

 Prestwick House

Instant Short Story Pack



Each pack contains:

- Objectives
- Full Text of Story
- Student Questions
- Activities and Graphic Organizers
- Teacher Answer Guide

The Cask of Amontillado

BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1, 2
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1, 2, 3



Objectives:

After completing the activities in this packet, the student will be able to:

- cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text (RL.9-10.1; 11-12.1),
- determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text (RL.9-10.2),
- determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text (RL.11-12.2), and
- analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set) (RL.11-12.3).

Time:

1-3 class periods

Materials:

✓ 1 copy of each handout per student:

- **Handout #1** (3 pages) – Purpose-setting and Motivational Activities
- **Handout #2** (7 pages) – Text of Story
- **Handout #3** (1 page) – Student Questions
- **Handout #4** (6 pages) – Activities and Graphic Organizers

✓ Teacher Answer Guide

Procedure:

1. Reproduce all handouts.
2. Distribute **Handouts #1** and **#2**.
 - Allow students to read the short biography of Poe (approximately 10 minutes).
 - Read and discuss the information about Poe's work and ideas (approximately 20 minutes).
 - Assign story to be read for homework OR
 - Allow students to read the story in class and perform the two **As you read...**activities.
3. Distribute **Handout #3**.
4. Give students time to read the questions (approximately 5 minutes).
5. Review with students what each question is asking for and what type of information is required for a thorough answer (e.g., references to prior knowledge, quotations from the story, additional reading or research, etc.).
6. Distribute **Handout #4**.
7. Walk the class through Question 1, demonstrating that in order to address a complex issue, it is often helpful to divide it into smaller subtopics. Students can then use the ideas generated by each subtopic to build a complete and thoughtful answer to the full question.
8. Have students answer the questions.

Edgar Allan Poe

The Cask of Amontillado

You are about to read one of the most famous stories written by one of the most famous authors in American history. “The Cask of Amontillado” was first published in 1846. Much has changed in the 160+ years since Edgar Allan Poe wrote this story: social customs and manners, forms of travel and communication, clothing styles, taste in food and music, and so on.

What *hasn't* changed is human nature. Twenty-first-century Americans experience the same hopes, fears, and passions as did the men and women of Poe's day. Think about the devious plotting of any television or movie villain and compare it to Montresor's passionate hatred and driving need for revenge. When you read this story, don't just puzzle over the occasional strange word or the long and elaborate sentences. Read for every hint Poe gives to just how mad his narrator is and how horrible the fate his nemesis Fortunato is about to suffer.

By all means enjoy the plot, but don't allow the “surprise” ending to distract you from the real horror that Poe is exploring.

Before you read:

Know something about the life of the author:

Born on January 19, 1809, Edgar Poe was the second of three children born to actors Elizabeth Arnold Hopkins Poe and David Poe, Jr., of Boston. The following year the young child's father abandoned his family, and the year after that Poe's mother died of consumption (now known as tuberculosis). The orphaned Poe was taken into the home of John Allan, a successful merchant in Richmond, Virginia. Though he was never formally adopted into the family, they added Allan to Poe's name.

The Allans lived in England from 1815 to 1820, and Poe was educated in Scotland and London. He returned to Richmond and applied to the recently founded University of Virginia where he intended to study foreign languages. He began gambling, however, and mounting debt estranged him from his foster father. He dropped out of the university after only a year and went to Boston, where he worked at odd jobs. Finally, in May 1827, financial desperation forced him to enlist in the United States Army.

Edgar Allan Poe

The Cask of Amontillado

Lexile Measure: 800L

THE THOUSAND INJURIES of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that gave utterance to a threat. At length I would be avenged; this was a point definitely, settled—but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved precluded the idea of risk. I must not only punish but punish with impunity. A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. I continued, as was my wont to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile now was at the thought of his immolation.

He had a weak point—this Fortunato—although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity, to practise imposture upon the British and Austrian millionaires. In painting and gemmary, Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack, but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially;—I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap

Edgar Allan Poe

The Cask of Amontillado

STUDENT QUESTIONS:

1. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; 11-12.1) Who is the narrator of this story, and what are the most likely circumstances that occasion his telling it? What evidence in the text suggests this inference?
2. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3) In what ways are the setting and background of the story ironic? How does this irony contribute to the overall impact of the story?

3. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; 11-12.1) Explain what Montresor is saying when he tells his confessor early in the story:

“A wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.”

4. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; 11-12.1) Describe the Montresors’ coat of arms:

“A huge human foot d’or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel.”

How does knowing that this is the coat of arms of the Montresor family contribute to the overall impact of the story?

5. (CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1; 11-12.2) In one of his most famous works of literary criticism, Poe explained what is today known as his “single effect theory”:

“...having conceived with deliberate care, a certain unique or single effect to be wrought out, [the skillful literary artist] invents such incidents,—he combines such events as may best aid him in establishing this preconceived effect....*In the whole composition there should be no word written, of which the tendency, direct or indirect, is not to the one preestablished design.*”
[emphasis ours]

What single, unique effect does Poe establish in “The Cask of Amontillado”? Closely examine the construction of the story and explain how Poe has “invent[ed] such incidents” and “combine[d] such events” in order to establish this effect.

ACTIVITIES AND GRAPHIC ORGANIZERS:

Edgar Allan Poe, *The Cask of Amontillado*

Question 1: Who is the narrator of this story, and what are the most likely circumstances that occasion his telling it? What evidence in the text suggests this inference?

STEP 1: The majority of “The Cask of Amontillado” relates Montresor’s final encounter with Fortunato. However, the beginning and end of this story provide some clues to the narrator’s present condition. Interpret the lines from the story provided in the following chart. What does each imply or suggest about the narrator? Consider *who* the narrator could be speaking to, and *why*.

<p>If you are not certain what the narrator is literally saying, first interpret the literal meaning of the following excerpts.</p> <p>Then, explore what could be suggested or implied about Montresor by using specific words and phrases from the quotations.</p>		
<p>Beginning/End of “The Cask of Amontillado”</p>	<p>“The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge.”</p>	<p>Significance, implication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Montresor begins the story with a loose justification for his action.
	<p>“You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that gave utterance to a threat.”</p>	<p>Significance, implication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “[K]now the nature of my soul” likely has a religious affiliation.
	<p>“My heart grew sick; it was the dampness of the catacombs that made it so.”</p>	<p>Significance, implication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • •
	<p>“For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. <i>In pace requiescat!</i>”</p>	<p>Significance, implication:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • • • •