

EDGAR ALLAN POE

A close-up, high-contrast photograph of a black cat's face. The cat's fur is dark and textured, and its eyes are a bright, glowing yellow, looking directly at the viewer. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the cat's features against a dark background.

THE
BLACK CAT
AND OTHER STORIES

PENGUIN READERS

***The Black Cat
and Other Stories***

EDGAR ALLAN POE

Level 3

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Introduction

How can I explain this fear? It was not really a fear of something evil . . . but then how else can I possibly describe it? Slowly, this strange fear grew into horror. Yes, horror. If I tell you why, you will not believe me. You will think I am mad.

'The Black Cat' is one of Edgar Allan Poe's most famous stories. Why is the man in the story afraid of his own black cat? Why does he kill it? And how does the cat punish him for his evil ways?

In 'The Oval Portrait' a man finds a portrait of a beautiful young woman in a lonely house. Who is this woman? Who painted her? And why is the man so frightened of her picture? What terrible secret does it hold?

In 'Berenice', a madman wants to marry his sick cousin with the beautiful teeth. He cannot stop thinking about those teeth! What really happens to Berenice in the end?

In 'The Mask of the Red Death', Prince Prospero tries to shut his door against the face of Death. How does the 'Red Death' get into his large and beautiful house? What will happen to him and all his friends when they meet the stranger with the death mask?

Four horror stories from the strange and terrible mind of Edgar Allan Poe. Four stories that will stop you sleeping at night. Four stories that you will never, never forget . . .

No writer knew more about pain and horror than Edgar Allan Poe. He lived most of his life afraid of the things in his own mind. And he wrote some of the most frightening horror stories ever written.

He was born Edgar Poe on 19 January 1809 in Boston, USA.

When he was two years old his mother died and his father died or left the family (nobody knows exactly what happened to him). Poe went to live with a rich family called the Allans in Richmond, Virginia. Mrs Allan loved him like a real son, but her husband never understood Poe and was unkind to him. The family moved to England for five years from 1815 to 1820, and Poe went to one of the best schools in the country. In 1826 he went back to Virginia and went to university there. But when he was a student there his life started to go badly wrong. John Allan refused to pay for his university education because the boy was spending too much money. This hurt Poe very deeply. The dislike between him and John Allan grew and in 1827 he left the Allans' home for ever.

Poe became a successful soldier for a few years, and then went to Baltimore to earn money by writing for newspapers and magazines. He also worked on a magazine in Richmond, Virginia but he didn't go back to his old home. In 1835, when Poe was twenty-six, he married his young cousin, Virginia Clemm, who was fourteen years old. Their married life together was difficult. Poe worked hard but he didn't earn much money and never stayed long in one job. He was a nervous man, he drank too much all his life, and he believed that he was mad.

In 1847, Virginia died after a long illness. Poe's home life ended and he began to drink more than before. In September 1849, he disappeared and was later found in a street in Baltimore. He was taken to hospital, where he died on 7 October 1849. He was buried in Baltimore, next to his wife.

Poe had a very unhappy life, and when he died he was still a poor man. But by the end of his life he was beginning to be a very popular and successful writer. Many people were starting to read and enjoy his stories and poems – stories like *The Raven* (1845).

However, he never made any money from his writing when he was alive. Since his death, Poe has become one of the most famous of all American writers. His stories and poems are now read by people all over the world.

Poe's stories, like the four in this book, are frightening stories of horror and imagination. People read them in American magazines from 1831, and in books called *Tales of the Grotesque* and *Arabesque* (1840) and *Tales* (1845). Some of his most famous stories are in this Penguin reader. Other famous stories are 'The Fall of the House of Usher', 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue', and 'The Pit and the Pendulum'.

Poe had a strange imagination and one of the saddest lives in all of literature. His terrible stories touch our deepest human fears and are difficult to forget.



*This is a true story, as true as I sit here writing it — as true as
I will die in the morning.*

The Black Cat

You are not going to believe this story. But it is a true story, as true as I sit here writing it – as true as I will die in the morning. Yes, this story ends with *my* end, with my death tomorrow.

I have always been a kind and loving person – everyone will tell you this. They will also tell you that I have always loved animals more than anything. When I was a little boy, my family always had many different animals round the house. As I grew up, I spent most of my time with them, giving them their food and cleaning them.

I married when I was very young, and I was happy to find that my wife loved all of our animal friends as much as I did. She bought us the most beautiful animals. We had all sorts of birds, gold fish, a fine dog and *a cat*.

The cat was a very large and beautiful animal. He was black, black all over, and *very* intelligent. He was so intelligent that my wife often laughed about what some people believe; some people believe that all black cats are evil, enemies in a cat's body.

Pluto – this was the cat's name – was my favourite. It was always I who gave him his food, and he followed me everywhere. I often had to stop him from following me through the streets! For years, he and I lived happily together, the best of friends.

But during those years I was slowly changing. It was that evil enemy of Man called *Drink* who was changing me. I was not the kind, loving person people knew before. I grew more and more selfish. I was often suddenly angry about unimportant things. I began to use bad language, most of all with my



I hit my wife sometimes. And by that time, of course, I was often doing horrible things to our animals.

wife. I even hit her sometimes. And by that time, of course, I was often doing horrible things to our animals. I hit all of them – but never Pluto. But, my illness was getting worse – oh yes, drink is an illness! Soon I began to hurt my dear Pluto too.

I remember that night very well. I came home late, full of drink again. I could not understand why Pluto was not pleased to see me. The cat was staying away from me. My Pluto did not want to come near me! I caught him and picked him up, holding him strongly. He was afraid of me and bit my hand.

Suddenly, I was not myself any more. Someone else was in my

body: someone evil, and mad with drink! I took my knife from my pocket, held the poor animal by his neck and cut out one of his eyes.

The next morning, my mind was full of pain and horror when I woke up. I was deeply sorry. I could not understand how I could do such an evil thing. But drink soon helped me to forget.

Slowly the cat got better. Soon he felt no more pain. There was now only an ugly dry hole where the eye once was. He began to go round the house as usual again. He never came near me now, of course, and he ran away when I went too close.

I knew he didn't love me any more. At first I was sad. Then, slowly, I started to feel angry, and I did another terrible thing . . .

I had to do it – I could not stop myself. I did it with a terrible sadness in my heart – because I knew it was evil. And that was *why* I did it – yes! I did it *because I knew it was evil*. What did I do? I caught the cat and hung him by his neck from a tree until he was dead.

That night I woke up suddenly – my bed was on fire. I heard people outside shouting, 'Fire! Fire!' Our house was burning! I, my wife and our servant were lucky to escape. We stood and watched as the house burned down to the ground.

There was nothing left of the building the next morning. All the walls fell down during the night, except one – a wall in the middle of the house. I realized why this wall did not burn: because there was new plaster on it. The plaster was still quite wet.

I was surprised to see a crowd of people next to the wall. They were talking, and seemed to be quite excited. I went closer and looked over their shoulders. I saw a black shape in



*I saw a black shape in the new white plaster. It was the shape
of a large cat, hanging by its neck.*

the new white plaster. It was the shape of large cat, hanging by its neck.

I looked at the shape with complete horror. Several minutes passed before I could think clearly again. I knew I had to try to think clearly. I had to know why it was there.

I remembered hanging the cat in the garden of the house next door. During the fire the garden was full of people. Probably, someone cut the dead cat from the tree and threw it through the window – to try and wake me. The falling walls pressed the animal's body into the fresh plaster. The cat burned completely, leaving the black shape in the new plaster. Yes, I was sure that was what happened.

But I could not forget that black shape for months. I even saw it in my dreams. I began to feel sad about losing the animal. So I began to look for another one. I looked mostly in the poor parts of our town where I went drinking. I searched for another black cat, of the same size and type as Pluto.

One night, as I sat in a dark and dirty drinking-house, I noticed a black object on top of a cupboard, near some bottles of wine. I was surprised when I saw it. 'I looked at those bottles a few minutes ago,' I thought, 'and I am sure that object was not there before . . .'

I got up, and went to see what it was. I put my hand up, touched it, and found that it was a black cat – a very large one, as large as Pluto. He looked like Pluto too – in every way but one: Pluto did not have a white hair anywhere on his body; this cat had a large white shape on his front.

He got up when I touched him, and pressed the side of his head against my hand several times. He liked me. This was the animal I was looking for! He continued to be very friendly and later, when I left, he followed me into the street. He came all the way home with me – we now had another house – and came

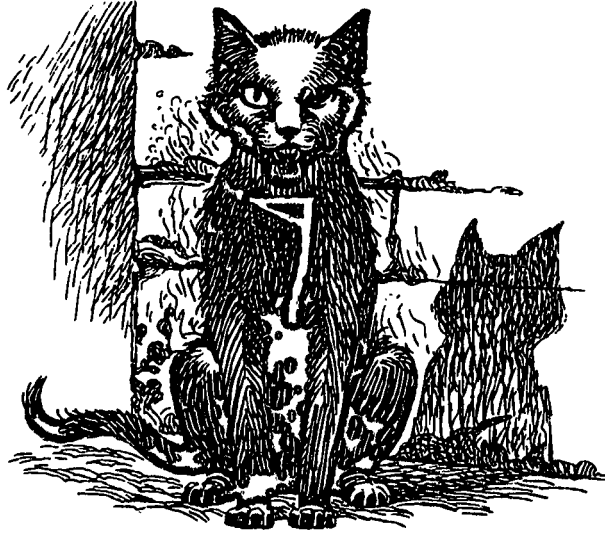
inside. He immediately jumped up on to the most comfortable chair and went to sleep. He stayed with us, of course. He loved both of us and very soon he became my wife's favourite animal.

But, as the weeks passed, I began to dislike the animal more and more. I do not know why, but I hated the way he loved me. Soon, I began to hate him – but I was never unkind to him. Yes, I was very careful about that. I kept away from him because I remembered what I did to my poor Pluto. I also hated the animal because he only had one eye. I noticed this the morning after he came home with me. Of course, this only made my dear wife love him more!

But the more I hated the cat, the more he seemed to love me. He followed me everywhere, getting under my feet all the time. When I sat down, he always sat under my chair. Often he tried to jump up on my knees. I wanted to murder him when he did this, but I did not. I stopped myself because I remembered Pluto, but also because I was *afraid* of the animal.

How can I explain this fear? It was not really a fear of something evil . . . but then how else can I possibly describe it? Slowly, this strange fear grew into horror. Yes, *horror*. If I tell you why, you will not believe me. You will think I am mad.

