**The Raven**

**by Edgar Allan Poe**

*In the box below each stanza, write a summary of what is happening in your own words.*

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,  
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore[[1]](#footnote-1)—  
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— 5  
                     Only this and nothing more."

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[[2]](#footnote-2) of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore— 10  
For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore—  
                     Nameless here for evermore.

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 15  
"'Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door—  
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;  
                     This it is and nothing more."

Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,  
"Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore; 20  
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.

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing, 25  
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. 30

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,  
Soon again I heard a tapping something 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;— 35  
                     'Tis the wind and nothing more.

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[[3]](#footnote-3).  
Not the least obeisance[[4]](#footnote-4) made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he,  
But, with mien[[5]](#footnote-5) of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door— 40  
Perched upon a bust of Pallas[[6]](#footnote-6) just above my chamber door—  
                     Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then the ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,  
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore[[7]](#footnote-7),  
"Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no craven[[8]](#footnote-8), 45  
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore—  
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore[[9]](#footnote-9)!"  
                     Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,  
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore; 50  
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being  
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—  
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,  
                     With such name as "Nevermore."

But the Raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust, spoke only 55  
That one word, as if its soul in that one word he did outpour  
Nothing farther 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." 60

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 — so, when Hope he would adjure[[10]](#footnote-10),  
Stern Despair returned, instead of the sweet Hope he dared adjure — 65  
                     Of 'Never—nevermore.'"

But the Raven still beguiling all my sad soul 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— 70  
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore  
                     Meant in croaking "Nevermore."

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[[11]](#footnote-11), with my head at ease reclining 75  
On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamp-light gloated o'er,  
But whose velvet violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er  
                    *She* shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer[[12]](#footnote-12)  
Swung by Seraphim[[13]](#footnote-13) whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor. 80  
"Wretch," I cried, "thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he hath sent thee  
Respite—respite and nepenthe[[14]](#footnote-14) from thy memories of Lenore!  
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!"  
                     Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!— 85  
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,  
Desolate, yet all undaunted[[15]](#footnote-15), on this desert land enchanted—  
On this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly, I implore—  
Is there—is there balm in Gilead[[16]](#footnote-16)?—tell me—tell me, I implore!"  
                     Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore." 90

"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[[17]](#footnote-17),  
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—  
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore." 95  
                     Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Be that our sign of 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 has spoken!  
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door! 100  
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"  
                     Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

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 105  
And the lamp-light o'er him streaming throws his shadows on the floor;  
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor  
                     Shall be lifted—nevermore!

implore (verb) to beg:

grim (adj) harsh, forbidding, and morbid

ominous (adj): threatening or warning of something negative; a bad omen

quaff (verb) to drink

tempest (noun): a violent storm

1. Describe the speaker’s situation at the start of the poem: what is the setting (time and place) and what is he doing?

2. Who is Lenore? What do you think was the speaker’s relationship to her? What happened to her?

3. How does the speaker’s reaction change each time the bird says “Nevermore”? Why does it change?

4. What does the raven **symbolize** in this poem?

5. In this poem, how much of what happens is real and how much the narrator’s imagination? How can you tell?

6. Give two examples of **allusion** in this poem. Why does Poe use each of these allusions?

7. What is the **rhyme scheme** of The Raven? Write the rhyme scheme for the first two stanzas below.

8. What is the **meter** of The Raven? Scan the line below to prove it.

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary

What effect does this meter have on the reader, and why do you think Poe used it?

9. What is Poe’s **tone** in this poem? How can you tell?

10. Give an example of how each of the following literary devices is used in the poem and why it is used:

**alliteration:**

**assonance:**

**internal rhyme:**

**personification:**

**repetition:**

**refrain:**

1. **quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore**: old, strange book of ancient learning [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. **surcease**: end [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. **days of yore**: times long ago [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. **obeisance**: a bow as a sign of respect [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. **mien**: manner [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. **bust of Pallas**: a statue of the head and shoulders of Athena, Greek goddess of wisdom [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. **By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore**: By the serious and stern expression it had [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. craven: coward [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. **Night’s Plutonian shore**: comparing Night to the underworld, ruled by the god Pluto [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. **adjure**: to beg [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. **divining**: guessing [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. **censer**: incense burner [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. **Seraphim**: angel [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. **respite and Nepenthe**: relief and forgetfulness (nepethe was a drug used in ancient times to cause a person to forget his sorrows) [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. **Desolate, yet all undaunted**: In a hopeless situation, yet not discouraged [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. **balm in Gilead**: cure for suffering (refers to Genesis Chapter 7) [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. **Aidenn:** Eden [↑](#footnote-ref-17)