

You'll find my comments throughout your work IN ALL CAPS. Again I'm not yelling.

Use the comments as a guide for crafting and revising the remaining writing assignments in the class (and, of course, for other courses). Grade for this assignment is at the bottom.

Underlined words/phrases/sentences needed more work – or needed to be deleted.

The focus in this class is on improvement: that's why I make comments. If you're satisfied with the grade, don't rest on your laurels: it's time to work on taking your writing "to the next level." If you're not satisfied with your grade, it's time to get more feedback on rough drafts from myself, the writing center, or smartthinking. Again, keep the focus on improving your writing.

Questions about my comments or your grade? Let me know via email.

MacKayla Probasco  
ENGL152- Critical Review Essay #1  
Dr. Bordelon  
June 6, 2016

### **Semiotic Review of "The Cask of Amontillado" <<NO BOLD**

At the midnight release of a popular horror film series <<NAME A PARTICULAR MOVIE, the lights of the theater dim, an eerie music plays in the background, the big screen shows a focused camera angle of the actor's dimly lit face and the crowd is tense with suspension for what may happen next.<<GREAT IDEA FOR AN OPENING. Many literary works, such as movies, novels and short stories, use physical and figurative elements to manipulate the mood of the film or writer and its viewer, or reader. <<SMOOTH OUT TRANSITION>>Symbolism is another common tool many authors utilize<<USE to disguise information that aids in the development of the plot or the aura it embodies; a tactic<<THIS LITERARY DEVICE that is skillfully used by Edgar Allan Poe in the gothic short story "The Cask of Amontillado". In the short story "The Cask of Amontillado", Poe uses symbolic application through color, objects and the setting to create a deeper interpretation of a dark mood.

Color is the first symbolic tool used by Poe in "The Cask of Amontillado" to build the dark mood of the horror story.<<NICE TOPIC SENTENCE TO SET UP YOUR POINT: YOU MENTION BOTH THE THESIS AND THE DIVISION. NOW WORK ON FRAMING THE ARGUMENT IN YOUR PARAGRAPH BY DEFINING HOW YOUR DIVISION CONNECTS WITH YOUR THESIS OR OFFERING ANY OTHER INFORMATION NEEDED TO HELP READERS UNDERSTAND YOUR ARGUMENT. INSTEAD OF A DICTIONARY DEFINITION, WORK ON CRAFTING ONE THAT SUITS YOUR SPECIFIC PURPOSE. HERE, FOR EXAMPLE, EXPLAIN HOW COLOR, IN GENERAL, CAN CREATE A MOOD. THIS WILL PROVIDE YOU WITH A LIST OF WORDS YOU CAN REPEAT IN YOUR PARAGRAPH TO SHOW READERS THE VALIDITY OF YOUR DIVISION. SEE "FRAMING AN ARGUMENT" ON THE "ESSAY REVISION" PAGE (DR. BORDELON'S WRITING SUGGESTIONS) FOR AN EXPLANATION AND EXAMPLE. Montresor, the narrator of this short story, arrived at the carnival to confront

his acquaintance, Fortunato, whom he had schemed a plan for revenge against. Fortunato approached the narrator donning a jester outfit. To explain this occurrence Montresor stated, “The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells” (166). This outfit is much like a clown costume, including many different colors and little bells, and symbolizes how easily Fortunato would be fooled by Montresor. <<IS IT THE COLOR OR THE FACT THAT IT’S MOTLEY – FOOL’S OUTFIT – THAT CREATES THE DARK MOOD? NEED TO CONNECT THIS TO A DARK MOOD Before leaving the carnival and luring Fortunato back to his home, where Fortunato would meet his death, Montresor dressed in black. To demonstrate Montresor’s attire the author writes, “Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm; and putting on a mask of black silk and drawing a roquelaire closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo” (167). A roquelaire is defined as a man’s heavy, knee-length cloak. The black silk mask and cloak that Montresor drapes over his body before leaving the carnival allows him to be pictured as the grim reaper. <<MUCH BETTER FOCUS HERE ON YOUR THESIS The black coloring of Montresor’s wardrobe is symbolic of the darkness that lay within him and the death he would bring to Fortunato in time to come. The reader can gain a sense of eeriness from the gloomy shade associated with Montresor and could even begin to speculate the morbid actions he takes next, giving the short story a much darker mood. The use of color within this portion of “The Cask of Amontillado” also allows the reader to gain a sense of the good and evil that exists within the plot and formulates a much darker mood.

Much like the colors used throughout “The Cask of Amontillado”, Poe also utilizes objects as symbols to heighten the gothic feel of the story line. While Montresor and Fortunato descend into the damp <<NICE QUICK FOLLOW UP TO GOTHIC IN THE PREVIOUS SENTENCE cellar, a conversation shared between the two men touches upon the Montresor family arms. Montresor shares that the family arms states, “A huge human foot d’or in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are embedded in the heel” (168). A serpent is typically figurative for a person who has the reputation of being sneaky, conniving <<ISN’T THIS A GREAT WORD? or even disloyal. It is for this reason that the snake is meant to represent Fortunato, who has allegedly betrayed Montresor. The foot of gold that is crushing the snake is symbolic of Montresor. This can be symbolic of, or even foreshadow, Montresor crushing, <NO COMMA and killing, <<NO COMMA Fortunato for the “insult” he caused Montresor. Fortunato also comments on the Montresor family motto and emblem while walking the spiral stairwell to the catacombs. The family motto translates to “No one provokes me with impunity” (168). Fortunato should have heeded this as a warning, seeing it as an indication that Montresor would kill anyone who did wrong to him or anyone in his family. <<MORE ON HOW THE WORDING OF THE MOTTO CONVEYS A DARK MOOD. This added symbolism, when paid close attention to by the reader, can further reveal Montresor’s plans for murder, creating a darker mood.

