

triumph learning

Common Core Coach

for American Literature and Informational Texts I



First Edition

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Common Core
State Standards

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Reading Fiction

Lesson

1

We read fiction for all kinds of reasons. Through fiction, we can have experiences we might never encounter in everyday life. Or, we can fall in love or suffer a tragedy along with a character. Sometimes, though, we just want to be thrilled.

Gothic fiction was written to thrill. This style of literature emphasized mystery, gloom, and violence and emerged with the Romantic movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A reaction against the Enlightenment's celebration of science and reason, Romanticism celebrated the natural world and the human capacity for feeling.

Two American writers working at this time were Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne. Poe remains popular today for his horror stories, which he infused with psychological insight. Hawthorne explored the evil that people do—and the guilt they often try to hide.

How do Poe and Hawthorne hook readers into their dark tales and keep the suspense going until the very end? Let's see how two masters of fiction draw us into their fearful visions.

Whole Class

Consider ► What elements of a story may serve to inspire dread and fear?
What can happen when one's fear grows out of control?

abridged from *The Fall of the*

House of Usher

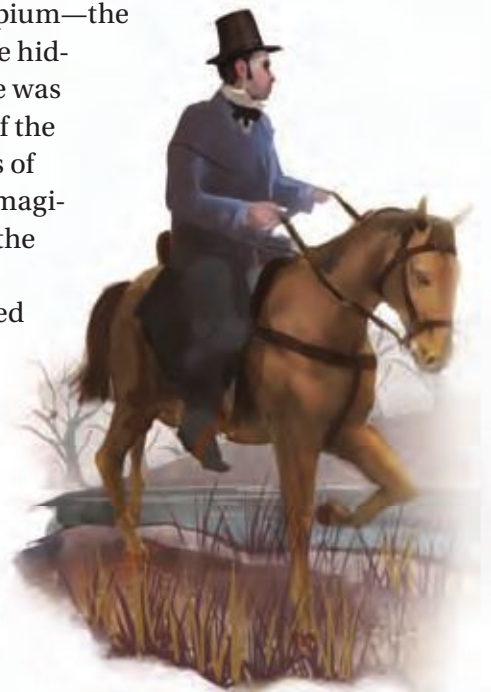
by *Edgar Allan Poe*

WORD CHOICE The words an author chooses create a particular feeling, or mood, in the reader. In this scene, the narrator approaches the House of Usher on a “dull, dark, and soundless day,” when clouds hang “oppressively low,” and upon seeing the house, he feels “a sense of insufferable gloom.” What mood does the author create through these word choices? What other words also create this mood?

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE Figurative language is language that is expressive, often surprising, and not literally true. Personification is a type of figurative language by which an object, plant, or animal is given human characteristics. The narrator's description of the windows of the House of Usher as “vacant and eye-like” is an example of personification. Why might the narrator describe the house in this way?

1 During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country, and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher. I know not how it was—but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit. I say insufferable; for the feeling was unrelieved by any of that half-pleasurable, because poetic, **sentiment**, with which the mind usually receives even the sternest natural images of the desolate or terrible. I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain—upon the bleak walls—upon the vacant eye-like windows—upon a few rank sedges—and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveller upon opium—the bitter lapse into every-day life—the hideous dropping off of the veil. There was an iciness, a sinking, a sickening of the heart—an unredeemed dreariness of thought which no goading of the imagination could torture into aught of the sublime. What was it—I paused to think—what was it that so unnerved me in the contemplation of the House of Usher? . . . I reined my horse to the precipitous brink of a black and lurid tarn¹ that lay in

¹tarn a small mountain lake or pool



unruffled lustre by the dwelling, and gazed down—but with a shudder even more thrilling than before—upon the remodelled and inverted images of the grey sedge, and the ghastly tree-stems, and the vacant and eye-like windows.

