

Jim Smith
"Annotated Bibliography: Poe's Dark Past"
1,518 words
English 1102 MW 11:00-12:15
Dr. Doug Davis

Even though Edgar Allen Poe wrote truly terrifying short stories and poems, what type of man was he in his private life? Was Poe actually a monster like so many of his characters were in his tales, or was he a gentle family man? I want to argue that Edgar Allen Poe's tragic life had a powerful influence on his writing, and that many of his tales were inspired by real-life tragedies. Misfortune haunted Poe throughout his entire life. Poe was constantly in severe debt, and untimely death seemed to follow him like a demented shadow. Poe looked to his own personal tragedies to inspire him to write some of the darkest stories in American literature history. Readers can find evidence of Poe's dark and troubling past in "The Raven," "The Tell-Tale Heart," and "Annabel Lee."

Beidler, Philip D. "Mythopoetic Justice: Democracy and the Death of Edgar Allan Poe." Midwest Quarterly: A Journal of Contemporary Thought 29.3 (2005): 252-67.

The focus of this article is on Edgar Allen Poe's mysterious death and the days leading up to it. Philip D. Beidler points out that Poe's death is ironic, and the appearance of his body after a week's absence sounds like a tale from one of Poe's gothic poems. Poe was found on October 7th, 1849, and there are many theories of the cause of death. Since this date was Election Day for the city of Baltimore, Beidler suggests Poe was involved in cooping. Cooping is when an individual is bribed by a group to repeatedly vote for a particular candidate. Beidler believes Poe received alcohol in return for his repeated vote, and his death was due to alcohol poisoning. Beidler finds this ironic because Poe was extremely anti-democratic. Beidler points out several passages from Poe's written work that state his distaste of government. I could possibly use this source while talking about Poe's death, but it does not compare Poe's tragic life to his gothic poems. None of my other sources mention Poe's death, but this source does not directly connect to my thesis, so I am not sure if I will use it in my research paper.

Hayes, Kevin J. "Poe, The Daguerreotype, and the Autobiographical Act." Biography: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly 25.3 (2002): 477-92.

This source is biographical, but it focuses on an aspect of Poe's life rarely mentioned. The article gives the reader insight to the ambitious side of Edgar Allen Poe. When Poe was living in Philadelphia in the early 1840's, he was planning on publishing his own magazine. Poe wanted to call the magazine *The Stylus*, and he was extremely professional about the magazine. Poe understood that there was a relationship between works of literature and visual images. This source will compliment my essay because it helps explain Poe's life outside of his horrifying stories. This source shows that there was more to Poe's life other than tragedy and presents a different take on Poe than that offered by Beidler. Part of my thesis is trying to understand the type of person Poe was, and this source gives insight to a segment of his life many readers did not know existed. I plan to use this source in the introduction of my paper to give readers interesting details about his life to hook them into my thesis.

Pritchard, Hollie. "The Tell-Tale Heart." Explicator 61 (2003): 144-47.

This source is a scholarly analysis of “The Tell-Tale Heart”. This author of this article discusses the madness of the narrator in Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart.” The author dives into the mind of the narrator to understand why he committed the murder in the short story. Hollie Pritchard points out the sexually charged language of the narrator moments before the murder. She mentions that the narrator both loves and hates his victim, which is a characteristic of being a sadist. This source not only points out the darkness of the narrator, but the darkness of Poe’s imagination. I believe this source complements my thesis because “The Tell-Tale Heart” shows the state-of-mind Poe was in while writing this essay. Poe needed to vent his emotions into his murderous tale. This source has a similar thesis to that of Zimmerman, but it gives more information about “The Tell-Tale Heart” than Zimmerman’s article on the same topic.

Richards, Eliza. "Outsourcing 'The Raven': Retroactive Origins." Victorian Poetry 88.3 (2005): 205-224.

