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## What is the rhythm of the raven

The driving rhythm of "The Raven," created by Poe's careful use of rhyme and meter, gives the poem its signature hypnotic sound (Lenore, door, nevermore, etc.). Most lines use trochaic octameter, which is eight metrical feet (sixteen syllables) that follow the pattern of stressed then unstressed. However, all the lines with the B rhyme scheme are catalectic, written in trochaic tetrameter, or four metrical feet following the pattern of stressed then unstressed. In Poe's 1864 essay "The Philosophy of Composition," the writer describes how he chose this combination carefully in order to create something original in the poem's structure. Originality mattered deeply to Poe, and he strongly believed, as both a writer and critic, that careful, intentional composition was at the heart of good art. Although Poe drew inspiration for the meter from a poem called "Lady Geraldine's Courtship" by the British poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, which also uses trochaic octameter and tetrameter with the catalectic feet. Poe also uses his rhyme scheme intentionally. The scheme contains more B lines than any others. This repetition of words that rhyme with "Lenore," including the bird's refrain of "nevermore," highlights the relentlessness of the speaker's grief and creates a mesmerizing and haunting effect on the reader. Photo by Gustave Doré October is the perfect time to bring in some Edgar Allan Poe. Much of Poe's work is best appreciated by older students, but the elementary students I worked with loved dipping their toes into his mysterious and dark world. No need to dig in too deep. The Raven at Project Gutenberg, or there's a free Kindle version on Amazon. Stanza One 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, suddenly there came a tapping, suddenly there came a tapping, rapping at my chamber door. "Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door- Only this, and nothing more." Just this stanza features incredible use of rhythm, meter, rhyme, and alliteration. Remember, all 18 stanzas might overwhelm some! Rhythm is simply a pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables: DUMDa DUMDa DUMDa DUMDa DUMDa DUMDa Once up on a midnight dreary In The Raven, every other syllable is stressed. The pattern is nearly identical to Shakespeare's sonnets, so you could adapt this scaffolded sonnet activity to help students write with Poe's rhythm. Note that Poe starts lines with a stress, while Shakespeare starts with an unstressed syllable. Rhyme The Raven's rhyme scheme twists and turns, making this a great opportunity to push students' understandings of a seemingly simple topic. The ends of lines have the rather unusual rhyme scheme of ABCBBB, but it's Poe's internal rhyme that makes the pattern so intriguing. We see "tapping" rhymed with "napping" and "rapping" within lines, not at the end. Here's a color-coded version: 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 visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door— Only this, and nothing more." Line Length The Raven is mostly broken up into lines of 16 syllables (or eight "feet"). However, eagle eyed students will quickly spot that he deviates from this now and again. Perhaps a lesson to be learned: don't let structure dictate art. Each stanzas is made up of five of these 16 syllable lines plus a "half line" of seven syllables. Refrain This half line which ends each stanza serves as a refrain, always rhyming with "Nevermore." Use this as an example of the power of repetition in a poem. Alliteration My favorite part of The Raven is the masterful use of alliteration. Typically, students use alliteration as a goofy tool. But Poe uses it to add to the creepy, hypnotic tone of the poem. nodded, nearly napping rare and radiant doubting dreaming dreams... dared to dream shorn and shaven surcease of sorrow (My favorite: alliteration within a word!) Take A Listen If you're strapped for time, listen to one of these great readings of The Raven by five frightening fellows (all available on Youtube): And, of course, The Simpsons' take on the poem (also narrated by James Earl Jones) at TeacherTube. Psst. No guarantees, but I used flvto.com to grab the audio of these in case YouTube is blocked at your school. I'll send you one or two emails a month to help you better understand and differentiate for gifted students. Get free resources now!There's actually a lesson at Byrdseed.TV that's specifically about this article. Check it out now!Don't have time to create differentiated lessons? Byrdseed.TV today! Poe creates a strong internal rhyme by using alliteration and repetitive sounds. He uses rhyming words in the middle and end of the fourth line then rhymes with the end of the fifth line and the end of the stanza. Poe uses words that rhyme with "more" throughout each stanza to unify the poem not only in theme and content, but in structure as well. This rhyming pattern has a thundering, strong effect that adds to the intensity of the poem. Cummings...© 2004 Revised in 2010...