Nevertheless, in this mansion of gloom I now proposed to myself a sojourn of some weeks. Its proprietor, Roderick Usher, had been one of my boon companions in boyhood; but many years had elapsed since our last meeting. A letter, however, had lately reached me in a distant part of the country—a letter from him—which, in its wildly importunate nature, had admitted of no other than a personal reply. The MS.² gave evidence of nervous agitation. The writer spoke of acute bodily illness—of a mental disorder which oppressed him—and of an earnest desire to see me, as his best, and indeed his only personal friend, with a view of attempting, by the cheerfulness of my society, some alleviation of his malady. . . .

Although, as boys, we had been even intimate associates, yet I really knew little of my friend. His reserve had been always excessive and habitual. I was aware, however, that his very ancient family had been noted, time out of mind, for a peculiar sensibility of **temperament**, displaying itself, through long ages, in many works of exalted art, and manifested, of late, in repeated deeds of munificent yet unobtrusive charity, as well as in a passionate devotion to the intricacies, perhaps even more than to the orthodox and easily recognizable beauties of musical science. I had learned, too, the very remarkable fact, that the stem of the Usher race, all time-honoured as it was, had put forth, at no period, any enduring branch; in other words, that the entire family lay in the direct line of descent, and had always,

²MS. manuscript

tone The tone is the manner in which a story is told. The tone may be formal or informal, humorous, excited, or matter-of-fact. The author's word choice creates the tone of a story as well as its mood. To determine the tone of a story, consider its language. Is it plain or elaborate? Are the sentences simple or complex? Based on its opening paragraph, how would you describe the tone of this story?



Vocabulary Strategy

Context Clues

Use the words, phrases, or sentences before or after an unfamiliar word to help you figure out its meaning.

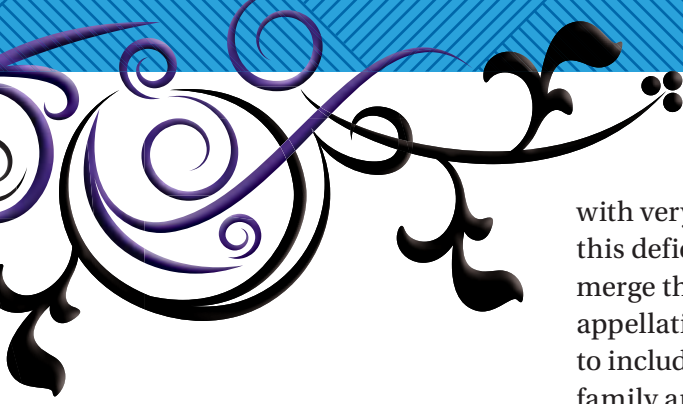
sentiment

temperament

sincerity

malady

apathy



with very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain. It was this deficiency . . . which had, at length, so identified the two as to merge the original title of the estate in the quaint and equivocal appellation of the “House of Usher”—an appellation which seemed to include, in the minds of the peasantry who used it, both the family and the family mansion. . . .

INFERENCE An inference is an educated guess that can be made from the information in a text. It is not stated directly in the text, but it is supported by the details in the text. At the end of paragraph 3, the narrator says that the “House of Usher” could refer both to the Usher family and to the house where they live. Based on the narrator’s descriptions of this house, what inferences can you make about the family?

. . . I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building. Its principal feature seemed to be that of an excessive antiquity. The discoloration of ages had been great. Minute fungi overspread the whole exterior, hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves. Yet all this was apart from any extraordinary dilapidation. No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones. In this there was much that reminded me of the specious totality of old wood-work which has rotted for long years in some neglected vault, with no disturbance from the breath of the external air. Beyond this indication of extensive decay, however, the fabric gave little token of instability. Perhaps the eye of a scrutinizing observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zig-zag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn.

