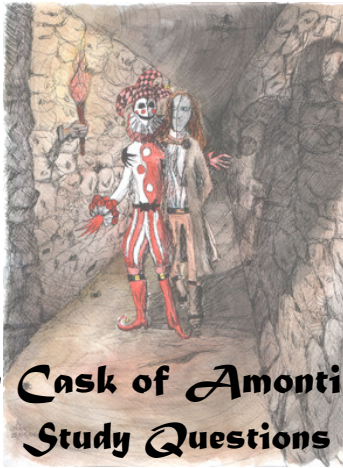


Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Ms. Ten Eyck / Period \_\_\_\_\_

English 10



## "The Cask of Amontillado" Study Questions

### Directions

Respond to the questions below on a separate sheet of paper. Be sure to use a proper heading and write in complete sentences (you don't have to restate!)

**Further directions:** Read the statements (in italics) below, then respond to the questions beneath (in bold) about the story.

*"The Cask of Amontillado" is a chilling story, but Poe also uses humorous elements as the narrator recounts his experience with Fortunato.*

1. Can you identify elements in the story that might be regarded as humorous?
2. What does the humor add to the story?
3. Can you think of any other stories, books, or movies that blend horror and humor in a similar way?

*"The Cask of Amontillado" uses a first-person narrator (a narrator that is a character in the story), and, sometimes, first-person narrators can be unreliable.*

4. How reliable or unreliable do you regard the narrator?
5. Are there any ways that the narrator might be manipulating the truth?
6. How would you describe the narrator's attitude toward himself and his actions?

*Although the narrator seems to assume that his actions are justified, he certainly can be interpreted as a villain.*

7. What characteristics of the narrator make him an effective villain?
8. Can you think of any other villains from stories, books, television shows, movies, or "real life" that share some of the narrator's villainous characteristics?
9. Is there anything about the narrator that you find attractive or like-able?

*The narrator never specifies why he hates Fortunato. Instead, he states only that Fortunato caused "a thousand injuries" to the narrator and eventually "ventured upon insult."*

10. What is your general impression of Fortunato?
11. Do any of Fortunato's words and actions support the narrator's belief that Fortunato is worthy of hatred?
12. Do any of Fortunato's words and actions refute the narrator's belief that Fortunato is worthy of hatred?

*Every story must exist in a certain time and place, and we refer to the time and place of a story as the "setting."*

13. How does the setting of "The Cask of Amontillado" change as the story progresses?
14. Why do you think Poe chose to bring together in this story the dreariness of the catacombs and the festival atmosphere of the carnival?
15. What elements of the setting in this story would you consider typical of a horror story? What elements seem unusual?

*"Theme" can be defined as "a comment about the human condition that a writer makes through his or her work," and a theme or themes are often what make a work of literature relevant to all of our lives.*

16. Can you identify one or more themes in "The Cask of Amontillado"? In other words, can you identify any general comments about life and the human condition that Poe is suggesting through the specifics of this story?
17. Can you think of any other stories, books, or movies that convey a similar theme?



## **Group Members:**

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**Directions:** Read the excerpts from the story (in italics) below, then answer the corresponding questions (in bold) on a separate sheet of paper.

*"My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchesi--"*

- 1. We soon find that the narrator very much wants Fortunato to go to the narrator's vaults, so why does the narrator say that he does not want Fortunato to go?**

*"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."*

- 2. If the narrator perceives that Fortunato is afflicted with a "severe cold," why does the narrator tell Fortunato that he looks "remarkably well" when the characters first meet?**

*"Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado! You have been imposed upon. And as for Luchesi, he cannot distinguish Sherry from Amontillado."*

*Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm. Putting on a mask of black silk, and drawing a roquelaire closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.*

- 3. It is carnival time, so the narrator is wearing a mask and a roquelaire (a cloak), but why else might he be dressed this way?**

*There were no attendants at home; they had absconded to make merry in honor of the time. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them explicit orders not to stir from the house. These orders were sufficient, I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.*

- 4. What instructions did the narrator give his servants earlier in the evening? Why did he give these instructions? What does this tell us about the narrator?**

