



In the Shadow of the Master: Classic Tales by Edgar Allan Poe and Essays by Jeffery Deaver, Nelson DeMille, Tess Gerritsen, Sue Grafton, Stephen King, Laura Lippman, Lisa Scottoline, and Thirteen Others

Michael Connelly (Editor) , Jeffery Deaver (Contributor) , Sara Paretsky (Contributor) , T. Jefferson Parker (Contributor) , P.J. Parrish (Contributor) , Joseph Wambaugh (Contributor) , Nelson DeMille (Contributor) , Tess Gerritsen (Contributor) , more... Sue Grafton (Contributor) , Stephen King (Contributor) , Laura Lippman (Contributor) , Lisa Scottoline (Contributor) , Lawrence Block (Contributor) , Laurie R. King (Contributor) ...less

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“A wonderful treat for the Poe connoisseur, or a perfect introduction to his works.”

—*Charlotte Observer*

In the Shadow of the Master is an exceptional collection of classic stories from the lord of literary darkness himself—the inimitable Edgar Allan Poe—accompanied by enthralling essays from twenty of his bestselling acolytes and admirers. With appreciations by Michael Connelly, Stephen King, Lisa Scottoline, Tess Gerritsen, Laura Lippman, Nelson DeMille, Lawrence Block, and thirteen others, *In the Shadow of the Master* is a must-have for thriller and mystery fans of all ages.

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From Reader Review In the Shadow of the Master: Classic Tales by Edgar Allan Poe and Essays by Jeffery Deaver, Nelson DeMille, Tess Gerritsen, Sue Grafton, Stephen King, Laura Lippman, Lisa Scottoline, and Thirteen Others for online ebook

blakeR says

A nice enough -- though far from vital -- collection of Poe's greatest hits. The hook is that editor Michael Connelly recruited a couple handfuls of modern authors to write blurbs after each story. Stephen King and Sue Grafton are the headliners while the others are probably known only to fans of modern mysteries and thrillers.

Given the hook, the main disappointment of the volume is just how vacuous most of these blurbs are, with few of them having anything to say beyond, "Wow I remember how scary my first Poe story was when I was (insert age here). He has influenced everyone!" Several even admit to not really liking Poe but writing this as a favor to Connelly. That's strange stuff to mold a tribute out of.

It's nice enough to mark the occasion of Poe's 200th birth year, and it's always great to read classics like "The Cask of Amontillado," "Black Cat," and "The Raven," so you know there's no way it can be actively bad. But oddly enough the best thing I can say about the book is that its layout is impressively handsome, with wonderful title pages, illustrations and fonts. Beyond that, it's not indispensable for anyone except the most ardent Poe enthusiasts.

Not Bad Reviews

@blakerosser1

Ben says

As most of the contributing mystery writers take care to mention in their essays in this book, much has already been written about Poe and I will merely echo a few sentiments. I'm not sure the last time I read Poe material, perhaps in high school. *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* made the greatest impression on me for its grisliness and reminder of Sherlock Holmes; and I'd never thought about the fact that Poe preceded Sir Arthur Conan Doyle until now. That is a common theme among the contributing writers here: Poe is the master because he set the stage for all the mysteries and horrors to follow. While I'm not a reader of mysteries, I suppose a parallel example would be my experience with J.R.R. Tolkien. I can hardly bear to read any fantasy novels because they are all mere shadows of his masterpiece and inevitably a disappointment.

Like many great writers, Poe's prose is the perfect balance of challenge and beauty. It is made to be read aloud, slowly and enunciated. The lyrical beauty makes up for the stories' sometimes unsatisfactory conclusions. Perhaps that is the Achille's heel of masterful suspense. The more suspenseful a story, the higher the demand for a knock-your-socks-off ending. The ending to *The Pit and the Pendulum* felt rushed. *Rue Morgue* ending ho-hum. And because most of Poe's stories are written in first person, you know the

hero is going to escape his predicament. But this is about the story, or the journey, or the experience, which I think is why Poe is so beloved. And *The Raven* is just the perfect poem - one of those literary works you think you know until you finally sit down and read it for yourself. Poe should be read at night, aloud, with friends. Around a campfire.

A word about the contributors' essays. I was expecting something a little more substantial, but they were mostly quite short and, if I were an English teacher, I'd say they lacked effort. At least two authors joked about not wanting to contribute in the first place, which means they truly didn't want to, and the result is what you'd expect. On the other hand, as many of the authors mentioned, there is hardly more to say about Poe that hasn't already been said (I take their word for it).

I had a great time reading this.

Elizabeth Barter says

Good read, the stories and essays about this remarkable writer, made me appreciate the written word, as I have never done before. The language is luminous.

Jonathan Terrington says

Edgar Allan Poe has become one of my personal favourite authors after I read this stunning compilation featuring from amongst Poe's greatest works. This includes my personal favourites: The Tell Tale Heart, The Masque of the Red Death, The Raven and The Pit and the Pendulum. Add to that essays by writers influenced by Poe's genius and this compilation becomes a must for any classic literature lover.

