

The Raven

Central Quote:

PRE-GRAMMAR | Preparation

*Prepare the student for understanding the Central One Idea
by drawing upon his or her prior knowledge or experience.*

1. Do you have a particular object in your life that reminds you vividly of a memorable experience, either good or bad? Briefly explain.

GRAMMAR | Presentation

The student is presented with and discovers essential facts, elements, and features of the poem.

READING NOTES

1. **speaker** – In poetry, we refer to the narrating voice as the speaker. In short stories and novels, we refer to the one telling the story as the narrator.
2. **meter** – the recurrence of a rhythmic pattern in a line of poetry. In short, the rhythm in a line of poetry.
3. **foot** – the combination of stressed and unstressed syllables in a unit of meter in a line of poetry
4. **trochaic** – A trochee is a particular kind of foot that has a stressed syllable followed by an unstressed syllable.
Ónce ůp | ón ă | mídnġht | dreárġ, | whġle Ĩ | pónġered, | weák ănd | weárġ (1.1)
5. **octameter** – eight metrical feet per line
6. **morrow** (2.3) – the next day
7. **mien** (7.4) – appearance; demeanor
8. **bust of Pallas** (7.5) – a head-and-shoulders statue of Pallas Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom
9. **Night’s Plutonian shore** (8.5) – a phrase in which Poe brings darkness and night together with Pluto, the Roman god of the underworld, and possibly the shore of the afterlife
10. **Seraphim** (14.2) – a special class of angels; literally “burning ones”; the highest rank in the Christian angelic hierarchy
11. **nepenthe** (14.4) – a medicine used by the ancients to bring forgetfulness of sorrow; an anti-depressant
12. **quaff** (14.5) – to drink heartily
13. **balm in Gilead** (15.5) – a healing compound made from a bush that grew plentifully in Gilead
14. **distant Aidenn** (16.3) – from Hebrew “Eden”; paradise

WORDS TO BE DEFINED

Definitions Bank

accumulated facts, traditions, or beliefs about a particular subject	propriety and good taste in conduct or appearance
attractively unusual or old-fashioned	respect; deference
awkward; clumsy	rest or relief
to bring to an end; to stop	suitably; appropriately
charming or enchanting, sometimes in a deceptive way	a vessel made for burning incense

1. Over many a **quaint** and curious volume of forgotten lore (1.2)
attractively unusual or old-fashioned
2. Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten **lore** (1.2)
accumulated facts, traditions, or beliefs about a particular subject
3. From my books **surcease** of sorrow – sorrow for the lost Lenore (2.4)
to bring to an end; stop
4. Not the least **obeisance** made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he (7.3)
respect; deference
5. Then this ebony bird **beguiling** my sad fancy into smiling (8.1)
charming or enchanting, sometimes in a deceptive way
6. By the grave and stern **decorum** of the countenance it wore (8.2)
propriety and good taste in conduct or appearance
7. Much I marveled this **ungainly** fowl to hear discourse so plainly (9.1)
awkward; clumsy
8. Startled at the stillness broken by reply so **aptly** spoken (11.1)
suitably; appropriately
9. Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen **censer** (14.1)
a vessel made for burning incense
10. **respite** and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore (14.4)
rest or relief



Read "The Raven," marking the poem in key places.

COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

1. The opening line, "Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary" gives us a revealing insight into:
 - a. comedy and terror
 - b. form and content
 - c. setting and character
 - d. irony and apostrophe

2. In stanza two, the speaker gives specific details about the setting. Identify two.

Bleak December; dying embers are making ghostly shadows on the floor

3. The **alliteration** in 2.5, "For the rare and radiant maiden," might have been employed by Poe for what purpose?
 - a. It enhances how the speaker feels about Lenore.
 - b. no purpose at all
 - c. It provides a way for the speaker to discuss what he is reading in his books.
 - d. paradox

4. This is Poe's most well-known poem, published in 1845, for which he quickly became famous. What words, lines, or features of the poem stand out to you? List three.