5 Upon my entrance, Usher rose from a sofa on which he had been lying at full length, and greeted me with a vivacious warmth which had much in it, I at first thought, of an overdone cordiality—of the constrained effort of the *ennuyé* man of the world. A glance, however, at his countenance, convinced me of his perfect **sincerity**. We sat down; and for some moments, while he spoke not, I gazed upon him with a feeling half of pity, half of awe. Surely, man had never before so terribly altered, in so brief a period, as had Roderick Usher! It was with difficulty that I could bring myself to admit the identity of the wan being before me with the companion of my early boyhood. . . . The now ghastly pallor of the skin, and the now miraculous lustre of the eye, above all things startled and even awed me. The silken hair, too, had been suffered to grow all unheeded, and as, in its wild gossamer texture, it floated rather than fell about the face, I could not, even with effort, connect its Arabesque expression with any idea of simple humanity.

POINT OF VIEW The point of view in a story is the position of the narrator in relation to the story. In a story with a third-person point of view, the narrator is outside the story. A third-person narrator may be omniscient, telling about the thoughts and feelings of many characters in the story, or limited, telling about the thoughts and feelings of just the main character. In a story with a first-person point of view like this one, the narrator is a character within the story. How does the narrator of this story view Usher and his home?

In the manner of my friend I was at once struck with an incoherence—an inconsistency; and I soon found this to arise from a series of feeble and futile struggles to overcome an habitual trepidancy—an excessive nervous agitation. . . . He entered, at some length, into what he conceived to be the nature of his **malady**. . . . He suffered much from a morbid acuteness of the senses; the most insipid food was alone endurable; he could wear only garments of certain texture; the odors of all flowers were oppressive; his eyes were tortured by even a faint light; and there were but peculiar sounds, and these from stringed instruments, which did not inspire him with horror.

To an anomalous species of terror I found him a bounden slave. “I shall perish,” said he, “I *must* perish in this deplorable folly. Thus, thus, and not otherwise, shall I be lost. I dread the events of the future, not in themselves, but in their results. I shudder at the thought of any, even the most trivial, incident, which may operate upon this intolerable agitation of soul. I have, indeed, no abhorrence of danger, except in its absolute effect—in terror. In this unnerved, in this pitiable, condition I feel that the period will sooner or later arrive when I must abandon life and reason together, in some struggle with the grim phantasm, FEAR.”

CHECK IN Make sure you understand what you have read so far by answering the following question: What are your impressions of Roderick Usher at this point in the story?

. . . He admitted, however, although with hesitation, that much of the peculiar gloom which thus afflicted him could be traced to a more natural and far more palpable origin—to the severe and long-continued illness—indeed to the evidently approaching dissolution—of a tenderly beloved sister, his sole companion for long years, his last and only relative on earth. “Her decease,” he said, with a bitterness which I can never forget, “would leave him (him the hopeless and the frail) the last of the ancient race of the Ushers.” While he spoke, the lady Madeline (for so was she called) passed slowly through a remote portion of the apartment, and, without having noticed my presence, disappeared. I regarded her with an utter astonishment not unmingled with dread; and yet I found it impossible to account for such feelings. A sensation of



CHARACTER The characters in a story are revealed through description as well as through what they say and do. On this and the previous page, the narrator introduces the main character, Roderick Usher. What do you learn about this character from the narrator’s descriptions of him? What do you learn about the character from his own words in paragraph 7?



CHARACTER A character in a story may have a foil, or a character with contrasting qualities. The differences between the characters serve to highlight their individual characteristics. This page introduces the character Madeline. Like her brother, she is ill. How is her illness the opposite of her brother's?

stupor oppressed me as my eyes followed her retreating steps. When a door, at length, closed upon her, my glance sought instinctively and eagerly the countenance of the brother; but he had buried his face in his hands, and I could only perceive that a far more than ordinary wanness had overspread the emaciated fingers through which trickled many passionate tears.

The disease of the lady Madeline had long baffled the skill of her physicians. A settled **apathy**, a gradual wasting away of the person, and frequent although transient affections of a partially cataleptical³ character were the unusual diagnosis. Hitherto she had steadily borne up against the pressure of her malady, and had not betaken herself finally to bed; but on the closing in of the evening of my arrival at the house, she succumbed (as her brother told me at night with inexpressible agitation) to the prostrating power of the destroyer; and I learned that the glimpse I had obtained of her person would thus probably be the last I should obtain—that the lady, at least while living, would be seen by me no more.

