

The Raven

By Edgar Allan Poe

Names:

This is a fun small group activity that can be used in grades 8 through 12. This is an assignment that requires deep thinking and that the students actually enjoy. I usually introduce this activity in October to set the Halloween theme. Divide the class up into small groups of a minimum of 2 students but no more than 4 students. Give each group one of more verses of Edgar Alan Poe's poem The Raven. Have the students totally and thoroughly translate the verse(s) into today's modern language. Any vocabulary must be simplified and their text must be clearly understandable and must remain within Poe's original context and meaning. This is an example from the first verse that you can use to get the class started and to explain the assignment.

The Raven

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Names:

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.”

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Today's translation

On a dark, foggy, creepy night around midnight, I laid in depression thinking about curious books about legends that have been long forgotten. While I was almost asleep, I started to doze, suddenly I heard a knock, a very light knocking at my bedroom door. This was strange but I thought to myself, "Must be some visitor knocking so late at my bedroom door. Yes, this is what it is and nothing else."

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Names:

Stanza 1

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 someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
"Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door -
Only this, and nothing more."

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Stanza 2

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.

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Names:

Stanza 3

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."

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Stanza 4

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.

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Names:

Stanza 5

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.

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Names:

Stanza 6

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."