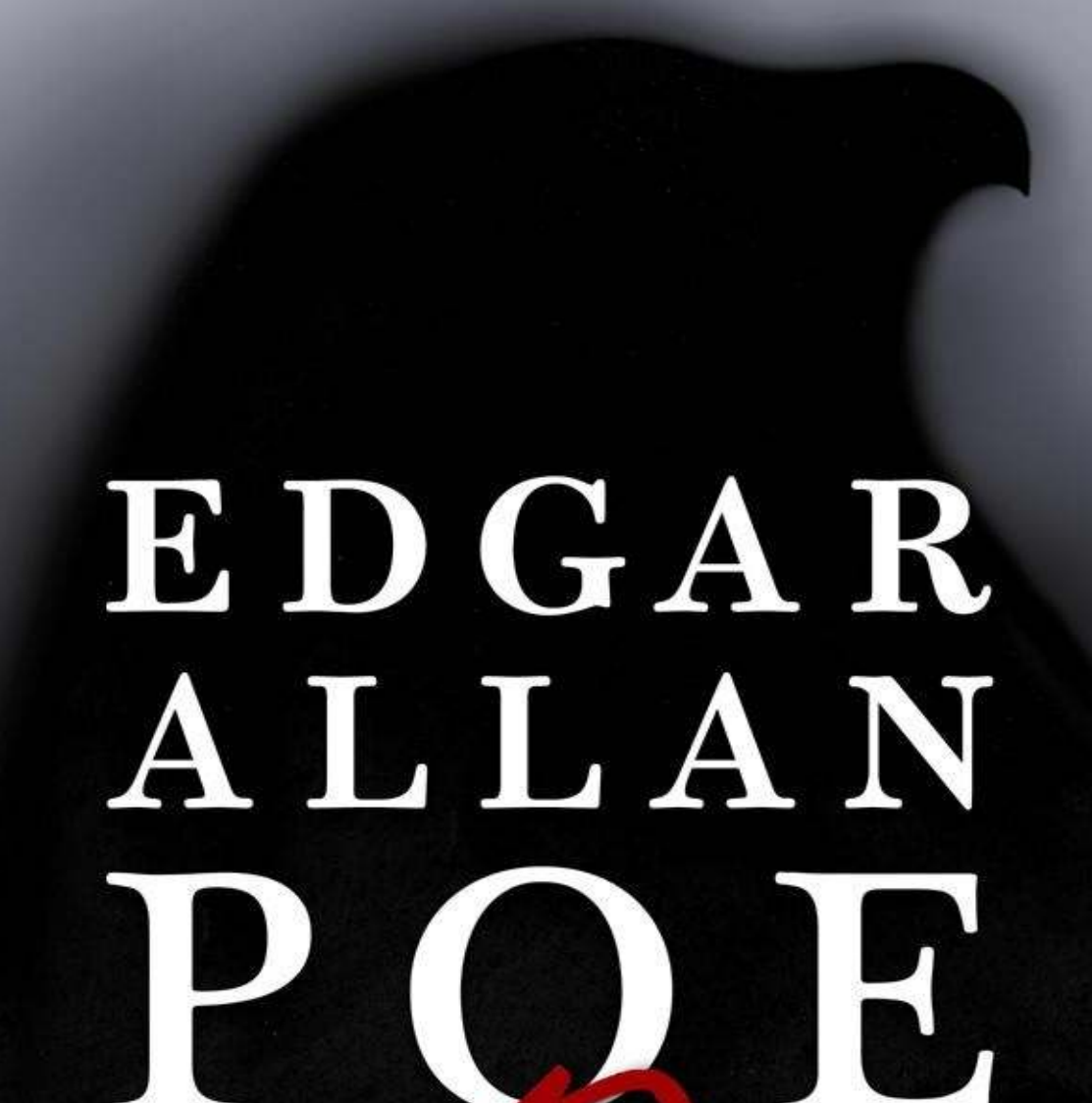


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POE

The Raven

Illustrated by GUSTAVE DORÉ

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THE RAVEN

BY EDGAR ALLAN POE



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Introduction.

FEW POEMS—or any other literary works, for that matter—have ever generated the kind of immediate and overwhelming response that Edgar Allan Poe’s poetic masterpiece “The Raven” achieved in late January 1845. Poe went from a literary critic and short-story writer of moderate renown to an international celebrity and household name almost overnight.