10 For several days ensuing, her name was unmentioned by either Usher or myself; and during this period I was busied in earnest endeavors to alleviate the melancholy of my friend. We painted and read together; or I listened, as if in a dream, to the wild improvisations of his speaking guitar. And thus, as a closer and still closer intimacy admitted me more unreservedly into the recesses of his spirit, the more bitterly did I perceive the futility of all attempt at cheering a mind from which darkness, as if an inherent positive quality, poured forth upon all objects of the moral and physical universe in one unceasing radiation of gloom. . . .

[O]ne evening, having informed me abruptly that the lady Madeline was no more, he stated his intention of preserving her corpse for a fortnight, (previously to its final interment), in one of the numerous vaults within the main walls of the building. The worldly reason, however, assigned for this singular proceeding, was one which I did not feel at liberty to dispute. The brother had been led to his resolution (so he told me) by consideration of the unusual character of the malady of the deceased, of certain obtrusive and eager inquiries on the part of her medical men, and of the remote and exposed situation of the burial-ground of the family. I will not deny that when I called to mind the sinister countenance of the person whom I met upon the staircase, on the day of my arrival at the house, I had no desire to oppose what I regarded as at best but a harmless, and by no means an unnatural, precaution.

³**cataleptical** characterized by physical rigidity and a loss of sensation

SUMMARY A summary is a brief retelling of the main ideas and events in a story. Summarizing scenes can help you understand the development of the characters as well as to make predictions of what will happen next. Summarize paragraph 11. What predictions can you make?

At the request of Usher, I personally aided him in the arrangements for the temporary entombment. The body having been encoffined, we two alone bore it to its rest. The vault in which we placed it (and which had been so long unopened that our torches, half smothered in its oppressive atmosphere, gave us little opportunity for investigation) was small, damp, and entirely without means of admission for light; lying, at great depth, immediately beneath that portion of the building in which was my own sleeping apartment. . . .

Having deposited our mournful burden upon tressels within this region of horror, we partially turned aside the yet unscrewed lid of the coffin, and looked upon the face of the tenant. A striking similitude between the brother and sister now first arrested my attention; and Usher, divining, perhaps, my thoughts, murmured out some few words from which I learned that the deceased and himself had been twins, and that sympathies of a scarcely intelligible nature had always existed between them. Our glances, however, rested not long upon the dead—for we could not regard her unawed. The disease which had thus entombed the lady in the maturity of youth, had left, as usual in all maladies of a strictly cataleptical character, the mockery of a faint blush upon the bosom and the face, and that suspiciously lingering smile upon the lip which is so terrible in death. We replaced and screwed down the lid, and, having secured the door of iron, made our way, with toil, into the scarcely less gloomy apartments of the upper portion of the house.

