
Rhetorical Analysis: “The Raven” By Edgar Allen Poe

Edgar Allen Poe wrote the poem, “The Raven” in January of 1845 and upon the publication of his piece, he was met with great praise and critical success, despite having been a published author and journalist for many years. “The Raven” is deemed as one of Poe’s greatest poems for its structure, language, rhyme scheme, and for the story as a whole. It is a tale about a young man who is continuously grieving over the loss of his love “Lenore. ” A raven enters through the man’s window and sits on the bust of Pallas on the man’s chamber door. Every question the young man asks the raven he only receives one answer: “Nevermore. ” Because the raven can only speak this single word, each question the man asks only frustrates the man and reminds him of his loss. While this poem is critically acclaimed and considered one of the best poems ever written, the question is raised as to why. Could it be his poetic structure, or maybe a factor never been considered? Either way, “The Raven” by Edgar Allen Poe is seen as one of the best pieces of poetry ever written.

In order to understand what makes “The Raven” a great piece, one must look at the appeals it makes. At first look, it comes across as a being an ethos based writing, due to the fact that at this point in his career, Poe was already a very well established writer and poet. At a closer look however, it becomes clear that it is actually a pathos based piece. The reason being is that the story is about a man’s struggle to deal with the loss of his beloved. The piece begins and ends with this young man’s focus on the loss of his love, Lenore. It is only when the raven enters the piece that we begin to see this man’s distress in his loss. ‘Prophet!’ said I, ‘thing of evil! - prophet still, if bird or devil!By that Heaven that bends above us - by that God we both adore -Tell this soul with sorrow laden if, within the distant Aidenn,It shall clasp a sainted maiden whom the angels named Lenore -Clasp a rare and radiant maiden, whom the angels named Lenore? ‘Quoth the raven, ‘Nevermore. ‘ ‘Be that word our sign of parting, bird or fiend!’ I shrieked upstarting - ‘Get thee back into the tempest and the Night’s Plutonian shore!Leave no black plume as a token of that lie thy soul hath spoken!Leave my loneliness unbroken! - quit the bust above my door!Take thy beak from out my heart, and take thy form from off my door!’Quoth the raven, ‘Nevermore. ‘ Because of his sorrow, the young man begins to question the reasoning of the raven’s presence, taking the raven as devil who has come from the banks of Hades to torture him over his loss of Lenore. Since Poe digs deeply into the loss of Lenore, the piece is based off pathos. Due to the fact that the story as a whole is based off of the young man’s loss of Lenore, it can also be assumed that the piece was also supposed to be based off pathos. Lenore is the focus of the young man’s sorrow, and his sorrow in turn is what leads to the story of the raven tormenting him. This sorrow the man faces and the torturing by the raven all play off the idea of pathos.

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Poe's vocabulary is also a very strong contributor to pathos in this piece. The language Poe uses is very dynamic and forthright, allowing for the piece to be viewed in the way Poe wanted to, instead of leaving his writing up for interpretation. The audience gains a better understanding behind the language, and that allows for a much stronger feeling about what the story really means, making for a deeper connection to the young man's lost love. Poetic structure contributes to pathos since the story relies on its rhyme scheme and musicality. Due to the fact that the words are so closely connected rhyming wise, it give the reader a chance to read the poem as more of a song, instead of a story which allows for a deeper connection to the reader and the audience. It allows for more emotion to be put into it because it isn't just a story to be read, but a piece to be experienced.

"The Raven", which can be seen by its familiarity and acclaim, has a very broad audience, but was not intended for such a range of readers. Poe original focused for "The Raven" was a smaller audience because he released the poem in a periodical without the intent of reaching mass audiences. "The Raven" was simply a piece Poe created for a magazine that by chance made him an overnight sensation, and because of this it is possible to see the true audience. Since it was written for a small periodical, Poe understood that his poem would not be viewed by a large audience so his intent was not to write it for one. This can be seen in his writing style and content. The writing style of the piece uses a vast vocabulary and complex rhyme scheme that isn't too often seen in standard poetic writings. The content has horror twist to it, which Poe used to narrow down the audience even more.

Despite using these tactics Poe manages to appeal to a larger audience than he would have expected, mostly due to its very emotionally driven story line. Emotion spawns from the loss of Lenore, but also from the insanities in which this young man goes through because of his loss. It also appeals on a bigger scale because of the poetic structure of the piece, due to the fact that the piece as a whole rhymes and has a very consistent flow to it. This gives the piece mass appeal for the reason that it can be enjoyed for its poetic structure alone and doesn't need to appeal in the sense of literature. The raven appeals emotionally as an instigator to the young man's feelings and acts as a torturer of young man. Because of the highly charged emotional content, "The Raven" is able to appeal to a greater audience than Poe intended for.

Although Poe attempted to appeal to a small demographic of readers, he ended up appealing to a much larger audience. Poe was able to utilize every piece of his writing to reach an audience much larger than the one he initially intended. Because he uses each piece individually and with a great amount of depth, he was able to compose a stronger piece and thereby able to appeal to a larger audience. He was able to create one of the best examples of poetry through the depth of his piece, demonstrating the overall importance of the "The Raven" in the history of literature.

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