

TEACHER NOTES

46. The Works of Edgar Allan Poe

ABOUT THE WORKS OF EDGAR ALLAN POE

- **His Poems** Poe was excellent at manipulating rhythm and sound to create effects. In “The Raven,” he created a sense of melancholy, dread, and doom through the increasingly frenzied pace and the raven’s repeated and monotonous line “Nevermore”; “The Bells” mimicked the chiming and tone of the different bells; and “The Sleeper” created a sense of drowsiness. Like his stories, his best-known poems often focused on the macabre.
- **The Short Story Genre** As a critic and writer of short stories, Poe felt short stories should have a concise plot structure, telling a complete tale that takes place in one day and one place. He stressed the importance of correct grammar, meter, and structure, as well as the influence of setting, mood, and imagery.
- **Mystery and Horror Stories** Poe’s tales usually revolved around a dark secret or a study of human depravity. “The Gold Bug,” “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” and “The Purloined Letter,” were some of the first modern mysteries or detective stories. Other stories, such as “The Pit and the Pendulum,” “The Tell-Tale Heart,” and “The Cask of Amontillado,” created a unique sense of horror.

ABOUT THE IMAGE

- **Pre-Raphaelites** This illustration of “The Raven” is by Dante Gabriel Rossetti (1824–1882), who belonged to a group of European artists and poets known as the Pre-Raphaelites. Though the Pre-Raphaelites were individuals with unique qualities, the following characteristics typify their work: a realistic style; the use of symbols; narrative subjects often derived from literature; and depictions of romantic, often tragic, love. Notice the moodiness of the man in the foreground, who seems to resemble Poe himself. Also, note the almost mystical appearance of Lenore, a subject well-suited to the Pre-Raphaelite sensibility.

CONNECTIONS

- **Literature: Detective Stories** Poe’s detective, C. Auguste Dupin, is the first true literary detective and the forerunner of Sherlock Holmes. Dupin first appeared in Poe’s “The Murders in the Rue Morgue.”
- **Literature: Art for Art’s Sake** Poe was a forerunner of the “art for art’s sake” movement. He believed that the sole purpose of a poem or tale was to entertain, not to educate or uplift. This view became very influential later in the 19th century.