

“The Raven” by Edgar Allan Poe

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Once upon a midnight dreary, while I **pondered**, weak and weary,
Over many a **quaint** and curious **volume of forgotten lore**,
While I **n**odded, **n**early **n**apping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of some one gently rapping, rapping at my **chamber** door.
"Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door-
Only this, and nothing more."

[meditated, studied]
[archaic, old] [book of knowledge or myths]
[example of alliteration]
[bedroom or study]

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.

[internal rhyme]
[glowing wood fragment in fireplace] [formed ash]
[next day]
[an end, a pause, a delay]

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."

[example of alliteration]
[unreal, imaginary; weird, strange]
[begging, pleading for]

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.

[beg, ask for]

Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortals 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**.

[Lines 2, 4, 5, and 6 of each stanza rhyme, as here]

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**:

[shutter]

Let me see, then, what **thereat** is, and this mystery explore-

[there, at that place]

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,

[jerk]

In there stepped a **stately** raven of the saintly days of **yore**;

[majestic][the distant past]

Not the least **obeisance** made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he;

[bow, gesture of respect]

But, with **mien** of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door-

[manner]

Perched upon a **bust** of **Pallas** just above my chamber door, [small sculpture showing the head, shoulders][Athena, Greek goddess of wisdom]

Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this **ebony** bird **beguiling** my sad fancy into smiling,

[black][charming, coaxing]

By the grave and stern **decorum of the countenance it wore**.

[look on its face]

"Though thy **crest** be **shorn** and shaven, thou," I said, "art sure no **craven**, [tuft of feathers on head][cut] [coward]

Ghastly grim and ancient raven wandering from the Nightly shore-

[See Note 1 below the end of the poem.]

Tell me what thy lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore!"

Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

[Said, spoke]

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly,

[The narrator is surprised that the raven can speak.]

Though its answer little meaning- **little relevancy bore**;

[The raven's answer made little sense.]

For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being

Ever yet was blest with seeing bird above his chamber door-

Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door,

With such name as "Nevermore."

[See Note 2 below the end of the poem.]

But the raven, sitting lonely on the **placid** bust, spoke only

[peaceful]

That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour.

Nothing further 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'."

[the only words it can speak]

[learned]

[funeral hymns]

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."

[sinister, threatening]

[the bird is now the image of death]

This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl whose **fiery eyes now burned** into my bosom's core;
his and more I sat **divining**, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion's velvet lining that the **lamplight gloated** o'er,
But whose velvet violet lining with the lamplight gloating o'er,

[metaphor comparing the gaze to a fire]

[trying to figure out]

[personification]

She shall press, ah, nevermore!

[She will never again press her head to the cushion.]

Then methought the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen **censer**
Swung by Seraphim whose footfalls tinkled on the tufted floor.

[vessel in which incense is burned]

[Angels of the highest rank]

"**Wretch**," I cried, "**thy** God hath lent **thee**- by these angels he hath sent **thee** [the narrator is referring to himself]

Respite- respite and **nepenthe**, from thy memories of Lenore!

[Rest, pause][Drug causing forgetfulness]

Quaff, oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore!"

[Drink]

Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of **evil!**- prophet still, if bird or **devil!**
Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,
Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted-
On this home by horror haunted- tell me truly, I implore-
Is there- **is there balm in Gilead?**- tell me- tell me, I implore!"

[Poetic license: **evil** and **devil** don't rhyme]

Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

[Is there any cure for my deep depression?

See the Bible, Jeremiah 8:22]

"Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil- prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that Heaven that bends above us- by that God we both adore-
Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant **Aidenn**,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore-
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore."
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

[Paradise, heaven, Eden]

"Be that word our sign in parting, bird or fiend," I shrieked, upstarting-
"Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken!- quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!"
Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore."

And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,
And the lamplight o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor

Shall be lifted- nevermore!

[The narrator will never again see Lenore.]

THE END

Note 1 The narrator believes the raven is from the shore of the River Styx in the Underworld, the abode of the dead in Greek mythology. "Plutonian" is a reference to Pluto, the god of the Underworld.

Note 2 The narrator at first thinks the raven's name is "Nevermore." However, he later finds out that "Nevermore" means that he will never again see the woman he loved.

QUESTIONS:

1. DESCRIBE THE NARRATOR'S STATE OF MIND BY THE END OF THE POEM.
2. WHAT DOES THE RAVEN SYMBOLIZE?
3. WHY DOES HE KEEP REPEATING "NEVERMORE!"?
4. WHAT EFFECT DOES THE RHYME SCHEME HAVE ON THE TONE & MOOD OF THE POEM?