

# Tales of Edgar Allan Poe

## Study Guide

adapted by Bobby Box in collaboration with Jon Ludwig

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## A Note From the Education Director

Dear Educator,

Welcome to the Center for Puppetry Arts and our production of *Tales of Edgar Allan Poe*. The Center has been a cherished educational and cultural resource since 1978. We value your patronage and look forward to serving you during the 2002-2003 school year.

This study guide was designed to enhance student learning before and after your visit to the Center for Puppetry Arts. We think you'll find the medium of puppetry the perfect vehicle for dramatizations of the works of Poe, a legend of American literature whose real-life experiences were often as dark and mysterious as his writings. What makes our production especially exciting is that, unlike actors portraying characters in conventional theater, the monochromatic puppets in *Tales of Edgar Allan Poe* are the characters – forever.

All three areas of programming here at the Center for Puppetry Arts (Performance, Puppet Making Workshops and Museum) meet Georgia Quality Core Curriculum Standards (GA QCCs). Listed below are the GA QCCs for Grades 9-12 in Language Arts, Fine Arts, Social Studies and Character Education for all three programming areas. Access a complete list of GA QCC Standards at <http://www.glc.k12.ga.us/>.

**Performance:** Here are the GA QCC Standards (Grades 9-12) met when your students attend a 65-minute performance of *Tales of Edgar Allan Poe*, performed with rod and shadow puppets:

Subject: **Language Arts**

Strand: Core Skills

#13 – Topic: Core Skills

Standard: Uses a variety of print and non-print resources (e.g., films, recordings, theater, computer databases) as parts of the study of literature.

Subject: **Language Arts**

Strand: Literary Types/Composition

#27 –Topic: Reading/Literature

Standard: Is familiar with the structural elements of literature (e.g., plot, characterization, and mood).

Subject: **Fine Arts**

Strand: Advanced Drama

#21 – Topic: Artistic Skills and Knowledge: Creating, Performing, Producing

Standard: Recognizes the difference between presentational and representational theatre.

#22 – Topic: Connections

Standard: Assesses connecting themes and content among theatre and other arts.

Subject: **Fine Arts**

Strand: Acting

#19 – Topic: Connections

Standard: Examines relationships between drama/theatre, the other arts, the creation of a role, and the performance of dramatic literature.

Subject: **Fine Arts**

Strand: Art History and Criticism

#9 – Topic: Critical Analysis and Aesthetic Understanding

Standard: Discusses emotional responses to and possible interpretations of an artwork, citing specific qualities in the work that elicit the response.

**Puppet Making Workshops:** Here are the GA QCC Standards (Grades 9-12) met when your students participate in a 90-minute *Discovering Puppetry in Other Cultures* Workshop:

Subject: **Character Education**

Strand: Citizenship

#7 – Topic: Citizenship

Standard: Tolerance: the allowable deviation from a standard. Indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one's own.

Subject: **Fine Arts**

Strand: Art History and Criticism

#3 – Topic: Connections

Standard: Examines and discusses the role of art and artifacts as a visual record of humankind's cultural, political, scientific, and religious history.

Subject: **Fine Arts**

Strand: Crafts

#5 – Topic: Artistic Skills and Knowledge: Creating, Performing, Producing

Standard: Relates crafts to folklore of a wide range of cultures.

#13 – Topic: Artistic Skills and Knowledge: Creating, Performing, Producing

Standard: Examines the functions of crafts from diverse cultures and times and evaluates their role in society.

#19 – Topic: Historical and Cultural Context

Standard: Explains the influences of cultural factors upon the development of crafts from different societies.

Subject: **Social Studies**

Strand: Anthropology

#14 – Topic: Cultural Anthropology

Standard: Examines the social aspects of culture that are universal to all human societies.

Subject: **Social Studies**

Strand: Ethnic Studies

#26 – Topic: Cultural Diversity

Standard: Compares and contrasts the cultures of selected ethnic groups.