Several times, my wife took the cat and showed me the white shape on his chest. She said the shape was slowly changing. For a long time I did not believe her, but slowly, after many weeks, I began to see that she was right. The shape *was* changing. Its sides were becoming straighter and straighter. It was beginning to look more and more like an object . . . After a few more weeks, I saw what the shape was. It was impossible not to see! There, on his front, was the shape of an object I am almost too afraid to name . . . It



*There, on the cat's front was the shape of that terrible machine of pain
and death – the gallows!*

was that terrible machine of pain and death – yes, the
GALLOWS!*

I no longer knew the meaning of happiness, or rest. During
the day, the animal never left me. At night he woke me up
nearly every hour. I remember waking from terrible dreams and
feeling him sitting next to my face, his heavy body pressing down
on my heart!

I was now a very different man. There was not the smallest
piece of good left in me. I now had only evil thoughts – the
darkest and the most evil thoughts. I hated everyone and
everything, my dear wife too.

One day she came down into the cellar with me to cut some
wood (we were now too poor to have a servant). Of course, the

* Gallows. The place where criminals are hanged.



*I tried to cut the animal in two. My wife stopped my arm with
her hand. This made me even more angry.*

cat followed me down the stairs and nearly made me fall. This made me so angry, that I took the axe and tried to cut the animal in two. But as I brought the axe down, my wife stopped my arm with her hand. This made me even more angry, and I pulled her hand away from my wrist, lifted the tool again, brought it down hard and buried it in the top of her head.

I had to hide the body. I knew I could not take it out of the house. The neighbours noticed everything. I thought of cutting it into pieces and burning it. I thought of burying it in the floor of the cellar. I thought of throwing it into the river at the end of the garden. I thought of putting it into a wooden box and taking it out of the house that way. In the end, I decided to hide the body in one of the walls of the cellar.

It was quite an old building, near the river, so the walls of the cellar were quite wet and the plaster was soft. There was new plaster on one of the walls, and I knew that underneath it the wall was not very strong. I also knew that this wall was very thick. I could hide the body in the middle of it.

It was not difficult. I took off some plaster, took out a few stones and made a hole in the earth that filled the middle of the wall. I put my wife there, put back the stones, made some new plaster and put it on the wall. Then I cleaned the floor, and looked carefully round. Everything looked just as it did before. Nobody would ever know.

Next, I went upstairs to kill the cat. The animal was bringing me bad luck. I had to kill it. I searched everywhere, but I could not find him. I was sure it was because of my wife's murder; he was too clever to come near me now.

I waited all evening, but I did not see the evil animal. He did not come back during the night either. And so, for the first time in a long time, I slept well. When I woke up the next morning, I was surprised to see that the cat still was not there. Two, three

days passed, and there was *still* no cat. I cannot tell you how happy I began to feel. I felt so much better without the cat. Yes, it was *he* who brought me all my unhappiness. And now, without him, I began to feel like a free man again. It was wonderful – no more cat! Never again!

Several people came and asked about my wife, but I answered their questions easily. Then, on the fourth day, the police came. I was not worried when they searched the house. They asked me to come with them as they searched. They looked everywhere, several times. Then they went down into the cellar. I went down with them, of course. I was not a bit afraid. I walked calmly up and down, watching them search.

They found nothing, of course, and soon they were ready to go. I was so happy that I could not stop talking as they went up the stairs. I did not really know what I was saying. 'Good day to you all, dear sirs.' I said. 'Yes, this is a well-built old house, isn't it? Yes, a *very* well-built old house. These walls – are you going, gentlemen? – these walls are *strong*, aren't they?' I knocked hard on the part of the wall where my wife was.

A voice came from inside the wall, in answer to my knock. It was a cry, like a child's. Quickly, it grew into a long scream of pain and horror. I saw the policemen standing on the stairs with their mouths open. Suddenly, they all ran down in a great hurry and began breaking down the wall. It fell quickly, and there was my wife, standing inside. There she was, with dried blood all over her head, looking at them. And there was the cat, standing on her head, his red mouth wide open in a scream, and his one gold eye shining like fire. The clever animal! My wife was dead because of him, and now his evil voice was sending me to the gallows.



*There she was with dried blood all over her head. And there was the cat,
standing on her head.*



*We saw the dark shape of the roof above the forest. It was a sad and
strangely beautiful house.*

The Oval Portrait

We saw the dark shape of the roof above the forest. It was not far away, but travelling was difficult in that wild part of the mountains. We did not arrive until night was falling.

It was a sad and strangely beautiful house, many hundreds of years old. Pedro, my servant, broke in through a small door at the back and carried me carefully inside. I was so badly hurt that I would die if we stayed out all night.

'People were living here until a very short time ago,' Pedro said. 'They left in a hurry.'

He carried me through several tall, richly decorated rooms to a smaller room in a corner of the great house. He helped me to lie down on the bed. There were a lot of very fine modern pictures in this room. I looked at them for a while in the dying light. They were everywhere on the walls, all round me.

After dark, I could not sleep because of the pain. Also, I was so weak now that I was afraid that I was dying. So I asked Pedro to light the lamp beside the bed.

I began to look at the pictures on the walls, and as I did so I read a small book. I found this book on the bed next to me. It described all the pictures in the room, one by one, and told their stories.

I looked and read for a long time, and the hours passed quickly. Midnight came and went. My eyes became more and more tired, and soon I found it hard to read the words on the page. So I reached out – this was painful and difficult – and moved the lamp closer. Now, the lamp's light fell in a different part of the room, a part that was in deep shadow until then. I saw more pictures, and among them there was a portrait of a young woman. As soon as I saw it, I closed my eyes.

Keeping my eyes closed, I tried to understand why. Why did I suddenly close my eyes like that? Then I realized. I did it to give myself time. I needed time to think. Was I sure that I *really* saw what I thought I saw? Was I dreaming? No, I was suddenly very awake.

I waited until I was calm again; then I opened my eyes and looked a second time. No, there was no mistake. My eyes were seeing what they saw the first time, only seconds before.

The picture, as I said, was a portrait. It was oval in shape, and showed the head and shoulders of a young woman. It was the finest and the most beautiful painting that I have ever seen. And I know I never ever saw a woman as beautiful as her! But it was not her beauty that shook me so suddenly from my half-sleep. And it was not the beauty of the painter's work that excited me in such a strange way.

I stayed for perhaps an hour, half-sitting, half-lying, never taking my eyes off the portrait. Then at last, I understood. At last, I realized what the *true* secret of the picture was, and I fell back in the bed again.

It was the way she was looking at me.

Her eyes, that beautiful smile, that way she looked at me – she was so *real*! It was almost impossible to believe that she was just paint – that she was not *alive*!

The first time I looked at the portrait I simply *could not believe* what my eyes were seeing. But now I felt a very different feeling growing inside me. The more I looked into those eyes, the more I looked at that beautiful smile, the more I was *afraid*! It was a strange, terrible fear that I could not understand. It was a fear mixed with horror.

I moved the lamp back to where it was before. The portrait was now hidden in darkness again. Quickly, I looked through the book until I found the story of the oval portrait. I read these words:



The picture was a portrait. It was oval in shape, and showed the head and shoulders of a young woman.

‘She was a beautiful young flower, and always so happy. Yes, she was happy until that evil day when she saw and loved the painter of her portrait. They were married. But, sadly, he already had a wife: his work. His painting was more important to him than anything in the world.

‘Before, she was all light and smiles. She loved everything in the world. Now she loved all things but one: her husband’s work. His painting was her only enemy; and she began to hate the paintings that kept her husband away from her. And so it was a terrible thing when he told her that he wanted to paint his young wife’s portrait.

‘For weeks, she sat in the tall, dark room while he worked. He was a silent man, always working, always lost in his wild, secret dreams. She sat still – always smiling, never moving – while he painted her hour after hour, day after day. He did not

see that she was growing weaker with every day. He never noticed that she was not healthy any more, and not happy any more. The change was happening in front of his eyes, but he did not see it.

‘But she went on smiling. She never stopped smiling because she saw that her husband (who was now very famous) enjoyed his work so much. He worked day and night, painting the portrait of the woman he loved. And as he painted, the woman who loved him grew slowly weaker and sadder.

‘Several people saw the half-finished picture. They told the painter how wonderful it was, speaking softly as he worked. They said the portrait showed how much he loved his beautiful wife. Silently, she sat in front of her husband and his visitors, hearing and seeing nothing now.

‘The work was coming near an end. He did not welcome visitors in the room any more. A terrible fire was burning inside him now. He was wild, almost mad with his work. His eyes almost never left the painting now, even to look at his wife’s face. Her face was as white as snow. The painter did not see that the colours he was painting were no longer there in her *real* face.

‘Many more weeks passed until, one day, in the middle of winter, he finished the portrait. He touched the last paint on to her lips; he put the last, thin line of colour on an eye; then he stood back and looked at the finished work.

‘As he looked, he began to shake. All colour left his face. With his eyes on the portrait, he cried out to the world: ‘This woman is not made of paint! She is *alive!*’ Then he turned suddenly to look at the woman he loved so much . . .

‘She was dead.’



*Then he turned suddenly to look at the woman he loved
so much . . . She was dead.*



I almost never left the house, and I left the library less and less.

Berenice

Egaeus is my name. My family – I will not name it – is one of the oldest in the land. We have lived here, inside the walls of this great house, for many hundreds of years. I sometimes walk through its silent rooms. Each one is richly decorated, by the hands of only the finest workmen. But my favourite has always been the library. It is here, among books, that I have always spent most of my time.

My mother died in the library; I was born here. Yes, the world heard my first cries here; and these walls, the books that stand along them are among the first things I can remember in my life.

I was born here in this room, but my life did not begin here. I know I lived another life before the one I am living now. I can remember another time, like a dream without shape or body: a world of eyes, sweet sad sounds and silent shadows. I woke up from that long night, my eyes opened, and I saw the light of day again – here in this room full of thoughts and dreams.

As a child, I spent my days reading in this library, and my young days dreaming here. The years passed, I grew up without noticing it, and soon I found that I was no longer young. I was already in the middle of my life, and I was still living here in the house of my fathers.

I almost never left the house, and I left the library less and less. And so, slowly, the real world – life in the world outside these walls – began to seem like a dream to me. The wild ideas, the dreams *inside my head* were my real world. They were my whole life.



