



THE FORGOTTEN LORE



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In Collaboration with
Cloudco Entertainment

EDUCATOR GUIDE

Ellen Poe: The Forgotten Lore by Diana Peterfreund is a fast-paced supernatural mystery and psychological thriller that introduces YA readers to the life and legacy of Edgar Allan Poe. Sixteen-year-old Ellen Poe Reynolds, whose family claims to be descended from the famous writer, has just moved into her aunt's struggling Poe-themed bed-and-breakfast and is now suffering from terrifying nightmares about dead people. Things grow stranger when she discovers a mysterious coded journal while helping her aunt go through boxes, and Poe's ghost ("Eddy") appears. He begins communicating with her—albeit cryptically, speaking only in quotes from his writings. But most unsettling is when new student Gus Davenport shows up in her English class and Ellen recognizes him as one of the figures who has been haunting her dreams. Though she's never felt— or wanted— a connection to Poe, for the sake of saving the Raven's Rest B&B, Ellen is determined to find out if Eddy's journal is authentic. As they work to decode the journal Ellen and Gus are pulled into a secret and somewhat sinister scavenger hunt linked to an underground Poe society/ club. Meanwhile the relentless plague of Ellen's nightmares leaves her questioning her own sanity and fearing for Gus's safety.

Offer students *Ellen Poe* as an enjoyable read that introduces them to Edgar Allan Poe and helps build familiarity with key ideas and themes before they tackle his original texts. Or, incorporate *Ellen Poe* into your Poe unit by having students read the works of Poe they encounter throughout the novel. The book also makes a good book club title, fits nicely into mystery or Gothic literature text sets, and would be a great addition to themed library displays.

In biography, the truth is everything

Being part of a family with “positively encyclopedic knowledge of the poet and everything he ever did,” Ellen has a lot of details about Poe to share with readers. As they read *Ellen Poe*, encourage students to do a little more digging of their own into the life, times, and writings of Edgar Allan Poe. Provide links for reading or viewing, or guide students through independent research with a mix of questions and tasks, such as:

- Creating a timeline of Poe's life, noting key events, publications, and personal milestones.
- Identifying 2–3 major works and summarizing their central themes, style, or innovations.
- Answering key questions about Poe's life and legacy, such as where he was born and raised, who cared for him, what challenges he faced during his life, what genres he wrote in, and why his work continues to be widely read today.
- Researching the literary, cultural, or historical context in which Poe wrote and how it influenced his work.

Resources:

Enoch Pratt Free Library Edgar Allan Poe Collection: collections.digitalmaryland.org/digital/collection/poe

The Edgar Allan Poe Society of Baltimore: eapoe.org

PBS – American Masters – Edgar Allan Poe: Buried Alive: youtu.be/zankYHjNIWk

Poe Baltimore: poeinbaltimore.org

The Poe Museum (Richmond): poemuseum.org

The Poetry Foundation: poetryfoundation.org/poets/edgar-allan-poe

TED-Ed – Why should you read Edgar Allan Poe?: youtu.be/8lgg-pVjOok

There are certain themes of which the interest is all-absorbing

Assuming students have a working knowledge of common literary devices, ask them to examine how these elements are used and what “Poe-ish” themes appear both in original works by Poe and in Peterfreund’s novel. Give students choice in the Poe texts they choose to read and analyze or offer some suggestions and possible directions for comparisons:

- Examine Poe’s use of unreliable narrators, including some who insist they are sane while their actions suggest otherwise. For example, compare how “The Tell-Tale Heart” or “The Premature Burial” and *Ellen Poe* both play with the reader’s uncertainty about what is real, imagined, or supernatural.
- Analyze Poe’s use of alliteration, repetition, rhyme, and assonance in poems such as “The Raven” or “Annabel Lee,” then compare and contrast use of those devices in the poems Ellen deciphered from Eddy’s journal entries.
- Compare the process of gathering clues and drawing conclusions in *Ellen Poe* with how mysteries are unraveled in “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” or “The Purloined Letter.”
- Explore how Poe builds atmosphere and suspense through setting in stories such as “The Fall of the House of Usher” or “The Masque of the Red Death,” and compare and contrast how tension and mystery are shaped in *Ellen Poe*.
- Examine how, in many of Poe’s stories, the real horror comes from a character’s mind rather than from supernatural forces. Analyze and compare how Ellen’s nightmares and psychic experiences create a similar sense of psychological suspense in the novel.
- Track direct references and allusions to Poe’s stories or ideas in *Ellen Poe* and analyze how recognizing these connections deepens the reading experience.

Students might also compare Poe as a real, historical figure with Eddy, the fictionalized version encountered in the novel. How does *Ellen Poe* portray Poe’s reputation, personal struggles, and literary mystique?

Composed for my own amusement the following exercises

- Have students write their own Poe-style poems and host an open mic, à la Aunt Marie where they can share their creations with classmates.
- Ask students to design and present a brochure or website for Raven’s Rest that features information about Poe’s Baltimore and descriptions of all the themed rooms, including two new ones of their own creation.
- Have students choose a line of Poe’s poetry, hide it within a cipher, then exchange it with a classmate to decode and determine the poem of origin.

And now these questions are forced upon us

- While Ms. Morris deems Poe “a very complicated man,” Rebecca Lambert simply finds him “incredibly problematic.” In what ways might Edgar Allan Poe’s personal life, views, or behavior be considered objectionable by modern readers, and how do these aspects show up or get reflected in his stories and poems?
- Poe was not known to have kept a journal (the one Ellen finds is fictional). How, in his time, might Poe have kept a record of thoughts and ideas he didn’t want to write down? How do you think Poe would have reacted to today’s culture of constant posting and sharing? Where does Ellen fit into the online culture?
- Ellen and Gus see themselves as outcasts, and Gus even says, “I think I might be a monster.” How does their sense of otherness reflect broader patterns of marginalized or “othered” figures in Gothic fiction, and what does this suggest about how society defines and treats those who are different?
- Ellen tells Gus, “There’s not a wrong way to feel about what happened to you and your family. Different people grieve in different ways.” What of Ellen’s own experiences reflect a kind of grief? How do you relate to the ways Ellen or Gus copes or processes their feelings?
- What books—and other works—do you believe bear Poe’s influence? Why do you think his stories and poems continue to fascinate readers today?

