

# Edgar allen poe argumentative essay



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Watts English Composition II May 2, 2008 Death-Despair-Revenge: A Recipe for a Good Drama “ Scorching my seared heart with a pain, not hell shall make me fear again. ” Edgar Allan Poe, Tamerlane, Part II Death, despair, and revenge, these three words form a treacherous triangle to any reader who dare enter the mind of Edgar Allen Poe. In many of his works these expressions seem to form a reoccurring theme. Comparing the works “ The Mask of the Red Death” and “ The Cask of Amontillado”, we will discuss these themes while analyzing the method behind Poe’s madness. In much of Poe’s Work, the presence of revenge and death seem to precede each other. In both stories, if someone dies, then revenge follows.

If someone commits revenge, death seems to find that person. With the death of the commoners in “ The Masque of the Red Death”, revenge seems to follow the prince who abandoned them. When Fortunato betrays Montresor in “ The Cask of Amontillado”, death follows shortly after. In the end of the stories the characters come full circle with fate, whether it fortune or misfortune. In the story “ The Cask of Amontillado”, Edgar Allen Poe tells the story of Montresor and Fortunato. This story has a much lighter mood to it, but from the beginning there is some tension between Fortunato and Montresor.

The story its self has a Vargas 2 rushed tone and you are held on the edge by the suspense that something dark could happen at anytime. There are hints throughout the storyline that give innuendos that there is revenge in the near future. The dreary tone of death looms in the air as the two

characters interact with one another. Montresor, although he is all smiles in front of Fortunato, is planning the demise of his foe in his head. Fortunato mistreats Montresor and this is why he has such a hatred for the man. The story seems to take place at night.

The two men, Fortunato and Montresor, are together. Fortunato seems very condescending towards Montresor. It seems as if Fortunato is sick and Montresor is taking care of him. Although Montresor is taking care of him and seems as if he cares about the health of his companion, his intentions are deceiving, and he is planning the death of Fortunato. Montresor maps out his revenge with much care.

He waits for the right moment to carry it out. He waits until he spots a weakness. Fortunato's love for wine was the perfect thing and Montresor plays right along with Fortunato's vanity to ensure that he will not notice anything. Montresor will stop at nothing to see the end of the person who has mistreated him; he will see his plan out until the end. Montresor baits Fortunato by telling him that he has a very rare bottle of wine called Amontillado. He wants Fortunato's advice to see if it's the real deal.

They wander underground into the catacombs, where Fortunato will soon meet his fate. Montresor even reconsiders killing his fellow nobleman and suggests that they go back up. This seems that he may have had cold feet or even a change of heart. Either way, Montresor is determined to find out if this is truly a wine of value. Vargas 3 The irony of the story happens as they walk through the tombs, when Montresor mentions his family coat of arms,

which a golden foot is crushing a snake whose fangs are in the heel of the foot.

Underneath the crest is the motto *Nemo me impune lacessit*, which means no one strikes me with impunity. When they finally to the spot where the wine is held, Montresor insists that Fortunato go first. It is at that time that Montresor chains his drunken friend to the wall and his plans are solidified. As soon a time permits, Montresor chains Fortunato to the wall before he sobers up. It is at this point that Montresor turns to repairing the hole in the wall in which they entered, sealing Fortunato's tomb. Fortunato sobers up before his companion thought he would and tries to break free from his state, shaking the chains vigorously.

Montresor stops for a while to enjoy the screams of his victim, as a signal of his victory. Fortunato screams for help all the while Montresor is mocking him and saying that no one will be able to help him. The end of the story comes when Montresor admits to the murder being over 50 years ago and that his companion's bones are still attached in the chains they were set in. In remorseless words, Montresor utters *In pace requiescat*, May he rest in peace. From the beginning to the end, death and revenge set the tone of the story. Even though throughout the story Montresor offered Fortunato a way out, but murder was inevitable.