Berenice and I were cousins. She and I grew up together here

in this house. But we grew so differently. I was the weak one, so often sick, always lost in my dark and heavy thoughts. She was the strong, healthy one, always so full of life, always shining like a bright new sun. She ran over the hills under the great blue sky while I studied in the library. I lived inside the walls of my mind, fighting with the most difficult and painful ideas. She walked quickly and happily through life, never thinking of the shadows around her. I watched our young years flying away on the silent wings of time. Berenice never thought of tomorrow. She lived only for the day.

Berenice – I call out her name – Berenice! And a thousand sweet voices answer me from the past. I can see her clearly now, as she was in her early days of beauty and light. I see her . . . and then suddenly all is darkness, mystery and fear.

Her bright young days ended when an illness – a terrible illness – came down on her like a sudden storm. I watched the dark cloud pass over her. I saw it change her body and mind completely. The cloud came and went, leaving someone I did not know. Who was this sad person I saw now? Where was my Berenice, the Berenice I once knew?

This first illness caused several other illnesses to follow. One of these was a very unusual type of epilepsy.* This epilepsy always came suddenly, without warning. Suddenly, her mind stopped working. She fell to the ground, red in the face, shaking all over, making strange sounds, her eyes not seeing any more. The epilepsy often ended with her going into a kind of very deep sleep. Sometimes, this sleep was so deep that it was difficult to tell if she was dead or not. Often she woke up from the sleep as

* *Epilepsy*. A serious illness in which, for a short time, the mind stops working, everything goes black, and the body jumps and shakes.

suddenly as the epilepsy began. She would just get up again as if nothing was wrong.

It was during this time that *my* illness began to get worse. I felt it growing stronger day by day. I knew I could do nothing to stop it. And soon, like Berenice, my illness changed my life completely.

It was not my body that was sick; it was my mind. It was an illness of the mind. I can only describe it as a type of monomania.* I often lost myself for hours, deep in thought about something – something so unimportant that it seemed funny afterwards. But I am afraid it may be impossible to describe how fully I could lose myself in the useless study of even the simplest or most ordinary object.

I could sit for hours looking at one letter of a word on a page. I could stay, for most of a summer's day, watching a shadow on the floor. I could sit without taking my eyes off a wood fire in winter, until it burnt away to nothing. I could sit for a whole night dreaming about the sweet smell of a flower. I often repeated a single word again and again for hours until the sound of it had no more meaning for me. When I did these things, I always lost all idea of myself, all idea of time, of movement, even of being alive.

There must be no mistake. You must understand that this monomania was not a kind of dreaming. Dreaming is completely different. The dreamer – I am talking about the dreamer who is awake, not asleep – needs and uses the mind to build his dream. Also, the dreamer nearly always *forgets* the thought or idea or object that began his dream. But with me, the object that began the journey into deepest thought always stayed in my mind. The object was always there at the centre of my

* *Monomania*. Thinking about one thing, or idea, and not being able to stop.

thinking. It was the centre of *everything*. It was both the *subject* and the *object* of my thoughts. My thoughts always, always came back to that object in a never-ending circle. The object was no longer real, but still I could not pull myself away from it!

I never loved Berenice, even during the brightest days of her beauty. This is because I have *never* had feelings of the heart. My loves have always been in the world of the mind.

In the grey light of early morning, among the dancing shadows of the forest, in the silence of my library at night, Berenice moved quickly and lightly before my eyes. I never saw my Berenice as a living Berenice. For me, Berenice was a Berenice in a dream. She was not a person of this world – no, I never thought of her as someone real. Berenice was the *idea* of Berenice. She was something to think about, not someone to love.

And so why did I feel differently after her illness? Why, when she was so terribly and sadly changed, did I shake and go white when she came near me?

Because I saw the terrible waste of that sweet and loving person. Because now there was nothing left of the Berenice I once knew!

It is true I never loved her. But I knew she always loved me – deeply. And so, one day – *because I felt so sorry for her* – I had a stupid and evil idea. I asked her to marry me.

Our wedding day was growing closer, and one warm afternoon I was sitting in the library. The clouds were low and dark, the air was heavy, everything was quiet. Suddenly, lifting my eyes from my book, I saw Berenice standing in front of me.

She was like a stranger to me, only a weak shadow of the woman I remembered. I could not even remember how



I watched as Berenice's lips made a strange smile that I could not understand. And it was then that I saw the teeth.

she was before. God, she was so thin! I could see her arms and legs through the grey clothes that hung round her wasted body.

She said nothing. And I could not speak. I do not know why, but suddenly I felt a terrible fear pressing down like a great stone on my heart. I sat there in my chair, too afraid to move.

Her long hair fell around her face. She was as white as snow. She looked strangely calm and happy. But there was no life at all in her eyes. They did not even seem to see me. I watched as her thin, bloodless lips slowly opened. They made a strange smile that I could not understand. And it was then that I saw the teeth.

Oh, why did she have to smile at me! Why did I have to see those teeth?



I heard a door closing and I looked up. Berenice was not there any more. The room was empty. But *her teeth* did not leave the room of my mind! I now saw them more clearly than when she was standing in front of me. Every smallest part of each tooth was burnt into my mind. *The teeth!* There they were in front of my eyes – here, there, everywhere I looked. And they were so *white*, with her bloodless lips always moving round them!

I tried to fight this sudden, terrible monomania, but it was useless. All I could think about, all I could see in my mind's eye was the teeth. They were now the centre of my life. I held them up in my mind's eye, looked at them in every light, turned them every way. I studied their shapes, their differences; and the more I thought about them, the more I began to want them. Yes, I *wanted* them! I had to have the teeth! Only *the teeth* could bring me happiness, could stop me from going mad.

Evening came; then darkness turned into another day; soon a second night was falling, and I sat there alone, never moving. I was still lost in thought, in that one same thought: *the teeth*. I saw them everywhere I looked – in the evening shadows, in the darkness in front of my eyes.

Then a terrible cry of horror woke me from my dreams. I heard voices, and more cries of sadness and pain. I got up and opened the door of the library. A servant girl was standing outside, crying.

'Your cousin, sir' she began. 'It was her epilepsy, sir. She died this morning.'

This morning? I looked out of the window. Night was falling . . .

‘We are ready to bury her now,’ said the girl.



I found myself waking up alone in the library again. I thought that I could remember unpleasant and excited dreams, but I did not know what they were. It was midnight.

‘They buried Berenice soon after dark,’ I told myself again and again. But I could only half-remember the hours since then – hours full of a terrible unknown horror.

I knew something happened during the night, but I could not remember what it was: those hours of the night were like a page of strange writing that I could not understand.

Next, I heard the high cutting scream of a woman. I remember thinking: ‘What did I do? I asked myself this question out loud. And the walls of the library answered me in a soft voice like mine: *What did you do?*

There was a lamp on the table near me, with a small box next to it. I knew this box well – it belonged to our family’s doctor. But why was it there, now, on the table? And why was I shaking like a leaf as I looked at it? Why was my hair standing on my head?

There was a knock on the door. A servant came in. He was wild with fear and spoke to me quickly, in a low, shaking voice. I could not understand all of what he was saying.

‘Some of us heard a wild cry during the night, sir’ he said. ‘We went to find out what it was, and we found Berenice’s body lying in the open, sir!’ he cried. ‘Someone took her out of the hole where we buried her! Her body was cut and bleeding! But worse than that, she . . . *she was not dead, sir! She was still alive!*’



Dentist's tools fell out of the box, and with them — so small and so white! — thirty-two teeth fell here, there, everywhere.

He pointed at my clothes. There was blood all over them. I said nothing.

He took my hand. I saw cuts and dried blood on it. I cried out, jumped to the table and tried to open the box. I tried and tried but I could not! It fell to the floor and broke. Dentist's tools fell out of it, and with them – so small and so white! – thirty-two teeth fell here, there, everywhere . . .



*The Prince locked the great door of the house and threw the key
over the wall, into the lake outside.*

The Mask of the Red Death

For a long time the Red Death was everywhere in the land. There never was a plague* that killed as many, and there never was a death as terrible.

First, you felt burning pains in your stomach. Then everything began to turn round and round inside your head. Then blood began to come out through your skin – yes, you began to bleed all over your body – but most of all through your face.

And of course when people saw this they left you immediately. Nobody wanted to help you – your horrible red face told everyone that it was too late. Yes, the Red Death was a very short ‘illness’ – only about half an hour, from its beginning to your end.

But Prince Prospero was a brave and happy and wise prince. When half of the people in his land were dead, he chose a thousand healthy and happy friends and took them away from the city. He took them over the hills and far away, to his favourite house, in the middle of a forest.

It was a very large and beautiful house, with a high, strong wall all round it. The wall had only one door: a very strong metal one. When the Prince and all his friends were safely inside, several servants pushed the great door shut. Looking pleased with himself, the Prince locked it and threw the key (it was the only one) over the wall into the lake outside. He smiled as he watched the circles in the deep dark water. Now nobody could come in or out of the house. Inside, there was plenty of food, enough for more than a year. He and his lucky friends did not have to worry

* *Plague*. A serious illness that goes from person to person very quickly, killing nearly everyone.

about the 'Red Death' outside. The outside world could worry about itself!

And so everyone soon forgot the terrible plague. They were safe inside the Prince's beautiful house, and they had everything they needed to have a good time. There were dancers, there were musicians, there was Beauty, there was wine. All this (and more) was inside. The Red Death was outside.

Five months later – the plague was still everywhere in the land – Prince Prospero gave a very special party for his thousand friends. It was a masked party of a most unusual kind.

Prince Prospero gave this party in the newest part of his great house, in seven rooms which he almost never used. Normally, only the most important visitors used those rooms, foreign princes, for example. They were very unusual, those seven rooms, and that is why he chose them for the party. Prince Prospero often had very unusual ideas. He was a very unusual – a very *strange* – person.

First of all, the rooms were not in a straight line. Walking through them, you came to a turn every twenty or thirty yards. So you could only ever see into one other room at a time. Yes, it was a strange part of the house, and in every room the furniture was different. With each turn you always saw something interesting and new.

In every room there were two tall and narrow windows, one on either side. There was coloured glass in these windows, a different colour in each room. This – and everything else, of course – was the Prince's idea (I forgot to tell you: the Prince made the plans for this part of the house himself).

Of course it was the Prince who decorated the rooms for the party, and he did this in his usual unusual way. Like the glass, each room was a different colour. And everything in each room was that same colour. The first room, at the east end, was blue, and so were the windows: bright blue. In the second room everything

was purple, like the glass. In the third everything was green. The fourth was orange, the fifth white, the sixth yellow. In the seventh room everything was black – everything but the windows. They were a deep, rich, red colour, the colour of blood.

