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**A Short Biography of Edgar Allan Poe**

**What can we take away from this?**

The life and legacy of Edgar Allan Poe is a mix of triumph and tragedy.

*By* ***James F. Buffett, revised***

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| Edgar Alan Poe |
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**THE BEGINNING**
Born in Boston in the year 1809, Edgar Poe was the second child of David Poe and Elizabeth Arnold, who were traveling actors. As a young child Edgar and his siblings were abandoned by David Poe, and Elizabeth died shortly after her husband left. Edgar and his brother and sister were put into foster care. For the rest of his life he would have very little contact with his siblings. Edgar was taken in by John and Frances Allan of Richmond, Virginia where he would spend his childhood and the majority of his life. Although John Allan never adopted Edgar, the boy took it upon himself to take his foster father’s last name as his own. The two often argued and John Allan showed little affection towards young Edgar.

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**COLLEGE AND THE ACADEMY**
At the age of seventeen in 1826, Edgar entered the University of Virginia. While at the university he developed a serious drinking problem and got himself into some deep gambling debts. After only a year at the university, Edgar withdrew and ran off to Boston to seek his fortune as a writer. While there, he published a volume of poetry, but it failed to make money. With John Allan’s help he was able to get into the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Poe showed great potential as a student but his drinking and gambling created financial and personal problems. Ultimately, he neglected his duties at the academy and was dismissed in 1831.

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**EDITOR, WRITER, HUSBAND**
Poe would spend the rest of his life bouncing from job to job. He worked at many publications as an editor to support himself and his family which included his aunt Maria Poe Clemm and her 13 year old daughter, Virginia, who he married in 1835. Unfortunately, Virginia was a weak creature and never in good health. When he wasn’t working or drunk, Poe wrote poems and short stories. Although he never made any real money as a writer, Poe single-handedly invented the detective story as well as the horror story. Poe’s work often centered on the psychological rather than the supernatural. His best stories were “The Tell-Tale Heart” about a murderer with a conscious, the revenge tales “The Cask of Amontillado,” “Hop Frog,” and “The Masque of the Red Death.” His work often featured hopeless heroines and heroes and scenes that could actually happen, which made Poe’s work all the more frightening. Sadly for Poe, he did not live to see himself changed into a pop culture icon.

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**THE END**
In the year 1845, Poe wrote and published what would become his most famous work, “The Raven.” The poem was a success and made Poe a household name, but he was paid only ten dollars for the piece. Famous but not rich, Poe slipped deeper into depression and alcoholism. In 1847, his wife Virginia died of tuberculosis at the age of twenty-five. While on a trip in 1849, Poe disappeared and was found nearly a week later in Baltimore, drunk, delirious, and asking God for help. Four days after he showed up in Baltimore, Poe died at the age of forty and was buried in a cemetery in Baltimore. Oddly, it was an appropriate ending to the life of a man stricken by loss, Heartache, and abandonment.

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