*The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.*

- 5. Why might Fortunato walk in an "unsteady" way?**

*"How long have you had that cough?"*

*"Ugh! ugh! ugh!--ugh! Ugh! ugh!--ugh! ugh! ugh!--ugh! ugh! ugh!--ugh! ugh! ugh!"*

*My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.*

- 6. If the narrator hates Fortunato, why would he refer to Fortunato as his "poor friend"?**

*"Come," I said, with decision, "we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter."*

- 7. What do the following words suggest about the narrator: "you are happy, as once I was"? Likewise, what do the adjectives the narrator uses to describe Fortunato tell us about him, especially in relation to the narrator?**

*"We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchesi--"*

**8. Why is the narrator so concerned about Fortunato's health? Note also that the narrator says he cannot be responsible for making Fortunato more ill.**

*"True--true," I replied; "and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily--but you should use all proper caution. A draught of this Medoc will defend us from the damp."*

**9. In a few places on this page, Poe uses "foreshadowing," hints about things that will occur later in the story. Can you identify some of this foreshadowing?**

*Here I knocked off the neck of a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows that lay upon the mould.  
"Drink," I said, presenting him the wine.*

**10. Why would the narrator want Fortunato to drink some of his wine?**

*He raised it to his lips with a leer. He paused and nodded to me familiarly, while his bells jingled.*

**11. Why might Fortunato look at the narrator "with a leer"?**

*"I drink," he said, "to the buried that repose around us."  
"And I to your long life."  
He again took my arm, and we proceeded.  
"These vaults," he said, "are extensive."  
"The Montresors," I replied, "were a great and numerous family."*

**12. What does this comment tell us about the narrator?**

*"I forget your arms."  
"A huge human foot d'or, in a field azure; the foot crushes a serpent rampant whose fangs are imbedded in the heel."*

**12. How does this coat of arms relate to other aspects of the story?**

*"The nitre!" I said; "see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river's bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough--"*

**14. The narrator nearly insists that Fortunato leave the catacombs. Why?**

*"It is nothing," he said; "let us go on. But first, another draught of the Medoc."  
I broke and reached him a flacon of De Grâve. He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light.*

**15. What does this description tell us about Fortunato?**

*He laughed and threw the bottle upwards with a gesticulation I did not understand.  
I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement--a grotesque one.  
"You do not comprehend?" he said.  
"Not I," I replied.  
"Then you are not of the brotherhood."  
"How?"  
"You are not of the masons."  
"Yes, yes," I said, "yes, yes."  
"You? Impossible! A mason?"*

**16. Fortunato finds it "impossible" to believe that the narrator is a mason. What does this fact tell us both about Fortunato and the narrator? Also, if Fortunato finds it impossible to believe that the narrator is a mason, why would Fortunato give the narrator a secret sign that only another mason would understand?**

*"It is this," I answered, producing a trowel from beneath the folds of my roquelaire.  
"You jest," he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces. "But let us proceed to the Amontillado."*

**17. Why does Fortunato "recoil" when the narrator produces the trowel? Why do you think Fortunato does not ask, and apparently does not wonder, why the narrator is carrying a trowel beneath his cloak?**

*"Be it so," I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak, and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily.*

**18. What does Fortunato's leaning "heavily" suggest?**

*We continued our route in search of the Amontillado. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.*

**19. Literally, the scene is getting darker. What might this detail suggest on a symbolic level?**

*At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious.*

**20. Notice where the narrator and Fortunato are now: at "the most remote end of the crypt." Why this setting?**

*Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth the bones had been thrown down, and lay promiscuously upon the earth, forming at one point a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a still interior recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven. It seemed to have been constructed for no especial use within itself, but formed merely the interval between two of the colossal supports of the roof of the catacombs, and was backed by one of their circumscribing walls of solid granite.*

**21. Why do you think the narrator goes into such detail as he describes this scene? Why, for instance, does the narrator give the measurements of the "interior recess"?**

*It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavored to pry into the depth of the recess. Its termination the feeble light did not enable us to see.  
"Proceed," I said; "herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchesi--"*