There were no lamps anywhere in the seven rooms. Light came from the windows on either side. Outside each window there was a fire burning in a large metal dish. These fires filled the rooms with bright, rich and strangely beautiful colours. But in the west room – the black room – the blood-coloured light was *horrible*. It gave a terrible, wild look to the faces of those who went in. Few people were brave enough to put one foot inside.

A very large clock stood against the far wall of the black room. The great machine made a low, heavy *clang . . . clang . . . clang . . .* sound. Once every hour, when the minute-hand came up to twelve, it made a sound that was so loud, so deep, so clear, and so . . . *richly*, so *strangely* musical that the musicians stopped playing to listen to it. All the dancers stopped dancing. The whole party stopped. Everybody listened to the sound . . . And as they listened, some people's faces became white . . . Other people's heads began to go *round and round* . . . Others put hands to their heads, surprised by sudden strange, *dream-like* thoughts . . . And when the sound died away, there was a strange silence. Light laughs began to break the silence. People laughed quietly, quickly. The musicians looked at each other and smiled. They promised that when the next hour came they would not be so stupid. They would not stop and listen like that. They would go on playing, without listening at all.

But then, three thousand six hundred seconds later, the clock made the same sound again. And again, everything stopped. Again the people's faces became white; again those strange, dream-like thoughts went through people's minds; and again there was that same empty silence, those same quiet laughs, and those same smiles and promises.

But, if we forget this, it was a wonderful party. Yes, we can say that the Prince had a truly fine eye for colour! And all his friends enjoyed his strange decorations. Some people thought he was mad, of course (only friends who knew him well knew he was not).

But he did more than choose the decorations. He also chose the way everyone was dressed. Oh yes, you can be sure that they were dressed strangely! And many of them were much more than just strange. Yes, there was a bit of everything at that party: the beautiful, the ugly, and a lot of the horrible. They looked like a madman's dreams, those strange masked people, dancing to the wild music. They went up and down, changing colour as they danced from room to room . . . until the minute-hand on the clock came up to the hour . . . And then, when they heard the first sound of the clock, everything stopped as before.

The dreams stood still until the great deep voice of the clock died away. Then there was that same strange silence. Then there were those little light and quiet laughs. Then the music began again. The dreams began to move once more, dancing more happily than ever. They danced and danced, on and on, through all the rooms except one. No one went into the west room any more. The blood-coloured light was growing brighter and more horrible with every minute.

But in other rooms the party was going stronger than ever. The wild dancing went on and on until the minute-hand reached that hour again. Then, of course, when the first sound of the clock was heard, the music stopped, the dancers became still, all was still.

It was midnight. One, two, three, four, five . . . Twelve times, the clock made that same, strange, deep and so *sweetly* musical sound. Midnight . . . seven, eight . . . It seemed like there was no end to the sounds this time. Each sound seemed to go on for



The stranger was wearing black clothes. His mask was the face of a dead man – the mask of the Red Death.

ever. And as those twelve sounds went on and on and on . . . people became whiter . . . Their heads began to go round and round and round . . . They thought stranger and more dream-like thoughts than ever before . . . And some of them saw a tall masked man walking slowly and silently among them.

The news travelled quickly through the rooms. Soon, everybody at the party was talking about the tall masked man. As the stranger walked silently among them, people looked at him with anger, and horror. Anger at choosing those clothes! *Horror* at choosing that mask! If it was to make them laugh, then it was not funny! Even the *Prince* would never dream of wearing those clothes.

The stranger was wearing black clothes. His mask was the face of a dead man. Yes, it was a death mask, but it was the *colour* of

that mask that made everyone shake with horror. The mask was red. It was the mask of the Red Death.

Prince Prospero saw the stranger as he walked among the dancers, and suddenly he became mad with anger. He waved his hand and the music stopped immediately.

‘Who?’ he shouted, ‘Who has done this horrible thing! Catch that man! Take off that mask! We will cut off his head in the morning!’

The masked stranger began walking slowly towards the Prince as he said this. Everybody – even the brave Prince Prospero – was suddenly afraid. Nobody was brave enough to put out a hand to stop the visitor. He passed very close to the Prince, and everybody, everywhere, stepped back against the walls as he walked slowly out of the blue room and into the purple, through the green into the orange, into the white, into the yellow . . .

Suddenly, Prince Prospero was angry with himself for being so stupidly afraid. He ran after the stranger. He ran through the six rooms – but nobody followed him.

Pulling out his knife, he ran into the black room. The masked man, who was walking towards the opposite corner, stopped. The Prince stopped, a yard from him. The masked man turned suddenly, and a terrible, cutting cry was heard. The Prince’s shining knife fell without a sound on the black floor. The Prince fell without a sound next to it. Dead.

Suddenly – and nobody knew why – suddenly, the dancers were no longer afraid. A crowd of them ran into the black room. They ran to the stranger who was standing in the shadow of the great clock. When they caught him, the mask and the empty clothes fell to the floor. Everyone cried out in horror. There was nobody inside the clothes! There was nobody there. The man’s body was nothing but air.

Everyone understood that the Red Death was now among them. He came like a thief in the night. And as the seconds



*The empty clothes fell to the floor. There was nobody there.
The man's body was nothing but air.*

passed – clang . . . clang . . . clang . . . – one by one, people began to die the terrible death. Soon, everywhere, the floors of the seven rooms were wet with blood.

When the last person died, the last lamp went out. And when that last lamp went out, the life of the clock stopped with it.

And everything was silence and darkness.

ACTIVITIES

The Black Cat

Before you read

- 1 Look at the pictures in this story. What type of story do you think it is? Do the people in the pictures look kind and happy, or frightened and angry? Does the cat look friendly?
- 2 Find these words in your dictionary.
evil funny happy horrible horror lovely mad
Which of the words are bad or frightening?
- 3 Find these words in your dictionary.
axe bury cellar object plaster servant
Now use the words to complete these sentences.
 - a He killed her with an and then her body in the ground.
 - b The made the beds and cleaned the rooms.
 - c The on the wall was wet because it was new.
 - d She went down to the and saw a black near the door.

After you read

- 4 Answer these questions:
 - a Why does the man begin to change and become ill?
 - b Why does he hang Pluto, the cat, from a tree?
 - c How does the shape of a cat get into the new plaster?
 - d Where does the man find a new cat? Why is he afraid of it?
 - e Where do the police find the man's dead wife? How do they find her?
- 5 In this story the man is afraid of the cat. Have you ever been afraid of an animal? Talk to another student.

The Oval Portrait

Before you read

- 6 Look at the picture on page 15. Describe the young woman. Now look at the picture on page 17. Describe the man.

7 Find these words in your dictionary.

decorate oval portrait

- a** Can you think of things that are *oval* in shape?
- b** Where do you usually see *portraits*?
- c** Look at the room you are in now. How is it *decorated*? Do you like it? Why/why not?

After you read

8 Are these sentences right or wrong?

- a** The man and his servant find a small, poor house.
 - b** The man is feeling very ill.
 - c** The man is excited because the young woman looks alive.
 - d** The husband loves his wife more than his work.
 - e** The woman smiles because her husband is happy.
 - f** The husband thinks his wife looks alive in the painting.
- 9** 'The Oval Portrait is not a horror story, it is a love story.' Do you agree? Talk to another student.

Berenice

Before you read

10 Look at the picture on page 23. What do you think the girl and the man feel about each other?

After you read

11 Put these sentences in the right order.

- a** The servants find Berenice's body and she is alive.
 - b** Egaeus and Berenice grow up together.
 - c** Egaeus cannot stop thinking about Berenice's teeth.
 - d** One day Berenice comes to see Egaeus in the library.
 - e** Egaeus is born in the library but his mother dies.
 - f** The servants bury Berenice soon after dark.
- 12** What do you think Egaeus does to Berenice at the end of the story? Why? Discuss your ideas with another student.

The Mask of the Red Death

Before you read

- 13** Look at the picture on page 33. Why do you think the people in the picture are wearing strange clothes?
- 14** Find this word in your dictionary: *mask*.
When do people wear *masks*? Why do they wear them?

After you read

- 15** Draw a plan of the part of the Prince's house where he had his party. Write the colour of each room on the plan. Draw the clock in the right place.
- 16** Who is the tall, dark stranger dressed in black? Why does everyone shake with horror when they see his mask?

Writing

- 17** You are the young woman in 'The Oval Portrait'. Your husband is painting you. Write a letter to your mother. Tell her about the painting, and about how you feel.
- 18** You work for *The Times* newspaper. Write a report on the murder of Berenice.
- 19** All these stories are about people with an illness called 'monomania' (explained on page 21). Write about the four different kinds of monomania in these stories.
- 20** Do you know any other horror stories by other writers or have you seen any horror films? Write about a horror story or horror film that you know.

Answers for the activities in this book are available from your local Pearson Education office or contact: Penguin Readers Marketing Department, Pearson Education, Edinburgh Gate, Harlow, Essex, CM20 2JE.



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The Black Cat and Other Stories by Allan Poe

BOOK ACTIVITIES

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5 In this story the man is afraid of the cat. Have you ever been afraid of an animal? Talk to another student.

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6 Look at the picture on page 15. Describe the young woman. Now look at the picture on page 17. Describe the man.

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d One day Berenice comes to see Egaeus in the library,

e Egaeus is born in the library but his mother dies,

f The servants bury Berenice soon after dark.

12 What do you think Egaeus does to Berenice at the end of the story? Why? Discuss your ideas with another student.

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15 Draw a plan of the part of the Prince's house where he had his party. Write the colour of each room on the plan. Draw the clock in the right place.

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Writing

17 You are the young woman in 'The Oval Portrait'. Your husband is painting you. Write a letter to your mother. Tell her about the painting, and about how you feel.

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19 All these stories are about people with an illness called 'monomania' (explained on page 21). Write about the four different kinds of monomania in these stories.

20 Do you know any other horror stories by other writers or have you seen any horror films? Write about a horror story or horror film that you know.

Teacher's notes

The Black Cat and Other Stories

by Edgar Allan Poe



SUMMARY

In their strange atmosphere and the fantastic events they describe, the four stories in this collection are typical of Edgar Allan Poe's tales: part horror story, part romantic poetry. In 'The Black Cat', one of Poe's most famous stories, the evil done by an originally good man comes back to him in the terrible revenge of his once-loved cat. In 'The Oval Portrait', a traveller comes across a remarkably life-like painting of a woman in a mountain castle. He also finds a book, which tells him the portrait's horrible secret. 'Berenice' is the weird story of a strange man's proposal of marriage to his cousin, and her terrible fate at his hands. In 'The Mask of the Red Death', another famous story, a prince tries to escape a horrible epidemic by locking the doors of his castle - but of course fails.

