

## Biography of Edgar Allan Poe (Adapted)

### Poe's Childhood

Edgar Poe was born in Boston on January 19, 1809. His parents were David and Elizabeth Poe. David was born in Baltimore on July 18, 1784. Elizabeth Arnold came to the U.S. from England in 1796 and married David Poe after her first husband died in 1805. They had three children, Henry, Edgar, and Rosalie.

Elizabeth Poe died in 1811 when Edgar was two years old. She had separated from her husband and had taken her three kids with her. Henry went to live with his grandparents while Edgar was adopted by Mr. and Mrs. John Allan and Rosalie was taken in by another family. John Allan was a successful merchant, so Poe grew up in good surroundings and went to good schools.

When Poe was six, he went to school in England for five years. He learned Latin and French, as well as math and history. He later returned to school in America and continued his studies. Edgar Allan Poe went to the University of Virginia in 1826. He was 17. Even though John Allan had plenty of money, he only gave Poe about a third of what he needed. Although Poe had done well in Latin and French, he started to drink heavily and quickly became in debt. He had to quit school less than a year later.

### Poe in the Army

Edgar Allan Poe had no money, no job skills, and had been shunned by John Allan. Therefore, Poe went to Boston and joined the U.S. Army in 1827. He was 18. He did reasonably well in the Army and attained the rank of sergeant major. In 1829, Mrs. Allan died and John Allan tried to be friendly towards him and signed Poe's application to West Point.

While waiting to enter West Point, Poe lived with his grandmother and his aunt, Mrs. Clemm. Also living there were his brother, Henry, and young cousin, Virginia. In 1830, Poe entered West Point as a cadet. He didn't stay long because John Allan refused to send him any money. It is thought that Poe purposely broke the rules and ignored his duties so he would be dismissed.

### A Struggling Writer

In 1831, Edgar Allan Poe went to New York City where he had some of his poetry published. He submitted stories to a number of magazines, but they were all rejected. Poe had no friends, no job, and was in financial trouble. He sent a letter to John Allan begging for help but none came. John Allan died in 1834 and did not mention Poe in his will.

In 1835, Poe finally got a job as an editor of a newspaper because of a contest he won with his story, "The Manuscript Found in a Bottle". As the editor for the *Southern Literary Messenger*, Poe successfully managed the paper and increased its circulation from 500 to 3500 copies. Despite this, Poe left the paper in early 1836, complaining of the poor salary. In 1837, he went to New York. He wrote *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* but he could not find any financial success. He moved to Philadelphia in 1838 where he wrote "Ligeia" and "The Haunted Palace". His first volume of short stories, "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque" was published in 1839. Poe received the copyright and 20 copies of the book, but no money.

Sometime in 1840, Edgar A. Poe joined George R. Graham as an editor for *Graham's Magazine*. During the two years that Poe worked for *Graham's*, he published his first detective story, "The Murders in the Rue Giordano, Robert." *Biography of Edgar Allan Poe.* *Poe Stories.com*. Design215, Inc., 31 July 2005. Web. 24 Oct. 2012. <<http://poestories.com/biography.php>>.

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Morgue," and challenged readers to send in cryptograms, which he always solved. During the time Poe was editor, the circulation of the magazine rose from 5,000 to 35,000 copies. Poe left *Graham's* in 1842 because he wanted to start his own magazine.

Poe found himself without a regular job once again. He tried to start a magazine called *The Stylus* and failed. In 1843, he published some booklets containing a few of his short stories but they didn't sell well enough. He won a hundred dollars for his story, "The Gold Bug," and sold a few other stories to magazines, but he barely had enough money to support his family. Often, Mrs. Clemm, his aunt, had to contribute financially. In 1844, Poe moved back to New York. Even though "The Gold Bug" had a circulation of around 300,000 copies, he could barely make a living.

In 1845, Poe became an editor at *The Broadway Journal*. A year later, the *Journal* ran out of money, and Poe was out of a job again. He and his family moved to a small cottage near what is now East 192nd Street. His wife's health was fading away, and Poe was deeply distressed by it. After only ten years of marriage, she died in 1847, ten days after Poe's birthday. After losing his wife, Poe collapsed from stress but gradually returned to health later that year.

