

A comparison of the
black cat by edgar
allan poe and the cat
from hell by
stephen...



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Depicted in the acclaimed short story “ The Black Cat” (1843) by master of macabre, Edgar Allan Poe and “ The Cat From Hell” (1977) by contemporary horror brilliance, Stephen King is a composition of suspense strategies, which engenders fear and curiosity that allows authors to manipulate their audience. Both pieces were initially published in an American magazine, Poe’s in an issue of the United States Saturday Post during the Romanticism and King’s in Post-Modernism Cavalier. However, despite the fact these tales give the impression of being abundantly alike in terms of feline revenge, the application of techniques in “ The Black Cat” vastly differs from that of “ The Cat From Hell” as a result of the authors’ contrasting background and respective time period.

To begin with, both tales incorporate an unusual situation where in a cat is ‘ responsible’ for vengeance. King and Poe are both seen to favor descriptive language and personification to build a visual image of his characters and furthermore hint its paranormal symbolism. An instance would be from the latter’s tale where the speaker accuses the cat of plotting murder against him, “ The cat,-, nearly [threw] me headlong.” In King’s piece, the speaker uses descriptive language in “ Its face was an even split: half black, half white.” With context of his Post-Modernism period, this is a plausible reference to how the cat’s appearance mirrors the balance of the scale of justice.

Another unassailable instance of resemblance is that both stories render an unusual character. Both narratives use characterization to cast a personality that is unreliable, developing a sense of uncertainty and confusion in the audience. Poe’s speaker confesses how his attitude had completely

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aggravated through fiend alcohol addiction. In a 1977 publication (“Grappling with the Monster”), author T. S Arthur states how alcohol was deemed an anathema thus preventing individuals from thinking lucidly in the mid-19th century. Similarly, King’s Drogan- who deems the cat demonic- is also head of the biggest drug company in the fictional world. His corporation supplies Tri-Dormal-phenobarbin, which allegedly contains “ mild hallucinogen” and is “ habit-forming”. This suggests that Drogan might have been consuming his own goods and therefore hallucinating everything.

Despite these patent similarities, the two seemingly same tales of horror in fact share a handful of pivotal differences.

One evident difference is the respective authors’ take on an unusual setting. In “ The Black Cat”, Poe uses limited to no imagery with regards of communicating the setting except its darkness. He is well aware that ambiguity can manipulate the audience into discomfort as information is being withheld. On the other hand, King extensively incorporates visual, tactile and auditory imagery majorly using descriptive language to build a vivid illustration of a bleak and abandoned setting. The contrast may be a consequence of their respective eras. As a part of Romanticism, Poe’s stylistic choices include less direct, poetic imagination and romantic irony to remain prosaic. Post-Modernism horror on the contrary, relies on graphic descriptions in order to level with animation and films.

Another dissimilarity that is present is the application of ironic devices.

Although both tales convey situational irony, “ The Black Cat” manifests duality in harming the pet (Pluto) the speaker once claimed to be his “

favorite pet and playmate". On the other hand, King's piece depicts the element of surprise as a domestic cat annihilates a professional hit man. With both authors coming from a relatively broken home with the absence of a father figure, the human-feline relationship that occurs in the story perhaps is how Poe and King perceive and approaches their past relationships with their family.

A final difference encountered within the stories is the implementation of foreshadowing. In Poe's piece, the gallows formed from the white section of the second cat's fur foreshadows the speaker's death; hung as a consequence of murdering his wife. He takes this sign seriously and does not let his guard down. On the other hand, King's character, Halston, felt that cats were designed specifically as "killing machines" and were the "hitters of the animal world" but decides to neglect this thought, preferring to think logically. This eventually leads to his death. Poe's isolation-triggered psychological deprivation in his childhood is a possible inspiration of the paranoia seen in his speaker. As for King, he is seen to be more inclined to characters that the general audience would relate to in order to increase sales, as that is how he makes a living.

On the surface, techniques these influential authors used to build suspense in stories "The Black Cat" and "The Cat From Hell" are akin to one another, but scrutinized, they share numerous contrasting elements under the circumstances of their respective context and period. Although both stories apply likewise unusual situations and characters, Poe's implementation of unusual settings, ironic devices and foreshadowing distinguishes itself from that of Stephen King's. Nevertheless, both short stories display a plethora of <https://assignbuster.com/a-comparison-of-the-black-cat-by-edgar-allan-poe-and-the-cat-from-hell-by-stephen-king/>

valid devices and techniques that encapsulates the ideas and environment of two distinct yet equally legendary macabre geniuses.