The distinguished Twayne study is one of the best study guides available. Doyle, an authority on Plomer’s writings, taught at many South African universities and published essays in a number of South African periodicals. Chapter 2 describes and analyzes Plomer's short stories in depth. Contains a chronology, copious reference notes, a bibliography, and an index.

Spender, Stephen. “A Singular Man.” New Statesman 86 (November 9, 1973): 690. Spender, a leading English poet and influential literary figure, published this tribute shortly after his friend Plomer’s death. Spender writes: “All his qualities were wind-blown, sun-saturated, sparkling, and in his writing the language shines and curls like waves animated by a strong breeze on a clear day.”

Tucker, Martin. Africa in Modern Literature: A Survey of Contemporary Writing in English. New York: Frederick Ungar, 1967. This interesting and authoritative discussion of all modern literature about the African continent contains many pages about Plomer in various contexts. Tucker hails him as the first white South African writer to treat miscegenation and interracial fraternization from the viewpoint of social and political protest rather than as something forbidden and shameful.

Bill Delaney

EDGAR ALLAN POE

Born: Boston, Massachusetts; January 19, 1809
Died: Baltimore, Maryland; October 7, 1849

PRINCIPAL SHORT FICTION
Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque, 1840
The Prose Romances of Edgar Allan Poe, 1843
Tales, 1845
The Short Fiction of Edgar Allan Poe, 1976 (Stuart and Susan Levine, editors)

OTHER LITERARY FORMS
During his short literary career, Edgar Allan Poe produced a large quantity of writing, most of which was not collected in book form during his lifetime. He published one novel, The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym (1838), and several volumes of poetry, the most famous of which is The Raven and Other Poems (1845). Poe earned his living mainly as a writer and as an editor of magazines. For magazines, he wrote reviews, occasional essays, meditations, literary criticism, and a variety of different kinds of journalism, as well as poetry and short fiction.

ACHIEVEMENTS
During his life, Edgar Allan Poe was a figure of controversy and so became reasonably well known in literary circles. Two of his works were recognized with prizes: “Manuscript Found in a Bottle” and “The Gold-Bug.” “The Raven,” his most famous poem, created a sensation when it was published and became something of a best-seller. After his death, Poe’s reputation grew steadily—though in the United States opinion remained divided—until by the middle of the twentieth century he had clear status as an author of worldwide importance. Poe’s achievements may be measured in terms of what he has contributed to literature and of how his work influenced later culture.

Poe was accomplished in fiction, poetry, and criticism, setting standards in all three that distinguish him from most of his American contemporaries. In fiction, he is credited with inventing the conventions of the classical detective story, beginning the modern genre of science fiction, and turning the conventions of gothic fiction to the uses of high art in stories such
as "The Fall of the House of Usher." He was also an accomplished humorist and satirist. In poetry, he produced a body of work that is respected throughout the world and a few poems that have endured as classics, notably "The Raven," as well as several poems that, in part because of their sheer verbal beauty, have persistently appealed to the popular imagination, such as "The Bells" and "Annabel Lee." In criticism, Poe is among the first to advocate and demonstrate methods of textual criticism that came into their own in the twentieth century, notably in his essay "The Philosophy of Composition," in which he analyzed with remarkable objectivity the process by which "The Raven" was built in order to produce a specified effect in its readers.

Poe's influence on later culture was pervasive. Nearly every important American writer after Poe shows signs of influence, especially when working in the gothic mode or with grotesque humor. The French, Italians, and writers in Spanish and Portuguese in the Americas acknowledge and demonstrate their debts to Poe in technique and vision. Only to begin to explore Poe's influence on twentieth century music and film would be a major undertaking. In terms of his world reputation, Poe stands with William Faulkner and perhaps T. S. Eliot as one of the most influential authors of the United States.

**Biography**

Edgar Allan Poe was born in Boston on January 19, 1809. His parents, David and Elizabeth Arnold Poe, were actors at a time when the profession was not widely respected in the United States. David was making a success in acting when alcohol addiction brought an end to his career. He deserted his family a year after Edgar's birth; Elizabeth died a year later in 1811, leaving Edgar an orphan in Richmond, Virginia. There, he was taken in by John Allan, who educated him well in England and the United States. Poe was a sensitive and precocious child; during his teens, his relations with his foster father declined. Stormy relations continued until Allan's first wife died and his second wife had children. Once it became unlikely that he would inherit anything significant from the wealthy Allan, Poe, at the age of twenty-one, having already published a volume of poetry, began a literary career.

From 1831 to 1835, more or less dependent on his Poe relatives, he worked in Baltimore, writing stories and poems, a few of which were published. In 1835, he secretly married his cousin, Virginia Clemm, when she was thirteen. From 1835 to 1837, he was assistant editor of *The Southern Literary Messenger*, living on a meager salary, tending to drink enough to disappoint the editor, publishing his fiction, and making a national reputation as a reviewer of books. When he was fired, he moved with his wife (by then the marriage was publicly acknowledged) and her mother to New York City, where he lived in poverty, selling his writing for the next two years. Though he published *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* in 1838, it brought him no income. He moved to Philadelphia that same year and for several months continued to live on only a small income from stories and other magazine pieces. In 1839, he became coeditor...
achieving a final view of its wholeness. The story itself may provide an experience that demonstrates the ultimate inadequacy of human reason to understand the mysteries of creation.

Although Poe wrote a variety of stories, he is best remembered for his tales of terror and madness. His popular literary reputation is probably a distorted view of Poe, both as person and as artist. While he was tragically addicted to alcohol and while he did experience considerable difficulty in a milieu that was not particularly supportive, he was nevertheless an accomplished artist whose work, especially when viewed as a whole, is by no means the mere outpouring of a half-mad, anguished soul. To look closely at any of his best work is to see ample evidence of a writer in full artistic control of his materials, calculating his effects with a keen eye. Furthermore, to examine the range and quantity of his writing, to attend to the quantity of his humor—of which there are interesting examples even in “The Fall of the House of Usher”—to notice the beauty of his poetry, to study the learned intelligence of his best criticism—in short, to see Poe whole—must lead to the recognition that his accomplishments far exceed the narrow view implied by his popular reputation.

OTHER MAJOR WORKS

LONG FICTION: The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym, 1838.

PLAY: Politician, pb. 1835-1836.

POETRY: Tamerlane and Other Poems, 1827; Al Aaraaf, Tamerlane, and Minor Poems, 1829; Poems, 1831; The Raven and Other Poems, 1845; Eureka: A Prose Poem, 1848; Poe: Complete Poems, 1959; Poems, 1969 (volume 1 of Collected Works).


BIBLIOGRAPHY


———. ed. The Recognition of Edgar Allan Poe. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1966. This selection of critical essays from 1829 to 1963 is intended to illustrate the development of Poe’s literary reputation. It includes a number of the most important earlier essays on Poe, including Constance Rourke’s discussion of Poe as a humorist. Also includes several essays by French and British critics.