



Visualizing “The Raven”: The Illustrations of Gustav Doré

Grades 9-12

60 minutes

Objective

Books have featured illustration since the beginning of bookmaking, from illuminated manuscripts to graphic novels. Today, we will explore how illustration enhances the reading experience by looking at and discussing “The Raven” by Edgar Allan Poe, illustrated by Gustav Doré. This book, published in 1884, is an item held by Pequot Library in its Special Collections. Students will view Dore’s illustrations as they appear alongside “The Raven”, and discuss the way he interpreted the text.

Questions

1. How does illustration enhance the reading experience?

- Adds a visual narrative for the reader
- Adds a visually artistic component to text
- Creates a mood
- Magnifies the power of the writer’s words
- Makes a story come to life
- Offers visual cues for developing readers
- Brings the reader deeper into a story
- Makes the reader think about a story in a new way
- Creates an emotional response - amusement, fear, etc

2. How would you describe Poe’s writing style?

- How would you describe the themes or subjects he writes about?
- What mood does he create through his writing?
- Who has read “The Raven?” What is it about (theme, mood, plot, etc)?



Activity:

Read “The Raven” alongside Doré’s illustrations. Discuss:

- How do these illustrations reflect the text?
- How do they add a new dimension to the text?
- How do they make you feel?
- Do you think the illustrator captures the mood, time period, story well? Why/why not?
- Are Doré and Poe well matched?
- What, if any, other interpretations have you seen of “The Raven?” How do they compare?

Follow up activities

- Students choose a passage from the poem and create their own illustration that reflects their interpretation of the text.
- Students select an illustration and write a new, unique passage that reflects the illustration in their own words and voice.

Background

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)

Widely recognized as America’s first great lyric poet, Edgar Allan Poe was the inventor of the modern detective story, a pioneer of science fiction, and the master of the macabre. Poe’s tales of terror and the bizarre characters that populate his stories have captured readers’ imaginations and influenced popular culture for over 160 years, through recurring themes of mourning, wonder, the grotesque, and the supernatural - many of which were present throughout the trials and tribulations that plagued his life.





Gustave Doré (1832 – 1883)

Gustave Doré was a French illustrator and sculptor. He was one of the most successful and prolific book illustrators of the 19th century. His work is characterized by darkly splendid scenes that create a dreamlike fantasy for the reader. He is famous for his wood-engraved book illustrations, having produced over 90 illustrated books including the large folio *Bible* (1855) and the *Inferno of Dante* (1866). He illustrated works by literary icons including Dante, Balzac, Milton, Coleridge, Tennyson, and Lord Byron. His more popular interpretations include Milton's *Paradise Lost* (which Pequot Library also holds in its Special Collections) and *Little Red Riding Hood*, but some of his most haunting work was for Edgar Allan Poe's writings.



The Raven

by Edgar Allan Poe

New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1884.

Illustrated by Gustave Doré.

Perhaps the most quoted of Poe's poems, "The Raven" forms part of our cultural psyche. Gustave Doré (1832 – 1883) was a French illustrator and sculptor. He earned 30,000 francs from Harper & Brothers in 1883 for his illustrations.

Notes on Dore's *The Raven*:

- Completed in 1883, the 26 plates Doré illustrated for Poe's poem "The Raven" were actually not published until after his death on January 23 of that year. Doré died shortly after completing the illustrations, at the age of fifty-one, and this exquisite edition was posthumously published in 1884.





- In *Fantasy and Faith: The Art of Gustave Doré* by Eric Zafran, Edmund C. Stedman wrote in the introduction to the edition that “Doré proffers a series of variations upon the theme as he conceived it: ‘the enigma of death and the hallucinations of an inconsolable soul ...’ Plainly there was something in common between the working moods of Poe and Doré. Both resorted often to the elf-land of fantasy and romance.”

Resources

***The Raven* Illustrated by Gustav Doré**

Interactive website that allows you to read *The Raven* along with the illustrations as they appear:

<https://poestories.com/gallery/the-raven-dore>

Text of *The Raven*

<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/48860/the-raven>

“Gustav Dore’s Hauntingly Beautiful 1883 Illustrations for Edgar Allan Poe’s *The Raven*”

<https://www.brainpickings.org/2015/08/05/gustav-dore-poe-the-raven/>

“Rediscovering the Dark Splendor of Gustave Doré with Edgar Allan Poe”

<https://hyperallergic.com/102457/rediscovering-the-dark-splendor-of-gustave-dore-with-edgar-allan-poe/>



PEQUOT
LIBRARY



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.
“T is some visiter,” I muttered, “tapping at my chamber door—
Only this, and nothing more.”





PEQUOT
LIBRARY



Ah, distinctly I remember it was in the bleak December,
And each separate dying ember wrought its ghost upon the floor.





