

Name _____ Date _____ Period _____

The Black Cat—Edgar Allan Poe



Part I

Directions: *Given the definition, create an original sentence for each of the words. You may need to use an additional piece of paper!*

Apparition- a ghost

Contemptuously- scornfully

Expound- to explain

Incarnate- having a physical form

Malevolence- evil; maliciousness

Sagacious- wise, clever

Part II

Directions: *Answer the following questions, in complete sentences, using support from the text.*

1. As the story opens, the narrator is in jail, awaiting his execution on the following day. Find and write down two of the lines from the story that show this is true.

2. The narrator tells us that he never had any troubles until he began drinking alcohol, yet there is evidence in the story that alcohol isn't the only thing to blame for his sociopathic actions. Describe other things we learn about the author that likely contributed to his slide into violence and insanity.

3. The narrator discusses his deteriorating relationship with his wife, and he says, "At length, I even offered her personal violence" (pg 116.) What does this comment imply?

4. What is significant about Pluto's being a black cat?

5. Where does the narrator obtain a new cat? What is ironic about the appearance of the cat?

6. Poe's story features a heavy use of dashes to create long, cumbersome, rambling sentences as we hear the fragmentation of the narrator's thoughts in his voice. This technique, which probably distracted you a bit as you read the story, is done for a purpose. Why would Poe use this technique?

7. The narrator says that he is certain that "perverseness is one of the primitive impulses of the human heart – one of the indivisible primary faculties, or sentiments, which give direction to the character of Man. Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or a silly action, for no other reason than because he knows he should not? Have we not a perpetual inclination, in the teeth of our best judgment, to violate that which is Law, merely because we understand it to be such?" (pg. 117) First, rephrase the narrator's point in just one sentence. Then, give an example from our modern world or your own life that illustrates the narrator's point.

8. Write down two of the adjectives the narrator uses to describe his wife. Why did the narrator kill her? What does the way the narrator trivializes domestic violence reveal about his frame of mind/character?

9. The narrator believes that the second cat is the reason he's captured, but the reader knows this isn't true. What's the real reason the narrator is caught and convicted?

10. In the beginning of the story, the narrator comments, "From my infancy I was noted for the docility and humanity of my disposition" (pg 115). Explain the irony of this statement.