ABOUT EDGAR ALLAN POE

The American poet, fiction writer and critic, Edgar Allan Poe (1809-49), was responsible for some of the most unforgettable stories of terror ever written. They were the products of the mind of an unstable man, who lived a short and unhappy life.

Poe was born in January 1809 in Boston, USA. His life began tragically, as both of his parents had died by the time he was two. He went to live with a family, the Allans, who became his foster parents. He went to good schools and university, but had to leave university early because he fell out with his foster father, who never really understood him. Poe was deeply upset; his relationship with his foster father worsened, and Poe left home for ever.

Poe showed early literary promise, finding a publisher for his first collection of poetry, *Tamerlane and Other Poems*, before he was twenty years old. After a spell in the army he started on a career in journalism and began writing short stories. He married when he was twenty-six. Despite being a good, hard-working editor and also producing articles and short stories all the time, Poe never had much money, and much of what he did have was spent on alcohol.

When Poe's wife died young in 1847, any stability in his life disappeared and he himself was dead two years later,

found unconscious in the street after a session of heavy drinking.

BACKGROUND AND THEMES

Horror stories are as popular today as they were when the genre was at its height of popularity some two hundred years ago. Now we can find horror not only in books and plays, but also in films and comics and on the Internet. But in nineteenth-century Europe it was of course through books that people enjoyed the excitement and thrills of the horror story.

In the early part of the nineteenth century, Mary Shelley published her novel *Frankenstein* (1818). From this time until the latter part of the century when Bram Stoker's *Dracula* was published, there was no shortage of novels and short stories telling tales of terror, murder, mystery and suspense. Some of the great writers of the nineteenth century concentrated much of their efforts in this direction, among them Charles Dickens, Robert Louis Stevenson and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century on the other side of the Atlantic, the novel was struggling to make its mark on the United States. The USA was still a very young country at that time, having only become independent in 1776. Remarkably little in the way of American literature had been produced before Independence. The novel had always been regarded with suspicion by the leading thinkers of the country, most of whom were Puritans with strict moral values. They considered the novel to be a potentially dangerous thing, with the power to have a bad influence on young people. Moreover, there was a strong tendency to look down on authors writing in the English language who were not living and publishing their work in Great Britain. Irving Washington was the best-known writer writing in English and living outside Great Britain. He freely admitted to borrowing heavily from European literature and based one of his most famous stories, *Rip Van Winkle*, on a folk tale from Germany.

Early American novelists tended to be cautious. Many of them aimed to please Puritans and publishers alike by putting morals before plot. One such writer was Charles Brockden Brown (1771-1810), but the books he published

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PRE-
INTERMEDIATE

THE BLACK CAT AND OTHER STORIES



Teacher's notes

at the turn of the century were different from his others in one respect - he included an element of horror in them. A little later, Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804-1864) wrote novels and collections of short stories concerning themselves with evil and the darker side of the human soul.

Edgar Allan Poe was influenced by both Brockden Brown and Hawthorne, who was a contemporary of his. The most successful of Poe's stories were in the tradition of Gothic fiction, and combine terror and guilt in a lyrical style that reminds us that he was a great poet, too. He also wrote some of the first science-fiction stories; and in his character C. Auguste Dupin, he virtually created the modern detective story. In addition, he was one of the most feared critics in America.

It is typical of Poe's tragic life that he died just as people were starting to read him in ever-increasing numbers and he was becoming famous. After his death, his reputation continued to grow, especially in Europe, and for well over a century he has been one of the most widely-read authors in any language.

Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the reader, and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book, see the photocopiable Student's Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of discussion and pair/groupwork questions, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access centre.

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

- 1 Ask students if they like stories (in books or films) which frighten them. Why/Why not? Ask them what the most frightening story they know is. Can the class agree on one story?
- 2 Ask students to look up *mad* and *horror* in their dictionaries. Then tell them that Edgar Allan Poe led a difficult life and believed that he was mad. Ask students to talk about the following:
 - Is it necessary for a writer to be mad to be able to write real horror stories?
 - Do the readers of horror stories like the stories more if they too have a difficult life?
 - Can horror stories be dangerous for some people?

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

'The Black Cat'

- 1 Put students into small groups. Ask them to discuss these questions. Ask them to look up *superstitious* in their dictionaries.
 - (a) Are black cats 'evil' in your culture?
 - (b) Are you superstitious? If so, what about? If not, why not?

- 2 Put students into pairs. Ask them to discuss:

'The Black Cat' begins: 'You are not going to believe this story, but it is a true story ...'. Do you think this is a good way to start a story which is impossible to believe? Does it make the story seem more or less easy to believe?

'The Oval Portrait'

- 1 Put students into small groups. They tell the story. Each student says one sentence, until the story is finished. They try to do it in three minutes.
- 2 Put students into small groups. Ask them to make up a story for one of the other pictures in the room. One person in the group tells their story to the class. The class decides which story is best.

'Berenice'

Put students into groups of four people. Ask them to role-play a conversation between two policemen/women and two of Egaeus's servants. The policemen/women ask questions and the servants explain what happened.

'The Mask of the Red Death'

Put students into pairs. They role-play a conversation between a newspaper reporter and the stranger in the mask. Reporters ask questions like 'Why did you go to the Prince's party?'.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

Put students into small groups. Ask them to look up *vampire* and *ghost* in their dictionaries, and then to discuss these questions:

- (a) What do you most like to find in horror stories - murder, vampires, ghosts, etc.?
- (b) Do you think Poe's stories are better as books or as films? What can you do with a film that you can't do with a book? Think of five things, for example *music*, and make a list.

Then compare lists as a class.

Glossary

It will be useful for students to know the following new words. They are practised in the 'Before You Read' sections of exercises at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those in the Longman Active Study Dictionary.)

'The Black Cat'

axe (n) this is like a big knife; people use it to cut down trees
bury (v) to put somebody who is dead under the ground
cellar (n) a room under the ground in a house
evil (adj) very, very bad and doing bad things
horrible (adj) very unpleasant
horror (n) great fear
mad (adj) ill in the mind
object (n) a thing that you can touch
plaster (n) this is put on walls to make them smooth
servant (n) somebody who works for a person in their house

'The Oval Portrait'

decorate (v) to put paint or paper on the walls of a house
oval (adj) with a shape like an egg
portrait (n) a painting of a person

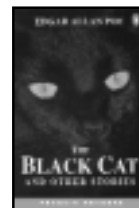
'The Mask of the Red Death'

mask (n) this is worn over someone's face to hide it



Student's activities

The Black Cat and Other Stories



Photocopiable

Students can do these exercises alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only activities are marked.

Activities before reading the book

Try to answer these questions, then look in the Introduction at the front of the book to find the answers.

- (a) When did Edgar Allan Poe live?
(i) 1809-1849, (ii) 1919-1959, (iii) 1950-1990
- (b) Which country did he come from?
(i) England (ii) The United States
(iii) Australia (iv) Scotland

Activities while reading the book

'THE BLACK CAT'

Before reading the story

Look at the picture on the front of the book. What words does a black cat make you think of? Write them down and then talk about them with another student.

At the middle of page 6

Which of the words below describe the people or animals in the story?

good kind clever brave happy loving sick bad

The story-teller:

His wife:

Pluto:

The second cat:

After reading the story

- 1 All of these sentences are in the story. Put them in the same order as they are in the story.
 - (a) But the more I hated the cat, the more he seemed to love me.
 - (b) ... I pulled her hand away from my wrist, lifted the tool again, brought it down hard and buried it in the top of her head.
 - (c) It was the shape of a large cat, hanging by its neck.
 - (d) It was that evil enemy of Man called Drink who was changing me.
 - (e) I put my hand up, touched it, and found that it was a black cat - a very large one, as large as Pluto.
 - (f) I knocked hard on the part of the wall where my wife was.
 - (g) I took my knife from my pocket, held the poor animal by his neck and cut out one of his eyes.
 - (h) And there was the cat, standing on her head, his red mouth wide open in a scream, and his one gold eye shining like fire.

- (i) There, on his front, was the shape of an object I am almost too afraid to name ... It was that terrible machine of pain and death - yes, the GALLOWS!
- (j) I caught the cat and hung him by his neck from a tree until he was dead.

- 2 Talk about this question with another student. Can you agree?

Was the second cat Pluto?

'THE OVAL PORTRAIT'

Before reading the story

Look at the picture at the beginning of the story. Guess which of these words you will read in the story:

paint, photographer, beautiful, electricity, afraid

Talk about your answers with another student. Try to agree. When you've read the story, check back to see if you were right.

At page 14, line 8

- 1 What's happening in the story? Why do you think the story-teller closes his eyes? Who do you think the woman in the portrait is? Talk about your ideas with another student. Can you agree?
- 2 What do you think is going to happen next? Discuss your ideas with another student.

Page 14, line 8 to the end of the story

- 1 Answer these questions.
 - (a) What is strange about the portrait?
 - (b) Why does the story-teller again pick up the book by his bed?
 - (c) Why did the beautiful woman hate her husband's paintings?
 - (d) What happens to the woman when her husband is painting her?
 - (e) Why does she die?
- 2 Continue to write the story, beginning like this: 'I put the book down, and looked at the portrait again. Now something was happening to the portrait. I was even more afraid than before, because now...'

'BERENICE'

Before reading the story

Look at the picture on page 18, and the words below it. Write down five words that you think you will read in the story. Talk about them with another student. When you have read the story, check back to see if you were right.

E

1

2

3

4

5

6

PRE-
INTERMEDIATE

THE BLACK CAT AND OTHER STORIES



Student's activities

At page 20, line 16

Write down the three best words to describe Egaeus and the three best to describe Berenice. Then write sentences to describe Egaeus and Berenice. In what ways are they different?

At the top of page 24

1 Answer these questions.

- (a) Why does Berenice change so much?
- (b) What is wrong with Egaeus?
- (c) Why does Egaeus ask Berenice to marry him?

2 Work with another student.

Look at the beginnings of newspaper stories below. Which newspaper story, if any, do you think says what is going to happen in the story? Look up *vampire* in your dictionary.

A Berenice drinks blood

Beautiful woman is really vampire.

A man died in a strange old house yesterday...

B Man kills girl because of her teeth

Police took a man away from his home yesterday after he killed his cousin because of her teeth. 'I am a murderer,' he said. 'But I did it because her teeth were so bad. I saw them for the first time last night...'