5. Describe three particulars of **sound imagery** the narrator hears, beginning in stanza 3 and following.

Uncertain rustling of the curtains; his beating heart; rapping, faintly tapping, etc.

6. List three characteristics of the raven.

With many a flirt and flutter; stately raven of the saintly days of yore; showed no respect for the speaker; appeared stately and aristocratic; perched above his chamber door, etc., etc.

7. Describe the progression of the speaker's conversations with the raven. Include a few lines from the poem in your answer.

The speaker gets progressively more agitated and angry, and then finally he is depressed and full of despair. In st. 15-16 he yells at the bird, "Prophet!" "Thing of evil! Prophet still, if bird or devil!" He ends by pleading, "Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!" (17.5)

8. Does the raven leave the speaker alone in the end? Include a line from the poem in your answer.

No, the raven "still is sitting, still is sitting / On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door" (18.1-2)

LOGIC | Dialectic

The student reasons with the facts, elements, and features of the poem, and begins to uncover and determine the Central One Idea.

SOCRATIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The poem consists of eighteen six-line stanzas written in **trochaic octameter**. The rhyme pattern is *abcbbb*, with the *b* lines rhyming with "Lenore" and "nevermore." This pattern evokes _____ in the **mood** of the lyric.

- a. fear and excitement c. darkness and gloom
b. softness and intelligence d. freedom and humor

2. What effect does the frequent **dialogue** provide the poem?

It brings voice, tone, and drama into the poem. We are allowed to travel with the narrator through his exasperation, anger, and despair.

3. Do you see the raven as a **symbol** for something? What might it represent?

His fear; his loneliness; his depression; his loss; Lenore's spirit; a demon taunting him; his own conscience; his broken heart; et al.

4. Why do you suppose Poe chose a raven for the creature to relay the man's worst fear?

Throughout human history, the raven has been a powerful symbol and a common object of mythology and folklore. Ravens have long been viewed as birds of ill omen and death, partly because of the negative association with their all-black color and their eating of carrion.

5. What does the speaker discover from the raven when he seeks information about whether he will see Lenore in the afterlife? How might this connect to the Central One Idea?

Unfortunately this is also met with "nevermore." This reveals that there is no hope for the narrator; there is nothing he can look forward to; he will never see her again.

6. Where do we find the speaker's soul in the last stanza of the poem? What might the raven's eyes and shadow **represent**?

The speaker's soul lies with the raven's shadow on the floor. The raven's demon eyes look on in a dreamlike state. The speaker's soul lies covered by the shadow with no hope of ever rising because he will never see Lenore again.

7. How does the last stanza encompass the Central One Idea of the poem?

It contains all the elements of the Central One Idea: the permanence of the raven looking on; the speaker's soul is in the most despair possible because he will never see Lenore again; and the permanence of this most sorrowful reality.

RHETORIC | Expression

The student explains in his or her own words the Central One Idea with supporting details.

1 CENTRAL ONE IDEA

1. In a few sentences, **summarize** “The Raven.”

“The Raven” is a melancholy evocation of a young man’s lost love Lenore—he is visited by a raven that he thinks speaks only the word “nevermore,” which reveals his fear and despair that he will see her nevermore.

2. Write the **Central One Idea** of the story in a complete sentence.

3. List two or three features of the poem that support your determination of the Central One Idea.

4. Choose a line(s) from the poem that you think best embodies the Central One Idea – and with good penmanship, write it in the Central Quote section at the beginning of this lesson.

1 CENTRAL ONE IDEA (as expressed by the teacher)

One can never overcome the loneliness and despair brought about by the loss of one’s true love.

ESSAY OPTION

Write an essay in which you discuss the role of the main symbol in the poem (the raven) and how it contributes to and/or reveals the speaker’s deteriorating mental state.