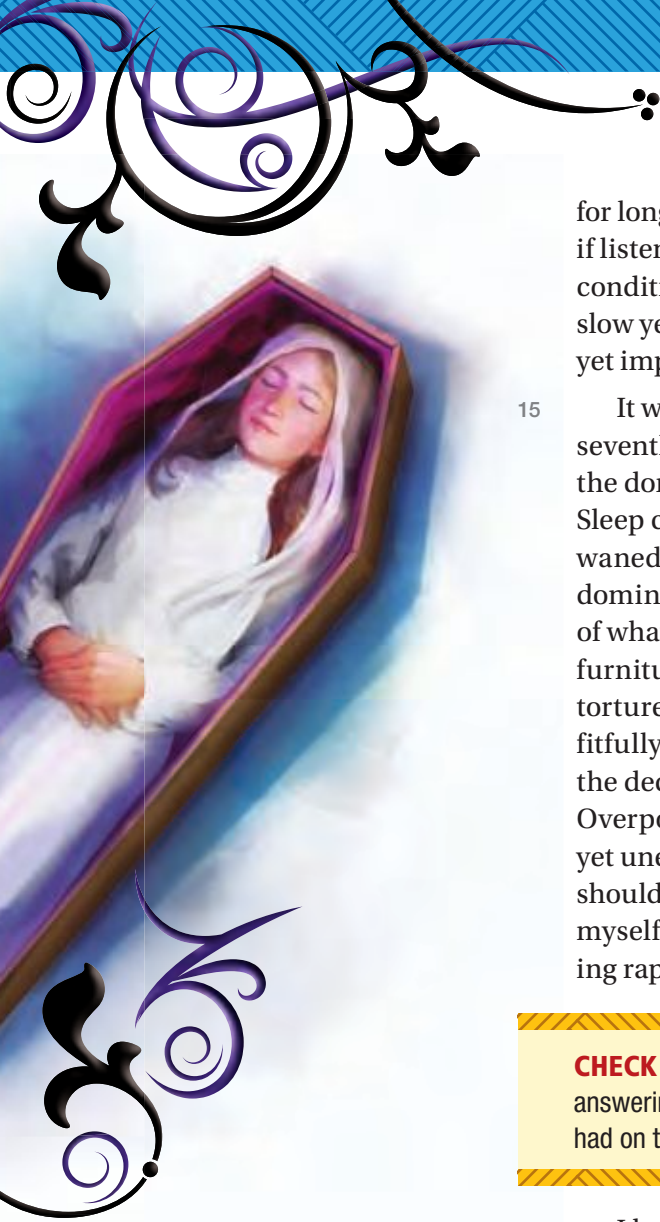
And now, some days of bitter grief having elapsed, an observable change came over the features of the mental disorder of my friend. His ordinary manner had vanished. His ordinary occupations were neglected or forgotten. He roamed from chamber to chamber with hurried, unequal, and objectless step. The pallor of his countenance had assumed, if possible, a more ghastly hue—but the luminousness of his eye had utterly gone out. The once occasional huskiness of his tone was heard no more; and a tremulous quaver, as if of extreme terror, habitually characterized his utterance. There were times, indeed, when I thought his unceasingly agitated mind was laboring with some oppressive secret, to divulge which he struggled for the necessary courage. At times, again, I was obliged to resolve all into the mere inexplicable vagaries of madness, for I beheld him gazing upon vacancy

PLOT The events in a story make up the plot. Some events, such as Madeline's death, are beyond the control of the characters. Sometimes the actions of the characters themselves advance the plot. What do Usher's actions after the death of his sister show about his character?



CHARACTER The main characters of a story typically change, or develop, as the story progresses. After Madeline's death, the narrator sees "an observable change" in his friend Usher. What is this change, and how does it affect him?

SUSPENSE Suspense is a state of uncertainty. An author uses suspense to engage readers and keep them wanting to know what will happen next. On this page, how does the author use details about both Madeline and Roderick Usher to create uncertainty? What are your questions at this point in the story?



for long hours, in an attitude of the profoundest attention, as if listening to some imaginary sound. It was no wonder that his condition terrified—that it infected me. I felt creeping upon me, by slow yet certain degrees, the wild influences of his own fantastic yet impressive superstitions.

- 15 It was, especially, upon retiring to bed late in the night of the seventh or eighth day after the placing of the lady Madeline within the donjon, that I experienced the full power of such feelings. Sleep came not near my couch—while the hours waned and waned away. I struggled to reason off the nervousness which had dominion over me. I endeavored to believe that much, if not all of what I felt, was due to the bewildering influence of the gloomy furniture of the room—of the dark and tattered draperies, which, tortured into motion by the breath of a rising tempest, swayed fitfully to and fro upon the walls, and rustled uneasily about the decorations of the bed. But my efforts were fruitless. . . . Overpowered by an intense sentiment of horror, unaccountable yet unendurable, I threw on my clothes with haste (for I felt that I should sleep no more during the night), and endeavored to arouse myself from the pitiable condition into which I had fallen, by pacing rapidly to and fro through the apartment.

