

The Cask of Amontillado

Literary Analysis

The events that make up a story are called the **plot**. Plot usually grows from a **conflict** or problem. The plot can be divided into the following parts:

- **Exposition:** the characters and setting are introduced
- **Rising Action:** the major conflict is introduced
- **Climax:** high point of the conflict is reached
- **Falling Action:** conflict is reduced after the climax
- **Resolution:** conflict concludes and loose ends are tied up

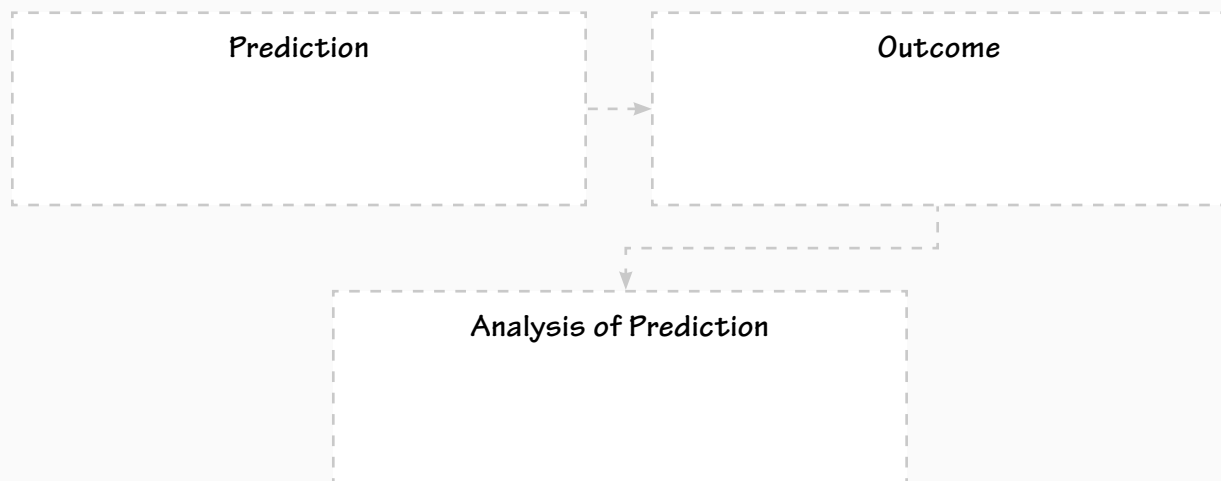
Authors use many ways to keep readers interested in the plot. One of these is **foreshadowing**. Foreshadowing is clues that hint at events that will happen later in a story. Giving clues creates **suspense**. Suspense keeps readers wondering what will happen next.

Reading Skill

A **prediction** is a guess about what will happen later in a story. Notice details that may foreshadow future events. Make predictions based on those details. Then, **read on to verify your predictions**.

If a prediction is wrong, ask yourself why it was wrong. **Revise**, or change, your prediction.

Record and check your predictions. Use the chart shown.



The Cask of Amontillado

Edgar Allan Poe

Summary Montresor feels that Fortunato has insulted him. To get revenge, he tricks Fortunato and lures him to a hidden room. Then, he chains Fortunato to the wall. He bricks up the entrance and leaves Fortunato to die.