Another object linked to the symbolism of Fortunato’s eventual death that darkened the mood was the towel Montresor exposed to jokingly confirm that he was a stonemason. During the journey the two men took into the dimly lit catacombs, Montresor shows a towel when asked if he is a mason. Although Fortunato was really asking if he was apart << A PART of the international secret society, Montresor jokingly

admits he is a stonemason. This symbolism foreshadows how Fortunato would ultimately meet his death, by being block in with a wall built of stone by Monsanto himself. Given that Poe is a writer that frequently uses symbolism and foreshadowing, this odd detail of the story sticks out to the reader and makes him or her speculate why that element was important which creates a sense of suspicion, hence darkening the mood further.

<<GOOD: WITHOUT THIS LAST SENTENCE, I WOULD ASK “HOW DOES THIS CONNECT TO A DARK MOOD?” YOU ANSWERED THE QUESTION READERS WOULD HAVE.

The setting “The Cask of Amontillado” takes place in is the final component of the storyline that uses symbolism to create a darker mood. SEE PREVIOUS COMMENT ABOUT FRAMING – HOW IT CAN CREATE A MOOD. The short story begins in a carnival setting. The setting of a carnival is ironic in the case of this short story because carnivals are typically symbolic of fun, youth and happiness. “The Cask of Amontillado” however, is about undermining, revenge, darkness and death.<<THINK ABOUT HOW CARNIVAL IS ABOUT CASTING OFF RESTRAINTS – THAT MIGHT WORK BETTER. Carnivals and clowns are also symbolic of jokes and laughter. However, the plot of the story focused around the death of a friend, which is a very serious and grave concept- creating and even darker feel to the story. This setting also allowed Montresor to disguise himself before taking Fortunato back to his home where he would take his last breath. This makes for an important detail that should not be overlooked in the writing of this story because it made the concealed murder seem possible, again, creating a dark mood. <<FOCUS ON THE NIGHT TIME SETTING AND GENERAL DISARRAY – NO SERVANTS, ETC.

Lastly, the dark catacombs the two men descended into, filled with vaults containing Montresor’s dead family members, was an in-depth description of the place in which Fortunato would be left that added an eerie sensation to the story line. The dead family members that lie inside the vaults Montresor and Fortunato walked among, while Fortunato was distracted with win and the thought of Amontillado, was a symbol for what he would soon become- another dead body, encased in stone in the cellar of Montresor’s home. This morbid idea alone, along with other mentioned elements of the setting, emulate an extremely dark mood to the short story. <<GOOD: THIS SHOULD BE YOUR MAJOR ARGUMENT. NEED SOME QUOTES HERE TO SUPPORT YOUR POINT AND MORE EXPLANATION HERE.

Through contrasting dark and light colors, a number of objects, and the setting of “The Cask of Amontillado”, a plethora of symbols were used in this Edgar Allan Poe short story to achieve a dark mood. The symbols found throughout Poe’s writing made it possible for the reader to speculate what may follow in the story, creating a very ominous feeling. Overall, in the writing of “The Cask of Amontillado”, Edgar Allan Poe used the application of symbolism to create a dark mood for the gothic short story.

FOR A CONCLUSION, CONSIDER ANSWERING THE QUESTION “WHAT’S IT ALL MEAN?” NOW THAT READERS HAVE COMPLETED THE ESSAY, WHAT LARGER MEANING CAN THEY DERIVE FROM IT? YOU CAN ALSO REFER BACK TO AN IDEA FROM YOUR INTRO. AVOID THE CLASSIC (AND BORING) REPETITION OF THE THESIS. IF READERS NEED TO BE REMINDED OF YOUR THESIS, YOU HAVEN’T REALLY CONVINCED THEM IN

YOUR ESSAY – AND REPEATING IT AT THE CONCLUSION WON'T CHANGE THEIR MINDS.

Works Cited

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FOLLOW THE FORMAT BELOW FOR THIS AND FOR ALL ANTHOLOGIES.

Updike, John. "A&P." *Literature: Approaches to Fiction, Poetry, and Drama*. Ed. Robert DiYanni. New York: McGraw Hill, 2009. 32-35. Print.

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MACKAYLA,  
STRONG START TO THE SEMESTER. YOU SET OUT A CLEAR THESIS AND THEN WORK THROUGH THE DIFFERENT POINTS IN YOUR REVISION.

WHEN REVISING YOUR ESSAYS, REMEMBER TO GO BACK AND CHECK FOR WHERE YOU DRIFT AWAY FROM THE THESIS OR DIVISIONS – YOU MOVE AWAY FROM DREAD A FEW TIMES HERE.

REMEMBER TOO TO WORK CLOSELY WITH THE TEXT: PULL OUT AND EXPLAIN HOW THE SPECIFIC WORDS IN A QUOTE PROVE YOUR POINT.