**22. Why does the narrator mention Luchesi at this point?**

*"Pass your hand," I said, "over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed, it is very damp. Once more let me implore you to return."*

**23. Why does the narrator remind Fortunato of the nitre and again "implore" him to leave the catacombs?**

*No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power."  
"The Amontillado!" ejaculated my friend, not yet recovered from his astonishment.  
"True," I replied; "the Amontillado."*

**24. "True" seems an odd response to Fortunato's "The Amontillado!" Why do you think the narrator responds in this way?**

*As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.*

**25. Obviously, the narrator has carefully prepared this scene, but why do you think the narrator kept his trowel with him and did not bury it under the bones with the other materials?**

*I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was not the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and obstinate silence.*

**26. Why do you think the narrator describes Fortunato's silence as "obstinate" (stubborn)?**

*I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might hearken to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labors and sat down upon the bones.*

**27. What is your reaction to this comment by the narrator?**

*When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier. The wall was now nearly upon a level with my breast. I again paused, and holding the flambeaux over the mason-work, threw a few feeble rays upon the figure within.*

**28. Why do you think the narrator describes in such detail his building of the wall to encase Fortunato?**

*A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. For a brief moment I hesitated--I trembled.*

**29. Why does the narrator "hesitate" and "tremble"? And why does he indicate that he reacted in this way only for "a brief moment"?**

*Unsheathing my rapier, I began to grope with it about the recess: but the thought of an instant reassured me.*

**30. The narrator reveals a fact that he has held back until this point: that he is carrying a rapier. Why might the narrator have a rapier with him?**

*I placed my hand upon the solid fabric of the catacombs, and felt satisfied.*

**31. How does the narrator "satisfy" and "reassure" himself?**

*I reapproached the wall. I replied to the yells of him who clamored. I re-echoed--I aided--I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamor grew still.*

**32. Why does the narrator "re-echo" and even "surpass" Fortunato's yelling? What effect might the narrator's actions have on Fortunato?**

*It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close.*

**33. Why do you think Poe chose "midnight" as the time when the narrator is finishing his task?**

*I had completed the eighth, the ninth, and the tenth tier. I had finished a portion of the last and the eleventh; there remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head.*

**34. Why does the narrator react this way?**

*It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognising as that of the noble Fortunato.*

**35. What effect does the narrator create by referring to Fortunato as "noble" at this point?**

*"Ha! ha! ha!--he! he!--a very good joke indeed--an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the palazzo--he! he! He!--over our wine --he! he! he!"*

**36. How would you explain Fortunato's behavior and comments?**

*"The Amontillado!" I said.*

**37. How would you explain this comment from the narrator?**

*"He! he! he!--he! he! he!--yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone."*

**38. What might Fortunato be trying to do by mentioning his wife, "the Lady Fortunato," and how she and others will be waiting for them?**

*"Yes," I said, "let us be gone."*

**39. The narrator knows that "they" (Fortunato and he) will not be going, so why does he respond in this way?**

*"For the love of God, Montresor!"  
"Yes," I said, "for the love of God!"*

**40. What might the narrator mean by this echoing of Fortunato's words?**

*But to these words I hearkened in vain for a reply. I grew impatient. I called aloud--  
"Fortunato!"  
No answer. I called again--  
"Fortunato!"*

**41. Why is the narrator becoming "impatient"?**

*No answer still. I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells.*

**42. What effect do the "jingling of the bells" create at this moment?**

*My heart grew sick--on account of the dampness of the catacombs.*

**43. Why does the narrator specify that "the dampness of the catacombs" is what made his heart grow sick? How would you describe the narrator's tone in this sentence?**

*I hastened to make an end of my labor. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old rampart of bones.*

**44. Why does the narrator now work quickly to finish his task?**

*For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them.*

**45. This is a surprising fact: it has been 50 years since the narrator buried Fortunato alive. Why might the narrator be telling his story now?**

*In pace requiescat!*

**46. "Rest in Peace" (Latin). Why do you think the narrator ends his story with this phrase?**