

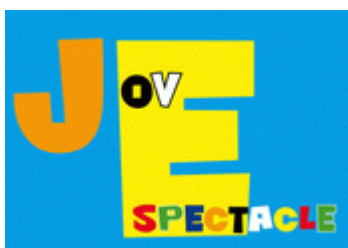
# The fall of the house of Usher (Edgar Allan Poe's)

**The Performers Inc.**



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# Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher"

## Objectives:

Students will respond to the story "The Fall of the House of Usher."

Students will complete study guide showing their understanding of the story.

Students will choose one interpretation (given in a handout) and analyze story.

Students will back up their interpretation with passages from the texts.

## Instructions:

(Students have already read story prior to class)

- 1.** Discuss the class' likes and dislikes of the story and their reasoning. (3 minutes)
- 2.** Pass out study guide and allow students to work in partners to complete it. (30 minutes)
- 3.** Have students return to their regular seats and address any questions that arose while completing the study guide. Students will then turn in their study guides. (5 minutes)
- 4.** Pass out "Interpreting 'The Fall of the House of Usher'" worksheet. (1 minute)
- 5.** Discuss the contents of the worksheet (the five most popular interpretations of the story) and address any questions the students have. (8 minutes)
  1. Allow students to work individually on the worksheet for the remainder of class. This is a homework assignment that is due tomorrow.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Level \_\_\_\_\_

## "The Fall of the House of Usher" Study Guide

1. What is the setting of this story?

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2. Using the textual clues from the first few pages of the story, draw a picture of the house. It does not have to be fancy, but make sure you include the specific features given.

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3. What is meant by "the entire family lay in direct line of descent, and had always, with very trifling and very temporary variation, so lain"?

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4. Look at the picture of Poe in the preface to the story and the narrator's description of Roderick. Do you see any similarities or differences? Be specific.

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5. What is the nature of Roderick's illness? Of Madeline's? Describe in detail.

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6. Why had Poe made Roderick and Madeline twins and not just brother and sister? What does Madeline seem to represent? What does Roderick seem to represent?

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7. What does Roderick believe is causing his illness?

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8. Where does Roderick bury his sister? Why is this location chosen?

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9. What could Madeline's Vault symbolize? How does the place and nature of Madeline's burial contribute to the meaning of the story?

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10. How does Roderick react to Madeline's death and burial?

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11. What exactly happens to Madeline after her death?

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12. Why doesn't Roderick rescue her after he realizes she is still alive?

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13. How does Roderick die?

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14. What does the structural problem with the house have to do with the ending of the story? How does it relate to the illness Roderick suffers? Use textual evidence to support your answer.

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15. How does the house break apart? Why does the house break apart?

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16. Who is the narrator of the story? Why is that significant?

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Level \_\_\_\_\_

*Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher"*

Students and scholars from all over the world have attempted to analyze this famous short story. Dozens of different interpretations exist, but the most common five are listed below. Select the interpretation that you believe offers the best explanation of the story. Then find textual evidence from the story to support your interpretation. Be sure to include the page numbers where you found your evidence. Then explain how your evidence supports the interpretation you have chosen.

The five most common interpretations of "The Fall of the House of Usher":

1. Isolation: The mind and body of the Ushers have been destroyed due to their isolation from the rest of the world.
2. Conscious vs. Unconscious Mind: Roderick represents the conscious half of the mind; Madeline represents the unconscious half. Roderick (the conscious mind) tries to bury or deny the needs and desires of Madeline (the unconscious mind), but cannot. Ultimately the unconscious desires destroy the conscious.
3. Mind vs. Body: Roderick represents the mind; Madeline represents the body. Roderick tries to bury the body and the desires of the body, but cannot do this without also destroying himself—the mind.
4. Incest: Roderick and Madeline were guilty of incest. He buried her to try to escape his guilt, but his guilt destroys them both.
5. Autobiographical: Poe's mind vs. Poe's body; Poe's conscious vs. Poe's unconscious. Poe tries to deny his body (Madeline) and its needs, but cannot. Or Poe tries to deny the needs of his unconscious mind (Madeline), but cannot.

Your choice: \_\_\_\_\_

Your support from the text:

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Your explanation:

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