

## Things to know about Poe:

- His mother died and his father couldn't (wouldn't) take care of him and his sister, so they moved in with their aunt and uncle. His father is thought to have died a few days later.
- Many of his family members are thought to have been alcoholics, Poe and his father too.
- At age 27 he married his thirteen-year-old cousin, Virginia Clemm, who later dies from tuberculosis.
- Poe is given credit for inventing detective fiction, American gothic tales, and science fiction. He is also credited for defining the modern short story "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" was the first!
- The American football team the Baltimore Ravens are named in honor of Edgar Allan Poe's classic poem "The Raven"
- He had a nemesis, Rufus Griswold – ever heard of him? After Poe died, Griswold penned a mean-spirited obituary in which he claimed the writer's death "will startle many, but few will be grieved by it" and generally portrayed Poe as an unhinged maniac. Slamming a guy in his obituary is pretty low, but Griswold was just getting warmed up. He convinced Poe's aunt, Maria Clemm, to make him Poe's literary executor. Griswold then published a biography of Poe that made him out to be a drug-addled drunk, all while keeping the profits from a posthumous edition of Poe's work.
- His writer's worthy death - Poe's rumored causes of death were "cerebral inflammation" and "congestion of the brain," which were polite euphemisms for alcohol poisoning. Modern scholars don't totally buy this explanation, though. The characterization of Poe as a raging drunk mostly comes from Griswold's posthumous smear campaign, and his incoherent state of mind may have been the result of rabies or syphilis. Some Poe fans subscribe to a more sinister theory about the writer's death, though. They think he may have fallen victim to "cooping," a sordid 19th century political practice. Gangs of political thugs would round up homeless or weak men and hold them captive in a safe place called a "coop" right before a major election. On election day – and there was an election in Baltimore on October 3, 1849, the day Poe was found – the gangs would then drug or beat the hostages before taking them around to vote at multiple polling places.