

# Analysis of the masque of the red death

Literature



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In the short story, Masque of the Red Death, Edgar Allen Poe uses Symbolism, Setting, and Narration to deliver the theme that no one can escape death. His use of symbolism, such as the wall clock, to remind everyone of the time spent there, the Masquerade, and especially the Red Death. Poe's use of setting includes the placement of the seven rooms, as well as the color, all locked up in a castle that is hidden from the world, or death, in one's opinion. The Narration in the story is considered to be a third person's point of view, there's no link to a character and the person telling the story.

The narrator actually spends a great deal of time describing the layout or design, of the setting, rather than describing the characters in the castle. In one's opinion, the narrator is actually death telling the story, considering no one escaped the Red Death. Symbolism is used a great deal throughout the story, one of the most important details is the colossal, dark, and suspenseful clock located in the last room, which, of course, is the black room. The clock was used to remind the revelers that time was slowly, but surely passing.

When the hour struck, the narrator would describe the sound coming from the "brazen lungs" of the clock as a musical tone, somewhat creating a visual description that the clock was alive. With every hour that passed by, people would enjoy their time by laughing, playing music, and conversing, but as soon as the clock struck, everything would be silent. The musicians would stop playing and everyone would seem scared, or confused, for it had reminded them that with every hour they spent, it was another hour off their life.

Once the silent moment was over, the revelers would go back to whatever they were doing, in a way, forgetting that death was upon them. It seemed more like a dream than anything, especially with the Masquerade. The revelers were dressed in “grotesque” clothing, and everything was eccentric and wild. Even the rooms were opened up to be a whole. It created a dreamlike state, or an escape from reality, which, in fact, was the fear of the Red Death approaching and consuming everyone’s lives.

The reason all of these people were together, locked away in a castle, was to be safe from the disease, which is what kept them from leaving, also giving them hope that, one day maybe they could leave the castle. Setting is a huge detail in story. Poe actually spends more time describing the atmosphere, than any other aspect. In this story, the main purpose is to create somewhat of fear in the reader. The revelers are hidden away in this castle, for months, with no way out, they think they’re safe from death, but the reader knows that there’s no way to escape such a thing.

So from the beginning of the story, the reader already has this sense of dread for the revelers in the castle. There’s also the character, Prince Prospero, the castle, in fact, was his. Prospero was described to be quite mad, “It was necessary to hear and see and touch him to be sure he was not”, as told in the story, so it furthers the readers apprehension. Mostly, the narrator, spends more time talking about the seven rooms, than describing the plot or the characters. The seven rooms are designed to provoke reaction in the reader, seven is somewhat of a memorable number.

The seven wonders, the seven deadly sins, seven is used throughout history for a number of things, so naturally, the reader is going to suspect

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something symbolic in the seven rooms. The seven rooms are arranged from east to west, with a different color, or scheme, with every room. Historically, people have followed the path of the sun from east to west, signifying beginning to end. Poe uses the arrangement of the rooms to incorporate the theme of life to death. The colors also play a huge part in that as well.

The first room beginning with blue, purple, green, orange, white, and then violet, to black. In the story, violet is different than the purple, the violet room is more of a grey purple, or a blue hue, than the actual color purple. In a way the sixth room creates more of a dizzy, or dreamlike thought. The last room is black, signifying death, the last straw, it was also the room facing west, where the sun sets. It creates foreboding in the reader, knowing that the last room is basically death.

The Narrator is questioned throughout the story, if everyone died in the end, who exactly is the narrator? Poe wrote the story in a third person point of view, the narrator is not a character or is linked to any character in the story, what one would think. The narrator saw everything that happened in the castle, and in some way, was alive to tell it. One of many believe it was actually the Red Death itself telling the story. (When Poe was alive, from the time 1808 to 1849, Tuberculosis was a very common and feared disease, usually fatal when contracted.

Most of his family died from the disease. Tuberculosis was often referred as the Red Death because of the particularly gruesome way in which it claimed its victims. The victims would often bleed out of their pores and every orifice of their body. One's opinion would be that Poe derived this story from his past experiences, and fear of death himself. ) Referring back to the theme,

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which is no one can escape death, no one escaped the plague, so who exactly could tell the tale?

Poe used the narration to further that conclusion by, in fact, signifying the Red Death as the one telling the story. The Masque of the Red Death, written by Edgar Allan Poe, connects with the reader on a psychological ground that no one can escape death. The visual details of the seven rooms arranged by color from east to west entices the reader to read further as to why they were connected in such a way. The dreary setting in which this story takes place haunts the reader, keeping the interest in the arrangements of the castle.

The narration of the story makes the reader wonder why and who is telling the story, after coming to the conclusion that no one can escape the fatal end. His use of symbolism that includes the clock that ticks away at the revelers fate, the masquerade which is their undying wish to be happy and healthy, that one day they can escape the horror that is within the castle, as well as the Red Death itself, which is the ultimate and horrific end. Death is involuntary, and unfortunate, though Poe creates a sense of excitement and thrill in this ravishing story.