



“I have no faith in human perfectability. I think that human exertion will have no appreciable effect upon humanity. Man is now only more active - not more happy - nor more wise, than he was 6000 years ago.”

—EDGAR ALLAN POE



# Backstage Pass

STUDENT GUIDE FOR DAYTIME PERFORMANCES

2011/2012

WWW.PASAOONLINE.ORG

## AN EVENING WITH EDGAR ALLAN POE BY ROBERT MASON

Presented with the U.L. School of Music and Performing Arts

### STUDENT PERFORMANCES

TUESDAY  
OCT 25  
10:30 AM  
BURKE HALL AT  
UL LAFAYETTE

WEDNESDAY  
OCT 26  
10:30 AM  
BURKE HALL AT  
UL LAFAYETTE

## An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe by Robert Mason

PRESENTED BY



### An Evening with E.A. Poe PERFORMANCE REVIEW continued....

- Many Poe stories have surprise twists or endings. Did people in the audience often seem surprised?
- Poe stories tend to have horror and scary elements in them. How did the audience react to these?

#### Paragraph Four:

Consider the content of An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe.

- Many people think of horror and immediately think of movies, but An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe is a staged play. What differences can you think of in how these same stories would be produced in a play and in a movie?
- Think of the production terminology, technical elements, and theater jobs that you have studied. Who do you think developed the things you see on stage, and what do you believe is used to create any special effects or memorable moments onstage?
- How well do you think the director and technical staff did their jobs?
- Feel free to compare and contrast this performance to another performance or movie you have seen.



#### Paragraph Five:

Close by re-imagining the production of An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe. Imagine that you have been chosen to design and direct a movie version of the play.

- What actors and actresses would you want to see in the different roles?
- What sort of sets and costumes would you use?
- Would you integrate particular lighting, special effects, or music?
- Are there any Poe stories that were not included in An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe that you would like to see as part of your production?
- How would you want people to feel at the end of your movie?

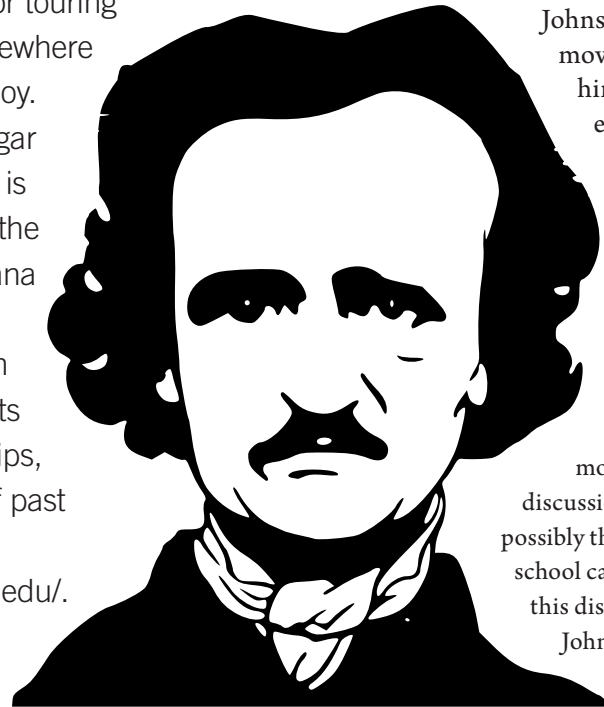
### DO'S AND DON'TS OF GOOD THEATER BEHAVIOR

The Golden Rule, “Treat others as you would want to be treated,” can be applied to any situation. This includes going to a theater to watch a play or a performance. Consider the rules below. Place an X next to anything that does not describe good theater behavior, and think about how you can correct bad behavior and present your best self at a performance.

1. \_\_\_\_ Eat or drink in the theater, even if no refreshments are sold there.
2. \_\_\_\_ Turn your cell phone off.
3. \_\_\_\_ Remain in your seat until intermission. Even bathroom breaks should be avoided until this time.
4. \_\_\_\_ Shout your opinion at the performers onstage.
5. \_\_\_\_ Clap at end of an act, a scene, after a wonderful moment called a “show-stopper”, or at the end of a production. If you are unsure, clap when others do.
6. \_\_\_\_ Talk to other people around you if you get bored.
7. \_\_\_\_ Sing along at an opera or a musical.
8. \_\_\_\_ Arrive on time.
9. \_\_\_\_ Sit in your assigned seat for the entire performance.
10. \_\_\_\_ Enjoy yourself and learn new things.

