

Poe and The Fall of the House of Usher

“The Fall of the House of Usher” is a short story written by Edgar Allan Poe in 1839. Poe is considered a master of Gothic fiction, which centers on dark and terrifying stories. Poe focuses on psychological terror, as his characters often show madness.

Below is a passage from the opening of “The Fall of the House of Usher.” The narrator has just arrived at the home of his childhood friend, Roderick Usher. It is a description of the Usher’s house. A tarn is a mountain lake.

Shaking off from my spirit what must have been a dream, I scanned more narrowly the real aspect of the building. Its principal feature seemed to be that of an excessive antiquity. The discoloration of ages had been great. Minute fungi overspread the whole exterior, hanging in a fine tangled web-work from the eaves. Yet all this was apart from any extraordinary dilapidation. No portion of the masonry had fallen; and there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones. In this there was much that reminded me of the specious totality of old wood-work which has rotted for long years in some neglected vault, with no disturbance from the breath of the external air. Beyond this indication of extensive decay, however, the fabric gave little token of instability. Perhaps the eye of a scrutinizing observer might have discovered a barely perceptible fissure, which, extending from the roof of the building in front, made its way down the wall in a zigzag direction, until it became lost in the sullen waters of the tarn.

Part I

Using the context of each word or a dictionary, write what you think the underlined word means.

1. Yet all this was apart from any extraordinary dilapidation

2. ...there appeared to be a wild inconsistency between its still perfect adaptation of parts, and the crumbling condition of the individual stones

3. reminded me of the specious totality of old wood-work

4. Perhaps the eye of a scrutinizing observer

5. discovered a barely perceptible fissure

Part II

1. Write an example of personification in the passage.

2. Write a metaphor from the passage.

3. Write an alliteration from the passage.