

Comparison

by 

FILE	POE.DOCX (21.3K)	WORD COUNT	677
TIME SUBMITTED	07-MAR-2015 11:55PM	CHARACTER COUNT	3558
SUBMISSION ID	513766054		

Mrs. Sasser

ELA-Writing

7 March 2015

It's dark in here

Edgar Allen Poe's unique ability to write Gothic literature is unmatched. The suspenseful and mysterious atmosphere he creates from emotions such as insanity, terror or agitation contributes greatly to the startling mood. "The Tale Tell Heart" and "The Cask of Amontillado" are works that include these characteristics of Gothic literature.

In "The Tell-Tale Heart", before the narrator kills the old man, there is a great amount of repeated sentences "cautiously -- oh, so cautiously -- cautiously (for the hinges creaked), I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye." (Literature.Org n.d.) As a result of this pause, the reader becomes even more suspicious over what events will occur next. In "The Tell-Tale Heart", the murderer's use of unusual language gives hints at the strange mental state of the narrator. He describes the old man's eye as "damned" or "evil". The reader then has cause to doubt the stability and state of mind of the narrator. The narrator in "The Tell-Tale Heart" enjoys reminiscing in terrifying detail, and seems to be proud of his crime "I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph" (Literature.Org n.d.). This again creates doubt within the reader's mind regarding the narrator's mental state. Sane people would not be proud of killing and then cutting to pieces an innocent old man.

The first person view is greatly important to the plot in "The Cask of Amontillado" and "The Tell-Tale Heart" especially in the "The Cask of Amontillado". The reader wishes to dig deeper into the mind of the narrator, and figure out his thoughts, and motives, thus suspense is

achieved. Furthermore the use of unclear description in “The Cask of Amontillado”, creates mystery surrounding the narrator’s reasons for murdering Fortunato past the stated “thousand injuries” (Poetry Foundation 2015). Instead of just simply laying out the plot, the reader is expected to struggle to find out the motive for oneself. Similarly in “The Tell Tale Heart”, a lack of descriptive imagery creates mystery surrounding the settings and characters. For example, the narrator never names the victim, nor does he name himself. This creates uncertainty inside the readers mind and as a reader it is nature to ask questions. This fuzzy and unclear atmosphere keeps the reader in suspense. In “The Tell-Tale Heart”, rhetorical questions are used greatly by Poe to demonstrate the murderer’s developing frustration, fear and the rigid atmosphere of the story. These questions support an atmosphere of frustration as he asks the rhetorical questions frequently in between irregular rushes of conversation. In addition, Poe creates a creepy and tense atmosphere by using sudden changes of pace through varied sentences. Near the climax of “The Tell Tale Heart” the pace of the story becomes considerably slower “But, even yet I refrained and stood still, I scarcely breathed, I held the lantern motionless... Mean while the hellish tattoo increased.” (Literature.Org n.d.) Poe allows time for tension and suspense to gather before proceeding to the climax.

Symbolism is used by Poe throughout his stories. For example, the moment when Montresor and his unfortunate victim, Fortunato, descend into the chamber in “The Cask of Amontillado” is symbolic, as Montresor can be seen as a sort of Hades like character leading Fortunato into the underworld, foreshadowing his downfall. In “The Tell Tale Heart” another example of Poe using symbolism in his work can be observed. “The sound of a ‘watch enveloped in cotton” (Literature.Org n.d.) could also create an image in the reader’s mind of a clock

counting down to the death of the old man. This symbolism creates a mutual signal of anticipation and uncertainty in the reader's mind.

Edgar Allen Poe used these two stories and many more to demonstrate how the literary elements particularly contributed to the overall mood of fear and insanity he was attempting to achieve. His use of literary elements adds to his incredible ability to catch the reader's attention.

Works Cited

n.d. *Literature.Org*. Accessed March 7, 2015.

2015. *Poetry Foundation*. Accessed March 7, 2015.

Comparison

ORIGINALITY REPORT

60%

SIMILARITY INDEX

16%

INTERNET SOURCES

57%

PUBLICATIONS

46%

STUDENT PAPERS

PRIMARY SOURCES

1

. "How Edgar Allen Poe Builds Tension in His Short Stories [Yr 9 Living Texts]",
gcse/english/english literature/prose fiction/edgar allan poe/1, 2013.

Publication

30%

2

Submitted to Kilgore College

Student Paper

22%

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www.studymode.com

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