

The cask of amontillado essay

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



The 'Cask of Amontillado' is a literary classic story, which can pass as an ordinary narrative piece of literature to the average ordinary reader. To readers with a critical eye however, the figurative speech, and the hyperbole contained in the story cannot go unnoticed.

Irony - Montresor, who is committed to punishing a perceived wrong, is also committed to carrying out a wrong without being punished for it. By his own admission, Montresor states that "a wrong is unredressed when retribution overtakes its redresser" (Poe 3).

As such, Montresor states that he would punish the person who inflicted him with injuries, because to him, the wrongs committed against him were worthy of punishment. Ironically, though, Montresor states that he would be avenging insults with death, since he perceived that as the ultimate revenge. Unfortunately, Fortunato seems not to have suffered the pain of dying, as Montresor would have liked.

Paradox - Montresor triggers a paradox by juxtaposing in the same sentence the phrase "punish with impunity," two words that are ordinarily antithetical. As human nature would have it, people are often quicker to see weaknesses in other while ignoring their more apparent flaws. As such, Montresor finds his companion's "transgression" worthy of the cruelest death, and believes that his cause is so right that he deserves to get away with it.

Sarcasm - In human speech, very few styles of expression are as cruel as sarcasm. Although in this case Fortunato is ignorant of the sarcasm, Montresor is nevertheless invoking it when he says, "my dear Fortunato, you

are luckily met” (Poe 3). It is as if Montresor, if he were understood for his true intentions, were saying, ‘ It is your ill-luck that you have met me today’.

It is often the cruelest hearts that fashion the most effective sarcasms: sarcasms so sharp-edged that they slice through their target audience’s ears without their ever getting to understand their full true meaning. The cruelty resident in Montresor’s dark mind is exhibited in his solitary musing: “ I was so pleased to see him that I thought I never should have done wringing his hands” (Poe 3).

Oxymoron - Montresor engages in oxymoronic speech by describing the attendant’s abandonment of their duties at his palazzo as “ making merry in honor of the time” (Poe 4). This was in direct disregard for his instructions to them not to leave the house at all while he is away.

Of course, there is the implication that he knew beforehand what they would do. By the attendants behaving just as he had anticipated, Montresor gets his perfect alibi. To protect themselves from the charge of absconding duty, they would swear that he had been on a journey and had not at all returned that whole day.

Hyperbole - There is a sense of this in Fortunato’s statement that he drinks to “ the buried that repose around us” (Poe 5). Dead bodies may be immobile but as to whether they are at rest, is a matter of conjecture.

Poe’s tale can be interpreted as an allegory of the pain, death, and the senselessness of vengeance. To reflect all the three identified themes, Poe (knowingly or unknowingly) divided his story into three parts. In the first

part, Montresor is infuriated by what he perceives as an insult from Fortunato.

As a result, he vows to inflict vengeance on Fortunato. This part of the story symbolizes people's desire to avenge for the wrongs committed against them, and to inflict pain on the people who wrong them. As reflected in the conclusion of Poe's tale, while inflicting pain on a person may seem like the perfect vengeance, it does not fetch as much pleasure as the avenger would like to.

The tale also makes an attempt to convince readers that death, is not necessarily a painful or even bitter experience to those who are dead or dying. This is symbolized by what sounds like Fortunato's laughter when he finally realizes his fate. Poe also hints at the emptiness of revenge through Montresor's description of his feeling as "sick" soon as he realized he had just killed Fortunato.

The second part of Poe's tale is apparent when Montresor lures Fortunato underground, and gets him drunk. The third part of the tale on the other hand is reflected in the long journey that two take, only for Montresor to encourage Fortunato into reaching "the extremity of the niche" (Poe 7), where he found iron staples hindering his progress further into the crypt.

Here, Montresor chained Fortunato up, ready to avenge the perceived wrongs committed against him. His vengeance was only pleasurable for a short period, because Fortunato's cry only lasted several minutes. At the

end, Fortunato made fun of his tormentor, and upon his death Montresor admits that his “ heart grew sick” (Poe 8).

Poe, Edgar Allan. The Cask of Amontillado. Feedbooks, n. d. Web.