C Man takes out girl's teeth

A very strange thing happened at the big house on the hill last night. A man took out all his cousin's teeth. 'I wanted them,' he said...

After reading the story

1 Answer these questions.

- (a) Why does Egaeus want Berenice's teeth?
- (b) When does the servant girl tell Egaeus that Berenice is dead?
- (c) When does Egaeus next wake up?
- (d) How many hours can't he remember?
- (e) What is in the box on the table? Whose are they?

2 Were you right about question 2, the newspaper stories, above? Talk to other students. Were they right?

'THE MASK OF THE RED DEATH'**Before reading the story**

1 Look at the picture on page 28. Guess when this story happens.

- (a) before 1600, (b) 1700-1800, (c) 1800-1900

2 Think about the title of the story. Why do you think the Prince is throwing the key into the lake? Make some guesses.

At the bottom of page 31

1 Answer these questions.

- (a) What is the Red Death?
- (b) Why did the prince take 1000 friends to his house in the forest?
- (c) Why did he throw the key into the lake?
- (d) What did the Prince do five months later?

2 Mark 'true' (✓) or 'false' (x).

The Prince's house has:

- (a) servants ____
- (b) a high wall outside ____
- (c) only seven rooms ____

Each of the seven rooms has:

- (d) different furniture ____
- (e) lamps ____
- (f) a clock ____
- (g) windows the same colour as everything inside it ____
- (h) When the clock makes a sound each hour, the dancers stop dancing and have strange thoughts. _____

3 Talk to another student.

How are the seven rooms going to be important in the story? Try to guess.

Page 32 to the end of the story

1 Answer these questions.

- (a) Why was everybody dressed so strangely at the party?
- (b) Why did people look at the tall masked man with anger and horror?
- (c) Who killed the Prince?
- (d) Why did everybody die?

2 Talk with another student.

What do you think is the importance of the clock in this story?

Activities after reading the book

Which story frightened you most? Put them in order, from most frightening to least frightening.

'The Black Cat', 'The Oval Portrait', 'Berenice', 'The Mask of the Red Death'





The Black Cat and Other Stories

PRE-INTERMEDIATE

3

Answers to book activities

- 1 Open answers
- 2 evil, horrible, horror, mad
- 3 a He killed her with an *axe* and then *buried* her body in the ground.
b The *servant* made the beds and cleaned the rooms.
c The *plaster* on the wall was wet because it was new.
d She went down to the *cellar* and saw a black *object* near the door.
- 4 a Because he starts to drink too much.
b Because Pluto doesn't love him any more and he is angry. He wants to do an evil thing.
c Somebody probably threw the dead cat through the man's window. The cat's body went into the plaster and then burned, leaving the black shape.
d On top of a cupboard in a drinking-house. He is afraid of the new cat because it only has one eye like Pluto; it never leaves him alone; and it has the shape of the gallows on its front.
e Inside a wall in the cellar. They find her because the man knocks on the wall and the cat cries out from behind the wall.
- 5-7 Open answers
- 8 a Wrong. The house has several rooms, is richly decorated, and has many pictures.
b Right
c Right
d Wrong. His painting is more important than anything in the world.
e Right
f Right
- 9 Open answers
- 10 Open answers
- 11 e Egaeus is born in the library but his mother dies.
b Egaeus and Berenice grow up together.
d One day Berenice comes to Egaeus in the library.
c Egaeus cannot stop thinking about Berenice's teeth.
f The servants bury Berenice soon after dark.
a The servants find Berenice's body, and she is alive.
- 12-14 Open answers
- 15 The rooms are not in a straight line. Walking through them you come to a turn every twenty or thirty yards. So you could only ever see into one other room at a time. In every room there are two tall and narrow windows, one on either side. There is coloured glass in these windows. The clock is against the far wall of the black room.
The first room is blue.
The second room is purple.
The third room is green.
The fourth room is orange.
The fifth room is white.
The sixth room is yellow.
The seventh room is black with red windows.
- 16 The stranger is the Red Death. Everybody is afraid because he is wearing the mask of the Red Death.
- 17-20 Open answers

Answers to Factsheet activities

Communicative activities

Open answers

Student's activities

Activities before reading the book

(a)(i), (b)(ii)

Activities while reading the book

'The Black Cat'

Before reading the story

Open answers

At the middle of page 6

Open answers

After reading the story

- 1 (d), (g), (j), (c), (e), (a), (i), (b), (f), (h)
- 2 Open answers

'The Oval Portrait'

Before reading the story

The words *photographer* and *electricity* are not in the story.

At page 14, line 8

- 1 Open answers
- 2 Open answer

Page 14, line 8 to the end of the story

- 1 (a) The woman in the portrait looks alive.
(b) To read the story of the portrait.
(c) Because her husband's paintings were more important to him than she was.
(d) She becomes more and more pale and ill. The painting becomes more and more alive.
(e) She dies because the painting is finished. The painting becomes alive and so she dies.
- 2 Open answers

'Berenice'

Before reading the story

Open answers

At page 20, line 16

Open answer

At the top of page 24

- 1 (a) Because she has some very bad illnesses.
(b) He has a type of monomania. He can't stop thinking about one thing.
(c) Because he feels sorry for her. He knows that she loves him.
- 2 Story C is what happens.

After reading the story

- 1 (a) Because of his monomania. He can't stop thinking about them. He thinks that only the teeth can stop him going mad.
(b) When night was falling
(c) At midnight

- (d) For five or six hours, from when night was falling until midnight
- (e) 32 teeth. Berenice's teeth.

- 2 Open answers

'The Mask of the Red Death'

Before reading the story

- 1 (a)
- 2 Open answers

At the bottom of page 31

- 1 (a) a terrible illness
(b) so that they could get away from the Red Death
(c) so that nobody could get in or out of the house
(d) five months later the Prince wanted to have a party
- 2 (a) true
(b) true,
(c) false (there were more rooms)
(d) true
(e) false (there were no lamps)
(f) false (only the black room has a clock),
(g) false (the black room has red windows),
(h) true
- 3 Open answers

Page 32 to the end of the story

- 1 (a) Because the Prince chose the way everyone was dressed, and the Prince was strange.
(b) They looked at him with anger because he was wearing black, which made them think of death and they were trying to get away from that. They looked at him with horror because he was wearing a red mask which looked like a dead man. This frightened them because it was the mask of the Red Death.
(c) The masked man.
(d) Because the masked man was Red Death, which killed them.
- 2 Open answers

Activities after reading the book

Open answers





The Black Cat and Other Stories

Edgar Allan Poe



About the author

The American poet, fiction writer and critic, Edgar Allan Poe (1809–49), was responsible for some of the most unforgettable stories of terror ever written. They were the products of the mind of an unstable man, who lived a short and unhappy life.

Poe was born in January 1809 in Boston, USA. His life began tragically, as both of his parents had died by the time he was two. He went to live with a family, the Allans, who became his foster parents. He went to good schools and university, but had to leave university early because he fell out with his foster father, who never really understood him. Poe was deeply upset; his relationship with his foster father worsened, and Poe left home forever.

Poe showed early literary promise, finding a publisher for his first collection of poetry, *Tamerlane and Other Poems*, before he was twenty years old. After a spell in the army he started on a career in journalism and began writing short stories. He married when he was twenty-six. Despite being a good, hard-working editor and also producing articles and short stories all the time, Poe never had much money, and much of what he did have was spent on alcohol.

When Poe's wife died young in 1847, any stability in his life disappeared and he himself was dead two years later, found unconscious in the street after a session of heavy drinking.

Summary

In their strange atmosphere and the fantastic events they describe, the four stories in this collection are typical of Edgar Allan Poe's tales: part horror story, part romantic poetry.

The Black Cat

In *The Black Cat*, one of Poe's most famous stories, the evil done by an originally good man comes back to him in the terrible revenge of his once-loved cat.

The Oval Portrait

In *The Oval Portrait*, a traveller comes across a remarkably life-like painting of a woman in a mountain castle. He also finds a book, which tells him the portrait's horrible secret.

Berenice

Berenice is a weird story of a strange man's proposal of marriage to his cousin, and her terrible fate at his hands.

The Mask of the Red Death

In *The Mask of the Red Death*, another famous story, a prince tries to escape a horrible epidemic by locking the doors of his castle – but of course fails.

Background and themes

Horror stories are as popular today as they were when the genre was at its height of popularity some two hundred years ago. Now we can find horror not only in books and plays, but also in films and comics and on the Internet. But in nineteenth century Europe it was of course through books that people enjoyed the excitement and thrills of the horror story.

In the early part of the nineteenth century, Mary Shelley published her novel *Frankenstein* (1818). From this time until the latter part of the century when Bram Stoker's *Dracula* was published, there was no shortage of novels and short stories telling tales of terror, murder, mystery and suspense. Some of the great writers of the nineteenth century concentrated much of their efforts in this direction, among them Charles Dickens, Robert Louis Stevenson and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century on the other side of the Atlantic, the novel was struggling to make its mark on the United States. The USA was still a very young country at that time, having only become independent in 1776. Remarkably little in the way of American literature had been produced before Independence. The novel had always been regarded with suspicion by the leading thinkers of the country, most of whom were Puritans with strict moral values. They considered the novel to be a potentially dangerous thing, with the power to have a bad influence on young people. Moreover, there was a strong tendency to look down on authors writing in the English language who were not living and publishing their work



The Black Cat and Other Stories

in Great Britain. Irving Washington was the best-known writer writing in English and living outside Great Britain. He freely admitted to borrowing heavily from European literature and based one of his most famous stories, *Rip Van Winkle*, on a folk tale from Germany.

Early American novelists tended to be cautious. Many of them aimed to please Puritans and publishers alike by putting morals before plot. One such writer was Charles Brockden Brown (1771–1810), but the books he published at the turn of the century were different from his others in one respect – he included an element of horror in them. A little later, Nathaniel Hawthorne (1804–1864) wrote novels and collections of short stories concerning themselves with evil and the darker side of the human soul.

Edgar Allan Poe was influenced by both Brockden Brown and Hawthorne, who was a contemporary of his. The most successful of Poe's stories were in the tradition of Gothic fiction, and combine terror and guilt in a lyrical style that reminds us that he was a great poet, too. He also wrote some of the first science-fiction stories; and in his character C. Auguste Dupin, he virtually created the modern detective story. In addition, he was one of the most feared critics in America.

It is typical of Poe's tragic life that he died just as people were starting to read him in ever-increasing numbers and he was becoming famous. After his death, his reputation continued to grow, especially in Europe, and for well over a century he has been one of the most widely-read authors in any language.

