

TIRÉ À PART

Stories to Ponder

5

for Reading and
Understanding English

MARTHE BLANCHET



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9900, avenue des Laurentides, Montréal (Québec) H1H 4V1
Téléphone: (514) 329-3700 • 1 800 563-6644 (sans frais) • Télécopieur: (514) 329-0630
Site Internet: www.marie-france.qc.ca • Courriel: editions@marie-france.qc.ca

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Révision linguistique :
Jean-Marie Jot

Correction d'épreuves :
Doris Lizotte

Page couverture :
Louis-Philippe St-Laurent

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InterPaul

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STORY 4

The Cask of Amontillado

by Edgar Allan Poe

THE thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could; but when he ventured upon insult, I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. *At length* I would be avenged; this was a point definitely settled—but the very definitiveness with which it was resolved, **precluded** the idea of risk. I must not only punish, but punish with **impunity**. A wrong is unredressed when **retribution** overtakes its redresser. It is equally unredressed when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood, that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. I continued, as was my **wont**, to smile in his face, and he did not perceive that my smile *now* was at the thought of his immolation.

He had a weak point—this Fortunato—although in other regards he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on his connoisseurship in wine. Few Italians have the true virtuoso spirit. For the most part their enthusiasm is adopted to suit the time and opportunity—to practise imposture upon the British and Austrian *millionaires*. In painting and gemmery, Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a quack—but in the matter of old wines he was sincere. In this respect I did not differ from him materially: I was skilful in the Italian vintages myself, and bought largely whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the carnival season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore motley. He had on a tight-fitting parti-striped dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him, that I thought I should never have done wringing his hand.

I said to him, “My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking today! But I have received a **pipe** of what passes for Amontillado, and I have my doubts.”

“How?” said he. “Amontillado? A pipe? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!”

“I have my doubts,” I replied; “and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain.”

“Amontillado!»

“I have my doubts.”

“Amontillado!”

“And I must satisfy them.”

“Amontillado!”

“As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchresi. If anyone has a critical turn, it is he. He will tell me—”

“Luchresi cannot tell Amontillado from Sherry.”

“And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own.”

“Come, let us go.”

“Whither?”

“To your vaults.”

“My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchresi—”

“I have no engagement; come.”

“My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with **nitre**.”

CONTENT ANALYSIS

1. a) Find the definition of each of the 18 bold-faced words in the text.

1) Word: _____

Definition:

2) Word: _____

Definition:

3) Word: _____

Definition:

4) Word: _____

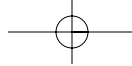
Definition:

5) Word: _____

Definition:

6) Word: _____

Definition:



3. Would you qualify the narrator's account of what happened entirely reliable? Explain.

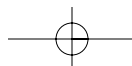
4. What explains Montresor's patience in seeing his plan unfold?

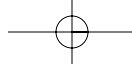
5. How did Montresor lure Fortunato in his trap?

Why did he seize the carnival as the ideal occasion to go through with his revenge?

Explain why the catacombs were chosen as the place to kill Fortunato.

6. Why does Montresor often mentions Luchresi's name to Fortunato?



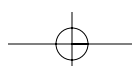


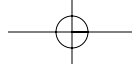
7. Go on the Internet to find the source and meaning of the motto *Nemo me impune lacessit*.

What connection can be made between the coat of arms / its motto, and Montresor's character?

8. What factors prevent Fortunato from fully comprehending Montresor's intentions?

9. Montresor is quite an adept of verbal irony by saying one thing and meaning something else. Illustrate how his words often have a double meaning.



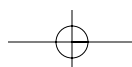


12. Montresor's plan was calculated and carefully devised. Explain this statement.

13. What is illogical about Fortunato's name?

14. Do you believe the title to be a fitting one? Develop your answer.

15. Write a short text expressing Fortunato's gamut of feelings and thoughts as he realizes what is happening to him.



INFORMAL CLASS DISCUSSION

Death is a serious topic but inflicting death is even more.

Develop your opinions concerning the following delicate questions:

- How can a human being resort to take the life of another?
- How disturbing do you find these following two quotes?

Wild animals never kill for sport. Man is the only one to whom the torture and death of his fellow creatures is amusing in itself.

James Anthony Froude

When I was twelve, I went hunting with my father and we shot a bird. He was laying there and something struck me. Why do we call this fun to kill this creature who was as happy as I was when I woke up this morning?

Marv Levy

- Do you believe that the death penalty is a just way to deal with murderers?

Think this over if you have reached a positive answer to the previous question:
Why do we kill people who are killing people to show that killing people is wrong?

- Is purposely taking your own life as serious as taking someone else's life?
- Is an abortion a murder?
When is it and isn't it justifiable?

- Does killing at war make the deed easier or more acceptable?

In answering this last question, think of the soldiers defending their country, but think also of Hitler's slaughter of 6 million Jews during World War Two . . .

- Express your opinion about mercy killing or someone helping an extremely sick person to put an end to his/her life.

SPECIMEN