**Museum:** Here are the GA QCC Standards (Grades 9-12) met when your students tour our special exhibit gallery and international puppetry museum featuring the Center's permanent collection: *Puppets: The Power of Wonder*:

Subject: **Fine Arts**

Strand: Art History and Criticism

#3 – Topic: Connections

Standard: Examines and discusses the role of art and artifacts as a visual record of humankind's cultural, political, scientific, and religious history.

Subject: **Character Education**

Strand: Citizenship

#7 – Topic: Citizenship

Standard: Tolerance: the allowable deviation from a standard. Indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one's own.

Subject: Social Studies

Strand: Anthropology

#14 – Topic: Cultural Anthropology

Standard: Examines the social aspects of culture that are universal to all human societies.

Subject: Social Studies

Strand: Asian Studies

#18 – Topic: World's Great Religions

Standard: Identifies Asian influence on the world's great religions.

Thank you for choosing the Center for Puppetry Arts for your study trip. We hope that your students' experience here will live on in their memories for many years to come.

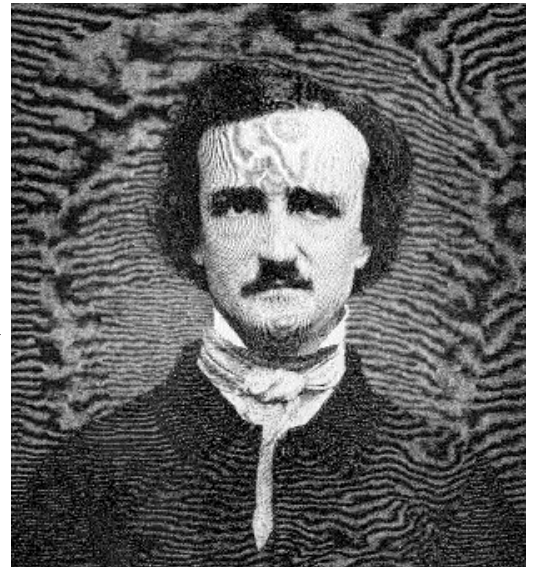
Sincerely,

Alan Louis

Education Director

## Synopsis

In *Tales of Edgar Allan Poe*, Bobby Box, Associate Producer at the Center for Puppetry Arts, in collaboration with Associate Artistic Director Jon Ludwig, weaves together several of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories and poems to create an evocative performance revealing the essence of Poe's works. This show brings the tales of Poe to life with the writer himself appearing in the stories. In this original show, Box includes *The Raven*, *Lenore*, *The Bells*, *The Cask of Amontillado*, *The Oval Portrait*, *MS. Found in a Bottle*, *Berenice*, *The Black Cat* and *The Tell-Tale Heart*. Poe and other characters in these stories come to life through the action of the macabre puppets and the figures on the stage. Through Box's intermingling of these poems and stories, we can see the common themes of madness, paranoia, beauty, melancholy and horror in Poe's writing.



## About the Author

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) was an American writer whose emotionally haunting works have a permanent place in literature.

The son of an actress, Poe was orphaned early in life and spent part of his childhood in England. When he returned to America, he briefly studied at West Point and joined the army. When he was 25, he married his 13-year-old cousin Virginia Clemm. They were married for 11 years, until her death of tuberculosis in 1847.

A writer during the Romantic era of literature, Poe expressed his art through emotion, not thought. Each of his works conveys one overall emotion, be it beauty, terror or sadness. Numerous accounts of Poe's life tell of his mental illness and alcoholism, as well as possible diseases and drug addictions. It is believed that alcoholism or rabies led to Poe's mental and physical illnesses and eventual demise.