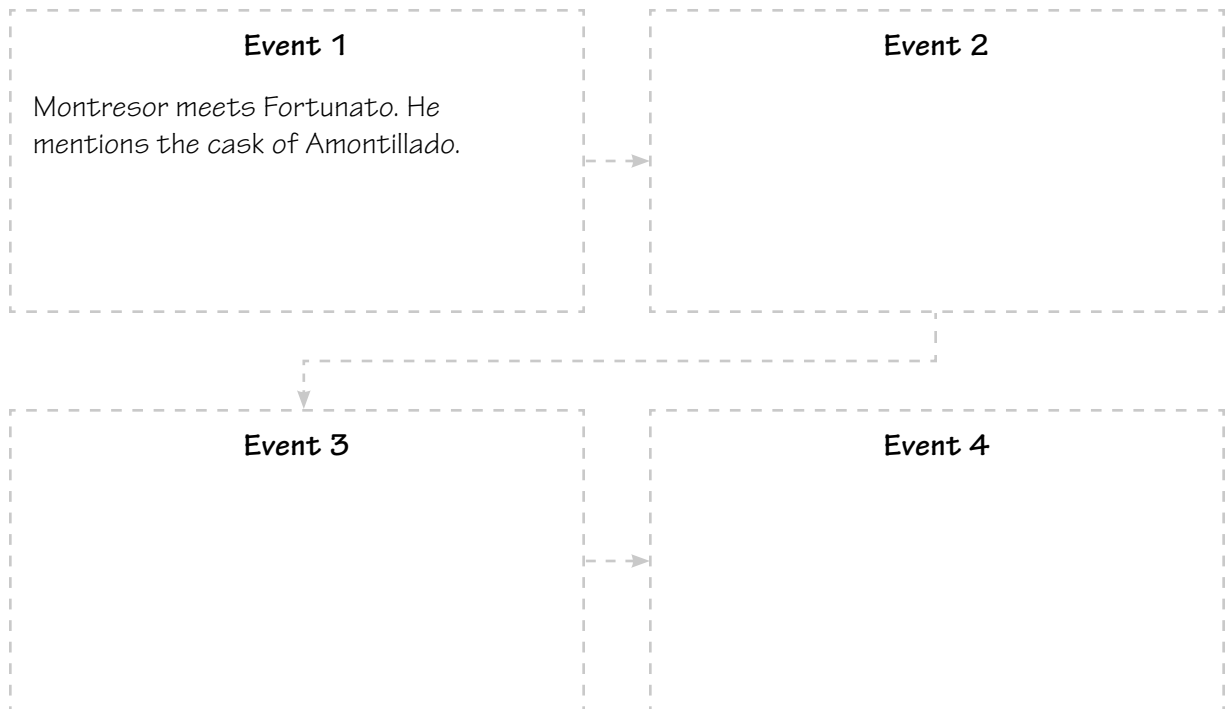
Writing About the Big Question

Is conflict necessary? In “The Cask of Amontillado,” a wronged man seeks revenge. Complete this sentence:

A conflict can reveal the truth about a person when _____

Note-taking Guide

Use this chart to record the four most important events of the story.



The Cask of Amontillado

by Edgar Allan Poe

As the story opens, the narrator, Montresor, reveals his feelings toward Fortunato. He explains that Fortunato has greatly insulted him. So, Montresor is determined to get revenge on him. Montresor acts friendly toward Fortunato when he meets him at the carnival. Fortunato is dressed in a costume. He has a cap of bells on his head. He is also very friendly. Montresor and Fortunato are very knowledgeable about wine.

Montresor tells Fortunato that he has bought a pipe¹ of very good wine. The wine is Amontillado.² He tells Fortunato that he needs an expert opinion. He says he is not sure if it truly is Amontillado. He says he does not wish to bother Fortunato, but instead he will ask another man, Luchesi. Fortunato is eager to try the Amontillado. He wants to give his opinion. He tells Montresor not to ask Luchesi. He is eager to go to Montresor's wine cellar to taste the wine.

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“Come, let us go.”

“Whither?”

“To your vaults.”

“My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature.

I perceive you have an engagement. Luchesi—”

“I have no engagement—come.”

“My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are **afflicted**.

Vocabulary Development

afflicted (uh FLIKT id) *v.* made to suffer in an unpleasant way

1. **pipe** (pyp) *n.* large barrel, holding approximately 126 gallons

2. **Amontillado** *n.* (uh MAHN tuh LAH doh) pale, dry sherry

TAKE NOTES

Activate Prior Knowledge

This story is set in catacombs, underground tunnels that hold graves. Describe the scariest setting you can imagine for a horror story.

Reading Skill

You learn that Montresor is angry with Fortunato, but he asks for his help with the wine. Based on this information, **predict** what will happen between the two men.

Reading Check

Why does the narrator want revenge? Circle your answer in the text.

Read Fluently

What mood or feeling does the author create with the idea of the damp underground vaults?

• TAKE NOTES

Read Fluently

An interjection is a part of speech that expresses feeling or emotion. What is the interjection *ugh* used to express?

Stop to Reflect

Do you think Montresor is serious when he says “your health is precious”? Explain.

Literary Analysis

Foreshadowing is a clue or hint to what might happen next in a story. Underline an example of foreshadowing in the bracketed paragraph.

Reading Check

What are two things that line the walls of the catacombs?.

The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with niter.”

“Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado!



Montresor’s house is empty. The servants are at the carnival. Montresor takes two torches. He leads Fortunato through the house. They come to an archway. It leads down to the underground vaults. They walk down a long stairway to the family catacombs. Fortunato asks about the white cobwebby chemical on the walls.



“Niter?” he asked, at length.

“Niter,” I replied. “How long have you had that cough?”

“Ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh!”

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

“It is nothing,” he said, at last.

“Come,” I said, with decision, “we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchesi—”

“Enough,” he said; “the cough is a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough.”

“True—true,” I replied; “and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily—but you should use all proper caution. A draft of this Médoc will defend us from the damp.”



They go deeper into the catacombs. The walls of the catacombs are lined with skeletons. There are also barrels of wine among the skeletons.



“The niter!” I said; “see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river’s bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough—”

“It is nothing,” he said; “let us go on.”



They go deeper into the burial vaults. The air is foul. Their torches are dull and do not show much light. Piles of human bones line the walls.

At one of the niches, Fortunato tries to see into it. The light from his torch is too weak. He cannot see the back wall. Montresor tells him to go in. He tells him the Amontillado is in there. Fortunato goes in. Montresor quickly chains Fortunato to the back wall. Then, Montresor moves a pile of bones. Under the bones were bricks and mortar. He begins to build a wall.




I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was not the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labors and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking **subsided**, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the masonwork, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.



Vocabulary Development

subsided (suhb SYD id) v. gradually became less strong or severe.

Reading Skill 

Predict what Montresor will do when he and Fortunato are deep into the catacombs.

