

”the cask of
amontillado” by edgar
allen poe essay
sample



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BUSTER**

Throughout Edgar Allen Poe's short story, a sense of irony is present, with Montresor and the reader knowing of the plan for revenge, and with Fortunato blissfully unaware; this sense of irony colludes with the ever-descending setting, which deepens into a macabre vision of the underground tomb where Montresor's ancestors are buried. As the dual tones of macabre terror and ironic humor continue to create narrative tension, the reader is left wondering just how serious will be the revenge that Montresor expects to exact against his enemy. If he means to simply humiliate the man, why then the sense of foreboding doom and lethality that pervades Montresor's narrative? And if Montresor means to kill his enemy, what exactly is the purpose of these moments of ironic humor?

The most incisive irony of the story occurs near the denouement. Fortunato, now thoroughly drunk (on both wine and vanity) refuses to make note of the innumerable clues: including the bones, the trowel, and Montresor's confession that his family motto is " Nemo me impune lacessit," and due to his oblivious nature, acts out the steps of his own undoing. In fact, it is by his own actions that Fortunato's murder is accomplished.

At the story's close, humor and irony turn fully to a macabre sense.

However, the arc of Poe's story shows that all of the comedy and irony that have passed before are in fact subservient to the elements of terror and horror which form the story's backbone. In this way, Poe uses humor to intensify the horrific impact of his tale, disarming the reader by way of comic relief, and planting the final seed of terror firmly in their imaginations.