sad things, for example death and madness.
- The NFL football team in Baltimore took the name The Ravens.
- People say that a ghost haunts in the rooms of the bar where he last drank.

*Now answer some questions about Poe.*

1. What did his parents do?
2. Did he have a happy childhood?
3. What happened to his parents?
4. Did he have a university degree?
5. Why did he have debts?
6. Did he have any bad habits?
7. What happened to his wife?
8. How did he die?
9. Why is detective fiction important in his works?
10. What were his main topics?
11. Is he popular nowadays? If yes, why?



## Intermediate

**Today you are going to read about the life of Edgar Allan Poe whose poem you read last week.**

Edgar Allan Poe is one of the most celebrated of all American authors. Heavily influenced by the German Romantic Ironists, Poe made his primary mark in Gothic fiction, especially through the tales of the macabre for which he is now so famous. Although he wished to be remembered as a poet, "it is, to use the words of a recent critic, as the arch-priest of the Gothic horror tale that we remember Edgar Allan Poe" (G.R. Thompson, *Great Short Works of Edgar Allan Poe*, 1). He is one of the few indisputably great writers of the short story, alongside Guy de Maupassant. Poe also invented the modern detective genre and wrote highly influential literary criticism.

Born on January 19, 1809, to David Poe, Jr., and Elizabeth Arnold Hopkins--both of whom died before their son was three--young Edgar went to live in Richmond, VA, with John Allan, a tradesman. Edgar enrolled in the University of Virginia but was prevented from returning due to hefty gambling debts. He enlisted in the U.S. Army until Allan secured his discharge.

Prior to enlisting, Poe had published a volume of poetry, *Tamerlane and Other Poems*. After his army time and while a student at West Point, he published a second volume: *Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane and Minor Poems*. Physically weak and older than most of his classmates, Poe felt out of place at the school, and he devoted much of his time to studying the Romantic poets, in particular Byron, Shelley, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. He played pranks involving bloody ganders posing as decapitated heads, and he finally got himself dismissed in 1831.

In 1832 five of Poe's short stories were published in the *Philadelphia Saturday Courier*. They were exclusively comic, satiric tales. Around this time, Poe discovered opium, soon to become a prominent feature of his life. In 1833, his tale of dread, "MS Found in a Bottle," won a \$50 prize from the *Baltimore Saturday Visitor*. The oeuvre of horror fiction which was to define Poe among future generations thus began--and so, perhaps not coincidentally, did his lifelong dependency on drugs and alcohol.

Returning to Richmond in 1835, Poe began writing for the *Southern Literary Messenger*. He quickly began to garner a reputation with vitriolic reviews, essays on the theory of literature and literary criticism, and, of course, his short stories. One of his most famous reviews was a pan of Theodore S. Fay's novel *Norman Leslie*, with criticism so devastating it helped earn Poe the nickname "tomahawk man." Later in the year, Poe married his cousin Virginia Clemm (not yet fourteen at the time) and became an editor of the *Messenger*. In 1837 he resigned from the *Messenger*, which he had helped transform into one of the country's leading journals, and in the same year he released more poems and short stories, including "Ligeia," which he considered his finest tale. In July 1838, *Harper's* published his novel *Arthur Gordon Pym*.

In 1839, Poe became an associate editor of *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* in Philadelphia, for which he wrote "The Fall of the House of Usher" that year. In 1840 he published a collection of his short stories, *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*. Discharged from his job due to quarrels with William Burton, he served as editor of *Graham's Magazine* until 1842. Hard times followed and, barely managing to scrounge together car fare for his family, Poe moved to New York in 1844 to work for the *Evening Mirror*.

1845 finally saw Poe crowned as a literary sensation in his country, with the publication of his hugely popular poem "The Raven." Tragedy, however, was just around the corner. In 1847, Virginia succumbed to tuberculosis, leading Poe to seek refuge in increased drinking. His violent mood swings became common as drugs and alcohol wore away at his body and mind.

In 1849, Edgar Allan Poe was found unconscious (or barely conscious) in a Baltimore street and was taken to a nearby hospital. There he died on Sunday, October 7.

Now answer some questions about Poe.

