

16/17 October 2016



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Greetings, AmLit Scholars—

Welcome back from Week Without Walls! I hope that your week was as fun and provocative as mine!

Today, we'll do what we should always do in the aftermath of new experiences: write about them! Keep in mind the words of the great American educational reformer, Thomas Dewey, who said, "We do not learn from experience... we learn from reflecting upon experience."

Here's how we'll roll today:

1. (not)WEDGE—Please note that this is NOT an ordinary WEDGE exercise, in that you will definitely benefit from following the prompt!

Open up a fresh, brand-spanking-new document and entitle it, "WWW 2016 Narrative." You'll probably want to keep this WEDGE apart from your usual pile o' WEDGES.

For roughly ten minutes, tell a single story from your WWW experience. Try to tell a story about an experience that could not have happened to any other HS student on the planet, except maybe the students who participated in WWW with you. While the events are still vivid in your memory, try to include specific multisensory imagery that would allow an audience of ignorant animals (college admissions officers, for example) to understand your experience vicariously. Describe both setting and important characters. After telling the tale as richly as you can, maybe offer a general claim explaining what it all means: what you learned about yourself or others or both.

2. (not)WEDGE Revision—We will dedicate adequate time to revising and proofreading our tale to make it all shiny. Why?

3. Introduction to the Gratitude Project—Using a document posted to our Moodle page, we will take steps to express our appreciation while also making ourselves better people. That's right: some writing projects can actually help to make us better people!

4. The Gratitude Project—This part will be explained orally. But it is important for you to know that I will NOT read the work that you produce, because I am not the intended audience.

5. Return to Poe (Poetry)—Our extended conversation about Poe will begin during our next class meeting, so we'll use most of today to prepare for that discussion. First, we will divvy up the Poe Topics and then we'll read some Poe(m)s together for fun!

6. Return to Poe (Prose)—If you have not finished your active reading of the “The Fall of the House of Usher,” do so immediately. You must also complete your active reading of “The Cask of Amontillado” and “The Tell-Tale Heart.”

Tappa! Tappa! Tappa!—
Mr Leo

Homework:

1. Prepare a conversation starter related to your Poe Topic. The conversation starter should include textual evidence from a minimum of two (2) pieces of literature from two different genres (one short story and one poem).
2. Upload your conversation starter to Turnitin.com prior to the start of our next class meeting. N.B. These conversation starters will be assessed at the start of class.

“Excellent” Sample Conversation Starter from a Former Student

K'Sondra Fredrickson:

The Power and Limits of Ratiocination: while Poe's work often reflects upon the power and limits of logical, rational thinking, it also contemplates other ways of knowing in similar ways. For example, Poe's work both acknowledges intuition (the ability to know or understand something without the need for conscious reasoning), but also undermines its importance and power. For example in “The Tell-Tale Heart” the narrator hears the “beating of his hideous heart” (Poe 6) of the man that he killed. The ability to hear the beating heart is a sort of intuition, or sixth sense but at the same time, he undermines the importance of a sixth sense by having it

not only be useless, but by also having it give the murderer away. The exact same use of a sixth sense occurs in the “The Fall of the House of Usher.” Usher senses the coming of his sister, but it does him no good in the end: “yes, I hear it, and have heard it. Long- long- long- many minutes, many hours, many days” (44). One of the harder to discern examples of this useless sixth sense is in Poe's poem “The Raven.” Here, the raven who was “tapping at [his] chamber door” (line 5) represents his fears and sorrows that will come. The bird gives him an intuition of sorts into the future, but in this case knowing and having the raven who “still is sitting, still is sitting/ On the pallid bust of Pallas just above [his] chamber door” (103-104) staying there and watching you for ever was probably worse than knowing, so in this case the intuition of the future is, again, useless and causes more harm than good. So, if rational knowing is both powerful and limited and intuitive knowing is both powerful and limited, can anything really be known in a Poe text? If so, how? And would that knowledge always be unreliable? [conversation starter]

P.S. You may enjoy these files:

Vincent Price reads “The Raven”:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T7zR3IDEHrM>

Christopher Lee reads “The Raven”:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BefliMIEzZ8>

And just as a treat for you, on the chance that you need some help procrastinating:

Tim Burton's Poe-inspired short film, “Vincent”:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n0zkFo3IkY>