Poe was the editor of numerous newspapers and magazines throughout his lifetime. Besides being known for his poems and short stories, Poe is noted for being an excellent literary critic. He published much about his own critical theories on literature and the Romantic period. Of all the short stories and poems published throughout his life, he did not truly receive great financial return or recognition until *The Raven* was published in 1845. Upon the success of this poem, Poe began lecturing and published collections of his short stories and poetry. Poe wrote throughout his entire life, short as it was, and died in 1849, at age 40, two years after his wife's death.

## Production Design and Style of Puppetry

*Tales of Edgar Allan Poe* is performed with the puppeteers visible on stage; no attempt is made to hide them. Our puppeteers dress in clothing in the style of the Romantic period, the mid-1800s. However, the costumes are dark and muted so that the puppeteers do not draw more attention than the puppets. The puppeteers also appear as characters in some of the vignettes. The puppets in this show are predominantly rod puppets, constructed from a variety of materials, including wood, plastic PVC tubing, fabric, and neoprene latex. Such figures are operated through the use of rods or sticks attached to the figure at key points. For this production, each puppet has been designed with a control rod affixed to the back of its head. The puppeteers grasp and directly manipulate the arms, legs and other expressive parts of the figure. The hand of the puppeteer serves as the hand of the puppet (which allows the props to be more effectively manipulated).

Director Bobby Box found himself inspired by the imagery of *The Fall of the House of Usher*. Poe's descriptions of the decaying structure brought forth strong visceral feelings of inner dread, utterly appropriate for this adaptation of Poe's stories and poetry. Scenic designer Elaine Williams created a setting incorporating elements of a decaying house set adrift in space, with time standing still, the clock frozen at midnight. The set serves as the study of *The Raven*, a large abandoned home for *The Oval Portrait*, the deck of a ship for *MS. Found in a Bottle*, and various rooms in other places for *The Black Cat*, *The Tell Tale Heart* and *Berenice*. The set, like the puppet figures, comes alive, taking us both within and outside of the various aspects of Poe's world, while providing constant stimulation for the eyes and mind.

## Glossary for Tales of Edgar Allan Poe

Aidenn – Heaven [“The Raven”]

alarum – alarm [“The Bells”]

archipelago – a sea with many islands. In this case, the Sunda islands, off the coast of Java [“MS. Found in a Bottle”]

ardor – emotional warmth; passion. [“The Oval Portrait”]

balm in Gilead – “something that heals or soothes” in “an Old Testament city and mountain that was a destination for Moses and others (i.e., Heaven). [“The Raven”]

bas relief – painting or drawing in which the figures actually have a slight dimension. [“The Black Cat”]

craven – 1) begger; 2) coward. [“The Raven”]

euphony – a pleasant combination of sounds; a harmony. [“The Bells”]

expostulation – to reason with a person earnestly, objecting to that person’s actions. [“The Bells”]

fervid – impassioned. [“The Oval Portrait”]

Guy de Vere – according to an old German ballad, a dead lover who came back to this world to carry his love Lenore into the world of the dead [“Lenore”]

kraken – a huge mythical beast that lives on the ocean floor [“MS. Found in a Bottle”]

mien – {meen} ones’s appearance, bearing or manner. [“The Raven”]

obeisance – {o-‘bay-suns} a song of joy or triumph. [“The Raven”]

palpitating– beating rapidly, like a heart [“The Bells”]

peccavimus – Latin for “we have sinned.” [“Lenore”]

pernicious – causing great injury or destruction; fatal. [“Berenice”]

pipe – a long tube used for carrying liquids. [“The Cask of Amontillado”]

plutonian – having to do with the god of the underworld. [“The Raven”]

rampart – a sloping surface which leads from one level to another; an embankment of earth surmounted by a parapet (a wall which protects) for defending a fort, etc. [“MS. Found in a Bottle”]

rheum – {room} a watery discharge from the eyes, nose, etc., as in a cold. [“MS. Found in a Bottle”]

Runic – a mystical or obscure poem or song, perhaps of Germanic origin. [“The Bells”]

Stygian River – the river Styx, which surrounded the underworld. [“Lenore”]

tintinnabulation – the ringing sound of bells. [“The Bells”]

vagaries – odd or eccentric actions. [“Berenice”]

## **Sixth and Seventh Grade Activities (Middle School)**

### **Looking Beyond the Mask**

GA QCC Standards: Sixth Grade, Language Arts (Listening): 20; (Literature): 23, 28, 29; (Reading): 36, 37, 39, 40. Seventh Grade, Language Arts (Literature): 27, 28; (Reading): 40.

