

# Primary Poe: Poe's Possessions



Grade: 4th-12th

VSOLS: VS, USI, USII, VUS

# THE POE MUSEUM

**Directions:** Learn about Edgar Allan Poe's life as a writer through the objects in the Poe Museum's collection. First, identify what each source is by reading the object's info. Next, use the Primary Source Worksheet to analyze each source. Finally, answer the guiding questions under each primary source to interpret how the source relates to Poe's life and literature.

## Introduction to Poe's Literary Career:

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), also known as the "Master of the Macabre" was an American writer who influenced the gothic, science fiction, and detective genres. Poe began his literary career in Richmond, Virginia at the Southern Literary Messenger. Today, he is most well known for his gothic tales, including "The Fall of the House of Usher" and "The Tell-Tale Heart." Poe was also an important poet, publishing works such as "Annabel Lee" and most famously, "The Raven" in 1845. Many of Poe's stories and poems were inspired by real-world fears including crime, disease, being buried alive, and "the death of a beautiful woman." Today, Poe remains one of the most well-known authors in the world, inspiring modern writers, filmmakers, and artists.

New-York: April 7th-45. Received of John Bisco  
ten dollars, on account of the Southern Literary Mes-  
senger.  
10 \$  
Edgar A. Poe

# THE POE MUSEUM

## POE'S WAISTCOAT

POE MUSEUM COLLECTION 1995.46.1



**Date:** Before 1849

**Object Info:** This is a silk, cream color waistcoat owned by Edgar Allan Poe. It is embroidered, buttoned, and has one pocket on the right side, and two on the left. The underarm areas are stained. It is unknown when he purchased this waistcoat.

### Guiding Questions:

- What image might Poe have wanted to convey by wearing this waistcoat?
- Is this waistcoat similar to clothes people wear today? Why or why not?

# THE POE MUSEUM

## POE'S SOCKS

POE MUSEUM COLLECTION 1995.46.2



**Date:** Before 1849

**Object Info:** Edgar Allan Poe's socks kept after his death by his aunt and mother-in-law Maria Clemm.

**Guiding Questions:**

- Why do you think Maria Clemm preserved Poe's socks after his death?

# THE POE MUSEUM

## POE'S BOOT HOOKS

POE MUSEUM COLLECTION 35



**Date:** 1849

**Object Info:** These wooden boot hooks were left by Poe at his sister's home, Duncan Lodge, in Richmond, shortly before his death.

### Guiding Questions:

- What might have Poe have used these hooks for? Do we still use an item like this today?

# THE POE MUSEUM

## POE'S POCKETWATCH

POE MUSEUM COLLECTION 2021.1.1



**Date:** 1842

**Object Info:** This is an 18k gold key-wound, open-face pocket watch owned by Edgar Allan Poe. It is engraved "Echappement A Cylindre En / Aiguille / Edgar A. Poe / Pierre Huit Trous En Rabis." Poe used this watch until 1843, when he sold it to pay off his debts.

### Guiding Questions:

- How does this watch show Poe's change of Poe's wealth over his life?
- How does this object show the advancements of technology from Poe's time to today?

# THE POE MUSEUM

## POE'S ENGAGEMENT RING TO ELMIRA

POE MUSEUM COLLECTION 2021.1.2



**Date:** 1849

**Object Info:** Elmira Royster Shelton was Edgar Allan Poe's first and last love. Edgar and Elmira's first engagement was broken off by her father when they were teenagers. They rekindle their love years later in 1849. Poe proposed shortly after with this ring, however, the couple would never marry. Poe passed away just ten days before their wedding. Elmira gave this ring to Poe's sister Rosalie, after Poe's death.

### Guiding Questions:

- What is the significance of Edgar engraving his name for Elmira's ring?
- Why might have Elmira preserved this ring after Poe's death? Why do you think Elmira gave this ring to Poe's sister?

# THE POE MUSEUM

## POE'S KEY

POE MUSEUM COLLECTION 365.B



**Date:** 1849

**Object Info:** Iron key found in Edgar Allan Poe's pocket at the time of his death. This key opens Poe's traveling trunk (365.a). Poe left the trunk in Richmond at the time of his death.

