

EDGAR ALLAN POE'S WRITING STYLE

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Annotation

The article discusses Edgar Poe's writing style, literary views and his unique place in world literature. In particular, his poetry and stories differ from other artists of that period by their abnormal and grotesque style and ideas.

Keywords: Gothic, Romanticism, impulses, fatality, utilization

Edgar Poe's works are quintessential examples of Gothic literature. They invoke a feeling of terror while exploring death, despair, suspense, and the nuances of romance. Poe engaged readers through the utilization of imagery and suspense within vivid settings.

Several themes were prominent throughout many of Poe's works. Though many of Poe's central themes reflect the influence of Romanticism, they also reflect events and emotions that Poe experienced himself.

Death was central to Poe's life. Specifically, he lost the women who were closest to him: his mother, Elizabeth Poe; his foster mother, Francis Allan; and his wife, Virginia. These experiences allowed Poe to delve deeply into the psychological ramifications of death as he explored the emotions of mourning and regret.

Sadness often came on the heels of death in many of Poe's works. His portrayal of the angst of losing a loved one and the longing of having the dead back with the living was enhanced by his concise application of vivid words, nuance, and cadence.

Beauty was both mourned and exalted in Poe's writing. Poe believed that there was a certain beauty in the honest expression of emotions, even if those emotions

were negative. Women were often praised for both their physical and inner beauty, and Poe often lamented the fading of beauty with illness. Despite this, Poe acknowledged the passive beauty that often remained after death.

Poe often expressed anxiety, terror, and trepidation through his use of foreboding and suspense. Many of Poe's characters became overwhelmed by their feelings of angst as they were tormented by relentless or increasing dread. These emotions were often portrayed through precise word use, onomatopoeia, and rhythm.

Poe's characters often regretted their actions and reactions. Many gradually lost their sanity as they attempted to reconcile their regret. Scholars often suggest that Poe himself struggled with overwhelming regret for actions and circumstances that were both within and beyond his control, such as the illness and subsequent death of his wife, Virginia.

Poe is most widely known for his poetry and short stories, but he also wrote several explanatory and critical essays, a novel, and a play.

The majority of Poe's poems were narrative and told a story. In his poems, Poe often used alliteration and simile in order to invoke an emotional response from the reader. The following are Poe's poetical works:

Edgar Allan Poe has a unique writing style that uses several different elements of literary structure. He uses intrigue vocabulary, repetition, and imagery to better capture the reader's attention and place them in the story. Edgar Allan Poe's style is dark, and his mysterious style of writing appeals to emotion and drama. What might be Poe's greatest fictitious stories are gothic tend to have the same recurring theme of either death, lost love, or both. His choice of word draws the reader in to engage them to understand the author's message more clearly. Authors who have a vague short lexicon tend to not engage the reader as much. One example of his authorization is how he begins the “Fall of the House of Usher,” for example, with a description of the house, which is adorned with “phantasmagoric armorial trophies” (Long). The word “phantasmagoric,” which is not commonly-used,

makes the audience pause to contemplate the contextual implications of such a term. Edgar Allen Poe has a very effective way of using vocabulary as a literary device to add meaningfulness to his works.

In addition to vocabulary, Poe’s use of repetition ensures that his audience will appreciate the deeper meaning of his writing and understand which concepts are important in his stories. In “The Tell-Tale Heart,” the narrator, after stating that he is not insane, goes on to describe “how stealthily, stealthily” (Long) he proceeds when going into of the elderly man and blighting the room with the lantern. The repetition of “stealthily” demonstrates just how sneaky and narrator is, suggesting that he is crazy.¹

A virtuoso of suspense and horror, Edgar Allan Poe is known for his Gothic writing style. His style is created through his use of punctuation, sentence structure, word choice, tone, and figurative language. Punctuation-wise; dashes, exclamation marks, semicolons, and commas are a favorite of Poe. His sentences vary greatly; their structures are influenced by punctuation. Much of his word choice set the tone of his works. Figurative language colors his writings with description. Such is observed in the similarities between two of his most well-known short stories, “The Cask of Amontillado” and “The Tell-Tale Heart”

To begin with, Poe valued punctuation in its ability to make a point. Proper use of punctuation allowed the reader to feel the full effect the sentence was supposed to have. All this is demonstrated in the first sentence of “The Tell-Tale Heart”, “True!—nervous—very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad?” Here, the dashes take the place of a comma to create the tension of the story on the first line. It draws the reader in, so that the reader has to determine whether or not the narrator is sane. Also, he uses semicolons to lengthen and support a sentence, usually by joining multiple phrases together. With a period instead of a semicolon, the relationship between the first clause and second isn’t emphasized as much as it could be. A semicolon stresses the narrator’s insistence in his sanity. Last

¹ <https://study.com>

of all, his use of exclamation marks shows the narrator’s state of mind, thoughts, and emotions. Without the exclamation mark in the first line, the impact of the narrator’s statement wouldn’t be as great. Yet, in observing punctuation, one can hardly fail to notice the relationship it pla...

Conclusively, Edgar Allan Poe’s distinctive writing style comes from his use of punctuation, sentence structure, word choice, tone, figurative language. Commas, dashes, semicolons, and exclamation marks appear frequently in his writing. Simultaneously, they affect the organization and length of his sentences. Word choice sets the tone. Literary devices imbue it with life. On comparing “The Cask of Amontillado” and “The Tell-Tale Heart”, this is observed.

The genre for which Edger Allan Poe is best known for is the **Gothic genre**. His works adhere to the conventions of the genre. Therefore, it appeals to the public state. His gothic fiction deals with the **recurring themes of death**. It also includes the physical signs of death, concerns of early burial; effects of decomposition; mourning, and the reanimation of death.

His works are considered to belong to the genre of dark Romanticism. This genre started as a reaction to transcendentalism, which is highly disliked, Poe. He called the followers of the movement of transcendentalism as “**Frog-Pondian**.” He also ridiculed their writings by calling it “metaphor – run mad” elapsing into “mysticism for mysticism’s sake” or “obscurity for obscurity’s sake.” In reality, Poe does not like transcendentalism but the sophists and pretenders among the transcendentalists.

Apart from horror fiction, Edger Allan Poe also wrote **hoaxes, humour tales, and satires**. To add comic effect in his works, he used **absurd indulgence** and **irony**. He uses the **comic effect** to free the readers from the conventionality of culture. The first-ever story that Poe published was

“Metzengerstein.” This story is also his first horror story; however, it was initially intended as comedy ridiculing the popular genre.²

He also reestablishes the genre of science fiction through his writing that responds to the newly emerging technologies. For example, the story “The Balloon-Hoax” is about the hot air balloon that emerged in his time.

Edger Allan Poe’s works are based on themes that were according to the tastes of the mass-market. To satisfy the taste of the masses, he also included the elements of pseudo-sciences like physiognomy and phrenology in his works.

The critical literary theories presented by Poe in his criticism are reflected in his writings. One of the best critical essays he wrote is “The Poetic Principle.” Though Poe believed that the meaning of the literary work should not be on the surface, it must be deep and undercurrent, he does not like allegory and didacticism.

For him, the works which have their meaning on the surface do not belong to art. Moreover, qualitative work must be brief and focused on one exact effect. Lastly, he also held that the writers should sensibly analyze every idea and sentiment. Poe’s essay “The Philosophy of Composition” deals with the method of writing in his masterpiece poem “The Raven.” In the essay, Poe claims that he had strictly adhered to this method.

Along with the **satanic** and **occult**, the works of Edger Allan Poe is concerned with **Romanticism**. His works are also inspired by his intense dreams. He shaped his dreams with his distinctive imagery and use of language. His works have **unique imaginations, elaborated techniques, objectivity, and spontaneity**. He was appreciated even in his life for his clear and comprehensive criticism as an evaluator of the literature of his time, his **poetic idealism and melodic gift, and his dramatic storytelling art**. With his distinguished writing style; he secured an imminent position among the well-known men of letters.