PEQUOT
LIBRARY



Eagerly I wished the morrow:—vainly I had sought to borrow





PEQUOT
LIBRARY



From my books surcease of sorrow—sorrow for the lost Lenore—

720 PEQUOT AVENUE | SOUTHPORT, CT 06890 | PEQUOTLIBRARY.ORG | (203) 259-0346
Pequot Library's programs are supported by the generosity of the Town of Fairfield and Friends of Pequot Library members like you!





PEQUOT
LIBRARY

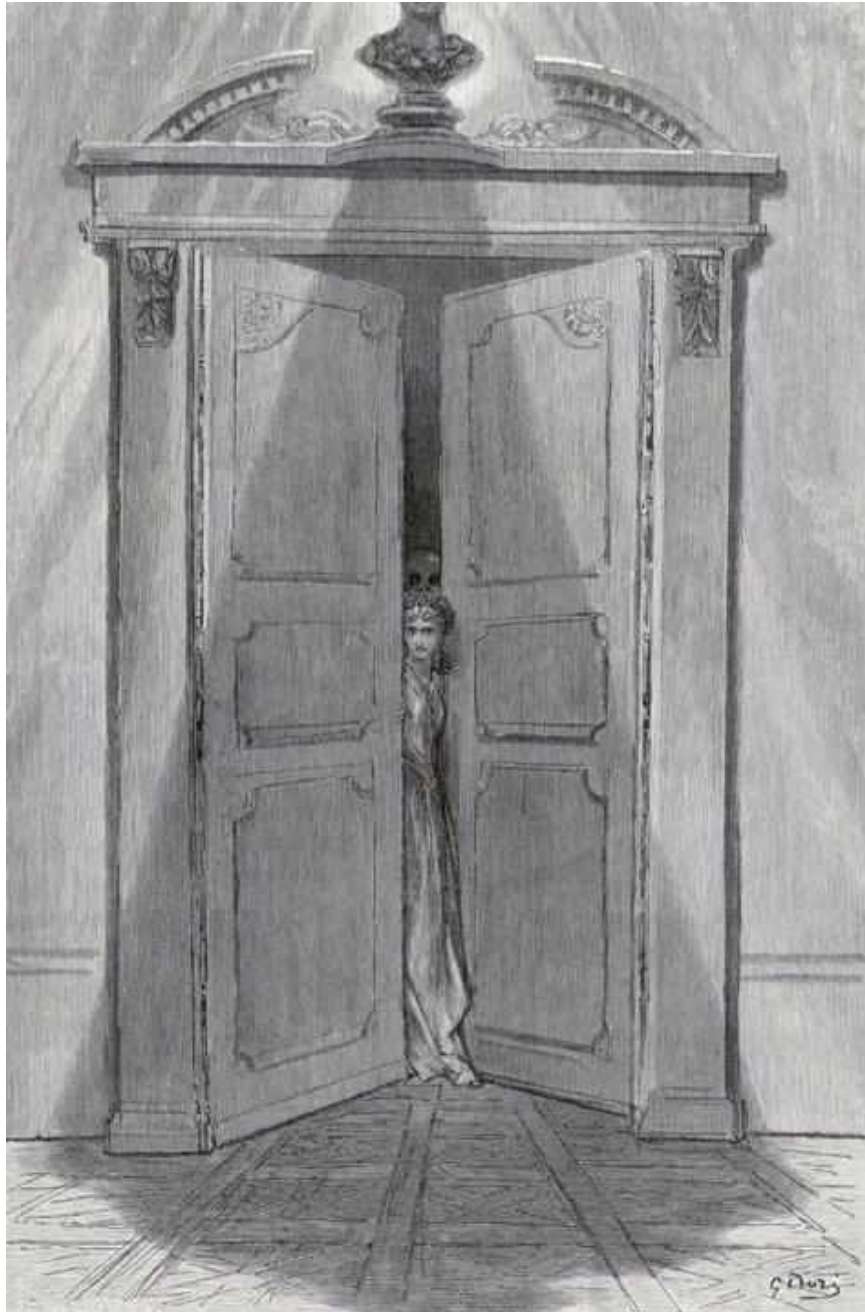


For the rare and radiant maiden whom the angels name Lenore—
Nameless here for evermore.





PEQUOT
LIBRARY



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
“T is some visiter entreating entrance at my chamber door
Some late visiter entreating entrance at my chamber door;—
This it is, and nothing more.”



PEQUOT
LIBRARY



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.





PEQUOT
LIBRARY



Deep into that darkness peering, long I stood there wondering, fearing,
Doubting, dreaming dreams no mortal ever dared to dream before;
But the silence was unbroken, and the darkness 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.





PEQUOT
LIBRARY



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;—
‘T is the wind and nothing more!”