This particular source is a scholarly essay written by Eliza Richards. This source discusses the vast popularity of Poe’s “The Raven” during the nineteenth century. The subject of this article is the origin of Poe’s darkest tale. There are many theories that suggest Poe did not write this poem by himself. Some critics call Poe a plagiarist and argue that the entire poem was stolen. Another theory suggests a group of writers wrote segments of the poem. Certain literary groups from different cities have taken credit for writing certain portions of the famous poem. Many critics believe that Poe did write this poem, and it was inspired by his suffering from cerebral epilepsy. Richards points out that one of the symptoms of this disease is visual hallucinations. “The Raven” was also written while Poe’s wife Virginia was slowly dying from tuberculosis. Richards argues that Poe felt extremely helpless during this part of his life since he was financially unable to purchase medicine for his wife. This source is perfect for my research paper because this is directly linked to my thesis. I plan to base an entire body paragraph around the ideas presented by Richards. Richards writes that Poe was suffering from severe mental stress, and his personal pain is present in “The Raven.” This source will go extremely well with my Shear article because it discusses an aspect of Poe’s protagonists that Shear doesn’t mention, so it complements what Shear has to say.

Shear, Walter. "Poe's Fiction: The Hypnotic Magic of the Sense." Midwest Quarterly 47.1 (2006): 276-289.

This source is a scholarly journal article. Walter Shear, the author of this particular article, writes about the similarities of Poe’s protagonists. Shear feels that the lead characters in most of Poe’s stories are restricted to severely hostile environments. Most of Poe’s protagonists are in an unfortunate state of isolationism. These characters have been completely cut off from the outside world. The only interaction the characters have is their relationship to the environmental world. All of Poe’s protagonists must rely heavily on their senses to overcome their conflicts. Shear discusses that the character’s isolation reflects Poe’s own situation. Poe felt isolated from most of the world, and this is exactly how his protagonists feel. I believe this source is the most supportive of my thesis. This source mentions that the character’s loneliness gives insight to Poe’s own personal feelings. This similarity in most of Poe’s stories shows he constantly suffered from his own personal demons. This particular source will compliment my article by Eliza Richards.

Zimmerman, Brett. "Frantic Forensic Oratory: Poe's 'The Tell-Tale Heart'." Style 22.4 (2001): 34-49.

Zimmerman discusses Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart." Zimmerman argues for several lines that the main character of Poe's tale is not confessing to the murder, but trying to make the reader believe that he is not a madman. Zimmerman also mentions Hugh Blair, a Scottish author, and his ideas about poetry. Blair believed that most poems follow a certain literary pattern, and Zimmerman believes Poe followed this pattern while writing "The Tell-Tale Heart." This scholarly article also gives some insight to Poe's childhood. Poe's foster parents encouraged him at a young age to give speeches to their guests. Zimmerman believes that Poe was such an eloquent speaker because both of his deceased parents were actors. Poe's eloquence can be felt in many of his writings. This source does not give enough information on "The Tell-Tale Heart," but this was the only source I found which discussed Poe's childhood. This scholarly article will compliment my thesis because it sheds light on a portion of Poe's life rarely discussed. This article proves that Poe was not a rude, cruel man, but an excellent orator who impressed people with his eloquence.

My research is going extremely well right now. I have been able to find several articles that have supported my thesis. Several scholarly writers agree with my thesis, and they believe there is evidence of Poe's turbulent life in many of his gothic tales. I still need to find a source comparing Edgar Allen Poe's life to his poem "Annabel Lee." I would also like to find more information on Poe's personality, because I am aware that I am just scratching the surface. I would particularly like to find out how he interacted with his wife Virginia when she was healthy. His sorrow for her death is present in "Annabel Lee," and I would like to discover what their relationship was like. I was surprised when I read the scholarly article about Poe's professional side. It is just hard for me to imagine Poe as a business man. The only absence I feel in my research is the absence of an "Annabel Lee" source, but I am sure I will find one when I continue my research.

I have been using the MLA database, the Academic Search Complete database, and the Gil catalog for my research. I have been using the keywords "Poe," "biography," "tragedy," "influence," "inspiration," "Raven," "Annabel Lee," "Tell-Tale Heart."