The one reason I love Poe's writing so much is because he was a poet and also a writer of prose. I also like to write both poetry and prose although I am completely unable to match the genius of his beautiful flowery writing style. A style that created uniquely gothic and haunting tales of macabre genius that show the inner darkness of humanity.

If you haven't read Poe I recommend that you do. Perhaps you'll find the language daunting, too dramatic, too flowery and his plots a little melodramatic. It is the one flaw in his genius. And yet such melodrama is necessary to help convey the allegorical ideas and metaphoric ideas Poe fiendishly creates. Any way I recommend that you read Poe and also be impacted by the grandeur of his work.

Barrett says

currently reading in preparation for an upcoming trip to Baltimore. seems only fitting. and before anyone asks, yes, i have read some Poe before, in HS (Cask Of Amontilldo, The Raven, The Tell-Tale Heart) and all seriously creeped me out. so i'm doubly intrigued as to how that opinion might've changed over time.

021011: skipped one or two of the stories in there, but so far i've read William Wilson, The Black Cat, The Cask of Amontilldo, The Tell-Tale Heart, Ligeia, The Fall of the House of Usher, and A Descent into the

Maelstrom. Amontialldo still wins for creepiest; Fall and Ligeia i can't really appreciate because i keep attempting to "science" an explanation. And i found Fall and Wilson unnecessarily wordy somehow. descriptive, sure, but i was rereading paragraphs constantly because my mind kept wandering off. Favorite is Maelstrom -- the descriptions there are rather stupendous.

03/11: read Pit and the Pendulum, which i think i liked better than most of the others, save for maybe Descent. that one was my favorite for some reason. perhaps because it's less horror and more thriller? and of course, The Raven, which was just as chilly yet morose as i seem to recall it being.

Deborah Wysinger says

Some great essays, from some great mystery writers, about the effect Edgar Allan has had on them

Lisa says

I just don't get Poe. I started out reading the first two stories in this book - The Cask of Amontillado and A Descent into the Maelstrom - and I didn't get them at all. The commentary afterwards by famous mystery writers helped, but not enough. I had to go online and get summaries that explained these two stories. I figured if I had to do this with every story in this book, it was too much work and not worth it. So then I skipped to his two most famous stories, A Tell-Tale Heart and The Raven. I understood both of these stories and didn't need to research them, but I didn't think they were all that great. At least not enough to be wildly popular. So in all, Poe is just not for me. Sorry Poe fans out there!!

William Dury says

I've always, with the exception of "A Cask of Amontillado," had trouble with EAP. "Tell Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat"** are fine but I had trouble with the language and simply didn't know what was going on in the stories plot wise.

It's odd, too, because, in 1965, the first thing I read by Poe was "ACofA" in my 10th grade English class. I was stunned. It is still one of the greatest works of art I have ever come across. It's just perfect. I don't know how else to put it. We read "Tale of Two Cities" in the same class and I have, to be honest, the same reaction to that one. I re-read them both every once in a while and yep, they work just fine. Dickens' hokum becomes more apparent, but what works really, really works. And like with Poe, I'm not that crazy about a whole lot of Dickens. "David Copperfield" is okay, but I wasn't crazy about "Great Expectations," found "Bleak House" undigestible and "Little Dorrit" unreadable, even while simultaneously watching a PBS version. (Which may have been the problem. Loved "Woman in White" but the recent PBS version? Gosh it was bad.)

Anyway, re: the book under review. Read and enjoyed the whole thing. The commentary by the modern mystery writers helps put the work in context and frequent Google consultancy helped keep the actual plot mechanisms apparent. Was interested in the frequent references by the modern writers to the Roger Corman films which were fondly remembered and closer in spirit to Poe than one would generally think. (Think more Stephen King and less GREAT WRITER). "The Murders in Rue Morgue" CLEARLY gave Arthur Conan

Doyle his career, thank you very much, including the view point sidekick and "I know he owns a Chinese fluent white terrier because the teeth marks on his walking stick have plum sauce on them" thing. I gave up on "Arthur Pym" earlier this summer but the four chapters in this book gave me nightmares for a while.

So, anyway, Harold Bloom was crazy about "Pickwick Papers." Read it when he was eleven or something. Maybe I'll give it a try.

*Except for the white splotch that looks like a gallows. A marking on a cat that looks like a gallows? Oh, wait. A Rorschach test. Oh. Got it. Never mind.

Oh, but while I got you here, I've been reading a lot about unreliable narrators the last couple of years. I had a writing teacher tell me thirty years ago that ALL first person narrators are unreliable. When writing in first person you need third person confirmation to establish facts. So there.

Steve Goble says

I would like to have rated this volume, produced by the Mystery Writers of America in celebration of of Poe's 200th birthday, with more stars. It is a good collection, but overall I think the book squandered some opportunities. The stories included are largely the ones we have all read, like "The Tell-Tale Heart" and "The Black Cat," although I applaud the inclusion of "William Wilson," a story not anthologized as often as the others.