Though its initial publication is credited to the January 29, 1845, issue of the New York *Evening Mirror*, it was more or less published simultaneously in the *Mirror* and a New York–based monthly, the *American Review*, from February 1845. Poe had in fact sold “The Raven” to the *Review*’s editor George H. Colton, first (for nine dollars), and then allowed the *Mirror* to publish the poem “in advance” of the *Review* (though the February issue of the *Review* may have already come out by January 29). The *Mirror*’s editor, Nathaniel P. Willis included a short preface to “The Raven,” in which he wrote:

We are permitted to copy (in advance of publication) from the 2d No. of the *American Review*, the following remarkable poem by Edgar Poe. In our opinion, it is the most effective single example of “fugitive poetry” ever published in this country, and unsurpassed in English poetry for subtle conception, masterly ingenuity of versification, and consistent sustaining imaginative lift...

Willis also revealed Poe as the author of the poem, who had simply been identified (for reasons unclear) as “Quarles” in the *Review*’s edition. In any case, the nearly concurrent release of “The Raven” in the two periodicals, combined with the work’s obvious appeal, only helped spread the poem’s—and poet’s—fame.

Poe set out to write a poem to “suit at once the popular and the critical taste” (for Poe’s 1846 essay on his writing process with “The Raven,” see “The Philosophy of Composition” in *Edgar Allan Poe’s Complete Tales & Poems*). He borrowed the idea of a talking raven from Charles Dickens’s *Barnaby Rudge* and selected a frequently recurring theme in his work—the death of a loved one. Having lost both his parents before the age of three, watched as death claimed the mother of a close friend at school, and suffered through three years of his wife’s five-year battle against tuberculosis, Poe knew a few things about loss. In earlier stories like “Ligeia,” “Morella,” and “Berenice,” and the poems “Tamerlane,” “The Sleeper,” and “Lenore,” Poe used the bereaved lover as narrator of each work, the lost loved one the fulcrum upon which the drama rests. Poe thought this notion of Beauty’s passion would be the most powerful and most universal.

“The Raven” would apply this melancholy motif to a distinct story and combine a musical rhythm with a strong, repetitive rhyme scheme to create an unforgettable effect. In “The Raven” Poe not only uses the same rhyme in the last three lines of each six-line stanza throughout the poem, he employs rhymes within the first and third lines of each of the eighteen stanzas. He also makes liberal use of alliteration, and in hammering away at his chorus of “Nevermore,” Poe creates the most memorable refrain in literature. As Poe wrote of this chant-like refrain in his “Philosophy of Composition”: “The pleasure is deduced solely from the sense of identity—of repetition.” (Or, as Prince later put it: “There’s joy in repetition.”)

Though “The Raven” made Poe world-famous, it wouldn’t make him a rich man. Copyright law being virtually nonexistent in the 1840s, “The Raven” was endlessly copied, reprinted, and so on without the author earning a cent. Poe was, however, able to have his *Raven and Other Poems* released later in 1845, and his newfound notoriety did lead to many other opportunities—lectures, poet readings, and other outlets for publishing his future poems, short stories, and essays. His fame also

brought him into regular contact with other poets and authors he admired. But his struggle to earn a living as a writer continued, despite the success of “The Raven.” His itinerant career as an editor, author, and critic—which led him from Boston to Baltimore, Richmond, Philadelphia, and New York—ended when he died of mysterious causes on October 7, 1849, in Baltimore. He was just forty years old, but his work would survive for nearly two centuries after his passing and shows no signs of ever fading away.



The steel-plate engravings reproduced in this Top Five Classics edition of *The Raven* were created by the renowned French illustrator, painter, and sculptor Gustave Doré from 1882 to 1883 for the U.S. publisher Harper & Brothers. Sadly, after completing the illustrations, Doré died at the age of fifty-one in late January 1883 after a brief illness. His engravings were published posthumously in Harper's 1884 edition of *The Raven*.

Doré's artwork accompanies the text of “The Raven” in the first section of this ebook, “[The Raven \(Illustrated\)](#),” and the [second section](#) features the text alone. The final portion includes a short but detailed [biography of Poe](#). I hope you enjoy this illustrated edition of Poe's masterwork, “The Raven.”

Alex Lubertoz
Copublish

THE RAVEN.





Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore—
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
“’Tis some visiter,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door—

Only this and nothing more



Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December;
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.



