Edgar Allan Poe Biography

Edgar Allan Poe

Long before there were chainsaw massacre movies or television detectives, there was Edgar Allan Poe. Poe was one of the most influential writers of his time. His influence is still apparent today. He wrote what is considered to be the first detective novel ever written. He was also a poet. He believed that the words of his poems should create a musical feeling for the reader. His short stories and poetry are still read all over the world.

Poe was the only son of an actor father and an actor mother. He was born on January 19, 1809, in Boston, Massachusetts. His father deserted his mother before he was even born. His mother died before his third birthday. He was taken in by a wealthy tobacco merchant from Richmond, Virginia. The man's name was John Allan. John Allan insisted that Edgar be baptized with the name Edgar Allan Poe. You might see Poe's middle name spelled Allen, but it should be Allan after John Allan.

Edgar led a pleasant early life with the Allans. He even studied in England for five years when he was young. He entered the University of Virginia in 1826. He soon found that college life was not for him and dropped out. His adopted father cut off all ties with him because of this. Edgar tried to support himself in many ways. Gambling was not one of his successful endeavors. He got himself deeply in debt. Poe decided to join the army to escape his debts. He used the name Edgar A. Perry while in the army.

Poe wrote his first book while serving in the army. It was a collection of poems called *Tamarmane and Other Poems*. After two years in the army, Poe reconciled with John Allan. Mr. Allan arranged for Edgar to be appointed to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Poe didn't like the academy and purposely broke enough rules to be dismissed from the school. That was the last time Poe saw or heard from John Allan.

The one good thing which came from Poe's stint at West Point was his second attempt at writing a book of poems. His fellow cadets took up a collection and gave it to Poe. They asked him to use it to pay to have his poems published.

Poe left Virginia and moved to Baltimore, Maryland. He moved in with his widowed aunt and her daughter, Virginia. He needed to support himself, so he got a job writing fiction and editing for a literary magazine. In 1836 he married his cousin Virginia. The fact that she was his cousin was strange enough. The fact that she was only thirteen years old was even stranger.

Poe and his new wife moved to Philadelphia in hopes of finding better circumstances. In 1839, Poe published two of his first signature mind twisting stories, *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*. He also became the assistant editor of another magazine.

In 1842, Virginia became ill with a disease common to the time, tuberculosis. Poe moved her back to New York. He eventually became the editor of the *Broadway Journal*. The stress of Virginia's illness caused Poe to succumb to bouts of drinking. Some say that his bouts of depression led to some of his best works. In 1845, Poe published what is arguably his most famous poem, *The Raven*. Perhaps you've heard parts of it before. It begins:

*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 someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.*
*"Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door;*
*Only this, and nothing more."*
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Edgar Allan Poe edited a magazine that closed down in 1846. He moved to Virginia to a cottage in the Bronx in New York City. It was here that Virginia died in 1847. After her death, Poe could not control his drinking or depression. His moods became darker, which was witnessed in his writing. Poe used mind tricks to highlight his mysteries. He used language in his poetry which dug into the soul of the reader.

The rest of Poe's life was not happy. He tried suicide but failed. He tried to rekindle a romance with an old flame. That also failed. In October of 1849, Poe was found lying on a street in Baltimore. He was disoriented, delirious, and not even wearing his own clothes. He was taken to a nearby hospital. He died there four days later. The cause of Poe's death was never known. Some say it was from alcohol abuse. The doctor who attended him said he found no signs of alcohol on Poe. Some say he died of rabies. Some say it was other diseases that there were no tests for. His cause of death will remain a mystery.

It is sad to say that most of what people believe about Edgar Allan Poe was written by a man named Griswold who wrote Poe's obituary. It is hard to say whether Griswold's stories of Poe's wild and violent behavior are true or not. It seems that it was later found that Poe had criticized some of Griswold's early works in literary magazines. Many people feel Griswold's less than flattering biography of Poe was a form of revenge. Yet, many people believed him.

Poe was a very complex man. Read The Pit and the Pendulum or The Tell Tale Heart if you want to have your heart racing. Read Annabelle Lee or The Bells if you want to have the words of the poem roll off your tongue like musical notes. Poe's tortured soul is on full display in his work.

Questions

1. Edgar Allan Poe wrote poems and stories.  
   A. True  
   B. False

2. Where did the young Poe call home?  
   A. New York  
   B. Virginia  
   C. Baltimore  
   D. Philadelphia

3. What did Poe want the reader to hear in his poems?  
   A. The music of the words  
   B. The beat  
   C. The story  
   D. The idea

4. What event sent Poe "over the edge" into depression?  
   A. His wife died.  
   B. He lost his job.  
   C. He moved away.  
   D. His book was rejected.

5. According to the article, how did Poe die?  
   A. He had a brain aneurysm.  
   B. No one knows for sure.  
   C. He had tuberculosis.  
   D. He had a heart attack.

6. How did Poe get out of attending West Point?

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A short biography of 19th century American poet, horror and detective fiction author, Edgar Allan Poe, written for this web site by Robert Giordano.

John Allan was a successful merchant, so Edgar grew up in good surroundings and went to good schools. When Poe was 6, he went to school in England for 5 years. He learned Latin and French, as well as math and history. He later returned to school in America and continued his studies. Edgar Allan went to the University of Virginia in 1826. He was 17. Even though John Allan had plenty of money, he only gave Edgar about a third of what he needed. Although Edgar had done well in Latin and French, he started to drink heavily and quickly became in debt. He had to quit school less than a year later. P... Edgar Allan Poe was an American writer, poet, critic and editor best known for evocative short stories and poems that captured the imagination and interest of readers around the world. His imaginative storytelling and tales of mystery and horror gave birth to the modern detective story. Many of Poe's works, including The Tell-Tale Heart and The Fall of the House of Usher, became literary classics. Download biography's Edgar Allan Poe fact card.

Short Stories. In late 1830s, Poe published Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque, a collection of short stories.

Biography. Edgar Allen Poe was an American author, poet, editor and literary critic, considered part of the American Romantic Movement. Best known for his tales of mystery and the macabre, Poe was one of the earliest American practitioners of the short story and is considered the inventor of the detective fiction genre. He is further credited with contributing to the emerging genre of science fiction. He was the first well-known American writer to try to earn a living through writing alone, resulting in a financially difficult life and career. Early Life. The day Edgar Allan Poe was buried, a long obituary appeared in the New York Tribune signed "Ludwig". It was soon published throughout the country. The piece began, "Edgar Allan Poe is dead. He died in Baltimore the day before yesterday. Edgar Allan Poe was an American author, poet, editor and literary critic, who was also associated with the American Romantic Movement. Check out this biography to know about his childhood, family life, achievements and fun facts about his life. Who was Edgar Allan Poe? Edgar Allan Poe was an American writer, poet, editor, and literary critic. Poe was also associated with the American Romantic Movement.