

"black cat" a story by edgar allan poe essay

[Literature](#), [American Literature](#)



Edgar Poe's short story Black Cat can be viewed as an eloquent example of the horror genre, but at the same time, this literary work has psychological depth because the author skillfully describes the experiences of a person overwhelmed by guilt. Poe depicts the way in which the main character slips into madness, commits horrible atrocities, and tries to suppress these memories. In turn, the use of various stylistic devices helps the writer create a sense of suspense and show the immense moral tension that the main character struggles with. These are the main issues that should be analyzed more closely.

Edgar Poe chooses the first-person narration, and the narrator can be called unreliable. It means that the story-teller may not necessarily describe various events in an objective or impartial manner. At the very beginning, the main character says, " I neither expect nor solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence" (Poe 61). This statement immediately indicates that the main character may have a distorted perception of reality; however, this person is keenly aware of his madness. To a great extent, this approach helps the writer intrigue the readers of this text.

It should be noted that the word choices of the writer are partly aimed at increasing the sense of suspense. For example, he describes alcoholism as " Fiend Intemperance" (Poe 62). However, in this way, Poe may also suggest that the protagonist could be obsessed with the devil. So, in this case, the word fiend can be viewed as an allusion to the beliefs and myths about supernatural forces. This allusion helps the author to increase the sense of

foreboding. Moreover, in this way, the main character may imply that he could not take full control of his actions.

Apart from that, the narrator's use of personification also suggests that he has a distorted view of reality. He attributes the qualities of a human being to an animal while explaining the reasons for his actions. For instance, he describes his cat in the following manner, " the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder, and whose informing voice had consigned me to the hangman" (Poe 68). To some degree, this person tries to shift the blame for the crimes that he committed to this creature. However, it is quite clear that this self-vindication is only a cry for pity. Thus, this sentence indicates that this main character experiences intense moral suffering.

Additionally, the author includes vivid visual imagery that can produce an indelible impression on the audience. For example, one can mention the narrator's vision of his cat. Poe chooses the following words in order to depict this creature, " extended red mouth and solitary eye of fire" (Poe 68). To a great extent, this image symbolizes his fear as well as a guilty conscience. The most important issue is that this person is unable to overcome to cope with internal pressure. This individual is forced to see the atrocities that he committed, and this realization is unbearable for him. This is one of the main details that should be considered by the readers.

One should keep in mind that the tone of this short story changes significantly. In the beginning, the main character tries to sound casual. This is why he says that his narrative will be " a series of mere household events" (Poe, 61). Nevertheless, the author is able to capture the attention of the

readers who can see the inner world of the protagonist. This world is filled with cruelty, remorse, and self-deception. At the end of the short story, its tone becomes sinister.

To some degree, this literary work can be linked to the short story *The Tell-Tale Heart* (Zimmerman 28). In both cases, the main characters are trying to suppress their conscience, but they fail to do it. Moreover, these people clearly suffer from hallucinations (Zimmerman, 28). So, one can say that Poe is willing to combine such themes as guilt and illusion.

Overall, *Black Cat* is an eloquent example of Poe's writing style. The examples that have been provided show how Edgar Poe can combine various stylistic elements in order to engage the audience. However, the main strength of this short story is that the author enables the viewers to see the immense guilt which overwhelms the main character. The author demonstrates the cruelty of his crimes. Yet, at the same time, the viewers can feel some pity for this person.

Poe, Edgar. *The Collected Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*, New York, Wordsworth Editions, 2004. Print.

Zimmerman, Brett. *Edgar Allan Poe: Rhetoric and Style*, New York: McGill-Queen's Press, 2005. Print.