² “Highlights of American literature”. Based upon a core manuscripts by Dr. Carl Bode. University of Maryland.

Edger Allan Poe had a **dual personality**. This personality is also reflected in his works. The views and judgments prevailing in his time about him appear to the extent of coexistence totally different from two persons in him. He was devoted and gentle to the people he loved, whereas he was self-centered and irritable to the people he does not like.

The best fictional works of Poe are concerned with **sadness and terror**. However, his poetry is quite pleasant, as is his company. He admired the works of Alexander Pope and William Shakespeare. His writings have his **sense of humor**.

Poe was a visionary and an idealist. He desires for both the ideal of imagination and the ideal of heart. Most of his poetry is inspired by his sensitivity to the sweetness and beauty of women. For example, his poem “To One in Paradise,” “To Helen,” “Annabel Lee,” and “Eulalie” is all about women. The poems “Ligeia” and “Eleonora” are his hymns in full-tone prose to love and beauty. In the poem “Israfel,” he is taken to the world of dreams from reality through his imagination. The distinguishing characteristic of his late-year works was his **“Pythian mood.”**

He dodges the readers from the world’s common experiences with **unnerving thoughts, fears, and impulses**. Such familiar mode is present in his poetry, such as “Lenore,” “The Valley on Unrest,” “The Raven,” “Ulalume,” and “For Annie” and also in his famous short stories. He portrayed the **astonishing effect of death** in his tale by using a **dark mood, fear, and impulses**.

His works that deal with the **theme of death** are “The Masque of the Red Death,” “The Fall of House of Usher,” “The Fact in the Case of M. Valdemar,” “The Oval Portrait,” “The Premature Burial,” and “Shadow.”

He also has themes of **crime and wickedness** in the stories “The Black cat,” “Berenice,” “The Imp of Perverse,” “William Morris,” “The Tell-Tale Heart,” and “The Cask of Amontillado.”

The stories, “Ligeia,” “Metzengerstein,” and “Morella” deal with the **themes of survival after desolation**. Lastly, he also has the **theme of fatality** in the short stories “The man of Crowd and The Assignation.

In the short story “The Pit and the Pendulum,” he does not allow his character to become a victim of mysterious forces, he uses the suffering of forthcoming death to make his stories nerve-racking. Moreover, he also employs grotesque elements in his works that deal with the aftermath of death: corpses and decay.

Moreover, Poe also includes the **minute details** in his works. For instance, when in the long narratives and the description that introduces the tale or setting of the story, observe little details. He is closely associated with his power of reasoning.

Poe was proud of his logic, and he handled his logic very carefully to impress the public with his stories. He was highly praised for his problem disentanglement, thought-reading, and cryptography that he credited to characters C. Auguste Dupin and William Legard. It was these characters that made him write detective stories and science fiction.

The duality in his personality is also reflected in his art. He wrote weird and angelic poetry. His poetry has the utmost rhythm and appealing words. Similarly, his prose has suggestiveness and extravagant beauty with the superficial recklessness of persuasive motivation. However, he also wrote about the dark pshtychology or the plans of inexorable plots in dry and hardstyle. The duality of his mind, temper, and art are blended into a unity of structure, tone, and movement in his masterpieces. These masterpieces are the most effective and overwhelmed with various elements.³

Poe also **focuses on the precision of meter, structure, and language**. As a critic, he formulated his own principles for the short story. He searched for the **ancient unities in the plot**: the unity of action, plot, and magnitude. He added mood and effects to these units. However, he was not very harsh in his principles. Though he praised brief and focused works, he also admired long works, morals,

³ <https://study.com>

and allegories provided that they are not presented crudely. He also praised the originality in the work that was totally different from his; he was a surprisingly generous critic of minor writers.

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