Research Essay: The mask is an important part of many cultures, frequently associated with images of death and decay. Write an essay examining why the mask has such a powerful effect upon the human imagination, and why has it become so associated with the more mysterious and terrifying aspects of human thought. You may look at mask traditions associated with Halloween, Mardi Gras and other forms of Carnival, European folk rituals (Austria, Switzerland), masked theatre forms such as Japanese Noh and Balinese Wayang Topeng, or religious rituals in Tibet and China.

You will find the following online museum resource useful: <http://www.masks.org/>

These books will also be helpful:

Mack, John. *Masks and the Art of Expression*. NY: Abrams, 1994.

Nunley, John W. and Cara McCarty. *Masks: Faces of Culture*. NY: Abrams, 1999.

## **Unearthing Buried Meaning**

GA QCC Standards: Sixth Grade, Language Arts (Literature): (Literature): 23, 28, 29; (Reading): 36, 37, 39, 40. Seventh Grade, Language Arts (Listening): 14, 15, 16, 17; (Literature): 27, 28, 29, 32, 36; (Reference and Study Skills): 50.

Write an essay on the subject of how rituals and customs surrounding the death of the member of a community vary in different cultures. Would the fears expressed in *The Premature Burial* make sense in a culture where bodies were cremated instead? How do religious beliefs affect how the people of a given culture or geographical region approach the rituals of death? How does geography, community resources, available materials, etc. affect such practices?

## **Eighth Grade Activities (Middle School)**

### **Better Write Than Worry**

GA QCC Standards: Eighth Grade, Language Arts (Literature): 22, 27, 28.

Essay: Poe sometimes wrote of fears that were common to his time. For instance, medicine often could not distinguish between a deep coma and death, and so premature burials were not uncommon. Epidemics of diseases now virtually eradicated also took place (as reflected in the medieval plague of *The Cask of Amontillado*). If Poe were writing today, what might some of his subjects be? How do the things we fear change from one era to another? If you were to write in the manner of Edgar Allan Poe, what subjects might you find fearful?

### **Manuscripts Found in New Bottles**

GA QCC Standards: Eighth Grade, Language Arts (Literature): 22, 27, 28, 29.

Essay: Horror and fantastic fiction has a strong following today. Who are some of your favorite authors, playwrights or screenwriters of fantastic fiction, and how do they follow in the footsteps of Edgar Allan Poe? Why do you think writers write of frightening subjects, and why do their readers enjoy them?

## Ninth through Twelfth Grade Activities (High School)

### **Poe Tells Tales of the Heart**

GA QCC Standards: Ninth through Twelfth Grade, Language Arts (Core Skills): 2, 10, 13, 14, 18.

Research essay: At a time when psychology was not even a field of study, *The Tell-Tale Heart* demonstrates Poe's keen understanding of the human mind and the powerful effect of guilt upon the main character. What other examples from the stories and poems of *Tales of Edgar Allan Poe* illustrate Poe's grasp of how the human mind works? What dominant emotions do each of his characters experience? Do you believe that Poe's characters feel emotions in the same way that you do, or are they too extreme? Do you think that life 150 years after Poe's time has changed how we experience and express emotions?

### **In the Shadows with Edgar Allan Poe**

GA QCC Standards: Ninth through Twelfth Grade, Fine Arts (Technical Theatre and Design): 2, 10, 13, 14, 18.