More information on theater behavior and a crossword puzzle that can be used to reinforce this lesson are found in the teacher guide at [www.pasa-online.org](http://www.pasa-online.org).

An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe will be different from most PASA performances for one special reason. Typically, PASA brings in an artist, group, or touring production from elsewhere for audiences to enjoy. An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe, however, is being produced by the University of Louisiana at Lafayette. To get more information on ULL’s performing arts program, scholarships, or to see pictures of past productions, visit <http://pfar.louisiana.edu/>.



## The Man Who Interpreted POE

FOR TRAVIS JOHNSON, UL PROFESSOR AND DIRECTOR OF AN EVENING WITH EDGAR ALLAN POE, IT WAS A CASE OF LOVE AT FIRST READ.

Johnson, who grew up watching the original Twilight Zone and classic horror movies with his mother, says that he has always enjoyed the thrill of scaring himself with his imagination. “Throughout my education,” he recalls, “I was exposed to Poe and instantly fell in love with his writings.”

Key in Johnson’s memory of studying Poe in high school is a discussion of Poe’s classic poem “The Raven.” He describes this lesson as “the most spirited and inclusive discussion we had all year, possibly the whole of my high school career.” When asked why this discussion was so significant, Johnson remembers being wowed by the power

of language in the poem and fascinated by how each person in his class imagined the piece slightly different from how other people saw it.

“Seeing” how Poe’s work can come to life is a big part of Johnson’s job today. He is not only directing An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe, but also designing the set for the production. Johnson says his goal is to create an experience “much like a marathon of the Twilight Zone onstage.” Travis designed the show so that there will be very little downtime between the six Poe stories that make up the play. All of the stories will revolve around one set that allows for furniture and props to be added, subtracted, and re-arranged in a smooth flow.

“Beauty of whatever kind, in its supreme development, invariably excites the sensitive soul to tears.” —EDGAR ALLAN POE

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## An ImPOEsing Presence

Edgar Allan Poe lived for just 40 years, but his influence has lasted...and lasted...and lasted. Two hundred years later, Edgar Allan Poe references still abound in pop culture today. Just where can his influence be seen?

**IN SPORTS:** In 1996, when the NFL team now known as the Baltimore Ravens made a move to the city where Edgar Allan Poe often worked and was buried, a fan contest to re-name the team was established. Following one fan's suggestion, the team was renamed after the bird in Poe's famous poem "The Raven." An image of this famed creature appears on the team's helmets to this day.

**ON TELEVISION:** Many, many television shows have referenced Edgar Allan Poe or based entire episodes on his writings. In *The Simpsons*, the entire poem "The Raven" was re-enacted with Homer as the narrator and Bart as the raven in the original "Treehouse of Horror" episode. Edgar Allan Poe is credited as a co-writer on that episode, and his works are referenced again in an episode called "Lisa's Rival" (where Lisa competes against a girl who re-creates a scene from "The Tell-Tale Heart").

**AT THE MOVIES:** *The Raven*, which stars actor John Cusack and is directed by James McTeigue, will be released in 2012. Shots from this movie, which features Poe as a character working alongside a detective trying to track a serial killer, have begun leaking onto the internet, and talks of a sequel are already in works.

## Theatrical ProPOEositioning

# How does a story become a play?

Even though plays and stories both have a plot and characters, the differences in how they are put together are immense. Since a play is performed live and without the benefit of flashbacks or background information, speeches must be used to convey most of the information to the audience. However, while a story uses descriptive words to tell a reader about setting, a play actually shows the setting. Also, a theater-goer sees what characters think and feel rather than having to picture it for themselves.

All of these words are parts of a play or have something to do with how a play is put together. Reference this list when writing your performance review.

### Production Terminology and Theatrical Elements:

**ACT:** large unit of a play that consists of several scenes. Sometimes a break between Acts indicates the passage of time in the play.

**ACTORS:** individuals who portray the characters in a play.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS OR DRAMATIC PERSONAE:** list of all characters in the play that often provides a brief description or significant information about character. This is likely found in your program.

**COSTUMES:** clothing, make-up, hairstyles, etc. worn by the performers to make them appear to be the people or things they are portraying for the performance.

**HAND PROPS:** small items such as telephones, books, or weapons that actors can hold and interact with during a scene.

**LIGHTING:** stage lights work with sets, costumes, props, and performers to create pictures and to tell stories. Lighting is often used to suggest time of day or to enhance the mood of the play and in some cases, shadows are deliberately created for visual effect.

**LIGHTING CUES:** directions for raising, dimming, or turning off the lights during a scene.

**PROLOGUE:** spoken introduction to a work that provides background information about the characters, conflicts, and setting.