PEQUOT
LIBRARY



Open here I flung the shutter, when, with many a flirt and flutter,





PEQUOT
LIBRARY



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—





PEQUOT
LIBRARY

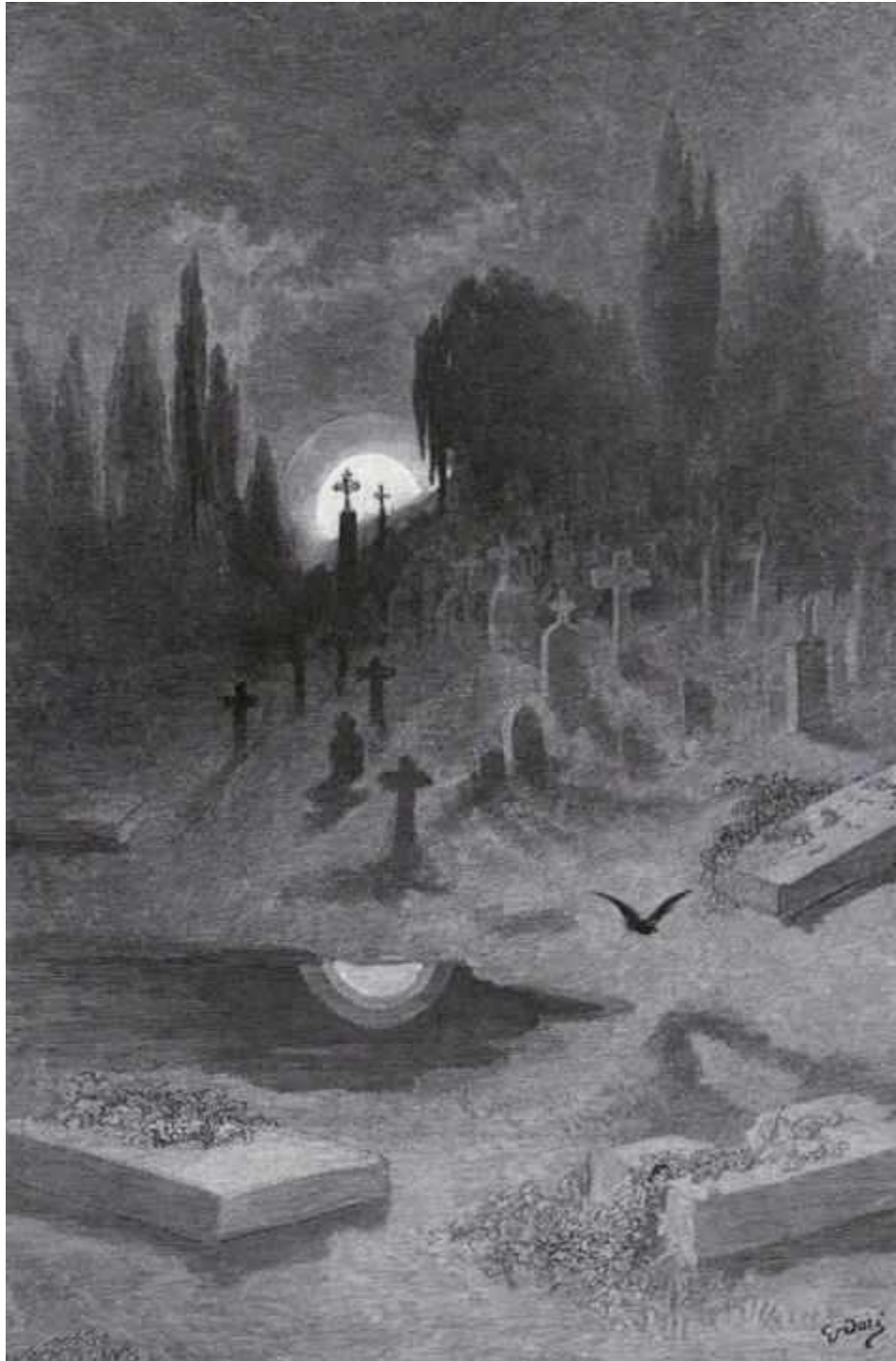


Perched upon a bust of Pallas just above my chamber door—
Perched, and sat, and nothing more.





PEQUOT
LIBRARY



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,—



PEQUOT
LIBRARY

Tell me what thy 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."





PEQUOT
LIBRARY



But the Raven, sitting lonely on the 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—





PEQUOT
LIBRARY

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.’”





PEQUOT
LIBRARY



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.”





PEQUOT
LIBRARY



This 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 foot-falls 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, oh quaff this kind nepenthe, and forget this lost Lenore!”
Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”



PEQUOT
LIBRARY



“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—





PEQUOT
LIBRARY



Is there—*is* there balm in Gilead?—tell me—tell me, I implore!”
Quoth the Raven, “Nevermore.”





PEQUOT
LIBRARY



“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.”



PEQUOT
LIBRARY



“Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!” I shrieked, upstarting—





PEQUOT
LIBRARY



“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.”



PEQUOT
LIBRARY



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!