

“The Raven”

Edgar Allan Poe

Annotation Key

Details/Questions

- Imagery
- Denotation
- Connotation
- Figurative Language
- Syntax

Text	Sample Annotations
<p>[1] 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.</p> <p>[5] “’Tis some visitor,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door— Only this and nothing more.”</p> <p>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</p> <p>[10] From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore— For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore— Nameless here forevermore.</p> <p>And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain</p>	<p>The speaker speaks in past tense. Dreary: dull, dark, somber Lore: tales, stories Mood: dreamy, contemplative, lethargic The narrator is reading a book and almost falling asleep when he hears a knock.</p> <p>It is nighttime in December, and the fire is burning out. Mood: mysterious, eerie, ominous</p> <p>The narrator wishes for morning; he has been reading to try to forget about a “lost” Lenore. A lover, perhaps?</p> <p>SOUND: The rustling creates a feeling that someone/thing might be coming in.</p>

Thrilled me—filled me with **fantastic terrors** never felt before;

[15] So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
“’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,

[20] “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.

[25] **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!”—

[30] 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—

The purple curtains are blowing in the wind, and the narrator feels a sense of terror.

Mood: nervous, frightened

He repeats that is simply a visitor at his door, but who would come at this hour?

The narrator calls out to the “visitor”—there is no one there.

SIGHT: The absence of light creates a feeling of isolation.

Mood: fatalistic, foreboding

The narrator begins to whisper his lost lover’s name.

SOUND: He hears his echo which creates a mood of apprehension.

He hears the tapping again and determines that it is coming from the window. He thinks it might be the wind.

[35] 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;

[40] But, with **mien** of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door—

Perched upon a **bust of Pallas** just above my chamber door—
 Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird **beguiling** **my sad fancy into smiling**,

By the grave and stern **decorum** of the countenance it wore,

[45] "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,

[50] 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."

He opens the window, and in walks an old raven.

The raven lands on a statue of Athena and says nothing—but do ravens usually speak?

Athena is the goddess of wisdom. This bird is "taking over" his mind. Or, maybe he's trying to say the raven is wise?

Beguiling: charm someone in a tricky way

Mood: relieved, awed

Decorum: look, manners

The narrator then asks the raven's name. The raven responds "Nevermore."

Pluto is the other name for Hades, the god of the underworld. The narrator is implying that the black bird has come from hell.

The narrator is surprised to hear the raven speak and ponders that no other human has ever had this particular experience.

[55] 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.”

[60] 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—

[65] Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore
Of ‘Never—nevermore’.”

But the Raven still beguiling all my 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

[70] 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;

Placid: calm, peaceful

The raven says that other word over and over, and the narrator comments that the bird will leave him like all of his other friends have done.

Mood: dejected, unstable

Then the narrator reasons that maybe “nevermore” is the only word that the raven knows.

Dirges: sad song like at a funeral

The narrator pulls his chair in front of the bird and wonders what the bird could possibly mean.

The repetition of the “g” sound creates a stuttering effect.

He thinks again about how he will never see Lenore again.

[75] 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!

SIGHT: the light is soft just as the cushion is soft, but these normally positive things only remind him of lost love.

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer

[80] 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;
 Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!"
 Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

SMELL: the narrator imagines that he smells incense floating in the air; this gives the narrative an other-worldly feel.

Respite: rest or peace
Nepenthe: medicine for forgetting

The mood shifts again and becomes increasingly dark and foreboding.

[85] "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 Gilead?—tell me—tell me, I implore!"

The narrator begins yelling at the bird, accusing the raven of being sent from hell to torture him.

When he asks about balm in Gilead, he wants to know if he will ever have peace from torment.

[90] Quoth the Raven "Nevermore."

The sentences begin to have a lot of dashes and there is a shift. The narrator then begins a series of questions (even though he knows what the answer will be) and becomes increasingly upset by the raven's replies. He asks if he will

"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,
 It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
 [95] 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!

[100] 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;

[105] 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!

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ever see Lenore again.

SIGHT: the bird has black feathers; black birds usually bring bad omens

Fiend: demon

Tempest: violent storm

The directs the raven to leave him and return from the hell from which he came. The raven does not.

The speaker shifts to present tense

The raven remains on the bust even today. Something that is tormenting him won't leave him alone. It is a constant reminder of something negative.

Mood: desolate, hellish