

TEACHER NOTES

45. Edgar Allan Poe

ABOUT EDGAR ALLAN POE

- **Childhood** After Edgar Allan Poe was orphaned at the age of six, he was raised by his godfather John Allan. Poe moved to England and attended a private school. After returning to the United States, he continued private schooling and later attended the University of Virginia for one year. In 1827, Poe's drinking and gambling worsened, and his foster father refused to pay his debts. Poe dropped out of school and was forced to take a job as a clerk. Hating his job, he quit and moved to Boston, where he published his first book of poems and then enrolled in the army.
- **Alcoholism and Mental Illness** Although Poe was prone to abuse alcohol, and many people suspected that he used drugs, it is thought that he actually suffered from a brain lesion. After his wife Virginia died in 1847, Poe became ill. A few years later, he died after a night of drinking.
- **Belief About Humans** Poe's trouble with self-control probably contributed to his belief that humans had a mysterious dark side that would destroy their lives. Most of his stories were concerned with sadness, terror, and evil.

CONNECTIONS

- **World: Influence Abroad** French poets Charles Baudelaire and Stephane Mallarmé considered Poe a genius. The French Symbolists were influenced by his imagery as well as his work as a critic.
- **Present Day: The Beatles** The image of Poe appears on the cover of The Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Heart's Club Band* album.
- **Present Day: Pop Culture** The work of Poe has made its way into nearly every medium. The TV show *The Simpsons* did an entire episode devoted to Poe's "The Raven," and he has been referenced in several movies, songs, and TV shows.