CHECK IN Make sure you understand what you have read so far by answering the following question: What effect have the events of the story had on the narrator?

I had taken but few turns in this manner, when a light step on an adjoining staircase arrested my attention. I presently recognized it as that of Usher. In an instant afterwards he rapped, with a gentle touch, at my door, and entered, bearing a lamp. . . .

“And you have not seen it?” he said abruptly, after having stared about him for some moments in silence—“you have not then seen it?—but, stay! you shall.” Thus speaking, and having carefully shaded his lamp, he hurried to one of the casements, and threw it freely open to the storm.

The impetuous fury of the entering gust nearly lifted us from our feet. It was, indeed, a tempestuous yet sternly beautiful night, and one wildly singular in its terror and its beauty. A whirlwind had apparently collected its force in our vicinity. . . . But the under surfaces of the huge masses of agitated vapor, as well as all terrestrial objects immediately around us, were glowing in the unnatural light of a faintly luminous and distinctly visible gaseous exhalation which hung about and enshrouded the mansion.

“You must not—you shall not behold this!” said I, shuddering, to Usher, as I led him, with a gentle violence, from the window to a

DIALOGUE The words that characters speak to one another, or dialogue, can reveal what they are like and how they view the events of the story. According to his words—“And you have not seen it? you have not then seen it?”—how does Usher view the storm? According to his response—“These appearances, which bewilder you, are merely electrical phenomena not uncommon”—how does the narrator view it?

seat. “These appearances, which bewilder you, are merely electrical phenomena not uncommon—or it may be that they have their ghastly origin in the rank miasma of the tarn. Let us close this casement;—the air is chilling and dangerous to your frame. Here is one of your favorite romances. I will read, and you shall listen;—and so we will pass away this terrible night together.”

20 The antique volume which I had taken up was the “Mad Trist” of Sir Launcelot Canning; but I had called it a favorite of Usher’s more in sad jest than in earnest; for, in truth, there is little in its uncouth and unimaginative prolixity⁴ which could have had interest for the lofty and spiritual ideality of my friend. It was, however, the only book immediately at hand; and I indulged a vague hope that the excitement which now agitated the hypochondriac, might find relief (for the history of mental disorder is full of similar anomalies) even in the extremeness of the folly which I should read. . . .

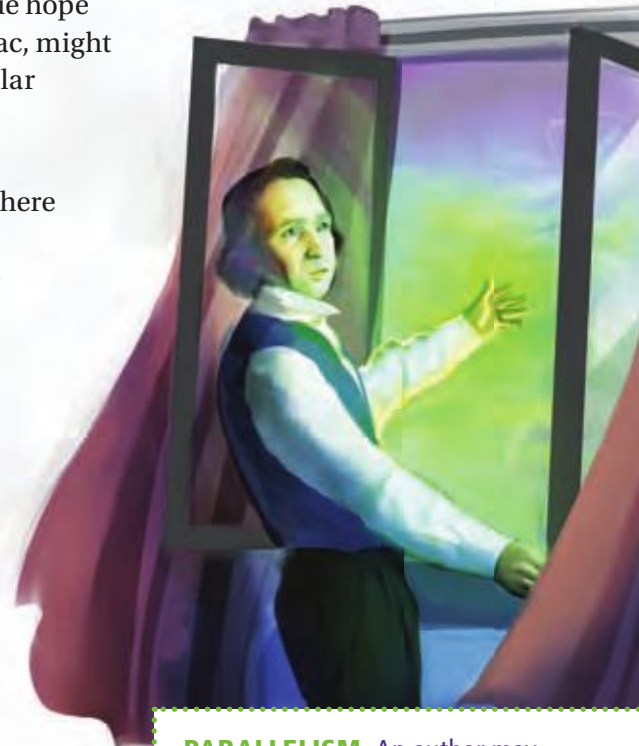
I had arrived at that well-known portion of the story where Ethelred, the hero of the Trist, having sought in vain for peaceable admission into the dwelling of the hermit, proceeds to make good an entrance by force. Here, it will be remembered, the words of the narrative run thus:

