Fitzgerald

Summaries of the Poe Stories

**Metzengerstein**

**A reversal of fortune**

This was the first short Poe story ever published.

The story follows the young Frederick, the last of the Metzengerstein family that is in a longstanding feud with the Berlifitzing family. Suspected of causing a fire that kills the Berlifitzing family patriarch, Frederick becomes intrigued with a previously unnoticed and untamed horse. Many elements introduced in "Metzengerstein" would become common in Poe's future writing, including the gloomy castle and the power of evil. Because the story follows an orphan raised in an aristocratic household, some critics suggest it at least in part autobiographical.

The story begins with a line written in Latin from an epic poem written by Martin Luther. The connecton of this line to the story is a puzzle the reader must solve.

“*Pestis eram vivus—moriens tua mors ero*. “ (Living I have been your plague, dying I shall be your death.)

**The Cask of Amontillado**

**A story of revenge**

The narrator in this story vows revenge upon a man named Fortunato. He takes advantage of Fortunato's ego and lures him down into the recesses of an underground vault to taste a rare wine, a cask of Amontillado.

*"He had a weak point --this Fortunato --although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine."*

## The Pit and the Pendulum

### A torture chamber

Another of Poe's more popular works. It's the story of a man's attempt to survive in a torture chamber during the Spanish Inquisition, one of the most deadly inquisitions in history. This isn't really a horror story. It's more of a suspenseful thriller. If you had been sentenced to death in a torture chamber, what would you do? and what's in the Pit?

Did you know the Spanish Inquisition ended during Poe's lifetime? We tend to think it happened in the Middle Ages, but torturing people because they wouldn't convert to Christianity officially ended in 1834, when Poe was 25 years old.

## The Purloined Letter

### A detective story

Purloined simply means stolen. A document of national importance has been stolen and the police can't find it or prove who stole it. Poe's character, C. Auguste Dupin, comes to the rescue, solves the crime and recovers the letter. It's great to read how the police go through all of their usual methods and are unsuccessful. Dupin comes along and figures it all out using the powers of deduction as his only weapon. Its like "CSI: Edgar Allan Poe".

## The Tell-Tale Heart

### A murderer's guilt

The narrator of this story tells you his "perfect" plan to kill an old man, then takes you through the process of doing it. He might get away with it too except he starts hearing things...

*"I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening; just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall."*

## Hop-Frog

### A midget seeks revenge

Are you looking for a short story about a crippled midget who seeks revenge on those who mistreat him and make fun of him? This is that story. And it was written almost 200 years before Game of Thrones.

## The Oval Portrait

### A tragic love story

A painter is so obsessed with painting the perfect portrait of his beautiful wife, that he does nothing else until it is finished. As an artist myself, I can relate to this story in more ways than one. It is very short, only a couple of pages, but definitely worth reading.

## The Masque of the Red Death

### The horror of the plague

The "Red Death" is a plague which has killed off half of the population. Prince Prospero gathers a thousand people from the knights and royalty. They seal themselves off from the rest of the world in an extensive castle, in an attempt to separate themselves from the horrible conditions on the outside. But, can they escape the Red Death?

## Ligeia

### A haunting supernatural tale

Probably my favorite Poe story. The narrator of the story describes his beautiful wife, Ligeia. She was tall and slender with pale skin and long black hair. She dies and he is heartbroken. Some time later he decides to move on with his life and he remarries. Strange things start to happen as the narrator thinks more and more about his first love, Ligeia...

Wait for a rainy night, turn off all the lights and light some candles before you read this story. Poe does such a great job of describing the surroundings in this story, you can easily place yourself there.

## The Fall of the House of Usher

### An old house and its secrets

One of the most widely read of Poe's stories. The narrator receives a desperate letter from a "boyhood friend" requesting that he come to see him. The friend, a mister Roderick Usher, lives in a very old mansion out near a swamp. Once inside, the narrator finds more than he expected. A classic story of a creepy guy living in a haunted house.

*"The room in which I found myself was very large and lofty. The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within."*

## The Murders in the Rue Morgue

### A detective story

Poe invented the detective story with this tale. The main character is C. Auguste Dupin, a sleuth that solves crimes by deduction. Two women have been brutally murdered and it appears there was no way in or out of the room where the murders took place. How does Dupin figure it out? Who killed the women? (They didn't kill each other)

A reporter asked Sir Arthur Conan Doyle in 1894 if he had been influenced by the work of Edgar Allan Poe. The creator of Sherlock Holmes replied, "Oh, immensely! His detective is the best detective in fiction."