Eagerly I wished the morrow;—vainly I had sought to borrow

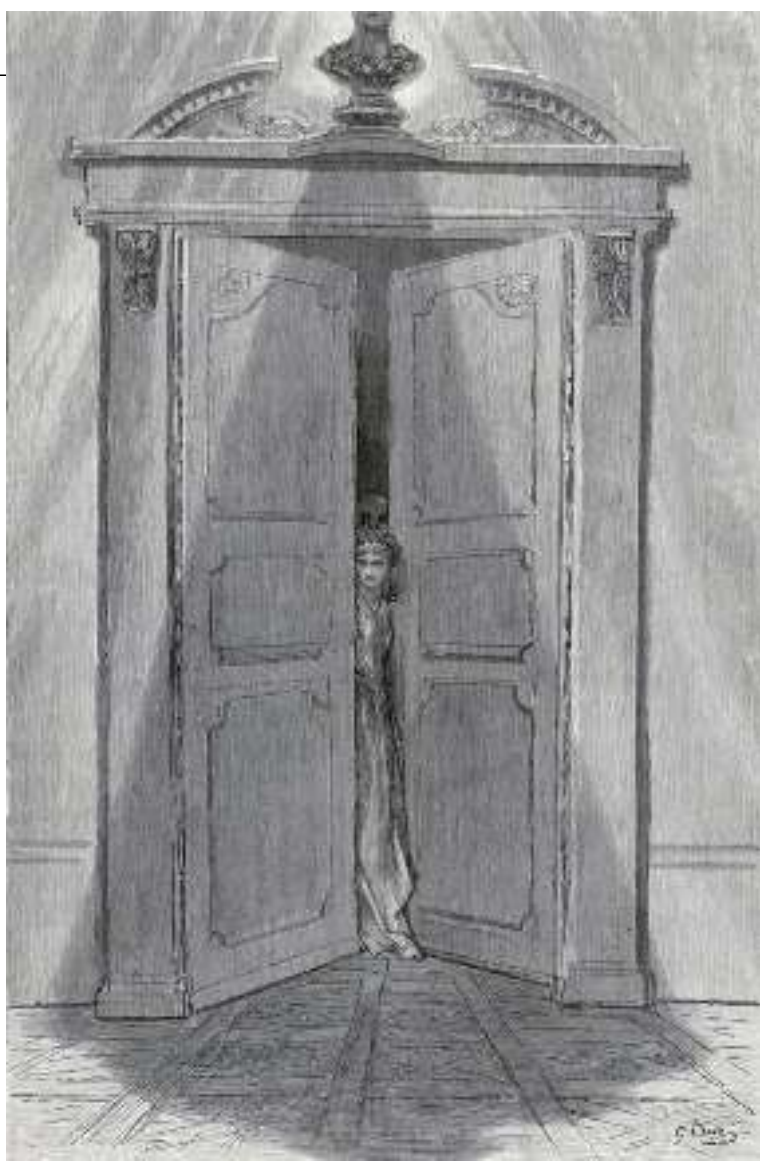


From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore—



For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore—

Nameless here for evermore



And the silken, sad, uncertain rustling of each purple curtain
Thrilled me—filled me with fantastic terrors never felt before;
So that now, to still the beating of my heart, I stood repeating
“’Tis some visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door—
Some late visitor entreating entrance at my chamber door;—

This it is and nothing more



Presently my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer,
“Sir,” said I, “or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore;
But the fact is I was napping, and so gently you came rapping,
And so faintly you came tapping, tapping at my chamber door,
That I scarce was sure I heard you”—here I opened wide the door;—

Darkness there and nothing more



Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token,
And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore?"
This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"

Merely this and nothing more



Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning,
Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before.
“Surely,” said I, “surely that is something at my window lattice;
Let me see, then, what thereat is, and this mystery explore—
Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;—

’Tis the wind and nothing more



Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,



In there stepped a stately Raven of the saintly days of yore;
Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;
But, with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door—



Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door—

Perched, and sat, and nothing more.



Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling,
By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore,
“Though thy crest be shorn and shaven, thou,” I said, “art sure no craven,
Ghastly grim and ancient Raven wandering from the Nightly shore—
Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night’s Plutonian shore!”

Quoth the Raven “Nevermore

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,
Though its answer little meaning—little relevancy bore;
For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being
Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door—
Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,

With such name as “Nevermore



But the Raven, sitting lonely on the placid bust, spoke only
That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.
Nothing farther then he uttered—not a feather then he fluttered—
Till I scarcely more than muttered “Other friends have flown before—
On the morrow he will leave me, as my Hopes have flown before.”

Then the bird said “Nevermore

Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
“Doubtless,” said I, “what it utters is its only stock and store
Caught from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster
Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore—
Till the dirges of his Hope that melancholy burden bore

Of “Never—nevermore



But the Raven still beguiling all my fancy into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore—
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore

Meant in croaking “Nevermore

sample content of The Raven

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