“And Ethelred, who was by nature of a doughty heart, and who was now mighty withal, on account of the powerfulness of the wine which he had drunken, waited no longer to hold parley with the hermit, who, in sooth, was of an obstinate and malicious turn, but, feeling the rain upon his shoulders, and fearing the rising of the tempest, uplifted his mace outright, and, with blows, made quickly room in the plankings of the door for his gauntleted hand; and now pulling therewith sturdily, he so cracked, and ripped, and tore all asunder, that the noise of the dry and hollow-sounding wood alarmed and reverberated throughout the forest.”

At the termination of this sentence I started, and for a moment, paused; for it appeared to me (although I at once concluded that my excited fancy had deceived me)—it appeared to me that, from some very remote portion of the mansion, there came, indistinctly to my ears, what might have been, in its exact similarity of character, the echo (but a stifled and dull one certainly) of the very cracking and ripping sound which Sir Launcelot had so particularly described. It was, beyond doubt, the coincidence alone which had arrested my attention; for, amid the

⁴prolixity a long, wordy book

CHARACTER Characters’ attitudes toward one another are revealed not only through their dialogue but also through the ways they interact with one another. How does the narrator treat Usher on the night of the storm? How does this treatment reflect his treatment of Usher throughout the rest of the story?



PARALLELISM An author may use similar structures for different parts of a story, or parallelism, to draw attention to similarities in meaning. How does Poe use parallelism in this section of the story, as the narrator reads aloud from the “Mad Trist” of Sir Launcelot Canning? What effect does this parallelism create?



rattling of the sashes of the casements, and the ordinary commingled noises of the still increasing storm, the sound, in itself, had nothing, surely, which should have interested or disturbed me. I continued the story:

“But the good champion Ethelred, now entering within the door, was sore enraged and amazed to perceive no signal of the malicious hermit; but, in the stead thereof, a dragon of a scaly and prodigious demeanor, and of a fiery tongue, which sate in guard before a palace of gold, with a floor of silver . . . [a]nd Ethelred uplifted his mace, and struck upon the head of the dragon, which fell before him, and gave up his pesty breath, with a shriek so horrid and harsh, and withal so piercing, that Ethelred had fain to close his ears with his hands against the dreadful noise of it, the like whereof was never before heard.”

25 Here again I paused abruptly, and now with a feeling of wild amazement—for there could be no doubt whatever that, in this instance, I did actually hear (although from what direction it proceeded I found it impossible to say) a low and apparently distant, but harsh, protracted, and most unusual screaming or grating sound—the exact counterpart of what my fancy had already conjured up for the dragon’s unnatural shriek as described by the romancer.

Oppressed, as I certainly was, upon the occurrence of the second and most extraordinary coincidence, by a thousand conflicting sensations, in which wonder and extreme terror were predominant, I still retained sufficient presence of mind to avoid exciting, by any observation, the sensitive nervousness of my companion. I was by no means certain that he had noticed the sounds in question. . . . But, as I placed my hand upon his shoulder, there came a strong shudder over his whole person; a sickly smile quivered about his lips; and I saw that he spoke in a low, hurried, and gibbering murmur, as if unconscious of my presence. Bending closely over him, I at length drank in the hideous import of his words.



