The Style of Edgar Allan Poe
Argumentative Essay

Task: Write an argumentative essay in which you analyze the style of a short passage from “The Black Cat” or “The Cask of Amontillado.”

1. Consider the elements of writing that influence Poe’s style:
   - Intricate, Super-sophisticated Vocabulary
   - Repetition
   - Punctuation
   - Sentence Structure
   - Length of Sentences/ Rhythms of Sentences
   - Imagery/Setting (to establish and develop mood)
   - Characterization
   - Narrative Voice
   - Word Choice: Connotation
   - Tone: Urgent, Ashamed, Anguished, Dramatic, Frantic
   - Dramatic Irony: What the reader knows that the characters don’t
   - Verbal Irony: Words used to mean something different or opposite from their actual meanings
   - Poe’s work is often extraordinary for what it leaves out, not what it includes.

2. Select a passage in which you can identify and explain some of these elements in the format of an argumentative essay:
   - Start with the text: What do you notice? In the passage you have selected, what effect do these stylistic elements have?
   - Make a series of simple claim statements that you can support and develop with quotations from the passage:
     - Poe’s intricate vocabulary causes the reader to _____________________.
     - The effect of the repetition in this passage is _____________________.
     - The word choice in the passage indicates _______________________.
     - The imagery Poe uses to develop his setting is _______________________.
   - Be prepared to warrant those claims by explaining how the text itself supports the claims you have made.
   - Consider any counterclaims. Is there another way the passage could be viewed? Be prepared to explain any problems with the counterargument and/or explain why your analysis is more logical.

3. Write a thesis statement about Poe’s style that unifies your claims. (What can you prove about Poe’s writing by developing your claims?)

4. Put it together in an essay: Argue your point using logical examples and explanations.
   - Intro: Capture attention; provide background info; clearly state thesis.
   - Body: Turn each of your claims into a paragraph that you develop by including quotations from the passage and warrants that explain how the quotations support your claim. The more such paragraphs you have the better.
   - Conclusion: Sum up; restate thesis; close with a powerful “clincher” statement.