

A main idea of edgar allan poe in man of the crowd

Literature



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Analytical Essay on “ Man of the Crowd” by Edgar Allan Poe

In the short story “ Man of the Crowd”, Edgar Allan Poe utilizes the first point of view to not only reveal the main character, but also give personal ties between the reader and narrator. From the first page, the narrator directly reveals personal characteristics such as, “ For some months I had been ill in health, but was now convalescent...”. The narrator immediately reveals an important piece of the story, as it explains his sudden and giddy manner. Without the knowledge of the narrator recovering from an illness, the reader would lack the connection from his stern observations of large groups, initially, to becoming completely fascinated by the joy and wonder of a random stranger. While he reveals bits of himself through direct dialogue, his personal thoughts and actions are major developing pieces as well. The story contains extremely little dialogue but is written in a stream of conscious from the narrator. Each of his thoughts during the events unfolding in the story are immediately revealed to the reader. In a way, the narrator is having dialogue to himself and the reader simultaneously. To begin, his internal pessimistic nature is revealed through his thoughts to himself regarding the lowly people he observes. “ Descending in the scale of what is termed gentility, I found darker and deeper themes for speculation.” The narrator, while in a self-admitted elevated sense of happiness, still finds the time to scrutinize the crowds of people passing by. No one is safe from judgement as he comments on their wealth, social status, attire, and occupation. No single person of these groups necessarily asks to be judged or grouped, yet the narrator cannot help himself but to do exactly that. He reveals his curiosity

in continually pursuing these assumptions of people, and even more direct pursuit of the old man. The narrator admits the old man "at once arrested and absorbed my whole attention.". Immediately his thoughts begin to pick up in pace almost. Poe transforms the speech from a lackadaisical, all knowing pace of banter to wild, incomprehensible emotion and thought. Without these personal thoughts, the reader would lack the reality of what is going on both in the story and within the narrator. If third person was used to describe the scene, so much of the intimacy of character knowledge would be lost. The narrator, essentially, would just be a man, looking at people from a window. There would be no grasp of the judgements and disgust found in certain glances of people. There would be no revelation of the narrator's infatuation with the old man. The story would lack crucial detail and complexity. The narrator has identified himself as curious, judgmental, assumptive, and quite a bit strange, all through his personal thoughts.

First person perspective adds yet another depth to the story as the narrator discovers his piece of interest; the old man. This may seem like a very large and inconclusive leap, following the narrator's thought process helps the reader to understand the level of interest in this old man. His rapid thoughts allow the reader to see the coinciding tenseness and fascination. "there arose...within my mind, the ideas of vast mental power, of caution, of penuriousness". This jumbled thought process given blankly to the reader allows them to feel the same emotion as the narrator. And again, the reader is further drawn in as the narrator decides to follow the stranger. Poe sets the story up in an almost continuous stream of thought, sometimes chaotic and difficult to follow. This aspect of realness and accuracy, as racing

thoughts rarely make much sense or have a particular order, allows the reader to feel as though they too are thinking these same thoughts. Drawing the reader into the journey adds to the suspense, confusion, and curiosity. The reader almost becomes apart of the strange stalking journey and gains curiosity in the old man. With each turn and alley followed, the narrator manages to describe 3 things: his own emotions, the old man's actions and facial expression, and the setting. Each described in great detail, all at once, the reader can not only picture where they are, but also how they should be feeling and what their main focus should be. This first-person account is the only vehicle providing these tools to the reader. Lastly, the revelation, or epiphany, the narrator comes to in the end would not give its full impact if not given directly from his own thoughts. When the narrator becomes "absorbed in contemplation", he is forced to look inward at himself. While the entire story is focused on this stalking of the strange old man, the narrator realizes he will never be able to understand the old man any further, and he should immediately give up this desire of his. Poe again changes the pace of thoughts from feverish and inquisitive to bluntly accepting and no longer interested. Only through the personal emotion of the narrator does the reader truly understand the past intensity of the chase, and the disappointing conclusion.