Discussion activities

The Black Cat, pages 1–11

Before reading

- Discuss:** Talk about the beginning of the story. Have students read the first sentence of the story: 'You are not going to believe this story, but it is a true story ...' Then have a whole-class discussion using the following questions.
 - Do you think this is a good way to start a story which is impossible to believe?*
 - Does it make the story seem more or less easy to believe?*

After reading

- Discuss:** Talk about Pluto and the second cat. Have students work in pairs and discuss the following question. Later, ask some pairs to share their opinions with the rest of the class.
 - Is the second cat Pluto? What do you think?*

- Discuss:** Talk about superstition. Put students into small groups. Ask them to look up 'superstition' and 'superstitious' in their dictionaries. Then ask them to discuss these questions.
 - Are black cats 'evil' in your culture?*
 - Can you think of some examples of superstition in your culture?*
 - Are you superstitious? If so, what about? If not, why not?*

The Oval Portrait, pages 13–17

Before reading

- Discuss:** Put students into small groups. Have them look at the picture on page 12. Ask them to guess which of these words they will read in the story: house, horse, paint, photographer, sad, beautiful, electricity, afraid. Later, ask each group to share their conclusions with the rest of the class.

While reading

- Pair work:** Stop reading at page 14, line 8. Put students into pairs. Have them ask and answer the following questions and see if they can agree with each other.
 - What's happening in the story?*
 - Why do you think the story-teller closes his eyes?*
 - Who do you think the woman in the portrait is?*
 - What do you think is going to happen next?*

After reading

- Check:** Have students revisit the list of words from the Activity 4. Have them see if they were right. Ask them to add some more words which are important in the story.
- Retell:** Put students into small groups. Have each group retell the story. Each student says one sentence, until the story is finished. Encourage them to try to do it in three minutes.
- Write:** Have students work in pairs or small groups. Prompt students to continue the story. Give them the sentences beginning like this: 'I put the book down, and looked at the portrait again. Now something was happening to the portrait. I was even more afraid than before, because now ...' When they are ready, ask some students to read out their stories or make a classroom wall display so that everyone can read them.
- Group work:** Create a story. Put students into small groups. Ask them to make up a story for one of the other pictures in the room. One person in the group tells their story to the class. The class decides which story is best.

Berenice, pages 19–27

Before reading

- Guess:** Put students into small groups. Have them look at the picture on page 18 and the words below it. Have each group to come up with five words that they think they will read in the story. Ask each group



The Black Cat and Other Stories

to read out the list of words and write them on the board. According to the number of times each word appears on the board, decide on the most popular five words. Ask them to keep the words in mind while reading.

While reading

- 11 Discuss:** Talk about Egaeus and Berenice. Stop reading at page 20, line 16. Put students into small groups. Have them discuss and choose the three best words to describe Egaeus and the three best to describe Berenice. Later, ask each group to share their words with the rest of the class.

- 12 Predict:** Stop reading at the top of page 24. Put students into small groups. Have them read the beginnings of newspaper stories below. Encourage them to choose one newspaper story that says what is going to happen in the story. Pre-teach the word 'vampire' if necessary or let students look it up their dictionaries.

Berenice drinks blood

Beautiful woman is really vampire. A man died in a strange old house yesterday ...

Man kills girl because of her teeth

Police took a man away from his home yesterday after he killed his cousin because of her teeth. 'I am a murderer,' he said. 'But I did it because her teeth were so bad. I saw them for the first time last night.'

Man takes out girl's teeth

A very strange thing happened at the big house on the hill last night. A man took out all his cousin's teeth. 'I wanted them,' he said ...

After reading

- 13 Check:** Have students go back to the three stories in the activity 12. Have them check if they were right.
- 14 Check:** Have students go back to the list of five words that they predict before reading the story (Activity 10). Ask them to check to see if they were right. Then tell them to add more words to the list.
- 15 Role play:** Put students into groups of four. Ask them to role-play a conversation between two police officers and two of Egaeus's servants. The police officers ask questions and servants explain what happened.
- 16 Discuss:** Put students into small groups. Draw their attention to the beginning of the story, and have them exchange their opinions.

Look at page 19. Egaeus says, 'I know I lived another life before the one I am living now. I can remember another time, like a dream without shape or body: a world of eyes, sweet sad sounds and silent shadows. I woke up from that long night, my eyes opened, and I saw the light of day again – here in this room full of thoughts and dreams.' What does he mean? What do you think he is talking about? Can you believe what he is saying?

The Mask of the Red Death, pages 29–36

Before reading

- 17 Guess:** Have students look at the picture on page 28. Ask them to guess when this story happens. Give them the following choices: before 1600, 1700–1800, 1800–1900. Then put students in small groups. Have them make some guesses using the following question.
- *Why do you think this man is throwing the key into the lake?*

After reading

- 18 Discuss:** Talk about the tall masked man. Put students into small groups. Have them discuss the following questions.
- *Who is the tall masked man?*
 - *Why is everyone afraid of him?*
- 19 Role play:** Put students into pairs. Have them act out a conversation between a newspaper reporter and the stranger in the mask. Prompt students to start a conversation with the reporter asking questions like 'Why did you go to the Prince's party?'

Extra activities

- 20 Discuss:** Talk about horror stories. Put students into small groups. Ask them to look up 'vampire' and 'ghost' in their dictionaries, and then to discuss the following questions.
- *What do you most like to find in horror stories – murder, vampires, ghosts, etc.?*
 - *What is the most frightening story you know?*
 - *Do you like horror stories?*
- 21 Discuss:** Books or films? Put students into small groups. Have them imagine that there are films of Poe's stories. Have them discuss the following questions.
- *Do you think Poe's stories are better as books or as films?*
 - *What can you do with a film that you can't do with a book?*

Later ask each group to share their opinions with the rest of the class.

- 22 Project:** Edgar Allan Poe's life Give students an opportunity to find information on Edgar Allan Poe using outside resources, e.g. library books, the Internet, etc as well as the Introduction in the book. Divide the students into groups and they can make posters to display the information they found out. This could be simply his biography, the types of his work or his famous poems. Then each group can make a presentation using their poster.

Vocabulary activities

For the Word List and vocabulary activities, go to www.penguinreaders.com.



The Black Cat and Other Stories

Photocopiable

While reading

***The Black Cat*, pages 1–11**

1 Which of the words below describe the people or animals in the story?

bad brave clever evil friendly good
happy horrible kind loving selfish sick

- a The story-teller:
- b The story-teller's wife:
- c Pluto:
- d The second cat:

2 Put these sentences in the correct order, 1–10.

The first half of the story: (1–5)

- a I searched for another black cat, of the same size and type as Pluto. ☐
- b For years, he and I lived happily together, the best of friends. ☐
- c I saw a black shape in the new white plaster. ☐
- d I caught the cat and hung him by his neck from a tree until he was dead. ☐
- e I took my knife from my pocket, held the poor animal by his neck and cut out one of his eyes. ☐

The second half of the story: (6–10)

- f And there was the cat, standing on her head, his red mouth wide open in a scream, and his one gold eye shining like fire. ☐
- g But the more I hate the cat, the more he seemed to love me. ☐
- h I knocked hard on the part of the wall where my wife was. ☐
- i Pluto didn't have a white hair anywhere on his body; this cat had a large white shape on his front. ☐
- j I took the axe and tried to cut the animal into two. But as I brought the axe down, my wife stopped my arm with her hand. ☐

***The Oval Portrait*, pages 13–17**

3 Something is wrong in these sentences. Cross out the wrong part of the sentences and correct them.

- a It was a sad and strangely ugly house, many hundreds of years old.
.....
- b He helped me to lie down on the sofa.
.....

- c I asked Pedro to light the candle beside the bed.
.....
- d I began to look at the maps on the walls, and as I did so I read a small book.
.....
- e The picture was a portrait. It was square in shape, and showed the head and shoulders of a young woman.
.....

4 Choose the right answers.

- 1 What is strange about the portrait? ...
 - a The woman in the portrait looks beautiful.
 - b The woman in the portrait looks alive.
 - c The woman in the portrait moves around.
- 2 Why does the story-teller again pick up the book by his bed? ...
 - a Because he fell in love with the portrait.
 - b Because he didn't want to look at the portrait again.
 - c To read the story of the portrait.
- 3 Why did the beautiful woman hate her husband's paintings? ...
 - a Because her husband's paintings were more important to him than she was.
 - b Because her husband's paintings were more beautiful than she was.
 - c Because her husband's paintings made her unhealthy.
- 4 What happened to the woman when her husband was painting her? ...
 - a She couldn't smile any more.
 - b She became more and more pale and ill.
 - c All of the above.
- 5 What happened to the woman when her husband finished the portrait? ...
 - a She had no face.
 - b She didn't love her husband anymore.
 - c She was dead.

***Berenice*, pages 19–27**

5 Are these sentences true (T) or not true (NT)?

- a Egaeus is from an old family. ☐
- b Egaeus lives in the house of his fathers. ☐
- c Egaeus' father died in the library. ☐
- d Egaeus doesn't like the library. ☐
- e Egaeus has a friend called Berenice. ☐
- f Berenice's bright young days ended because she became old. ☐



The Black Cat and Other Stories

Photocopiable

- g Egaeus had an illness of the mind. ☐
 - h Egaeus loved Berenice, but she never loved him. ☐
 - i Berenice died of epilepsy. ☐
- 6 Answer these questions.
- a Why does Berenice change so much?
.....
 - b What is wrong with Egaeus?
.....
 - c Why does Egaeus ask Berenice to marry him?
.....
 - d Why does Egaeus want Berenice's teeth?
.....
 - e When does the servant girl tell Egaeus that Berenice is dead?
.....