© .Type of Work......."The Raven" is a narrative poem presented by a man lamenting the death of the woman he loved. While he mourns her, a raven enters his room through a window, perches on a bust of the goddess Athena, and repeatedly speaks the word nevermore. Date of Publication ......."The Raven" was published on Jan. 29, 1845, in The New York Mirror from a copy prepared for The American Review. Setting ......The scene is set in a chamber of a house in an undisclosed locale in the United States, circa 1845. The time is midnight. In a fireplace, embers are turning to ash. The narrator uses the word chamber rather than bedroom apparently because chamber has a dark and mysterious connotation. Source of Inspiration ......Poe was inspired to write his poem after reading about the raven in Charles Dickens's 1841 novel, Barnaby Rudge, a historical novel in which a mentally retarded person (Barnaby) is falsely accused of participating in anti-Catholic riots in 1780. Barnaby owns a pet raven, Grip, which can speak. In the fifth chapter of the novel, Grip taps at a shutter (as in Poe's poem). The model for Grip was Dickens's own talking raven, which was the first of three ravens owned by Dickens, all named Grip. After the first Grip died, it was stuffed and mounted. An admirer of Poe's works acquired the mounted bird and donated it to the Free Library of Philadelphia, where it is on display today. Point of View ......The narrator tells the story in first-person point of view. He is depressed, lonely, and possibly mentally unstable as a result of his bereavement. What Is a Raven? ......A raven, which can be up to two feet long, is a type of crow. Ravens eat small animals, carrion, fruit, and seeds. They often appear in legend and literature as sinister omens. Word Choice ......As in his short stories, Poe is careful to use words that contribute to the overall atmosphere and tone of "The Raven" relies as much on its musical sound and rhythmic pattern as on the meaning of the words. To achieve his musical effect, Poe uses rhyming words in the end of another line (end rhyme), alliteration (a figure of speech that repeats a consonant sound), and a regular pattern of accented and unaccented syllables. Metric Pattern ......Most of the lines in "The Raven" each contains an accented syllables, for a total of sixteen syllables, for a total of sixteen syllables. Each pair, which makes up a unit called a foot, consists of an accented (stressed) syllable followed by an unaccented (unstressed syllable). Whenever a foot contains an accented syllable incomplete foot is called a catalectic foot but is still regarded as one foot. Now, since the feet in the line are still trochees but contains only four feet, the line is said to be in trochaic tetrameter. Tetra- means four. End Rhyme ......In each stanza, lines 2, 4, 5, and 6 rhyme. Also the second line of any stanza rhymes with the second line of any other stanza. For example, lore in the second line of the first stanza rhymes with floor in the second line of the fourth stanza, and implore in the second line of the fourth stanza. Following is another example, the fourth stanza: 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. Internal Rhyme......To support the rhythm and musicality of the poem, Poe also uses internal rhyme in the first and third lines of each stanza. Here are examples. Stanza 1. Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary, . While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping Stanza 2. Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December. Eagerly I wished the morrow; vainly I had sought to borrow Sometimes Poe extends the internal rhyme into the following line. Here are examples: Then upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore. Nothing further then he uttered—not a feather then he fluttered— Till I scarcely more than muttered, "other friends have flown before. Need help with Shakespeare? Click here for Study Guides on the Complete Works .Summary of the PoemIt is midnight on a cold evening in December in the 1840s. In a dark and shadowy bedroom, wood burns in the fireplace as a man laments the death of Lenore, a woman he deeply loved. To occupy his mind, he reads a book of ancient stories. But a tapping noise disturbs him. When he opens the door to the bedroom, he sees nothing-only darkness. When the tapping persists, he opens the shutter of the window and discovers a raven, which flies into the room and lands above the door on a bust of Athena (Pallas in the poem), the goddess of wisdom and war in Greek mythology. It says "Nevermore" to all his thoughts and longings. The raven, a symbol of death, tells the man he will never again ("nevermore") see his beloved, never again hold her—even in heaven. Text With Explanatory Notes The Raven By Edgar Allan Poe 1......Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, 1 weak and weary, 2......Over many a quaint 2 and curious volume of forgotten my soul grew stronger; hesitating then no longer, 20...."Sir," said I, "or Madam, truly your forgiveness I implore10 21....But the fact is I was napping, tapping at my chamber door, 23....That I scarce was sure I heard you"—here I opened wide the door;— .Darkness there, and nothing more. 25....Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing, 26....Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortals ever dared to dream before; 27....But the silence was unbroken, and the stillness gave no token, 28....And the only word there spoken was the whispered word, "Lenore!" .....Merely this, and nothing more. 31....Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning, 32....Soon again I heard a tapping somewhat louder than before. 33...."Surely," said I, "surely that is something at my window lattice:11 34....Let me see, then, 29....This I whispered, and an echo murmured back the word, "Lenore!"— 30...... what thereat12 is, and this mystery explore— 35....Let my heart be still a moment and this mystery explore;— 36........... ..........'Tis the wind and nothing more." 37....Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt13 and flutter, 38....In there stepped a stately raven of the saintly days of yore14; 39....Not the least obeisance15 made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he; 40....But, with mien16 of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door— 41....Perched upon a bust17 of Pallas18 just above my chamber door— 42..... .....Perched, and sat, and nothing more. 43....Then this ebony19 bird beguiling20 my sad fancy into smiling, 44....By the grave and stern decorum of the ...Quoth26 the Raven, "Nevermore." 49....Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl 55....But the raven, sitting lonely on the placid30 bust, spoke only 56....That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour. 57....Nothing further then he uttered—not a feather then he fluttered—58....Till I scarcely more than muttered, "other friends have flown before— 59....On the morrow he will leave me, as my hopes have flown before." ..Then the bird said, "Nevermore." 61....Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken, 62...."Doubtless," said I, "what it utters is its only stock and store,31 63....Caught32 from some unhappy master whom unmerciful Disaster 64....Followed fast and followed faster till his songs one burden bore— 65....Till the dirges33 of ..Of 'Never—nevermore'." 67....But the Raven still beguiling all my fancy into smiling, 68....Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door; 69....Then upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking 70....Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore— ...Meant in croaking "Nevermore." 73....This I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing 74....To the fowl whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom's core; 75....This and more I sat divining, 35 with my head at ease reclining 76....On the cushion's 71....What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt34 and ominous bird of yore 72..... ....She shall press, ah, nevermore!36 79....Then methought the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer37 80....Swung by Seraphim whose footfalls tinkled on the tufted floor 81...."Wretch,"38 I cried, "thy God hath velvet lining that the lamplight gloated o'er, 77....But whose velvet violet lining with the lamplight gloating o'er, 78..... lent thee—by these angels he hath sent 82....Respite—39 respite and nepenthe,40 from thy memories of Lenore! 83....Quaff,41 oh quaff this kind nepenthe and forget this lost Lenore! 85....Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil!— prophet still, if bird or devil! 86....Whether Tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore, 87....Desolate yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted—88....On this home by horror haunted—tell me truly, I implore—89....Is there—is there balm in Gilead?43—tell me—tell me, I implore! 90.......Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore." 91...."Prophet!" said I, "thing of evil- prophet still, if bird or devil! 92....By that Heaven that bends above us—by that God we both adore- 93....Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,44 94....It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels name Lenore— 95....Clasp a rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore." 96...... word our sign in parting, bird or fiend," I shrieked, upstarting- 98...."Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore! 99....Leave my loneliness unbroken!—quit the bust above my door! 101..Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!" .Quoth the Raven, "Nevermore." 103..And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting, still is sitting 104..On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door; 105..And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming, 106..And the lamplight o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor; 107..And my soul from out ..Shall be lifted—nevermore!45. THE END Themes Grief The theme of the poem is the abject grief the narrator suffers after the death of his beloved. No matter how hard he tries, he cannot gain "surcease of sorrow . . . / For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore" (lines 10-11). Finality of Death The narrator, heartsick at the loss of Lenore, finds it extremely difficult to accept her death. When he hears the tapping, he even calls out her name, perhaps thinking that her spirit has come to visit him. But the raven, repeating the word "Nevermore," reminds him that Lenore will not return. Death is final and irreversible. Mental Instability So grief-stricken is the narrator with Lenore's death that he appears to become mentally unstable. The raven may be a hallucination--a manifestation of what he wishes to deny, the death of Lenore. Who Is Lenore? It is possible that Lenore, the