Literary Analysis 

The **climax** of the story occurs when the high point of the conflict is reached. Describe the climax of this story.

Literary Analysis 

What part of the plot is the bracketed paragraph?

TAKE NOTES

Stop to Reflect

Do you think Montresor is sane or insane? Explain.

Reading Check

How does Montresor react to Fortunato's scream?

Reading Skill

Does the scene in which Montresor imprisons Fortunato match your **prediction**? Explain.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated, I trembled.

Montresor also begins to scream. He screams even louder than Fortunato, and Fortunato becomes quiet. By midnight, Montresor has made a wall of 11 rows of bricks. Fortunato is nearly sealed into the small room. Montresor says that one more brick will complete the wall.



I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head. It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said—

“Ha! ha! ha!—he! he! he!—a very good joke, indeed— an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo—he! he! he!—over our wine—he! he! he!”

“The Amontillado!” I said.

“He! he! he!—he! he! he!—yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone.”

“Yes,” I said, “let us be gone.”

“*For the love of God, Montresor!*”

“Yes,” I said, “for the love of God!”



Fortunato is quiet. Montresor puts the last stone in place. Then he hides the new wall with a pile of old bones.



For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. *In pace requiescat!*³

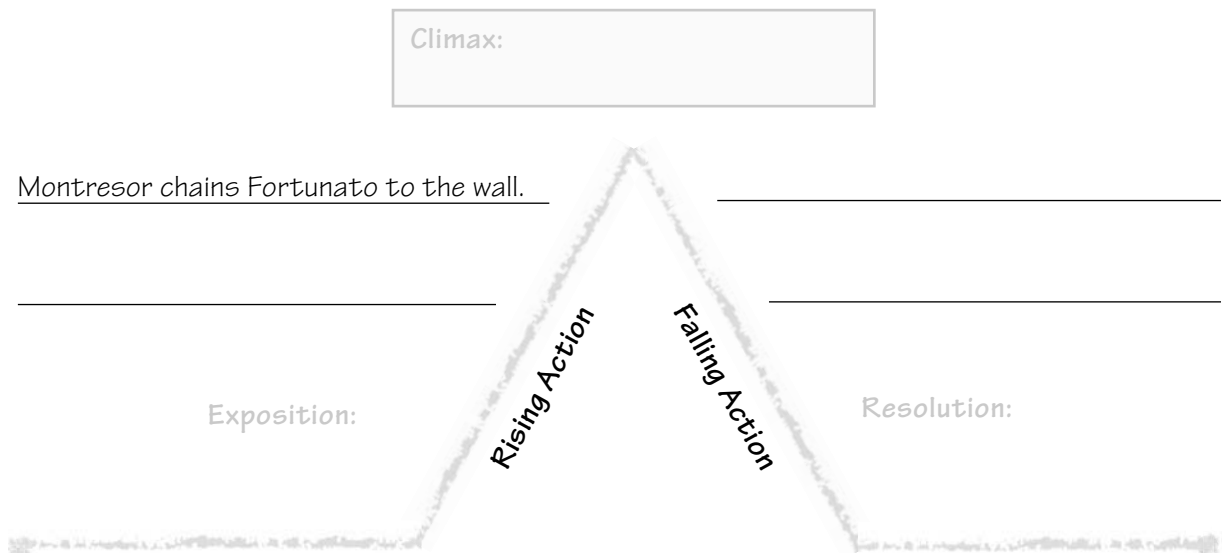
3. *In pace requiescat!* Latin for “May he rest in peace!”

The Cask of Amontillado

1. **Analyze:** Montresor describes Fortunato's strengths and weaknesses early in the story. Which character traits make Fortunato an easy victim for Montresor?

2. **Support:** Why does Montresor believe that he has the right to punish Fortunato?

3. **Literary Analysis:** Identify one event in the **rising action**, one event in the **falling action**, and the event that marks the **climax**. Use this chart.



4. **Reading Skill:** What **prediction** did you make after reading that Montresor and Fortunato shared an interest in wine?

Writing: Critique

Write a **critique** evaluating “The Cask of Amontillado” as a suspenseful story. Use the chart below to decide whether you think Poe’s story is suspenseful.

- Think about points in the story when you were excited or scared, or wondered what was going to happen next. Fill in the first column with those parts from the story.
- Use the second column to think about why these parts of the story were suspenseful.

Suspenseful Parts of the Story	Reasons These Parts Were Suspenseful
1. when they go down into the caverns	1. scary setting
2. _____	2. _____
3. _____	3. _____
4. _____	4. _____
5. _____	5. _____

Use these notes to help you write your critique.

Listening and Speaking: Retelling the Story

Plan your retelling of the story by answering the following questions.

1. The story will change when it is told from Fortunato’s point of view.
For example: when will the story begin? _____
2. When will Fortunato first suspect what Montresor is up to?

3. What facial expressions and gestures, or body movements, will you use? Describe a facial expression, a gesture, and the specific lines you will be saying as you use the expression and gesture.

Expression: _____

Gesture: _____

What I will be saying: _____

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