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MINISTERSTVO ŠKOLSTVÍ,  
MLÁDEŽE A TĚLOVÝCHOVY



OP Vzdělávání  
pro konkurenceschopnost



INVESTICE DO ROZVOJE VZDĚLÁVÁNÍ

## Some Outstanding American Writers

### Edgar Allan Poe

#### Task One:

Watch the video about Poe's life. Complete the fact file.

Born (date):

Born (place):

Brought up in (family name):

Started to write (age):

His studies:

Started to publish (age):

Lived in:

His wife:

Jobs (where, as):

The book published in 1840:

Invented new genre:

The book published in 1841:

The book published in 1845:

Died (date):

His last weeks:

His influence on the American literature:

#### Task Two:

Read the text:

### “The Philosophy of Composition”

In this essay Poe explains his poetical method; he describes the composing the poem as if it were a mathematical problem.

A poem should be written “backwards”. The structure must be thought out before the poem is written. The poet must choose and use suitable means to achieve the greatest effect and this is the only aim of a poet. The effect is determined first, and the whole plot is set; then the web grows backwards from that single effect. A poem is not written by pure chance, and the idea that a poet should express his inner life is entirely wrong. Even the



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melancholy which we feel in his poems is precisely calculated. His aim is to find beauty and harmony. According to Poe the death of a woman linked with beauty “is the most poetical topic” in the world and it is certain that the “lips best suited for such topics are those of a mourning lover”. A poem should always be written short enough to be read in one sitting; consequently, Poe figured that the length of a poem should stay around one hundred lines.

This is the way he explained how he had calculated his poem *The Raven*.

**Cover the text. In pairs, note down what you remember about Poe’s method. Then check with your teacher.**

### Task Three:

**Matching exercise. Match the names of Poe’s works with their descriptions and the pictures:**

- A. *The Black Cat*
- B. *The Masque of the Red Death*
- C. *The Raven*
- D. *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*

1. His best poem is composed of eighteen verses of six lines each. Poe looked for a haunting poetical effect and found it in the monotonous repetition of several impressive sounds (o, m, r) in ‘Nevermore’. These sounds led him to the idea of a raven that forebodes death. On a stormy night a tired student who has lost his love asks if he will ever meet her again in some other world. His doubts are underlined by the raven’s repetition of ‘Nevermore’.
2. A short story which follows Prince Prospero's attempts to avoid a dangerous plague known as the xxxxxxxx by hiding in his abbey. He, along with many other wealthy nobles, has a masquerade ball within seven rooms of his abbey, each decorated with a different colour. In the middle of their ball, a mysterious figure, disguised as a xxxxxxxx victim enters and makes his way through each of the rooms. Prospero dies after confronting this stranger; the guests also die in turn. The story follows many traditions of Gothic fiction and is often analysed as an allegory about the inevitability of death. Many different interpretations have been presented, as well as attempts to identify the true nature of the titular disease.



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3. A short story which has been recognized as the first detective story. C. Auguste Dupin is a man in Paris who solves the mystery of the brutal murder of two women. Numerous witnesses heard a suspect, though no one agrees on what language was spoken. At the murder scene, Dupin finds a hair that does not appear to be human. As the first true detective in fiction, the Dupin character established many literary devices which would be used in future fictional detectives including Sherlock Holmes and Hercule Poirot. Many later characters, for example, follow Poe's model of the brilliant detective, his personal friend who serves as a narrator, and the final revelation being presented before the reasoning that leads up to it.
4. A short story which was first published in August 19, 1843, edition of The Saturday Evening Post. It is a study of the psychology of guilt. A murderer carefully conceals his crime and believes to be unassailable, but eventually breaks down and reveals himself, impelled by a nagging reminder of his guilt.

#### Vocabulary:

inevitability – nevyhnutelnost

disguised - přestrojený

devices – prostředky

conceal – skrýt

unassailable – nezranitelný

impel – nutit

nagging – hlodavý, dotírající

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For those who are interested in poetry:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0wj1DRQs9AQ>

Listen to *The Raven*, a poem written by Poe.

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#### Evaluation:

How many correct answers have you had in the previous exercises?

100 – 80% .....	Excellent	👍
80 – 70% .....	Very good	😊
70 – 50% .....	Good	😐
50 – 30% .....	Average	😞
Less than 30% .....	Poor	💣

How much do you remember about Edgar Allan Poe and his works? Tick :

I remember a lot

need some revision