*Materials and equipment used: thin cardboard (file folders, thin poster board); thin sticks or dowels or lengths of thick wire (chop sticks or wire coat hangers); brass paper fasteners (1/2" or 3/4"); scissors; tape; overhead projector.*

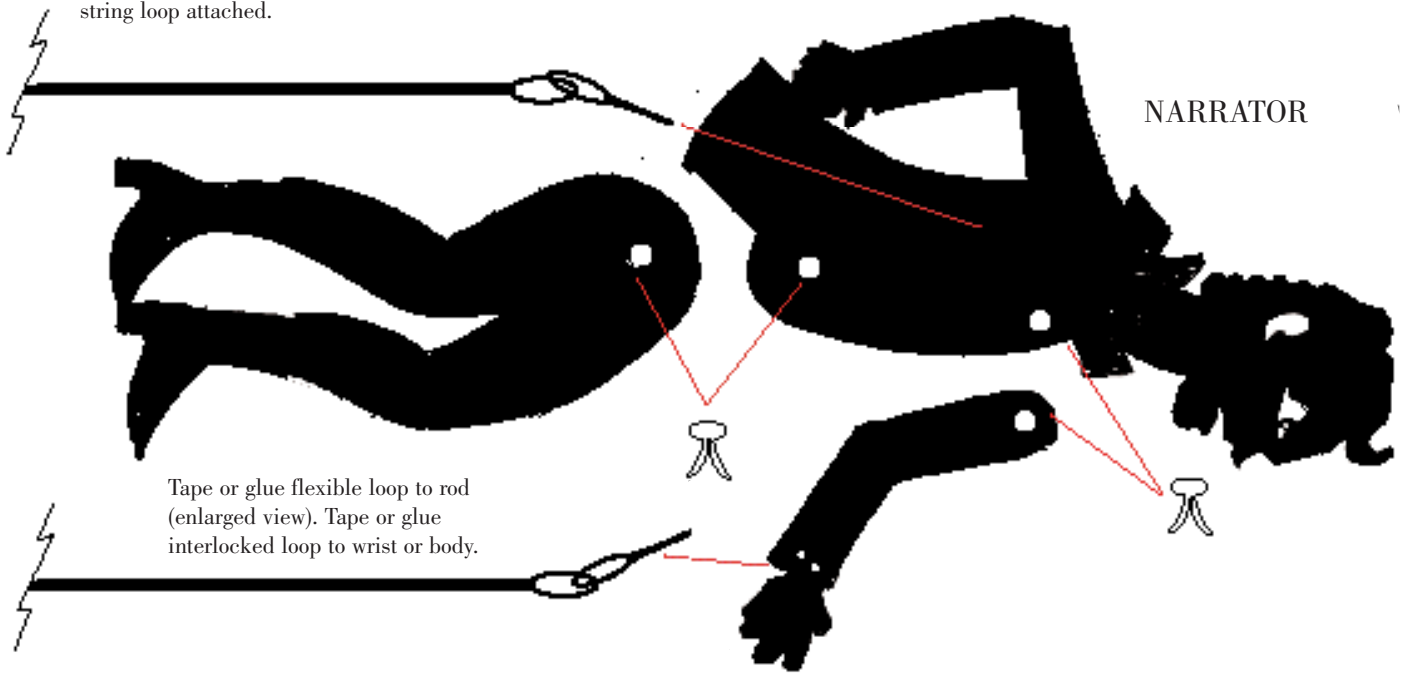
Shadow puppets or articulated silhouettes, may very effectively dramatize a story. They may be quickly cut out of thin materials (such as file folder cardboard), attached to sticks and either held up to a screen (a stretched white shower curtain or bedsheet) with a rear light source (such as a clip light) or placed on an overhead projector (see attached worksheet). Scenery may be cut out of the same material or larger sheets of thin poster board. Take several of Poe's tales and assign teams of students to create dramatizations suitable for shadow production. Tasks may be broken up between different teams – script, setting, puppets, music (using “found” noisemakers), etc.