**Below find the source of all summaries except that for Metzengerstein, which I wrote based on the introduction to the story on Wikipedia (Yes, teachers use Wikipedia!).**

* Giordano, Robert. “Brief Summaries of Stories by Edgar Allan Poe.” *PoeStories.com*, Design215 Inc., 27 June 2005, poestories.com/summaries.php.

**Click on the title of the story below for a link to the full text of the story.**

**"**[**Metzengerstein**](https://www.eapoe.org/WORKS/tales/metzngna.htm)**” (1832) A reversal of fortune**

[**“The Cask of Amontillado"**](https://poestories.com/read/amontillado)(1846) A story of revenge

[**"The Pit and the Pendulum"**](https://poestories.com/read/pit) (1850) A torture chamber

[**"The Purloined Letter"**](https://poestories.com/read/purloined) (1845) A detective story

[**"The Tell-Tale Heart"**](https://poestories.com/read/telltaleheart) (1843) A murderer's guilt

[**"Hop-Frog"**](https://poestories.com/read/hop-frog) (1849) A midget seeks revenge

[**"The Oval Portrait"**](https://poestories.com/read/ovalportrait) (1850) A tragic love story

[**"The Masque of the Red Death"**](https://poestories.com/read/masque) (1850) The horror of the plague

[**"Ligeia"**](https://poestories.com/read/ligeia) (1838) A haunting supernatural tale

[**"The Fall of the House of Usher"**](https://poestories.com/read/houseofusher) (1839) An old house and its secrets

[**"The Murders in the Rue Morgue"**](https://poestories.com/read/murders) (1841) A detective story

Reviews for

# HIS HIDEOUS HEART: Thirteen of Edgar Allan Poe's Most Unsettling Tales Reimagined

edited by Dahlia Adler

**Kirkus – starred review**

A genre-bending collection of 13 twists on Edgar Allan Poe’s works.

Editor Adler (contributor: *It's a Whole Spiel*, 2019, etc.) does Poe proud with this creepy and atmospheric set of stories inspired by a handful of his most well-known works. All are well worth reading, but there are quite a few standouts, including Rin Chupeco’s (contributor: *Hungry Hearts*, 2019, etc.) ebullient “The Murders in the Rue Apartelle, Boracay,” in which an effervescent Filipina trans woman joins up with her dashing new half-French, half-Filipino boyfriend to solve the baffling murders of two American tourists on the island of Boracay. Lamar Giles’ (*The Last Last-Day-of-Summer*, 2019, etc.) unsettling “The Oval Filter” features African American football star Tariq, whose dead girlfriend’s distorted images appear on his phone—and they seem to be trying to tell him something. “The Fall of the Bank of Usher” by Fran Wilde (*The Fire Opal Mechanism*, 2019, etc.) is an adrenaline rush of a tale about assumed white orphans Rik and Mad, brother and sister twins, who must hack their way out of an intimidating Scottish bank for a life-changing prize—a challenge many before them have failed. Strong feminist themes appear throughout, and genres run the gamut from futuristic to gothic and lots in between. Diversity in race, gender identity, and sexuality is well represented. As a bonus, all of the original stories and poems are included.

Poe’s ghost happily haunts this fresh, delightfully dark collection. *(Anthology. 14-adult)*

**Publishers Weekly – starred review**

Presenting 13 reinterpretations of Poe’s works alongside the originals, this enticing anthology offers an accessible, multifaceted reading experience for fans old and new. Some stories—such as Kendare Blake’s “She Rode a Horse of Fire” and Tiffany D. Jackson’s “It’s Carnival!”—serve updated wrappings of Poe’s classic plotlines. Others deconstruct Poe’s pieces in novel ways, such as Tessa Gratton’s lyrical “Night-Tide,” which poignantly delves into themes of queer identity, familial responsibility, and anxiety over the bones of Poe’s famous elegy, “Annabel Lee.” Diverse genres abound—Marieke Nijkamp situates “Changeling,” her fae rendition of Poe’s “Hop-Frog,” in a historical fantasy world that powerfully engages with disability, while Lamar Giles reframes “The Oval Portrait” in “The Oval Filter” through the lens of a football star haunted by the inexplicable death of his almost-girlfriend, an Instagram influencer. And Rin Chupeco’s “The Murders in the Rue Apartelle, Boracay” is the most comedic entry, juxtaposing the mystery of “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” with Filipinx mythology, LGBTQ slang, Lovecraftian references, and romance. A refreshing assortment of diverse voices and contemporary themes ensures there’s something for everyone in this delightful compilation. Ages: 12–up.  (Sept.)