1. In what kind of literature is his work very important?
2. What did he invent?
3. Why did he have a foster father?
4. Why was he unable to finish up university?
5. When did he discover opium?



6. Did he recover from his dependency on alcohol and drugs some time in his life?
7. What was his nickname as a journalist and why?
8. What happened in 1845?
9. How did he try to console himself after his wife had become ill?
10. Was he conscious when he was dying?

## Advanced

***Today you are going to read about the strange death of Edgar Allan Poe whose poem you read last week.***

On October 3, 1849, Poe was found on the streets of Baltimore delirious and "in great distress, and... in need of immediate assistance," according to the friend who found him, Dr. E. Snodgrass. He was taken to the Washington College Hospital, where he died early on the morning of October 7. Poe was never coherent long enough to explain how he came to be in his dire condition, and, oddly, was wearing clothes that were not his own. Poe is said to have repeatedly called out the name "Reynolds" on the night before his death, though no one has ever been able to identify the person to whom he referred. One Poe scholar, W. T. Bandy, has suggested that he may instead have called for "Herring," (Poe's uncle was called Henry Herring). Some sources say Poe's final words were "Lord help my poor soul." Poe suffered from bouts of depression and madness, and he attempted suicide in 1848.

The precise cause of Poe's death is disputed. Dr. Snodgrass was convinced that Poe died as a result of alcoholism and did a great deal to popularize this interpretation of the events. He was, however, a supporter of the temperance movement who found Poe a useful example in his work. Later scholars have shown that his account of Poe's death distorts facts to support his theory. Dr. John Moran, the physician who attended Poe, stated in his own 1885 account 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 was, however, only one of several, sometimes contradictory, accounts of Poe's last days which he published over the years, so his testimony cannot be considered entirely reliable.

Cholera cannot be ruled out. While in Richmond during the summer of 1849, Poe wrote letters to his aunt, Maria Clemm, and to a newspaperman, E.H.N. Patterson in which he confided that he may have contracted cholera in Philadelphia. 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 several forms of rare brain disease, diabetes, various types of enzyme deficiency, syphilis, the idea that Poe was shanghaied, drugged, and used as a pawn in a ballot-box-stuffing scam during the election that was held on the day he was found, and, more recently, rabies. The rabies death theory was proposed by Dr. R. Michael Benitez, and is based upon the fact that Poe's symptoms before death are similar to those displayed in a classic case of rabies. Cats play a prominent part in many of his stories, and it is conjectured that he was accidentally bitten by a rabid pet.

In the absence of contemporary documentation (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 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 School of Law in Baltimore.

Even after death Poe has created controversy and mystery. Because of his fame, school children collected money for a new burial spot closer to the front gate. He was reburied on October 1, 1875. A celebration was held at the dedication of the new tomb on November 17. Likely unknown to the reburial crew, however, the headstones on all the graves, previously facing to the east, were turned to face the West Gate in 1864. Therefore, as it was described in a seemingly fitting turn of events:

In digging on what they erroneously thought to be the right of the General Poe the committee naturally first struck old Mrs. Poe who had been buried thirty-six years before Edgar's mother-in-



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law; they tried again and presumably struck Mrs. Clemm who had been buried in 1876 only four years earlier. Henry's Poe's brother foot stone, it there, was respected for they obviously skipped over him and settled for the next body, which was on the Mosher lot. Because of the excellent condition of the teeth, he would certainly seem to have been the remains of Philip Mosher Jr, of the Maryland Militia, age 19.

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, January 19th, by a mystery man known endearingly as the Poe Toaster. It has been reported that a man draped in black with a silver-tipped cane, kneels at the grave for a toast of Martel Cognac and leaves the half-full bottle and three red roses. One theory (of many) is that the three red roses are in memory of Poe himself, his mother-in-law, and his wife Virginia.

The epitaph inscribed on Poe's tombstone reads:

Fly

Quoth the Raven,

"Nevermore."

*Now answer some questions about Poe.*

1. In what state was he when found lying on the street?
2. Could he later explain how he had gotten into that state?
3. What did he last say?
4. List the theories concerning the causes of his death.
5. What does shanghaiing mean?
6. What happened soon after his burial?
7. Did they manage to find Poe's body on the first attempt?
8. What strange thing happens on each of Poe's birthdays?