

Edgar allan poe: his life and legacy

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Edgar Allan Poe was an American author of short stories, a poet, a literary critic, and an editor. Poe was alive during the romantic era which was evident in his writing, and he was one of the first gothic writers of his time. He told dark tales that often included a dead or sickly woman and a tormented male figure.

It is believed that Poe's childhood and relationships to women throughout his life had a big impact on his writing. The women in Poe's family were often sickly and many of them passed away without living a full lifespan.

Poe was born on January 19th, 1809 in Boston, Massachusetts. His birth parents, Elizabeth Eliza Poe and David Poe Jr., were two professional actors. His family moved to New York City in the summer of 1809. Poe was the second child, William Poe was the older son and was two years older than Poe. Poe's mother was far more successful than his father, and David spent most of his acting career in the shadows while Eliza was in the spotlight. This angered David, who was an alcoholic, and caused him to leave her and his acting career behind shortly after the birth of Edgar. Eliza had one more child, a girl by the name of Rosalie Poe who's father is uncertain, but Poe believed she was his full sister and the daughter of David (Edgar Allan Poe).

Edgar's aunt and David's sister Maria Poe Clemm, didn't believe that Rosalie was the daughter of David or Eliza. When Rosalie was a child, a wealthy man from Richmond, Virginia left \$2, 000 towards Rosalie's upbringing, she was the only person who he left that much money for. Rosalie Poe was described as backwards and was believed to be mentally retarded. She was separated from Poe around the age of 1 and was adopted by Mr. and Mrs. Mackenzie

and didn't develop mentally past the age of 12. Rosalie wasn't in contact with Edgar during the beginning of her life and was unaware of her siblings. Later in her life she contacted her blood relatives although Poe was said to have neglected her. He would visit her from time to time and she would cling on to him, he was almost disgusted by her and would constantly tease her. After the civil war, she started selling pictures of Edgar Allan Poe and ordinary household items saying they belonged to Poe. She died in a charity home in 1874 and her tombstone states she was born in 1812, a year after Eliza's death (Meyers).

In 1811, the Poe family was at a boarding house in Richmond, Virginia for one of Eliza's performances. Eliza started spitting up blood and showing the first signs of tuberculosis. Her performances became less and less frequent in 1811 until they stopped completely, her last performance being October 11, 1811. Mr. And Mrs. Usher, Eliza's close friends who also acted with her, took care of her children as her illness grew worse and many people in Richmond helped as well. The Richmond Theatre even hosted a benefit performance for her on November 29, 1811 (Meyers). Shortly after, Elizabeth Poe died on December 8, 1811 of what was commonly believed to be tuberculosis. Her three kids were split up and Edgar Allan Poe was the only one of the three to not be formally adopted (Edgar Allan Poe).

Poe was put into foster care in December of 1811 and was raised as a foster child by John and Frances Allan the rest of his childhood. John Allan was a successful tobacco exporter and he sent Poe to the best boarding schools. Poe excelled as a student and continued his education Poe at University of

Virginia . There he struggled with money due to his gambling addiction, using the money that his foster-father was giving him for his tuition. As a result, his relationship with John Allan suffered (Edgar Allan Poe).

Poe was never adopted by the Allans, but he thought of Frances as a mother and even referred to her as Ma. Frances couldn't have children and took Poe in as her own even though he legally wasn't her son. Frances was very ill and grew more and more sickly while Poe was away at Fort Monroe in Virginia where Poe had been promoted to Sergeant-Major. While he was at Fort Monroe, Poe would constantly write to John Allan asking for updates about his foster mothers medical health but John was very insensitive to Poe and often didn't write back and when he did he gave very little detail. We are still unsure if Poe knew how severe her illness had gotten. The day Frances Allan passed away, Poe was present at Fort Monroe and seemed as if he didn't know about her passing. Once he finally went home, he was a day too late for her funeral and was devastated. After her death, Poe grew closer to John Allan and started to call him Pa rather than Sir, but soon enough John realized that Poe was an adult and didn't need a foster father anymore (Meyers).

After Poe left the military, he moved in with Maria Poe Clemm, his father's sister, and her daughter, Virginia Eliza Clemm in May of 1831. Maria's husband had recently died and she was struggling to support her family. Maria loved Poe and acted like a mother to him. Poe grew closer to Maria than he had to anyone in his entire life. Poe even wrote the sonnet To My Mother about Maria Clemm (Montague). While living with the Clemms, Poe

grew closer to Virginia and fell in love with her. Poe's cousin a Neilson Poe found out that Poe had the intention to marry Virginia and asked her to live with him to try to sway her away from marrying her first-cousin, offering material comfort and financial support to both Virginia and Maria. Poe found out about this and sent Maria a very personal letter confessing his deep love for Virginia and begging Maria to let Virginia decide for herself to marry him or not. In the letter he even asked if Virginia and Maria still loved him and said that he would have nothing left to live for if they didn't. The Clemms decided against the support from Neilson and remained loyal to Poe, leaving their fate in his hands (Meyers).

Poe spent his time and money molding Virginia into the type of woman he wanted to marry and he spent most of his salary on her education. Poe even became her tutor once while he wasn't making enough money to send her to school. Virginia became a successful singer and musician. Poe and Virginia got married when Poe was 26 and Virginia was 13, although on the legal documents of their marriage they listed her as 21. They honeymooned in Petersburg, Virginia. Virginia was very sick which made it hard for any sexual relations to occur between her and Poe, although Poe stated in one of his letters that their sexlife was normal. Others said their relationship was more like that of siblings than of a married couple. Poe and Virginia moved around often because of on Poe's work (Meyers).

Virginia grew more ill from tuberculosis in 1846 and Poe was reminded of his mother's death. Virginia's illness was hopeless at this point and Poe knew it. He contributed even more of his time to her and stopped publishing leaving

him without friends or money. On her deathbed, Virginia begged Maria to never leave Poe's side and to look after him after she died (Meyers). Virginia passed away on January 30, 1847 at age 24, which was the same age that Poe's mother and brother died, both of tuberculosis. Virginia's death influenced Poe's writing and many of the stories he wrote after her death involved young women dying, including *The Raven*, *Annabel Lee*, and *Ligeia* (Montague).

After Virginia's death, Maria kept her promise to her daughter and took care of Poe. They grew even closer than they were before the death of Virginia, Maria now replacing the role of his wife as well as his mother. Maria wrote that Poe never liked to be alone and that she would walk with him in their garden and would stay with him in his study while he wrote (Montague). Poe would kiss her before bed every night and would call her Mother. Poe had several other lovers as he tried to fill the gap in his heart that Virginia's death had left, but he never married again. Poe died on October 7, 1849, the details of his death are still unclear. Maria and Rosalie were the only women in Poe's family to outlive him, and Maria was the only woman who didn't struggle with an illness or disability during Poe's lifetime, other than getting weaker from aging, but she did suffer from inflammation of the lungs after his death (Meyers).

Poe was very disturbed and used his writing as an outlet for his troubles in life. Many of these troubles were rooted from his need for a maternal figure and the death of the love of his life. His stories grew darker as he aged and as he continued to lose his loved ones. The sicknesses and eventual deaths

of the women that were related to him and the women he loved tormented him, but also inspired his literary works that remain famous today.