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American Literature
The Raven-Edgar Allan Poe

The Raven is written by Edgar Allan Poe. It narrates the story of a man who is visited one night by a raven. It was first published in the New York Evening Mirror on January 29, 1845.

The poem begins with the protagonist, grieving over the loss of his love, Lenore. It is a gloomy midnight in December. A knocking sound wakes him up while he is reading and about to fall asleep. He decides to ignore it. He tries to calm down by telling himself twice that the tapping noise is only the sound of a visitor knocking on his door and nothing more. Addressing the unseen visitor as 'Sir' or 'Madame,' he offers apologies and excuses for his sleepiness. He admits that the faint tapping at the door barely roused him from his slumber. He opens his door and finds only darkness there and nothing else. He thinks of Lenore, and when he says her name into the dark night, an echo replies, 'Lenore!'

The speaker returns to his room. He hears the knocking again. This time, it is stronger than before and appears to have come through the window. The speaker opens the window. A Raven flies into his room. The raven settles on the statue of "Pallas" above the chamber door.

*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;*

The narrator asks the Raven's name, and it responds 'Nevermore.'

Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"
Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

He considers that the Raven may leave him, just like his friends and loved ones did, and the Raven replies, 'Nevermore.' The narrator then sits directly in front of the bird, trying to understand what 'Nevermore' means. The narrator assumes that the raven only knows one word, 'nevermore,' learned from its previous owner. He feels that the previous owner must have suffered a lot, so the raven repeats 'nevermore' alone.

The speaker, seated on a velvet cushion in the centre of the room, notices the shimmering pillow and is saddened by the absence of Lenore. He detects a powerful perfume and attributes it to the angels. Believing it's God's message to forget Lenore, he compares it to nepenthe, a drug for grief.

*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 nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore;

The raven again repeats the phrase 'nevermore'. The narrator becomes angry. He questions about the bird's origin and contemplates if it was sent by Satan. Despite his yelling, the bird remains calm. He describes his haunted home and asks about future peace, to which the raven responds, 'Nevermore.' He accuses the bird of being a prophet and demon, and asks if

he will be able to see Lenore again. The raven's "nevermore" confirms his fears. He demands that the bird leave because he is unwilling to face his sorrow. The raven perches on Pallas' statue; its gaze haunting. The lamp's light casts a shadow that is soul-binding and binds him to despair.

*And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor
Shall be lifted—nevermore!*

The raven serves as a metaphor for the narrator's overwhelming grief and sorrow caused by the loss of his beloved Lenore. Its dark presence mirrors the heaviness of the narrator's heart and the void left by her absence. The raven, a bird commonly linked to death and the afterlife, represents the theme of mortality. Its appearance in the poem suggests a connection to the mysteries of death and the inevitability of mortality. The raven's presence is a sign of doom, indicating the narrator's tragic fate.

The refrain 'nevermore' emphasizes the sense of hopelessness and impending doom that pervades the poem. The narrator's deep feeling of loneliness and isolation is highlighted by the raven's solitary nature. The presence of it in the narrator's chamber intensifies his feelings of despair and intensifies the eerie atmosphere of the poem.

The raven is seen as a symbol of wisdom and knowledge. The poem's complexity is heightened by the raven's ability to speak and its mysterious presence. The raven symbolizes the interwoven themes of grief, mortality, doom, loneliness, and wisdom, enriching the poem with layers of symbolism and meaning.

The Raven by Edgar Allan Poe is a timeless masterpiece that continues to captivate readers with its haunting beauty and profound themes. Through vivid imagery, rich symbolism, and rhythmic language, Poe creates an atmosphere of melancholy and suspense.

The poem explores the depths of human emotion, exploring themes of grief, loss, loneliness, and the inevitability of mortality. The interaction between the narrator and the mysterious raven serves as a poignant allegory for the human condition, highlighting the struggle to find meaning and understanding in the face of despair and existential uncertainty.

Poe's masterful use of repetition, particularly with the word 'nevermore,' adds to the poem's eerie ambiance and reinforces its themes of inevitability and doom. The Raven is a haunting exploration of the human psyche, offering readers a glimpse into the darkest corners of the soul.