

THE MULHERN STORY LIBRARY — SALON READING GUIDE

The Cask of Amontillado

Edgar Allan Poe · American Romanticism / Gothic · first published 1846

AUTHOR	Edgar Allan Poe
PUBLISHED	1846
ERA	American Romanticism / Gothic
THEMES	Revenge, Pride, Death
READER PATHWAY	College seminar / adult discussion

INTRODUCTION FOR THOUGHTFUL READERS

Montresor lures the wine connoisseur Fortunato into the family catacombs with the promise of a rare cask of Amontillado, then walls him in alive as payment for an unnamed insult. Fifty years later, the narrator calmly recounts his perfect crime.

HISTORICAL & LITERARY CONTEXT

First published in Godey's Lady's Book in 1846, the story distills Poe's theory of the single unified effect. Its carnival setting, dramatic irony, and chillingly composed narrator make it a touchstone for the literature of revenge.

DISCUSSION FOCUS

Verbal and dramatic irony, symbolism (the trowel, the coat of arms, the carnival), mood, and the calculating unreliable narrator. Strong for close reading of tone, resentment, and moral self-justification.

SALON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What does Montresor's calm retrospect disclose about aristocratic pride, wounded vanity, and self-mythologizing?
- How does the carnival setting deepen rather than merely decorate the moral darkness of the story?

READ & RESEARCH

1. Full text at Wikisource — https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/The_Cask_of_Amontillado
2. The Works of Edgar Allan Poe at Project Gutenberg — <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/2148>