

## **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.