Short Stories Analysis: The Masque Of The Red Death By Edgar Allan Poe

Edgar Allan Poe was an American critic, poet, and short-story writer. He was best known as the father of detective stories and known for his dark imaginative storytelling and writing. Behind his amazing work there is an even more intriguing life story. Poe, born in 1809, had a very dark and sad fulfilled life. With his father leaving when he was 1 to his mother dying when he was 3 he had a difficult childhood. When he was adopted by Allan's his life only got a little better with a loving foster mother and a good education. By the time he moved to college he had lost two women he loved and still didn't have a good father figure in his life. After falling in debt because of college he joined the Army and published his first book. 7 years after his foster mother dies he marries his cousin Virginia, age 13. While his love life with Virginia was great he struggled to make ends meet and publish his poems. Pos most famous poem "The Raven" was published in 1845 earning him only 14 dollars. 2 years later Virginia dies of tuberculosis with him following 2 years later. It is known that the main inspiration behind Edgar Allan Poe's work was his life history and the people he loved and lost along the way.

Edgar Allan Poe's poem "Alone" Is most commonly known to be inspired by his childhood. "Alone" is written from the viewpoint of an adult looking back on his childhood in the first person. Even in the first fine of the poem you can easily see and feel how personal this is for Poe, "From childhood's hour I have not been As others were - I have not seen As others saw - I could not bring My passions from a common spring -"(Poe, Lines 1-4) The poem features isolation, rejection and loneliness. Poe experienced all of those feelings and more in his upbringing.

His father leaving and age 1 and his mother dying at age 3 there is not telling the confusion and isolation he must of felt. Most people think Poe was an only child but he had an older brother William and a younger sister Rosalie. Separated after their mother died Poe was adopted by the Allan's and was rejected by his foster father John. John Allan was a tobacco merchant and never treated Edgar like his real son only another mouth to feed. When Frances Allan his foster mother, who loved him dearly got Tuberculosis, Mr. Allan started to have affairs and resented Edgar more for standing up for Mrs. Allan's honor. Soon Mr. Allan sent Edgar away to college with only enough money to pay for tuition and took Poe out of the will. He only knew the love from Mrs. Allan and was lonely without her. In the video on biography.com over Edgar Allan

Poe's life goes over Poe's life events and how the poem "Alone" is extremely autobiographical. The video goes into detail about his childhood and how his hard childhood shaped who he was as an adult.

The poem "Annabel Lee" by Poe is a Romance poem. The hints left in this poem by Edgar point to his inspiration being his loving with Virginia which was also his cousin. In the poem he writes about his love Annabel Lee and how much they loved each other and what their love was like. He mentioned that she was a child and so was he but their love was pure and strong. In the poem it states " A wind blew out of a cloud by night Chilling my Annabel Lee"(Poe, lines 15-16) meaning she died turning cold. This poem is said to be written when he was grieving his wife after her death and why he thinks she was taken from him.

After Edgar was kicked out of West Point he went to live with his Aunt and Cousin Virginia. His cousin was only 8 years old then. After he left them to work he Got news that Virginia would be sent away. In a frantic state of mind, he begins to drink and confesses his love for her in a letter to his Aunt. Soon they become married him at 27 years old and Virginia only 13. They lied about her age and said she was 21. Their marriage is described to have been more like brother and sister rather than husband and wife. He adored her and was happy with her but 6 years into their marriage Virginia developed Tuberculosis and died five years later. Virginia was the fourth woman Poe had loved and died. While Virginia was sick Poe tried to make ends meet and write but became a drunk and could not afford to feed her or get her medicine. He wrote “The Raven” While she was sick but only made 14 dollars enough to move to a cottage. He embodied his eternal love for Virginia in the poem “Annabel Lee”. In an essay by Cynthia Bily analyzing the “Annabel Lee” poem by Edgar Allan Poe she points out all the hints that the poem is about his love for Virginia. She talks about how in the poem he writes about how the angels envied her and their love and the resentment Annabel’s kingsmen had about their relationship. There are clues that the angels were people in society that did not approve of their marriage and the kingsmen is the family members that did not approve as well. Cynthia believes that the purpose of the poem is not only to show the love they shared but to show the people that disapproved that their criticism and negativity did not stop or hinder their love for each other.

Edgar Allan Poe wrote many short stories. Although he wrote many detective stories one of his most famous short stories is “The Masque of the Red Death”. The story is about a Prince called Prince Prospero who is running away from and trying to avoid a sickness that is taking over and the country. He is trying to escape by locking himself in a castle with a thousand friends. He believes if he parties with his friends and has fun death will skip over him. Somehow the disease enters the castle and one by one everyone dies.