**SCENE:** small division of a play; several scenes put together form an Act.

**SET:** backdrops and structures used to suggest setting (place and time) of a play. The set can appear very realistic or simply suggest the surrounding.

**STAGE DIRECTIONS:** notes included in the script or given by the director that tell actors when to enter, where to stand, what emotions to use, etc.

### Theater Jobs:

**DIRECTOR:** develops a vision for the production and sees that it is carried out with the help of many other designers and managers.

**COSTUME DESIGNER:** makes actors look like the characters they are portraying by coordinating the outfits, wigs, and make-up to transform the actors and ensuring their looks are complimentary to the world created by the lights and the set.

**LIGHTING DESIGNER:** responsible for designing lighting effects that enhances the feeling of a production and help create the world of the play.

**SCENIC DESIGNER:** envisions sets and props to help create the world of the play.

**STAGE MANAGER:** in charge backstage during rehearsals and performances.

## An Evening with E.A. Poe Performance Review

### THE PROJECT

Write a performance review of *An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe*.

### WRITING REQUIREMENTS

Unlike formal essays, which require neutral language, reviews make their point in part by being spunky and fun. Avoid giving a straight summary of the performance. Instead, focus on your opinions and reactions, and support these with observations and explanations. You may also want to amp up your writing by including the following:

- unique simile or metaphor
- hyperbole
- catchy title
- rhetorical questions designed to draw in the reader

### THE FORMAT

#### Paragraph One:

Create a catchy intro where you answer the following:

- What did you expect before seeing *An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe*?
- What did you study in preparation for this performance? Have you seen or read a poem or short story by Poe before?

#### Paragraphs Two and Three:

Be a critic here and rate the performance of *An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe*. Comment on all the elements of the production. Be opinionated! Tell what you did or did not like and why. Make specific references to the performance, but do not feel the need to summarize the whole thing. This is also a good place to include some humor.

### OVERALL PERFORMANCE

- Give your opinion of the quality of the actors. Did they really seem to become the Poe characters? Mention any standout performances here.
- What sort of emotions did these actors portray? Did you relate to them?
- What character or storyline was your favorite? Why?
- Give your opinion of the costumes and sets used in this production. What did you like or not like? Why?

### AUDIENCE APPEAL

- How did the audience react to the performance? Did they seem engaged? Provoked? What parts generated the most applause or other response?
- What sort of people do you think would like this performance?
- What sort of people do you think would not like or understand this performance?
- Did you overhear any other audience members' reactions that are worth quoting or reporting?



“To be thoroughly conversant with a man’s heart, is to take our final lesson in the iron-clasped volume of despair.”

—EDGAR ALLAN POE

## P is for Poe...and for Plot

### OFTEN, THE TWO MOST REMEMBERED PARTS OF A STORY ARE THE BEGINNING AND THE END.

Edgar Allan Poe was a master of surprise endings, and the plot twists and turns in his work are famously noteworthy as well. To begin learning about Poe and his plots, review the summary of “The Tell-Tale Heart” that gives the exposition (beginning of a story where characters and circumstances are explained and background is given) and the rising action (early events in the story that begin building a conflict).

After seeing *An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe*, you will be asked to supply information on the climax (moment when the conflict is fully realized), falling action (events occurring as a result of the conflict) and resolution (or wrap-up to a story, if any exists). You will also be asked to note if irony (a situation where what one does or says seems at odds with reality) or foreshadowing (where clues are used to tell you what will happen later on in the story) are part of the plot.

Use the theatrical notes section to share your thoughts and reactions to an actor, a line of dialogue, a costume, or any special effects you particularly liked. Later on, you can use this information for writing a performance review.

Summaries of each Poe story seen in *An Evening with Edgar Allan Poe* can be found in the teacher guide at [pasaonline.org](http://pasaonline.org).

### The Story: “The Tell-Tale Heart”

#### Characters:

- **Burke** – nervous and poorly dressed
- **Old Man** – has one blue eye with a film over it
- **Policemen**

#### The Exposition:

Burke reveals that he has a nervous condition that has sharpened his senses. The Old Man's evil-looking, vulture-like eye has tortured him. He plans to kill the old man, and looks in on him seven nights in a row. However, he does not kill the man since his eye is not open, and the problem he has is truly with the eye and not the man.

#### The Rising Action:

Burke awakens the Old Man at night and sees his eye open. He kills the old man and dismembers and hides the body.

#### The Climax:

#### Falling Action:

#### Resolution:

#### Foreshadowing:

#### Irony:

#### Theatrical Notes:

Continued on back.....