Poe is a master at death and revenge. He uses his gift to give the reader a story that is sure to leave them on the edge of their seats. In contrast to the fast paced tone of "The Cask of Amontillado", comes one with a much more dreadful tone. The story is of a prince and how he betrays his people in "The

Vargas 4 Masque of the Red Death”. It is set in a tone that is bleak and dreary from the very beginning.

Many of the ways in which Poe uses to describe the plot in this story involves the colors white, red, and black. With the scenes of death being painted using very descriptive words, the author portrays people being tormented by plague. Poe takes you to a place where the imagery is dark and the setting is even darker. The story begins with the background of the plague that is consuming a nation. While the people of the country are suffering, Prince Prospero runs from the disease by shutting himself and his court members, in his castle.

The author describes the palace as that of being luxurious and full of happiness. The Prince, abandoning his people to die from the horrible plague, directly rejects them while he lives well off in his palace under the blanket of comfort. Having a party while everyone else suffers shows the lack of concern that he possesses. As time passes, so does the mood of the party that the Prince is having. There is a direct symbol of time which is represented by an ebony clock. Every time the clock sounds it sends a feeling of discomfort throughout the palace.

The people are uneasy because although they are surrounded by strong walls, subconsciously they are thinking of the people outside who are dying of the plague. While the people are having a good time at the party, death shows its face. Not only as a symbol to the end of life, but as an actual character. Death is there to take the prince and his guests down to the

dreaded black chamber. In the end the people in the court met the same fate that the peasants did. Revenge is the prevalent theme at this point.

Death is a symbol of retribution that the prince and his people must face for leaving those Vargas 5 ho were less fortunate to die. By cheating death itself, the prince and his guest end up meeting their own misfortune. Death, despair, and revenge surround the plot of this story and teach us that no matter who you are or how much power you think you might have, no one can escape death. We are all victims of circumstance, and when it comes time for us to help our fellow man; we should not turn a cold shoulder, but instead help one another, lest we share the same fate that the prince and his followers did. In Asian cultures, this fate is known as karma.

Death seems to be the focus of these stories, despite the other the other things that are going on. Many of the details that go into the writings serve no other purpose than to lead the story into its pinnacle. When reading Poe's stories, you sense that there is an ever looming presence of revenge and that it will eventually end in death. Edgar Allen Poe brings us to the sense that no one is immune to death. Death comes in many forms, and for most characters, comes at the most inconvenient time. If someone isn't dying they are planning to kill someone else, which in turn might lead to their demise.

Revenge is another popular theme that Poe uses to lead up to the focus of the story. This helps to make the story dark and keep it interesting. Poe's writings often contain an implication of the supernatural. Revenge seems to be just as important to the story as death. His assessment in "The Masque of the Red Death", of the stranger at the ball to a shrouded corpse reminds

you of someone already dead. He also states that this figure appeared as Red Death, leading us to think that this person desiring revenge had died from this very cause.

The death of the nobility supports this explanation and idea of revenge.

Vargas 6 In “ The Cask of Amontillado”, revenge is offered more clearly and from a more conventional perspective. It is easier to visualize a living person desiring revenge for some real or alleged wrong done to them. We all want revenge at some point in our lives, although there aren’t many who are willing to take it to the extent of Montresor. However, it is easy to embrace such a feeling, and most have been exposed to such dark desires. Death, while suggested, does not have the same striking presence until they go down into the tombs.

However, it does seem unavoidable given the language of the narrator. In both “ The Masque of the Red Death” and “ The Cask of Amontillado”, Edgar Allen Poe tells us two very different stories with a similar theme. Poe seems quite comfortable writing about death in different situations, and recommends to us that death and revenge more often than not go hand in hand. This seems to be his most common theme in not only these two pieces, but in much of his work as well. He treats revenge more as a rule than exception, and that it is a normal part of life.

Poe seems to write easier about death than life, and he addresses it with more dexterity and technique than most writers. Vargas 7 Works Cited Poe, Edgar Allen. “ The Cask of Amontillado”. Literature: The Cask of Amontillado.

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