The Mask of the Red Death, pages 29–36

- 7 Are these sentences right (✓) or wrong (X)?
- 1 If you have the Red Death:
 - a you have burning pains in your eyes. ☐
 - b everything begins to turn round and round inside your stomach. ☐
 - c you begin to bleed all over your body – but most of all through your face. ☐
 - d you have about half a year to live. ☐
 - 2 The Prince's house in the middle of a forest has:
 - a servants. ☐
 - b a high wall around it. ☐
 - c only seven rooms. ☐
 - d a lot of keys. ☐
 - 3 Each of the seven rooms has:
 - a different furniture. ☐
 - b lamps. ☐
 - c a clock. ☐
 - d windows the same colour as everything inside it. ☐
 - 4 The seven rooms are different colours:
 - a The first room is blue. ☐
 - b The second room is pink. ☐
 - c The third room is yellow. ☐
 - d The fourth room is orange. ☐
 - e The fifth room is white. ☐
 - f The sixth room is green. ☐
 - g The seventh room is black with grey windows. ☐

- 8 Choose the correct answer.
- 1 Why was everybody dressed so strangely at the party? ...
 - a Because the Prince chose the way everyone was dressed.
 - b Because the Prince was strange.
 - c All of the above.
 - 2 Why did people look at the tall masked man with anger and horror? ...
 - a Because he was wearing black, which made them think of death.
 - b Because he was wearing a red mask which looked like a dead man.
 - c All of the above.
 - 3 Who killed the Prince? ...
 - a One of his friends.
 - b One of the servants.
 - c The tall masked man.
 - 4 Why did everybody die? ...
 - a Because they were very scared.
 - b Because the Prince was killed.
 - c Because the tall masked man was the Red Death.

After reading

- 9 Write a sentence using these words.
- a anger
.....
 - b evil
.....
 - c horror
.....
 - d mad
.....
- 10 Write one more sentence to continue the story.
- a *The Black Cat*: The policemen looked at me.
.....
 - b *The Oval Portrait*: When I finished reading the book, the portrait started to talk.
.....
 - c *Berenice*: The servant called the police.
.....
 - d *The Mask of the Red Death*: A hundred years later, someone came to this house.
.....



The Black Cat and Other Stories

Photocopiable

- 1 **The Black Cat:** Complete each sentence with a word from the box. You can use the same word more than once.

angry	axe	cellar	evil	horror
mad	object	plaster	several	

- a Some people believe that all black cats are
- b I was often suddenly about unimportant things.
- c Someone else was in my body: someone evil, and with drink!
- d The next morning, my mind was full of pain and when I woke up.
- e I realised why this wall didn't burn: because there was new on it.
- f I looked at the shape in complete
- g I noticed a black on top of a cupboard.
- h The cat pressed the side of his head against my hand times.
- i I took the and tried to cut the animal into two.
- j I decided to hide the body in one of the walls of the

- 2 **The Oval Portrait:** Match the two parts of the sentences.

- 1 I was so badly hurt ...
 - 2 After dark, I could not sleep ...
 - 3 I looked and read for a long time, and ...
 - 4 My eyes became more and more tired, and soon ...
 - 5 I saw more pictures, and ...
 - 6 It was almost impossible to believe ...
 - 7 Quickly, I looked through the book until ...
- a I found it hard to read the words on the page.
 - b because of the pain.
 - c I found the story of the oval portrait.
 - d that she was just paint – that she wasn't alive!
 - e that I would die if we stayed out all night.
 - f among them there was a portrait of a young woman.
 - g the hours passed quickly.

- 3 **Berenice:** Circle the correct words in *italics*.

- a Egaeus' favourite room is the *library* / *sitting room*.
- b Egaeus was born in the *library* / *richly decorated room*.
- c Berenice and Egaeus were *lovers* / *cousins*.
- d Berenice was always shining like a *bright* / *evil* new sun when she was young.

- e Berenice ran over the hills under the great blue sky while Egaeus studied *at school* / *in the library*.
- f Berenice became ill. The first illness caused *two* / *several* other illnesses to follow.
- g Egaeus became ill. He could lose himself in the useless study of even the simplest or most ordinary *subject* / *object*.
- h Egaeus asked Berenice to marry him because he *loved her* / *felt so sorry for her*.
- i Egaeus thought, 'Berenice was like *an angel* / *a stranger* to me, only a weak shadow of the woman I remembered.'
- j Berenice made a strange smile, and it was then that Egaeus saw her *eyes* / *teeth*.
- k 'We are ready to *bury* / *burn* her now,' said the servant girl.
- l Berenice wasn't *dead* / *alive*.

- 4 **The Mask of the Red Death:** Choose the right answers.

- 1 What is the Red Death? ...
 - a An old ship.
 - b A terrible illness.
 - c A small pub.
- 2 Why did the prince take 1,000 friends to his house in the forest? ...
 - a so that they could have a fight.
 - b so that they could enjoy the walking in the forest and listening to the birds singing.
 - c so that they could get away from the Red Death.
- 3 Why did he throw the key into the lake? ...
 - a so that nobody could get in or out of the house.
 - b so that he would die in the house.
 - c because he didn't like the key.
- 4 What did the Prince want to do five months later? ...
 - a He wanted to have an unusual party.
 - b He wanted to marry a beautiful girl.
 - c He wanted to have great furniture.
- 5 Which room has a very large clock? ...
 - a The blue room.
 - b The black room.
 - c The red room.
- 6 What happened when the clock made a deep, strange, musical sound? ...
 - a The musician was killed.
 - b The dancers fell down onto the floor.
 - c The whole party stopped.



The Black Cat and Other Stories

Book key

- 1 a servant, stranger
b anger, horror
c portrait, mask
d axe, lamp
- 2 a a man kills his black cat
b a beautiful young woman
c a death mask
d horror
e the last few months
- 3 Open answers
- 4 1 f 2 b 3 h 4 a 5 c 6 g 7 d 8 e
- 5 a X b ✓ c ✓ d ✓ e X f ✓ g ✓
- 6–9 Open answers
- 10 a lamp b horror c work d time
e unhealthy f mad g alive h dies
- 11 a She has begun to hate her husband's paintings because they keep him away from her.
b She has become weak and sad.
c She has died.
- 12 a surprise and excitement at first, then fear and horror
b love
c He loves her, but he loves his work more.
d He cannot think of anything or anyone except his portrait – until it is finished. We can only guess how he feels after that.
- 13–14 Open answers
- 15 a f b i c g d h e j
- 16 a monomania b dream c marry d teeth
e servant f buried g blood
- 17 a in the middle of his life
b often goes out
c object
d loves
e she is not dead
f without any teeth
- 18–22 Open answers
- 23 a feel everything turning round and round.
b bloody.
c nobody can come in or out of the house.
d each decorated in a different colour.
B not the same colour as the room.
- 24 a No b Yes c Yes d No e No
- 25–37 Open answers

Discussion activities key

- 1 Possible answers:
 - *I think this is a good way to start a story because you are ready to read something unrealistic.*
 - *I think it makes the story seem less easy to believe.*
- 2 Possible answers:
 - *I think the second cat is Pluto.*
 - *I think Pluto's ghost is inside the second cat.*
 - *I don't think the second cat is Pluto. Pluto was killed!*
- 3 Possible answers:
 - *Black cats are evil in my culture.*
 - *Black cats are good luck in my culture.*
 - *If you see a spider at night, it will bring bad news; if you see a spider in the morning, it will bring good news.*
 - *Number 4 is bad luck in my culture.*
 - *It's a bad luck to open an umbrella indoors.*
 - *I am not superstitious. I open my wet umbrella inside my flat. Where can I dry it otherwise?*
- 4 Open answers
Note: The words 'photographer' and 'electricity' are not in the story.
- 5 Possible answers:
 - *The story-teller saw a portrait of a young woman, and he closes his eyes because it was a shock.*
 - *I think he was very surprised and needed to time to think.*
 - *He closed his eyes to calm himself.*
 - *I think she is the owner of the house.*
 - *I think she is a ghost.*
 - *Probably the portrait will start to talk to the story-teller.*
 - *Perhaps the young woman's eyes follow the story-teller.*
- 6–9 Open answers
- 10 Possible words:
library, books, house, old, evil, ghost, dark, candles, windows, heavy
- 11 Possible words:
Egeus: weak, sick, dark, inside, heavy thoughts
Berenice: strong, healthy, bright, happy, sweet, beauty, light
- 12–13 The story 'Man takes out girl's teeth' is what happens in the story.
- 14–15 Open answers



The Black Cat and Other Stories

16 Possible opinions:

- *I think what he means is that he remembers his previous life.*
- *I don't believe in re-incarnation.*
- *I don't remember my previous life, but I think it sounds great if there is a previous life. You can have a different life as a different person.*
- *I think he means that he was a ghost before he was born. It says 'without shape or body.'*

17 Possible answers:

- *It is probably before 1600.*
- *I think he is throwing the key into the lake to lock up someone.*
- *I think it's because he is a bad person.*

18 Suggested answers:

- *The tall masked man is the Red Death.*
- *Everyone is afraid of him because he is wearing the mask of the Red Death.*

19–20 Open answers

21 Possible answers:

- *I think these stories are better as books because you can use your imagination.*
- *I think these stories make very good horror films.*
- *With a film, you can use some sound effects and music.*

22 Open answers

Activity worksheets **key**

1 Suggested answers:

- a** kind, loving, good, evil, bad, horrible, selfish, sick
- b** brave, good, kind, loving
- c** friendly, happy, kind, loving
- d** friendly, loving, clever

2 **a** 5 **b** 1 **c** 4 **d** 3 **e** 2 **f** 10 **g** 7 **h** 9
i 6 **j** 8

3 **a** ugly > beautiful

- b** sofa > bed
- c** candle > lamp
- d** maps > pictures
- e** square > oval

4 **1** b **2** c **3** a **4** b **5** c

5 **a** T **b** T **c** NT **d** NT **e** NT **f** NT

g T **h** NT **i** NT

6 Suggested answers:

- a** Because she has some very bad illnesses.
- b** He has a type of monomania. He can't stop thinking about one thing.
- c** Because he feels sorry for her. He knows that she loves him.
- d** Because of his monomania. He can't stop thinking about them. He thinks that only the teeth can stop him going mad.
- e** When the night was falling

7 **1** **a** X **b** X **c** ✓ **d** X

2 **a** ✓ **b** ✓ **c** X **d** X

3 **a** ✓ **b** X **c** X **d** X

4 **a** ✓ **b** X **c** X **d** ✓ **e** X **f** X **g** X

8 **1** c **2** c **3** c **4** c

9 Example sentences:

- a** My father was filled with anger.
- b** My friend believes in evil spirits.
- c** There was a car accident, and people watched in horror.
- d** I will go mad if I have to wait for a long time.

10 Open answers

Progress test **key**

1 **a** evil **b** angry **c** mad **d** horror **e** plaster
f horror **g** object **h** several **i** axe **j** cellar

2 **1** e **2** c **3** g **4** a **5** f **6** d **7** c

3 **a** library

b library

c cousins

d bright

e in the library

f several

g object

h felt so sorry for her

i a stranger

j teeth

k bury

l dead

4 **1** b **2** c **3** a **4** a **5** b **6** c