#### THE TELL-TALE HEART: Shadow Puppets

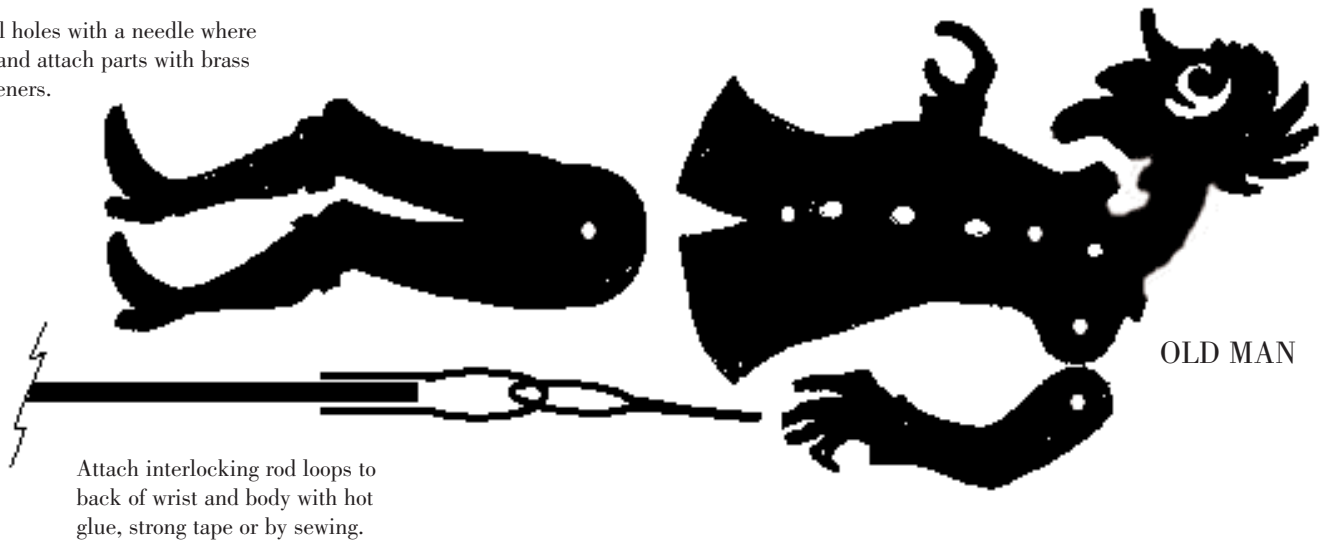
Designed by Bradford Clark

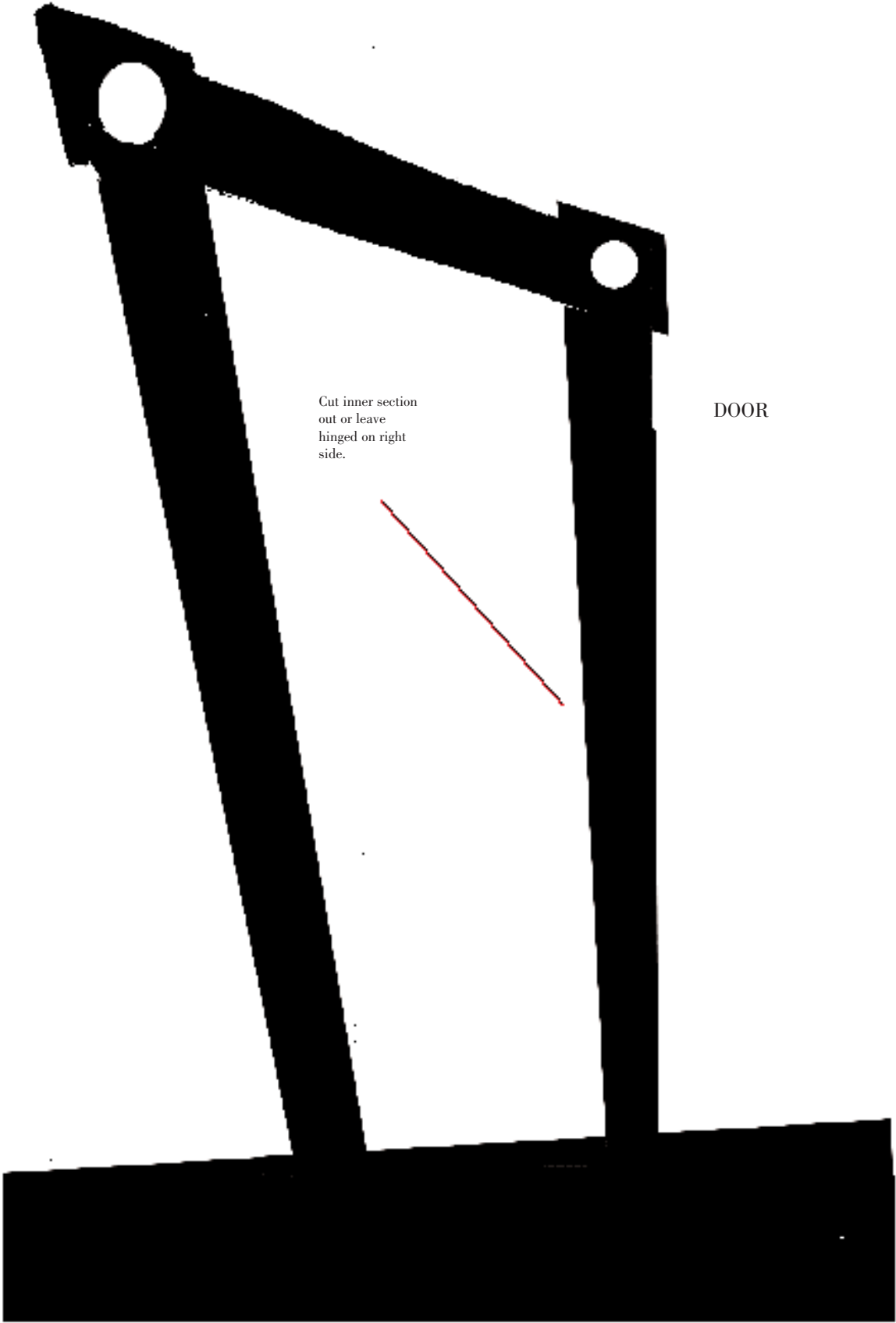
1. Print out shadow puppets. Enlarge on photocopy machine if puppets are to be used with a shadow screen (a white shower curtain or bedsheet, stretched tight, with a reading lamp or other directional clip light illuminating from behind). If you prefer to use an overhead projector, puppets may be used "as is."
2. Using a glue stick or other light white glue, glue puppets onto lightweight cardboard (a file folder, for instance). You may also simply transfer their outline to the cardboard. Cut them out, then assemble as shown below.

Rod control (chop stick or similar stick like a bamboo shishkebab skewer) with flexible wire or string loop attached.



