

# Description of loss in the black cat

[Literature](#), [Books](#)



## **Poe's Interpretation of Loss**

“ The Black Cat” by Edgar Allan Poe is a very dark and violent short story that contains many different types of loss. The story is narrated by the main character as we observe him sharing events from his past that eventually lead to his demise. Reading from the main characters’ point of view, we are able to grasp a deeper insight into his eventual unstable mind. There are several instances that due to his loss of mental state, consequently result in the loss of people and possessions close to him. It all starts when he abuses and kills his favorite pet, a black cat called Pluto. Then later that night, he loses his house and all of its possessions in an unexplainable house fire. Then lastly, he murders his innocent wife. The combination of these events were a direct result of him losing his mind. Therefore, not only does he physically lose his cat, house, and wife, but he also loses his emotional state of mind.

From the very beginning the narrator reveals to the readers certain events that have occurred in the past that “ have terrified, have tortured, have destroyed” him (Poe 395). Immediately, we can see that due to the severity of these events, he has changed. Overtime, he has become this unrecognizable person, causing him to lose his old, normal identity.

His caring character can also be seen in his love for animals. Together with his wife, they own many different pets, including a black cat called Pluto. He describes his relationship with Pluto to be very affectionate as they adored each other’s company. However, as the story progresses, we begin to see a change in the narrator as he becomes more moody and ill-tempered. He also

mentions alcohol to also play a factor in his declining mental state. When the narrator returns from a drunken night out, he tries to pick up a scared Pluto, and in doing so Pluto scratches him. In retaliation, the narrator cuts one of Pluto's eyes out. As a result, the narrators "original soul seemed, at once, to take flight from [his] body; and a more fiendish malevolence, gin-natured, thrilled every fiber of [his] frame" (Poe 696). This horrifying reaction to Pluto's harmless scratch is not only the beginning of the narrators many terrible acts, but also the start of his mental deterioration.

As the story continues, the narrator's actions become increasingly terrible. After his cat recovered from his eye incident, the narrator commits the insidious act of killing him, what makes this ever more disturbing is that the narrator acknowledges that the cat didn't deserve this cruel end to his life. Even though the narrator knows that what he is doing is wrong, he still continued on with killing innocent Pluto. Again, this shows how mentally unstable the narrator has become as he clearly has lost the ability to care for others.

Another form of loss that he suffers is on the same day he killed his cat, his house burns down. This leaves him and his wife homeless with all their possessions lost in the fire. Strangely, only one wall still stood up after the fire. This wall contained a slightly raised image of a gigantic cat with a rope around its neck. Seeking this image on the wall troubles the narrator as he believe it's related to the incident with Pluto. As it is not how the fire started, one could say the narrator lost his house as a result of karma for killing his cat.

After the events of the house fire, the narrator finds and befriends another black cat on a drunken night out. This cat looks very similar to Pluto, but it initially doesn't bother the narrator as he takes the cat home with him. The next day however, the narrator notices this cat only has one eye just like Pluto. Seeing this similarity between this cat and Pluto causes the narrator to avoid it as much as he could as it reminded him of the terrible things he did to Pluto. However, the cat would never leave the narrators side, constantly following him around and pining for his affection. One day, the narrator along with his wife head down to the cellar. The cat also followed them, and out of pure frustration towards this new cat, the narrator picks up an axe and swings it towards the cat in an attempt to kill it. His wife tries to stop him but in doing so, enrages the narrator even more as he then swings the axe at her, ultimately killing her. His reaction to what he had just committed again reiterates how unstable his mind is, as his first thought after he murders her is to conceal his wife's body. A typical, normal reaction would show at least some sort of remorse, but as we saw earlier in the incident with Pluto, he lost that ability to feel those types of emotions. Instead, "evil thoughts became [his] sole intimates, the darkest and most evil thoughts" (Poe 699).

Analyzing these terrible events that were caused by the narrator, one can see how he loses his mental state. As the buildup of these events continued to result in crueler outcomes, he also gradually loses his mentality with each event. In the end, it results in the narrator losing his mind altogether. He also loses his identity and who he once was because before all of these events, he was said to be a caring and gentle person. And lastly, he loses everyone

and everything in his life as his wife and cat are murdered and his house along with all of his possessions burnt down in a fire.