

# Psychological profile: roderick usher essay



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The Fall Of The House Of Usher is a morbid melancholy story, common to the style of Edgar Allan Poe, whose works frequently incorporated death.

The story is focused upon Roderick Usher, the last remaining heir to a wealthy family. Roderick was a hypochondriac who had an acuteness of touch, smell and taste, which could not handle bright lights. We are given an insight into the last days of Roderick through “ his friend” who has been invited to stay. In those last days, the narrator (Roderick’s friend) describes Roderick to the reader, depicting his many states, moods, and actions.

The story ends in the tragic death of Roderick and his twin sister Lady Madeline who, although is largely gone unmentioned throughout the story, plays a role in Roderick’s death. To get an insight into the Psychological mindset of Roderick, all one has to do is read the first two pages of the story. The clear description of the house of Usher, which is Metaphorically, linked directly to how Roderick is perceived throughout the story, given to us by the narrator. As soon as the story starts, its clear that there is a very dark depressing theme.

The narrator describes the setting as “ Dull, dark, soundless day ..... When the clouds hung oppressively low”. After establishing the mood, the reader is then introduced to the focus of the story. The House of Usher, “ the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit”. The story then goes on in a more in-depth description of how the house appears to look and the types of feelings it arises within the narrator.

The reason for the focus into the actual house of Usher instead of leaping into the introduction of Roderick himself is because of two things: Firstly, by

capturing a clear idea of the area, of the house and its “bleak walls” we get a sense of the person(s) that inhabit the place. The place where one lives always represents the type of people that live within it. You wouldn't find Roderick Usher living in a newly built mansion, with its majestic view, which would stop people in their tracks because that does not in anyway fit his character. Secondly, Roderick and the house, throughout the story are linked so closely together to one another, that it is almost like they are one.

When describing the feelings that the house represented the narrator comparing them “to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after dream of the reveler upon opium – the bitter lapse into everyday life”. The reference is to something that happens to living things, which in a sense brings the House alive, representing Roderick. Roderick Usher is a lonely man, a man of ill mental health. When we are introduced to the “master” of the house, he is much like the house he is living in. Quite old, with many cracks in the walls but continues to weather the test of time, although slowly rotting away.

Roderick is a hypochondriac; this is mentioned several times throughout the story as one of his illnesses. He also “suffered from a morbid acuteness of the senses”. Like the house that he prevails in, Roderick might seem to be standing up right, been able to function, but inside he was dying. Opium is mentioned again throughout the story, but this time in direct reference to Roderick describing him as having “periods of his most intense excitement” The high point of the drug, It gives a strong hint that Roderick is living in his own reality, with little notice of the world around him, only when he comes out of the high, when he is back down to the depressing lows.

Been primarily trapped inside his house it is easy to see how this would happen to a man such as Roderick. The narrator himself has obtained the thought that been inside the house, around Roderick, never going anywhere, been confined to the very few things that were on offer, he was to thinking that he was loosing his mind. Been the Heir to a wealthy family Roderick was a smart man, been able to read in many languages, having the ability to play the guitar, to draw, and write. On of “ rhapsodies”, which is mentioned in the book called “ the Haunted Palace” shows very strongly that although Roderick is mentally ill, he understands the situation that he has been placed in. The rhapsodies starts of with a wealthy family, all is well, before it descends into darkness.

“ But evil things, in robes of sorrow, assailed the monarch’s high estate”

Whilst reading this part there are two ways you can interpret it. One was that been the only remaining Heir in the family, with no prospects of been able to expand, the Usher family tree was coming to an end, hence the “ sorrow”. The other is a possible mention of Lady Madeline who is diagnosed with an unknown “ disease” and was also dying. Lady Madeline’s death is treated in a rather peculiar way. Roderick’s nervousness and handling of the situation suggests that he knew the truth about her all along.

That she hadn’t died when he had stated she did, but was rather in a hurry to be rid of her, for she was only weighing down his few spirits. Seeing her in the state she was, a mere ghost walking around the house. After been placed in her tomb, Roderick had “ assumed, if possible, a more ghastly hue” pacing his house without attending to his regular hobbies, such as playing the guitar and singing. He was been troubled by what he had done, and now

was fearful of what will be of him, for a hypochondriac this is especially intense.

The final night of Roderick's life, the man literally comes alive. The uncanny readings of his friend at the exact moments of the sounds that were heard as Lady Madeline, poetically speaking, rises from her entombment to come for her revenge of the brother who tried to dispose of her. Before the last moments as Lady Madeline was approaching the room of Roderick and his friend, Roderick has become a madman. His death, rather strange and somewhat unexplainable ends the legacy of a family forever.

As the Man had died, so was the house destroyed by the storm on that very night. After all Roderick Usher and the House were metaphorically speaking as one body. The fall of the house of Usher was just, for now that the "master" has perished, the Usher dynasty has come to a bitter end, and with it so does the house of Usher. Roderick Usher was a man trapped within his own self, trapped in his own reality.

The House had overpowered him, and with his only real close friend, who had not seen him since they had been children Roderick was alone. His sister lady Madeline was the walking dead in a sense. Alone in his house, the house that had raised many before him, was solely his. Solitude is one of man's most feared enemies. For it cannot be thought physically, but mentally.

It will slowly eat away at you like a bug. For when you are utterly alone, nothing, no one is there to save you. Roderick Usher had the "desire" to see his friend. I think that taking in all that happens throughout the story with Lady Madeline and Roderick's unforeseen death. It could be said that this "

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desire” for Roderick to see his friend was only there so he could be comforted in his last days of life. Having lived most of it in solitude, it was his wish to not die in solitude.

Roderick knew that although he could have his doctors attempt to find a cure for Lady Madeline it was hopeless, much like most things within his house. It is also possible that Roderick wanted a witness to all that was happening in last few days of life, to forever pass on the legend of the House of Usher since Roderick could not himself, extend his family tree, to keep the Usher name alive he could at least pass on a memory of his life to his only friend. Roderick Usher’s mental illness seized most power within him, but he was still able to think, to understand. This would have possibly driven further into insanity knowing what was occurring to him and around him. Death comes to all, it is a certainty to life, but few who are lucky, will forever leave legend in their place.

Roderick Usher in his last few days of life left a legend to be told.

Bibliography Fall of the house of Usher and other writings, Edgar Allan Poe,  
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