The real shortcoming, though, is in the brief essays interspersed throughout the book, short appreciations by well-known writers such as Stephen King, Sue Grafton, Jeffrey Deaver and others. They are for the most part anecdotal, simply offering a few short thoughts from each author regarding their own appreciation of Poe's work. They are entertaining, but not groundbreaking, and offer no new insights for the most part.

So ... it is a good collection of Poe stories you probably already own, interspersed with anecdotes from mystery writers that basically just explain why they like Poe. To mark a 200th anniversary, I guess I was expecting more.

Elizabeth K. says

So I was thinking I enjoyed this book a lot. I think it's clearly established that Edgar Allan Poe is a master of story-telling suspense, and I always like returning to my favorites. And the book *itself* is superb, it has a nice retro look to it and features the Harry Clarke illustrations, which seriously bump up the already high creepy factor of the stories significantly.

But the shtick of this particular edition of Poe stories is what didn't really work for me. It's put out the Mystery Writers of America, which seems fitting because their annual award is called the Edgar, for obvious reasons. A number of successful members of this group were asked to contribute pieces on Edgar Allan Poe. And with some few exceptions (Nelson DeMille, Laura Lippmann), these short writings add very little. Overwhelmingly, they're *so* insubstantial. And this is so consistent that I strongly suspect the editor and whoever else was working on this project made the requests in such a way that lead people to believe it was okay to toss off a few paragraphs and call it a day. I feel as though they must have been asked "hey, could

you write something? Just a little something? Don't feel you have to spend much time on it, anything you jot down would be just fine. You know, in your spare time." My general feeling after reading most of them, even from authors I very much like, was "wow, talk about phoning it in." I think fewer essays of more substance would have been a better way to go.

Grade: A for Poe, clearly. C for almost everyone else. The authors' essays felt much too obligatory.

Recommended: There are more complete works of Poe, but this is an especially nice-looking volume with good hand feel to it.

2009/46

Meaghan says

I had an urge to read some Poe and this was on the shelf at the library, so I grabbed it! It's a pretty good selection of Poe's short stories, a couple of poems ("The Raven" and "The Bells"), and an excerpt from *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket*, which I kind of wish they hadn't included because really, why bother including a short portion of a longer work when Poe wrote so many good shorter pieces? My favourite stories were some of the ones I had already read: "The Cask of Amontillado" is even better than I remembered; "The Tell-Tale Heart" is still terrifying; and the images that stuck with me after the first time I read "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" still freak me out. I probably got more out of "The Pit and the Pendulum" this time and maybe less out of "The Fall of the House of Usher." Of the stories I hadn't read before, I was probably most impressed with "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar," which is totally horrific. "The Masque of the Red Death" and "The Black Cat" are also memorable.

I was not very impressed with the selection of essays about Poe by other famous (?) mystery writers (I hadn't heard of most of them but I am not a connoisseur of the genre). Many of these essays are insipid; thankfully, at least most are also very short. Most of the authors who contributed did not appear to be very familiar with Poe's work, having encountered him mainly via the movies. Sue Grafton, whose essay ends the book, puts the final nail in the coffin, so to speak, by admitting that she doesn't even like Poe. Huh?? Why not ask some people who are actual Poe fans to contribute? Surely one of the great American writers deserves that much.

Kathy says

I remember reading *The Raven* by Edgar Allan Poe and I had heard of the *Tell-Tale Heart*. However, I don't remember ever being an Edgar Allan Poe fan. Being a Michael Connelly fan, however, I had downloaded anything related to Michael Connelly to my Kindle. This book, *In the Shadow of the Master*, is a collection of Edgar Allan Poe stories. Each one is followed by a reflection by a contemporary author who has won an Edgar award. The Edgar award recognizes mystery writers.

At first, I didn't want to get into this book because Edgar Allan Poe's writing style is quite "dense" and takes a little more concentration than my modern fiction mystery writers do. Then I started better understanding the Poe writing because of what each related author was writing about Poe. About half-way through this book, I took a break (rare for me) and read another book - *Homicide*, by David Simon. That book was what I would call a "reality detective novel". It took me about a week and a half to complete the David Simon book. Then, when I went back to the second half of "*In the Shadow of the Master*" I was really ready to enjoy it. The

second half of the book read much more enjoyably for me. By the time I finished the book, I understand now why so many high school literature teachers encourage study of Poe in some form. I also understand more why several of my 8th-grade girls are big Edgar Allan Poe "fans". I am too, now.

Anna Schubert says

I'm not convinced I'm a huge Poe fan after reading this compendium of some of his most popular stories, but his command of English is spectacular.

McKinley says

Authors talk about Poe's short stories.

Joellen says

I have to confess that I didn't read all of this, but I absolutely loved what I read! I know many people complained about the essays attached to the stories, but I loved them. I found them to be like fun blog posts made by other adoring fans <3

I will be pulling this back out again next Halloween to read more of his stories :D