### Final Days

In June of 1849, Poe left New York and went to Philadelphia, where he visited his friend John Sartain. Poe left Philadelphia in July and came to Richmond. He stayed at the Swan Tavern Hotel but joined "The Sons of Temperance" in an effort to stop drinking. He renewed a boyhood romance with Sarah Royster Shelton and planned to marry her in October.

On September 27, Poe left Richmond for New York. He went to Philadelphia and stayed with a friend named James P. Moss. On September 30, he meant to go to New York but supposedly took the wrong train to Baltimore. On October 3, Poe was found at Gunner's Hall, a public house at 44 East Lombard Street, and was taken to the hospital. He lapsed in and out of consciousness but was never able to explain exactly what happened to him. Edgar Allan Poe died in the hospital on Sunday, October 7, 1849.

**After reading the article "Biography of Edgar Allan Poe" (Adapted), answer the questions that follow. When necessary, return to the text and underline or highlight the details that helped you to determine the correct answer.**

1. In what year was Poe born
  - a. 1796
  - b. 1809
  - c. 1811
  - d. 1909
2. Poe is known as Edgar Allan Poe because
  - a. That is the name his parents gave him.
  - b. It sounds more professional than just Edgar Poe.
  - c. He took his adopted parents' name as part of his identity.
  - d. Allan is his middle name.

3. What does the word shunned mean as used in paragraph #4?
- a. supported
  - b. encouraged
  - c. ignored
  - d. embarrassed
4. What is the situational irony about the following from the section "Poe in the Army"?
- "He didn't stay long because John Allan refused to send him any money."**
- a. The reader is aware that he didn't send any money because Allan was broke.
  - b. The reader would have expected Allan to send him money since it says he was trying to be friendly towards him.
  - c. It says that he didn't send the money, but it means the opposite. He sent him all of his money.
  - d. He wanted to send the money, but Poe had already been dismissed from the academy.
5. Which sentence expresses an opinion?
- a. "While waiting to enter West Point, Poe lived with his aunt, Mrs. Clemm."
  - b. "As the editor for the *Southern Literary Messenger*, Poe successfully managed the paper and increased its circulation from 500 to 3500 copies."
  - c. "It is thought that Poe purposefully broke the rules and ignored his duties so he would be dismissed."
  - d. "He lapsed in and out of consciousness but was never able to explain exactly what happened to him."
6. Which sentence would be an example of situational irony?
- a. "Even though "The Gold Bug" had circulation of 300,000 copies, he could barely make a living."
  - b. "He renewed his boyhood romance with Sarah Royster Shelton and planned to marry her in October."
  - c. "John Allan was a successful merchant, so Poe grew up in good surroundings and went to good schools."
  - d. "Poe left *Graham's* because he wanted to start his own magazine business."
7. Organize the titles of Poe's works in order 1-6 by date of publication.

- \_\_\_\_\_ "The Gold Bug"
- \_\_\_\_\_ *The Narrative of Arthur Pim*
- \_\_\_\_\_ "Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque"
- \_\_\_\_\_ "The Haunted Palace"
- \_\_\_\_\_ "The Manuscript Found in Bottle"
- \_\_\_\_\_ "The Murders in the Rue Morgue"

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8. Use the article to create a timeline of Poe's life. Include at least 8 significant events on your timeline. Be sure to include the years!

Read the following short answer responses. Add TEXT-BASED details to support the writer's ideas.

**Question:** Explain why Poe's life could be considered tragic.

Poe's life could be considered tragic for several significant reasons. One reason why Poe's life was tragic because he suffered many losses in his short lifetime. 1.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 2.) \_\_\_\_\_

His life could also be considered tragic because even though he was adopted after the loss of his parents, he did not have a close relationship with his adopted father, John Allan. 3.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 4.) \_\_\_\_\_

Without a doubt, Edgar Allan Poe had a tragic life as a result of the tragic losses and poor relationship with his adopted father.

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**Question:** Explain why Poe could be considered successful in the literary world even though he was financially poor.

Although Poe was financially poor, he could be considered successful in the literary world. One reason he could be considered successful in the literary world because was he talented at his job as an editor. 1.) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 2). \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Another reason he could be considered successful in the literary world is because many of his works were purchased and published. 3.) \_\_\_\_\_

4.) \_\_\_\_\_

Obviously, Poe's success in the literary world was seen through his career as an editor and his now famous works that were published. Unfortunately, however, this success did not result in financial success in his lifetime.