

“Fall of the House of Usher” Edgar Allan Poe

Summary:

- First Person Narrator – has no name, he is nice and kind, going to visit a sick childhood friend (Roderick Usher)
- 1st thing he notices as he rides up to the house is that it is decaying but somehow still standing, it gives him a gloomy feeling, there is a very thin crack from the roof to the ground in the wall
- Roderick Usher has changed and looks like he is dying. He has a nervous disorder that affects his senses
- Roderick has a twin sister, Madeline, who is suffering from a cataleptical illness = she freezes and looks dead but isn't
- Madeline “dies” and the narrator and Roderick put her in a vault in the basement; she has a blush to her cheeks and a smile on her lips
- One night while the narrator is reading Roderick a story during a really freaky storm, they begin to hear strange sounds like cracking and ripping sounds, a scream, and a metallic thud.
- Madeline, bloody and gross, comes into the room, falls on her brother, and they both hit the floor dead. Roderick dies of shock.
- The narrator runs from the house terrorized by the event, and the house crumbles to the ground

Literary things to notice:

-Madeline's disease and the fact that she had color in her face while in her coffin **foreshadowed** that her brother would accidentally bury her alive.

-Elements of Gothic Literature in the story:

- *the house is bleak and is in a remote setting
- *disturbing events happen like Roderick burying his sister alive and she has to tear her way out
- *both Roderick and Madeline are tormented by their illnesses
- *a supernatural event occurs when the house falls down in the end because the last members of the family die
- *the writing style is overly descriptive and intense

"Fall of the House of Usher"

Questions in margin of story in textbook pg. 293-310

(skip from the last paragraph on pg. 300 to the 2nd paragraph on pg. 304)

1. (pg. 293) What does the narrator feel at his first glimpse of the House of Usher?
2. (pg. 294) Which details in the illustration reflect the description of the narrator's first impression of the house?
3. (pg. 296) How do the setting and mood of the story so far (at the beginning) reflect Gothic literary style?
4. (pg. 297) What flaw in the house might a careful observer find?
5. (pg. 299) In what ways do Usher's mental state and the house itself typify a work of Gothic literature?
6. (pg. 299) In what ways has Roderick Usher changed since the narrator last saw him?
7. (pg. 305) What does the narrator notice about Madeline's appearance in her coffin?
8. (pg. 306) Which elements of Gothic literature are present in this description of the narrator's sleepless night?
9. (pg. 307) What odd or unnatural sight does the narrator see when the curtain are opened?
10. (pg. 309) What effect does the description of Usher trembling and rocking help to create?
11. (pg. 309) Which aspects of Gothic literature are apparent in this description (at the end) of Madeline Usher?
12. (pg. 309) What unusual sound does the narrator hear as he reads aloud?