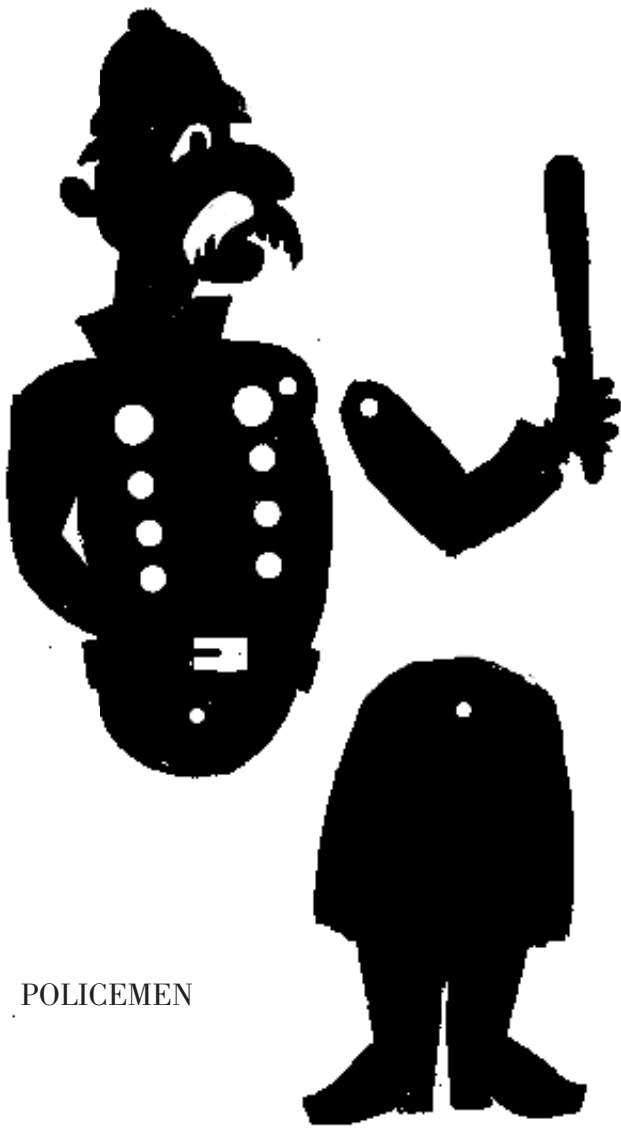
Poke small holes with a needle where indicated and attach parts with brass paper-fasteners.





Cut inner section  
out or leave  
hinged on right  
side.

DOOR



POLICEMEN



BED

## Selected Bibliography

Hayes, Kevin J. *The Cambridge Companion to Edgar Allan Poe*. Cambridge University Press, 2002.

King, Steven. *Steven King's Danse Macabre*. Berkley Publishing Group, 1981.

This is an excellent discussion of horror in literature and film, written by an acknowledged modern master of the genre.

Marlowe, Stephen. *The Lighthouse at the End of the World*. Penguin, 1996. A fictional exploration of Poe's mysterious death.

Poe, Edgar Allan. *Complete Tales and Poems*. Vintage Books, 1975.

Silverman, Kenneth. *Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-ending Remembrance*. Harper Collins Publishers, 1991.

Walsh, John Evangelist. *Midnight Dreary: The Mysterious Death of Edgar Allan Poe*. Rutgers University Press, 1998.

## Online Resources

<http://www.poemuseum.org/>

The Poe Museum in Richmond, Virginia, provides a retreat into early 19th century Richmond, where Edgar Allan Poe lived and worked. This site also includes further "Educational Resources."

<http://www.poedecoder.com/>

Essays on Poe and his works by a group of enthusiasts.

<http://www.ipl.org/div/litcrit/bin/litcrit.out.pl?au=poe-10>

Poe links and resources from the Internet Public Library

<http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~ehrlachs/posesites.html>

A Poe Webliography: Edgar Allan Poe on the Internet by Heyward Ehrlich. This is an excellent resource.

<http://www.nps.gov/edal/index.htm>

Visit the 1840's home of Edgar Allan Poe in Philadelphia, PA, now a National Historic Site.

<http://www.pambytes.com/poe/poe.html>

The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe online with biographic information annotation and other useful resources.

<http://bau2.uibk.ac.at/sg/poe/Work.html>

Another way to access the complete works of Edgar Allan Poe online.

Text: Bradford Clark and Pamela Csipo

Cover Photo: Shannon Frye

## Center for Puppetry Arts

1404 Spring St. NW • Atlanta, GA USA 30309-2820

Ticket Sales: 404.873.3391 • Fax: 404.873.9907

Email: [puppet@mindspring.com](mailto:puppet@mindspring.com) • Website: [www.puppet.org](http://www.puppet.org)

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