

## SUMMARY OF "THE PURLOINED LETTER"

Sometime in the 1800s on a windy, Fall night in Paris, the narrator and C. Auguste Dupin are smoking pipes in the dark in Dupin's library, not talking, but just thinking. It's obvious they are good friends. Then the head of the Paris police, Monsieur G, enters and asks if they want to hear a mystery. They do, so G tells a story.

A few months earlier the royal lady (probably the queen) got a letter and was sitting in her room reading it when another royal person walked in (probably the king). She wants to hide the letter from him, but cannot get it into the desk drawer fast enough. She puts it on the desk, leaving the address showing.

Then the dangerous Minister D strolls in and notices who the letter is from, but the readers are not told who it is. He notices the royal lady is acting funny and realizes that it is because she wants to hide the letter from the royal man. Right in front of everyone D switches the royal lady's letter with one of his own and walks out. The lady is unable to stop him because she is afraid D will show her letter to the royal man.

Minister D uses the letter to make the queen grant some of his wishes. She has called in G to find the letter for her. She thinks that D must have the letter on him or at his house somewhere. G searches and searches everywhere for it- like every night for the past three months- but did not find anything.

Dupin then takes an interest and asked G to describe the letter, inside, and out. He suspects that the G is missing the answer that is actually very obvious. Finally, G leaves the men, resolving to search again. About a month later, G comes back, but still has had no luck finding the letter. By this point, he is completely frustrated and offers to pay 50,000 Francs of his own money to whomever can find the letter. Dupin says, "Great!" and hands over the letter. G leaves 50,000 Francs poorer, but is stoked knowing he will likely get a promotion for finding the letter. Dupin then tells the narrator how he found the letter.

Dupin knew that Minister D was smart enough to have known how and where G would search for the letter. He concludes that Minister D probably hid the letter out in the open where G (who is not so smart) would never think to look. Dupin waltzed over to D's house for a friendly visit. He wore green glasses to hide his eyes. He saw the letter disguised as another letter in an organizer box hanging from the fireplace. The next day he returned with a copy of the disguised letter. Dupin then created a distraction in the street so that D would not notice as he swapped the copy for the original. As a final touch, Dupin wrote a snide little note to gloat about how he has outsmarted Minister D.



Name \_\_\_\_\_

# The Purloined Letter

By Edgar Allan Poe



**Matching:** Match each term with its definition.

|                    |                                                            |
|--------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. ____ narrator   | A. Prefect of the Parisian Police                          |
| 2. ____ Dupin      | B. Season in which the story occurs                        |
| 3. ____ Monsieur G | C. Man who takes the letter to the lady                    |
| 4. ____ Minister D | D. Time period in which the story occurs                   |
| 5. ____ Paris      | E. The story is told from his point of view                |
| 6. ____ Paris      | F. Recipient of the letter; from whom the letter is stolen |
| 7. ____ Royal Lady | G. Narrator's friend, finds the letter                     |
| 8. ____ 1800s      | H. City where the story takes place                        |

**Multiple Choice:** Choose the best answer.

9. Which of the following does NOT describe the setting of the story?

- A. 1800s
- B. Summer
- C. Dupin's Library
- D. Night

10. How can you tell that the narrator and C. Auguste Dupin are good friends?

- A. Poe makes a point to explain their background with one another.
- B. Poe explains how they keep talking non-stop.
- C. Poe explains how the two friends have a long history.
- D. Poe explains how the two are able to sit in silence without talking.

11. What was the narrator thinking about while sitting with C. Auguste Dupin?

- A. How upset he was
- B. The affair of the Rue Morgue
- C. How he wanted to visit another friend
- D. How he dreaded the next day

12. "I looked upon it, therefore, as something of a coincidence, when the door of our apartment was thrown open and admitted our old acquaintance, Monsieur G-, the Prefect of the Parisian police."

What is the best definition of acquaintance in the preceding sentence?

- A. A person known to someone, but not a close friend.
- B. Personal knowledge as a result of a study.
- C. Someone who is unknown to another person.
- D. An enemy of another friend.

13. What is the main reason G came to see the narrator and Dupin?  
A. He missed them and wanted to catch up with them.  
B. He enjoyed their company and wanted to catch up with them.  
C. He wanted to get their thoughts about a current case.  
D. He wanted to see if Dupin would talk to Minister D for him.



14. What does Dupin point out to G about the case?  
A. Perhaps it is simpler than he thinks.  
B. Perhaps he should check the royal lady's home again.  
C. Perhaps he is being tricked by the people involved.  
D. Perhaps he should check the home of G again.

15. What is the main reason Minister D stole the letter from the royal lady?  
A. To read the letter  
B. To blackmail the royal lady  
C. To blackmail the king  
D. To make the Prefect angry

16. "Well, but G-, what of the purloined letter? I presume you have at last made up your mind that there is no such things as overreaching the Minister?"  
What is the best meaning of purloined as used above and throughout the story?  
A. Important                      B. Exciting                      C. Stolen                      D. Damaged

17. Why did Dupin show so much interest in the investigative methods of the Prefect?  
A. He wanted to see where they had looked  
B. He wanted to help him solve the mystery  
C. He knew Minister D well and wanted to warn him  
D. He wanted to find the letter himself

18. Which of the following best describes the Prefect's emotion in response to Dupin's unveiling of the letter?  
A. Angry                      B. Excited                      C. Upset                      D. Surprised

19. How did Dupin find the letter?  
A. Looked in all the nooks and crannies of Minister D's home  
B. Thought like Minister D would have thought  
C. Thought like the Prefect would have thought  
D. Looked in all the books of Minister D's library

20. Why does Dupin tell the anecdote of the schoolboy and the marbles?  
A. He thinks it is a fun story  
B. To show the narrator how clever he was.  
C. To make the point that you have analyze others.  
D. He was excited to tell the funny story to his friend.





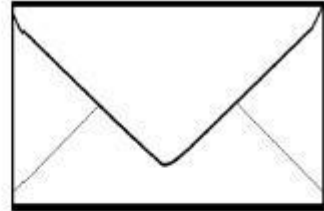
|                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                   |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>The Prefect searches the minister's apartment but comes up empty-handed.</p>                                                                                                                   | <p>Dupin is able to solve the case and get revenge for a wrong committed</p>                                      |
| <p>Dupin supplanted the letter with a facsimile, which reads, "So baneful a scheme, if not worthy of Atreus, is worthy of Thyestes."</p>                                                          | <p>A letter was stolen from a powerful lady. The main suspect is Minister D, a man whom Dupin has blood with.</p> |
| <p>The Prefect of the Paris police goes to see C. Auguste Dupin, a private investigator who recently helped him solve "The Murders of the Rue Morgue." His new case is about a stolen letter.</p> | <p>Dupin explains how he was able to think like a thief and recover the letter!</p>                               |



Name \_\_\_\_\_

# The Purloined Letter

By Edgar Allan Poe  
Plot Diagram



|                |            |
|----------------|------------|
| EXPOSITION     | CONFLICT   |
| RISING ACTION  | CLIMAX     |
| FALLING ACTION | RESOLUTION |