Poe was experienced with death and knew how death would come to everyone eventually it was just a matter of time. No matter what Poe did in his life death was always around taking people one by one like in the story. It is said that the Red Death stands for tuberculosis.All of the woman he loved and was close to died of this disease along with his brother. First his mother when he was 3, then his foster mother Mrs. Allan when he was 20, Then his brother William when he was 22 and his loving wife and cousin Virginia when he was 33. In the story the Ebony clock is mentioned and focused on. It is a symbol that death is always coming for you and time is ticking away. The colors of the rooms in the castle are symbolic to Poe’s progression in life. Blue represents birth, purple represents youth, green represents adolescence, orange represents adulthood, white represents old age, violet represents imminent death, and black represents death itself. In Tracy Caldwell analysis essay over “The masque of the Red Death” she goes in-depth of the seventh room. The seventh room has the Ebony clock that represents time ticking away till death and the windows are stained red to represent blood. She goes into detail about how the Black room can also be a hint to the black death known now as the Plague. Most people believe that Edgar Allan Poe’s work had hints about the future such as the Plague.

Some of Edgar’s short stories and poems have a vague meaning to them. You have to think hard about them to see why he wrote it and how he used his own life for inspiration. One of those types of short stories is “ The Pit and the Pendulum”. In this story the narrator is being tortured and imprisoned. He is thrown in a cell that has a giant pit located in the center. And given bread and water that has some drugs in it to make him sleep. When he regains

consciousness he notices he is strapped to a table. He is offered food and soon sees rats coming to eat it. He stares at the ceiling to see a pendulum swinging back and forth above him gradually getting closer to his body. He was hopeful he would escape but still scared as he rubs the food on the straps and the rats chew the food and the straps freeing him. He is then put back into the cell and notices the walls are hot and moving closer to him forcing him closer the pit. Right before he falls into the pit the French General catches him and saves him informing him they have taken over the prison.

This story may seem like just a dark suspenseful story by Poe but it is really him explaining how he has felt in his life. At the start of his childhood, he was alone and hopeless with his father leaving and mother dying. When he was adopted he felt imprisoned by Mr. Allan and his gruffness. He never felt loved by him only by Mrs. Allan. His first crush, Jane Stanard died when he was 15. She was the mother of a school friend and died of brain cancer. Whenever he was unhappy he would go to her for support. He wrote the poem “To Helen” about his love for her. He became depressed for a short time after her death resembling the prison. Thought his life he has been depressed and can never catch a break. He never earned a lot of money doing anything. While in college he went in debt of 2,000 dollars just for food and clothes. He tried gambling to make the money back but unfortunately never got good enough to make anything. He became a drunk to hide his shame from himself and make him forget everything going wrong. Kind of like the drugged water to make him forget how the cell was laid out and be unconscious while they move him to other areas. When he joined the Army, he used a different name so the debt collectors couldn't find him and he published a book and soon was kicked out for neglecting his duties. He then published his second book while studying at west point but never made any money off of any publication. He was a prisoner of the lower class but was hopeful it would turn around like with the pendulum. Some say the breaking of the straps and the rats resembles how Virginia made him feel inside. Although he was in a terrible situation the rats helped him stay hopeful and saved his life. Even when his writing wasn't going well or he was being hated by people because of his critiquing she was there for him to cheer him up and keep him hopeful things were going to get better. The cell collapsing on him with heated walls can symbolize the process of Virginia dying slowly with tuberculosis and her death. It was a long, hard process trying to make money and keep her alive. The general saving him is his death. He had nothing and no one to live for. Even after Virginia's death he was trying to find a wife so he wouldn't have to die alone. He was a drunken wreck and was finally at peace when he died. His dying words were God help my poor soul. Poe wrote about how glorious death would be and how he couldn't wait to see the woman he loved again. Patricia Cohen wrote an article for the New York Times called “Poe’s Cottage, Weak and Weary No More.” In the article talks about how poor Poe was and even living in a cottage he couldn’t keep Virginia warm and fed. If he was alive now he would have had enough money to do anything he wanted. In the Migell Book Review, they review the pain and torture the narrator went through but he still was calm though some of the issues he faced. He can't always trust his senses and he figures that out when the room isn't like he thought it was just like with Poe’s writings. He thought he was writing amazing work but the public thought it was too dark and hated it.

Although Poe’s wasn't popular in his time he is one of the most popular writers of our time. It’s sad to think that even after “The Raven” was written that he got so little out of it. He only accumulated 6,200 dollars over his 18 years of writing. He did so much for literature and the education system that is active today. There is no doubt that Edgar Allan Poe’s life inspired his poems and stories. His life may have not been the base of everything that he has written but it is the reasoning behind a good amount of his writings.

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