



Halloween Activity: “The Raven” By Edgar Allan Poe

AP[®] English Literature and Composition

“The Raven” Group Gallery Walk

After reading “The Raven”, put students in groups of 3–5 and provide each group with a different colored marker and a large sheet of paper.

Materials Needed

- “The Raven,” by Edgar Allan Poe (*Attached*)
- Anchor Chart Paper/Easel Pad

Assignment

For classes under 60 minutes, this activity may take two class periods.

Assign each group one of the questions below and tell them to write it as a heading at the top of the paper. **Instruct** the groups to stick/tape their paper on the wall. This is their first station. (*Teachers may choose to do this in advance to save time.*)

- **Characterize** the speaker’s state of mind with textual support.
- **Identify** striking examples of imagery and the feelings they evoke.
- **Identify** examples of metaphors and similes and **describe** their effect or how they contribute to meaning.
- **Describe** the use of the word “Nevermore” and the effect created by its repetition throughout the poem.
- **Identify** and **describe** the symbols and what they symbolize.
- **Identify** allusions and **explain** how they contribute to the meaning of the poem.
- **Identify** the tones and where they shift.
- **Explain** the speaker’s tone and the dark outcome described in the last stanza.

First Station

Groups will **discuss** their assigned question, and one recorder should **write** the group’s responses, thoughts, and comments on the paper. **(5 minutes)**



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Rotation

After 5 minutes, groups **rotate** to the next station, where they will **read** and **discuss** the previous responses and add their own. Responses must be unique rather than a repetition of what has previously been recorded. **Repeat** until all groups have visited each station. **(5 minutes per station)**

(Note: To ensure full student participation, groups can switch recorders when they move on to the next station.)

Monitor

As the groups work, teachers should **monitor** students to ensure they stay on task and all group members participate. **Offer** hints if a group is having difficulty providing a response or if they misinterpret a question.

Discussion

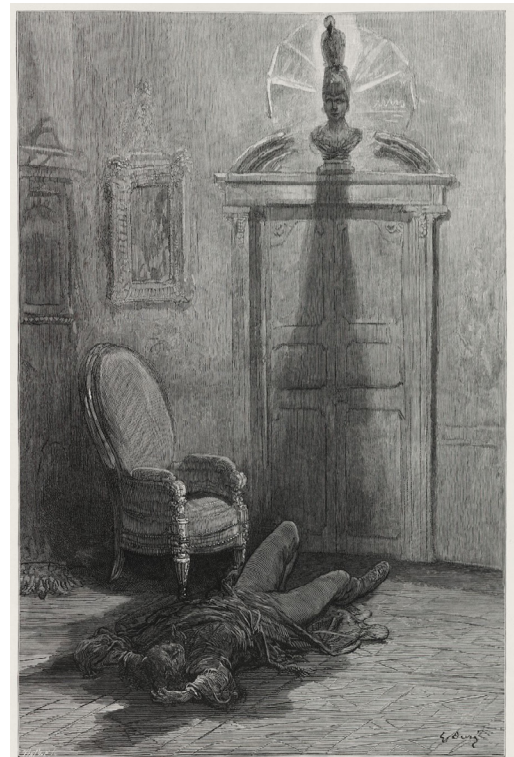
Have the groups go back to their original station and **read** what was added to their first response. Then, bring the class back together and have a member from each group **share** a summary of the responses.

Defensible Interpretation

Finally, **provide** each student with the prompt below. Allow 3-5 minutes to individually respond in writing. **Ask** for volunteers to share or collect the responses as an exit ticket at the end of the activity. This can be expanded into a full essay, if desired.

Prompt

In Edgar Allan Poe’s poem “The Raven,” published 1845, the speaker encounters a raven who enters his home and perches on a sculpture of the head of Pallas Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom and war. **Read** the poem carefully. Then, **write** a thesis statement with a defensible interpretation of the speaker’s encounter with the raven at that particular time and place.





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Passage

“The Raven” by Edgar Allan Poe

Suggested Read-Aloud: 11 minutes

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
“’Tis some visiter,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door—
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 of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore—
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
“’Tis some visiter entreating entrance at my chamber door—
Some late visiter 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;
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,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal 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.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat 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;—
’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;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door—
Perched upon a bust of Pallas¹ just above my chamber door—
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.



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Passage cont.

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Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
“Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,” I said, “art sure no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore—
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night’s Plutonian shore!”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore;
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 the placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his 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.”

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 till his songs one burden bore—
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
Of ‘Never—nevermore.’”

But the Raven still beguiling my sad fancy 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—
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, with my head at ease reclining
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
Swung by seraphim whose foot-falls tinkled on the tufted floor.
“Wretch,” I cried, “thy God hath lent thee—by these angels he hath sent thee
Respite—respite and nepenthe² from thy memories of Lenore;
Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”



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Passage cont.

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“Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil!—prophet still, if bird or devil!—
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted—
On this home by Horror haunted—tell me truly, I implore—
Is there—is there balm in Gilead³?—tell me—tell me, I implore!”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

“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 Aidenn⁴,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore.”
Quoth the Raven “Nevermore.”

“Be that word 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 hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door!
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,
And the lamp-light o’er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore!

(1845)

- 1 Pallas Athena, the goddess of wisdom in Greek mythology
- 2 a drug or drink believed in ancient times to bring relief from sorrow
- 3 in the Bible, a medicinal substance to relieve suffering
- 4 Eden, “the distant Aidenn” is a reference to heaven