

## ProQuest Learning: Literature Example Lesson Plan

### Topic: Edgar Allen Poe and the Art of Composition

**Grade Levels:** High School

**Subjects:** American Literature; Fiction Composition

**Standards:** *NCTE English Language Arts Standards 5,6,7 and 11.*

**Description:** The student will explore an alternative way of planning to write a short story using pre-writing techniques outlined by Poe in an article on composition. The student will analyze “The Cask of Amontillado,” a short story by Poe, for the composition patterns outlined in “The Philosophy of Composition.” These patterns will be documented using a graphic organizer. The student will then use a graphic organizer to guide him in using Poe’s pre-writing techniques to write an original short story. In writing the story, the student will evaluate the effectiveness of this pre-writing technique.

#### **Objectives:**

##### **Literature**

- ? Analyze the elements of plot structure in a work.
- ? Understand the effects of the author’s use of literary devices and techniques on the composition and quality of a work.
- ? Know the defining characteristics of a gothic tale.

##### **Writing**

- ? Use prewriting strategies and organizers to plan a composition.
- ? Write in response to literature.
- ? Evaluate the student’s own writing using pre-established criteria.

#### **Procedure:**

##### **1. Understanding the model.**

###### **Day One**

- ? Introduce Edgar Allen Poe to the students. Discuss his expertise at creating a malevolent atmosphere, the sense of confinement that often accompanies a growing foreboding, the economy of his writing.

###### **Day Two**

- ? Have the students read “The Cask of Amontillado” by Poe.
- ? In a class discussion, consider how this story is representative of his art. Make sure that the students understand any difficult passages.

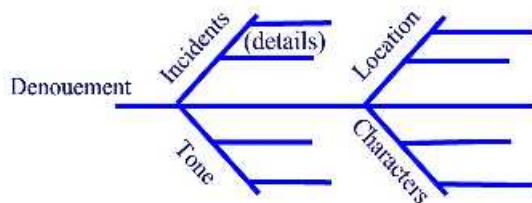
###### **Assignment:**

- ? Have the students read the excerpt of “The Philosophy of Composition” found in the Poe Study Units Page of **ProQuest Learning: Literature** (number 8 in the Prose Works section). Remind them to consult the *Dictionary of Literary Terms* in the Reference Shelf. As they read, have them consider the following questions:
  - ? Where does Poe say the author must begin constructing his plot?
  - ? What benefits does Poe see in building his plot in this manner?
  - ? What is the first creative decision that Poe makes about the work?
  - ? What are the two components that Poe uses to drive the plot forward?
  - ? Is the section on refrains relevant to “The Cask of Amontillado?”

###### **Day Three and Four**

- ? Building on the reading questions, discuss as a class how his system of composition might apply to his story. Ask the students to consider why most of what he describes is applicable to the composition of his prose works, even though Poe uses “The Raven” as his example.

- ? Using a graphic organizer such as the one below, have the students work in groups to trace the possible line of composition for “The Cask of Amontillado,” beginning at the denouement and working back. As they work, prompt them to keep in mind how the author uses his knowledge of the denouement to create foreshadowing and build suspense.



## 2. Using the model.

### Day Five through Seven

- ? Working alone, have each student design the plot of a short story using the same technique as Poe used. As part of the pre-writing strategies, have them incorporate the use of a graphic organizer.
- ? Using peer editors, have students consult each other on the design of the plot.

### Assignment and Day Eight:

- ? Have students write their stories.

### Days Nine

- ? As a class, discuss the students' experiences writing a story planned using Poe's technique. Ask the students to share plans for their stories and compare them to the completed works.

### Assignment/Assessment:

- ? Ask the students to do a brief written evaluation of Poe's technique, answering the following questions:
  - ? What is the weakness in using this technique?
  - ? What is its strength?

**Abbreviated Lesson:** The lesson plan may be abbreviated by teaching only the first section 'Understanding the Model,' and concluding with the Assignment/Assessment.