Edgar Allan Poe was born in Boston in 1809. He lost his parents in early childhood and was adopted by a Mr Allan of Richmond, Virginia. He went to University and soon got deeply into debt with gambling. For some years he led a wild, reckless life. First poems were published in 1827.

He joined the army, but managed to get himself discharged for neglect of duty in 1831. He married his cousin Virginia Clemm in 1836. He decided to make his living by writing. He wrote one of the first modern detective stories: “The Murders in the Rue Morgue“.

“The Raven“ came out in 1845. It is perhaps the finest poem in English literature.

Although he was admired as a poet, he is most famous for his horror stories, such as “The Fall of the House of Usher”, which tells the tale of a madman who buries his sister alive. Many of his stories have inspired horror movies.

The death of his wife 1847 was a severe blow to Poe. 1849 he died miserably after a violent drinking-bout.

The Raven

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.”

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.

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.”
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.

Deep into the 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.

Back into the chamber turning, all my soul within me burning, Soon again I heard a tapping, something 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.”

Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter, In there stepped a stately raven, of the saintly days of yore. Not the least obeisance made he; not a minute stopped or stayed he; But with mien of lord or lady, perched above my chamber door. Perched upon a bust of Pallas, just above my chamber door, Perched, and sat, and nothing more.

Then this ebony bird beguiling my sad fancy into smiling, By the grave and stern decorum of the countenance it wore, “Though thy crest be shorn and shaven thou,” I said, “art sure no craven, Ghastly, grim, and ancient raven, wandering from the nightly shore. Tell me what the lordly name is on the Night's Plutonian shore.” Quoth the raven, “Nevermore.”

Much I marvelled this ungainly fowl to hear discourse so plainly, Though its answer little meaning, little relevancy bore For we cannot help agreeing that no living human being Ever yet was blessed with seeing bird above his chamber door, Bird or beast upon the sculptured bust above his chamber door, With such name as “Nevermore.”

But the raven, sitting lonely on that placid bust, spoke only That one word, as if his soul in that one word he did outpour. Nothing further then he uttered; not a feather then he fluttered; Till I scarcely more than muttered, “Other friends have flown before; On the morrow he will leave me, as my hopes have flown before.” Then the bird said, “Nevermore.”
Startled at the stillness broken by reply so aptly spoken,
“Doubtless,” said I, “what it utters is its only stock and store,
Caught from some unhappy master, whom unmerciful disaster
Followed fast and followed faster, till his songs one burden bore,---
Till the dirges of his hope that melancholy burden bore
Of “Never---nevermore.”

But the raven still beguiling all my sad soul into smiling,
Straight I wheeled a cushioned seat in front of bird, and bust and door;
Then, upon the velvet sinking, I betook myself to linking
Fancy unto fancy, thinking what this ominous bird of yore --
What this grim, ungainly, ghastly, gaunt and ominous bird of yore
Meant in croaking “Nevermore.”

Thus I sat engaged in guessing, but no syllable expressing
To the fowl, whose fiery eyes now burned into my bosom’s core.
This and more I sat divining, with my head at ease reclining
On the cushion’s velvet lining that the lamplight gloated o’er,
But whose velvet violet lining with the lamplight gloating o’er
She shall press, ah, nevermore!

Then, methought, the air grew denser, perfumed from an unseen censer
Swung by seraphim whose footfalls tinkled on the tufted floor.
“Wretch,” I cried, “thy God hath lent thee -- by these angels he hath
Sent thee respite---respite and nepenthe from thy memories of Lenore!
Quaff, o quaff this kind nepenthe, and forget this lost Lenore!”
Quoth the raven, “Nevermore!”

“Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil!--prophet still, if bird or devil!
Whether tempter sent, or whether tempest tossed thee here ashore,
Desolate, yet all undaunted, on this desert land enchanted--
On this home by horror haunted--tell me truly, I implore:
Is there--is there balm in Gilead?--tell me--tell me I implore!”
Quoth the raven, “Nevermore.”

“Prophet!” said I, “thing of evil!--prophet still, if bird or devil!
By that heaven that bends above us--by that God we both adore--
Tell this soul with sorrow laden, if, within the distant Aidenn,
It shall clasp a sainted maiden, whom the angels name Lenore---
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden, whom the angels name Lenore?
Quoth the raven, “Nevermore.”

“Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!” I shrieked, upstarting--
“Get thee back into the tempest and the Night's Plutonian shore!
Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!
Leave my loneliness unbroken! -- quit the bust above my door!
Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!”
Quoth the raven, “Nevermore.”
And the raven, never flitting, still is sitting, still is sitting  
On the pallid bust of Pallas just above my chamber door;  
And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming.  
And the lamplight o'er him streaming throws his shadow on the floor;  
And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor  
Shall be lifted—nevermore!

**Balm of Gilead** was a rare perfume used medicinally, that was mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, and named for the region of Gilead in Palestine where it was produced.

**Plutonian** is a reference to Pluto, the Roman god of the underworld.

**Pallas** refers to Pallas Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom. The bust of Pallas in the narrator’s chamber represents his interest in learning and scholarship.

**Cross out the unsuitable option:**

A happy / lonely man tries to ease his “sorrow for the lost Lenore,” by distracting his mind with old books / latest bestsellers of “forgotten lore”. He is interrupted while he is “enjoying a juicy cheeseburger” / “nearly napping”, by a “tapping on his chamber door”. As he opens the door, he bumps into a huge raven. / finds “darkness there and nothing more.” Into the darkness he whispers / shouts, “Lenore,” hoping his lost love had come back / disappeared forever, but all that could be heard was “an echo / his parrot that murmured back the word ‘Lenore!’”

With a cigarette butt between his lips / burning soul, the man returns to his chamber, and this time he can hear a shattering / tapping at the window lattice. As he “flung open the shutter,” “in there stepped a stately raven,” the bird of ill-omen / symbol of eternal love. The raven perches on the bust of Pallas, the goddess of wisdom in Greek mythology / the Salvation Army, above his chamber door.

The man asks the raven for another drink / its name, and surprisingly it answers, and croaks “Nevermore”. The bird says that the man / The man knows that the bird does not speak from wisdom, but has been taught / sold by “some unhappy master,” and that the word “nevermore” is its actually “spick and span.” / only “stock and store.”

The man ignores / welcomes the raven, and is afraid that the raven will fly a fierce attack / be gone in the morning, “as his hopes have flown before”. However, the raven answers, “Nevermore.” The man pulls up a bed and goes to sleep, not / chair, interested in what the raven “meant in croaking, ‘Nevermore.’” The chair, where Lenore once sat, / which breaks down, brings back painful memories. The man, who knows the irrational nature in the raven’s colour / speech, still cannot help but ask the raven questions. / give the raven food.

Since the narrator is aware that the raven is all-knowing, / only knows one word, he can anticipate the bird's responses. “Is there balm in Gilead?” - “Always” / “Nevermore.” Can Lenore be found in Paradise? - “Nevermore.”/ “Who knows?” “Take thy form from off my door!” - “Nevermore.” / “Let's think about it.” Finally, the man concedes, realizing that to continue this dialogue would bring Lenore back to life. / be pointless. And his “soul from out that shadow” that he himself / the raven throws on the floor, “shall be lifted -- nevermore!”