idealized deceased woman in the poem, represents Poe's beloved wife, Virginia, who was in poor health when Poe wrote "The Raven." She died two years after the publication of the poem, when she was only in her mid-twenties. Criticism Some reviewers in Poe's day, including poet Walt Whitman, criticized today-and often parodied-for the same reason. However, the consensus of critics and ordinary readers appears to be that the poem is a meticulously crafted work of genius and fully deserves its standing as one of the most popular poems in American literature. It is indeed a great work. Figures of Speech ......Alliteration is an important figure of speech in "The Raven" because of its ability to impart rhythm and musicality. Following are examples of alliteration in the poem, as well as other figures of speech. Alliteration Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore . While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping . And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain . Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortals ever dared to dream before. Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter. What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt and ominous bird of yore Anaphora And the Raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting. Though its answer little meaning—littlerelevancy bore Metaphor And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor. Comparison of the ash to a ghost Onomatopoeia While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping As of some one gently rapping at my chamber door. And the silken sad uncertain rustling of each purple curtain. Swung by Seraphim whose footfalls tinkled on the tufted floor. Meant in croaking "Nevermore." Personification On the cushion's velvet lining that the lamplight gloated o'er The lamplight gloats, like a person. ..Notes1....pondered: Meditated, studied. 2....quaint: Archaic, old. 3....volume . . . lore: Book of knowledge or myths. 4....chamber: Bedroom or study. 5....ember . . . ghost: Each glowing wood fragment turned into ash. 6....morrow: Next day. 7....surcease: End, pause, delay. 8....fantastic: Unreal, imaginary; weird, strange. 9....entreating: Begging, pleading for. 10..implore: Beg, ask for. 11..lattice: Shutter. 12..thereat: There, at that place. 13..flirt: Jerk. 14..yore: The distant past. 15..obeisance: Bow, gesture of respect. 16..mien: Manner. 17..bust: Small sculpture showing the head, shoulders, and chest. 18..Pallas: Athena, Greek goddess of wisdom. 19..ebony: Black 20..beguiling: Charming, coaxing 21..decorum . . . wore: Look on its face. 22..crest: tuft of feathers on the head. 23..shorn: Cut. 24..craven: Coward. 25..Night's Plutonian shore: 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. 26.. Quoth: Spoke, said. 27.. to hear . . . plainly: The narrator is surprised that the raven can speak. 28.. little . . . bore: The raven's answer made little sense. 29.. Nevermore: The narrator at first thinks the raven's name is "Nevermore." However, he later learns that "Nevermore" means he will never again see the woman he loved. 30...placid: Peaceful. 31...its only . . . gaunt: The bird is now the image of death. 35..divining: Trying to figure out. 36...press . . . nevermore." Never again rest her head on the cushion. 37..censer: Vessel in which incense is burned. 38..Wretch: The narrator is referring to himself. 39..Respite: Rest, pause. 40..nepenthe: Drug causing forgetfulness. 41..Quoth: Said, spoke. 43..is . . . Gilead: Ointment used to heal. Anything that heals, soothes, or relieves suffering. The balm of Gilead is mentioned in the Bible (Jeremiah 8:22). 44..Aidenn: Paradise, heaven, Eden. 45..Shall . . . nevermore: The narrator will never again see Lenore represent Poe's wife, Virginia? Explain your answer. Write an essay that explain how poem achieves its rhythmic, musical effect? Write a short poem that imitates the rhyme scheme and meter of "The Raven." The topic is open. Author Information.......Edgar Allan Poe was born on January 19, 1809, in Boston. After being orphaned at age two, he was taken into the home of a childless couple-John Allan, a successful businessman in Richmond, Va., and his wife. Allan was believed to be Poe's godfather. At age six, Poe went to England with the Allans and was enrolled in schools, then attended the University of Virginia and the U.S. Military Academy, but did not complete studies at either school. ......After beginning his literary career as a poet and prose writer, he married his young cousin, Virginia Clemm. He worked for several magazines and joined the staff of the New York Mirror newspaper in 1844. All the while, he was battling a drinking problem. After the Mirror published his poem "The Raven" in January 1845, Poe achieved national and international fame. Besides pioneering the development of the short story, Poe invented the format for the detective story as we know it today. He also was an outstanding literary critic. ......Despite the acclaim he received, Poe was never really happy because of his drinking and because of the deaths of several people close to him, including his wife in 1847. He frequently had trouble paying his debts. It is believed that heavy drinking was a contributing cause of his death in Baltimore on October 7, 1849. . . . Poe Study Guides

