

## Stanza Summaries

# The Raven



By Edgar Allan Poe

Formatting, Annotations &  
Graphics by Mr. Rinkevich

## Notes/Annotations

1  
Late at night while reading some old books in his study the narrator hears a knocking on his door.

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.  
'Tis some visitor,' I muttered, 'tapping at my chamber door -  
Only this, and nothing more.'



Old Books

2  
The narrator thinks about his lost love named Lenore.

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 named Lenore -  
Nameless here for evermore.



Fireplace Shadows

3  
The narrator enjoys the fear caused by the unknown knocking.

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,'



Lenore - R.I.P.



Fancy Door

4  
The narrator checks the door, and no one is there.

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.

5  
The narrator stares into the darkness and whispers Lenore. The name is then echoed back at him.

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.

6  
The narrator becomes upset due to thinking about Lenore and his failures. He hears the knocking again, this time at his window.

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; -  
'Tis the wind and nothing more!"

7  
The narrator opens the window and in flies a Raven and lands on a statue of Pallas.

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.

Ravens are messengers of the Underworld



Bust = Statue.  
Pallas = Goddess of Wisdom

The narrator reasons that the raven is nothing to fear. He asks its name to which the bird responds "Nevermore."

8

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 thy lordly name is on the Night's **Plutonian** shore!' →  
**Quoth the raven, "Nevermore."** 



Hades-like qualities.  
Hades = Greek  
Underworld Lord

The narrator is amused by the bird's answer and is thankful to see him.

9

Much I marveled 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 above the sculptured bust above his chamber door,  
**With such name as "Nevermore."** 



The Raven mocks  
and answers every  
question with:  
NEVERMORE.

The narrator begins to get annoyed because the raven will only speak the word, "Nevermore."

10

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 -  
On the morrow will he leave me, as my hopes have flown before.'  
**Then the bird said, "Nevermore."** 

The narrator wonders if the raven's previous owner was a depressed soul that affected the bird.

11

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."** 



Dirge = Sad song  
often used at  
funeral marches

The narrator pulls 12  
a seat in front of  
the raven and begins  
to wonder about  
the meaning of  
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, gaunt, and ominous bird of yore  
Meant in croaking "Nevermore." 



Demonic Looking

The narrator 13  
begins to feel as  
if the raven is  
staring into his soul.

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 lamp-light gloated o'er,  
But whose velvet violet lining with the lamp-light gloating o'er,  
*She* shall press, ah, nevermore!



Angels carrying  
incense burners

The narrator begs 14  
God to help him  
forget his painful  
memories of Lenore.  
The raven watches  
this and simply  
states, "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 has 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."



Medicine that  
cures sorrow.

The bird is now 15  
accused of evil as  
the narrator feels the  
bird mocks his pain  
by answering every  
question or  
statement with,  
"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."



Medical perfume from  
the city of Gilead that  
supposedly cured any  
physical condition.

In a rage the narrator asks if he shall see his love in Heaven. The raven replies, "Nevermore." He now thinks the bird is a demon sent by Satan to torture him.

16

'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 named Lenore -  
Clasp a rare and radiant maiden, whom the angels named Lenore?"

Quoth the raven, "Nevermore." 

أيدان

Arabic word meaning Heaven.

The narrator begins screaming for the raven to leave the room and allow the narrator to grieve alone.

17

'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;

18 And his eyes have all the seeming of a demon's that is dreaming,  
And the lamp-light 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!



The raven has now corrupted the entire scene. The raven, who has caused the narrator's insanity, sits atop a symbol of wisdom (**Pallas**). A room meant for silence and thinking (**library**) has been turned into an explosive place of painful memories. Questions meant to bring understanding are mocked with the "non-answer", "**Nevermore.**" The light (**awareness**) that would be shining on the narrator is instead being blocked by the raven and a shadow (**confusion**) is now cast over the narrator.

18

The poem ends with the narrator convulsing, twitching, cursing and screaming in the shadow cast by the raven while the raven continues to mock the narrator by continuously repeating the word, "Nevermore."