### **Guiding Questions:**

- How has this object changed over time?
- Why do you think this key was one of the few objects Poe had on him when he passed away?

# THE POE MUSEUM

## POE'S PENKNIFE

POE MUSEUM COLLECTION 2017.2



**Date:** Before 1849

**Object Info:** Edgar Allan Poe left this knife with Thomas Richmond (the cousin of Poe's friend Annie Richmond's husband Charles Richmond) as security for a loan. Poe never repaid the loan, so Richmond kept the knife.

### **Guiding Questions:**

- How does Poe's pen knife help us understand the effort required to write with a quill pen in the 1800s compared to today?
  
- Why do you think Poe had this object engraved with his name?

# THE POE MUSEUM

## POE'S DAGUERRETYPE

POE MUSEUM COLLECTION 600



**Date:** 1848-1854

**Object Info:** Daguerreotype (early photograph) of Edgar Allan Poe made by Samuel Masury.

### Guiding Questions:

- Why do you think Poe wanted to get a daguerreotype of himself?
- How would you describe Poe in this daguerreotype?
- Do you think daguerreotypes were as accessible as photographs are today?
- How has this image contributed to Poe's legacy today? In what ways has Poe be represented in modern media?

# THE POE MUSEUM

## POE'S LETTER TO WASHINGTON IRVING

POE MUSEUM COLLECTION 2024.6.1

Date: 1839

**Object Info:** Poe wrote this letter to request an endorsement from Washington Irving (author of "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow") to be used in advertising Poe's forthcoming book *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*. Irving was already a famous author, but Poe had yet to publish his first collection of tales.

### Guiding Questions:

- What does this letter tell us about Poe's literary influences?
- What does this letter show us about Poe's struggles of being a writer?

Philadelphia  
Octo. 12. 1839.

Dear Sir,

I duly received your kind letter, and entirely acquiesce in what you say - that it would be improper to give an opportunity of speaking of a detached Tale. I should be grieved, however, if you have supposed that I could make such demand; my request you have fully promised to grant, in saying that you will bear me in mind, and "take the first unforced opportunity" for expressing your opinion.

I take the liberty of sending you the 60th No: of the *Cent's Magazine*, containing the Tale "William Wilson". This is the Tale of which I spoke in my former letter, and which is based upon a brief article of your own in the first "Gift" - that for 1836. Your article is called "An unwritten Drama of Lord Byron". I have hoped that, having thus a right of ownership in my "William Wilson", you will be induced to read it - and I also hope that reading it, you will find in it something to approve. This brings me to another request, which I hardly know how to urge, and for urging which I am greatly afraid you will think me importunate. I trust, however, you will make allowance for the circumstances in which I am placed, for the difficulties I have to overcome, and for the anxiety which I feel.

Mess: Lee & Blanchard are about publishing a collection of my Tales, in 2 vols, to be issued early next month. As these Tales, in their course of original publication from time to time, have received many high praises from gentlemen whose opinions are of weight; and as these encomiums have already

# THE MUSEUM

## PRIMARY SOURCE WORKSHEET

### ANALYZE AND IDENTIFY

- What is this source? Describe it. What color is it? Is it big or small? Have you seen an object like this before?
- When and where was it made?
- Why was it created?
- Who created it? Are there multiple people?
- Can anyone use this source? Or can only people of a certain gender, class, race, job etc. use this source?
- How was it made? What is it made of?
- Is this source sentimental to someone?
- Does this source have any text? If so, what does it say?

### EVALUATE

- Is this source truthful and reliable?
- What is this source not telling us? Does further research need to be done?

### INTERPRET

Context: What does this object show about larger historical events/trends at the time?

Cause and Effect: What event(s) led to this source being created? What bigger, historical event(s) happened when this source was used/created?

Compare and Contrast: What is similar about this source to another source? What is different?

Continuity: Is this source still used today? If so, how has it stayed the same? How has it changed? If not, why is it no longer used today?

### CONCLUSION

Summarize your findings to draw historical conclusions about the past. Be sure to answer the guiding questions above in your answer. What information do you still need? What other primary sources would be helpful to look at?