“Not hear it?—yes, I hear it, and *have* heard it. Long—long—long—many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it—yet I dared not—oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am!—I dared not—I *dared* not speak! *We have put her living in the tomb!* Said I not that my senses were acute? I now tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them—many, many days ago—yet I dared not—I *dared not speak!* And now—to-night . . . Do I not distinguish that heavy and horrible beating of her heart? Madman!”—here he sprang furiously to his feet, and shrieked out his syllables, as if in the effort he were giving up his soul—“*Madman! I tell you that she now stands without the door!*”

As if in the superhuman energy of his utterance there had been found the potency of a spell—the huge antique panels to which the speaker pointed, threw slowly back, upon the instant, their ponderous and ebony jaws. It was the work of the rushing gust—but then without those doors there *did* stand the lofty and enshrouded figure of the lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her white robes, and the evidence of some bitter struggle upon every portion of her emaciated frame. For a moment she remained trembling and reeling to and fro upon the threshold—then, with a low moaning cry, fell heavily inward upon the person of her brother, and in her violent and now final death-agonies, bore him to the floor a corpse, and a victim to the terrors he had anticipated.

From that chamber, and from that mansion, I fled aghast. The storm was still abroad in all its wrath as I found myself crossing the old causeway. Suddenly there shot along the path a wild light, and I turned to see whence a gleam so unusual could have issued; for the vast house and its shadows were alone behind me. The radiance was that of the full, setting, and blood-red moon which now shone vividly through that once barely-discernible fissure of which I have before spoken as extending from the roof of the building, in a zigzag direction, to the base. While I gazed, this fissure rapidly widened—there came a fierce breath of the whirlwind—the entire orb of the satellite burst at once upon my sight—my brain reeled as I saw the mighty walls rushing asunder—there was a long tumultuous shouting sound like the voice of a thousand waters—and the deep and dank tarn at my feet closed sullenly and silently over the fragments of the “*House of Usher.*”

TEXT EVIDENCE As stated earlier, an inference is an educated guess that can be made from the details in a text. These details are the evidence, or clues, that support the inference. In paragraph 27, Usher confesses his guilt. What evidence earlier in the text suggests his guilt? What evidence earlier in the text suggests that Madeline was buried alive?

THEME The theme of a story is its most important message, typically a universal truth rather than something that is true only of the characters or events in a particular story. The narrator describes Usher as “a victim to the terrors he had anticipated.” This description offers an explanation of Usher’s downfall. What does it suggest about the theme of the story?



Author's Craft

Character as Narrator

An author's choice of **narrator** affects the reader's understanding of the characters and events. When the narrator is a character, readers see the events and other characters through the narrator's eyes, and they know only what he or she chooses to reveal. Because the narrator is the one telling the story, readers must decide if they can trust the narrator to tell the truth. To determine the narrator's reliability, readers must pay attention to the narrator's thoughts, actions, and interpretations.

In "The Fall of the House of Usher," the narrator is a **dynamic character** whose changes advance the plot. When the reader first meets him, his descriptions of the actions and other characters seem reliable. In the passage below, however, readers begin to see how he has changed, making them wonder if they can really trust the story he is telling.

... [I]t appeared to me that, from some very remote portion of the mansion, there came, indistinctly to my ears, what might have been, in its exact similarity of character, the echo (but a stifled and dull one certainly) of the very cracking and ripping sound which Sir Launcelot had so particularly described.

Try It

Look back through the text and find clues that reveal whether or not the narrator is or is not reliable. How does the narrator's reliability help advance the plot?

Text Example	Reliable?	Effect on Plot

Vocabulary Strategy

Context Clues

Consider how the words, phrases, or sentences around an unfamiliar word provide context clues that help you determine the word's meaning. Read each sentence, using context clues to identify the meaning of the boldface word. Then write an additional sentence to demonstrate your understanding of the word.

1. The **sentiment** expressed in her letter revealed an eagerness for his visit.

2. Jack's **temperament** is less anxious than his brother's.

3. He never lied, so I did not doubt the **sincerity** of his words.

4. The dreadful **malady** left me weak for days at a time.

5. Her late arrival showed her **apathy** concerning the party.

Comprehension Check

Answer these questions about the selection you have just read. Use details from the selection to support your responses.

1. At the beginning of the story, the narrator's word choice creates a mood of gloom and oppression. How does the narrator sustain and develop this mood as the story continues?
2. How does the mood contribute to the suspense in the story? What other elements of the story create suspense?
3. How does Poe use the house as a character?