

Edgar Allan Poe
(1809-1849)

Biographical Timeline

- 1809: Poe is born in Boston, where his parents, traveling actors Eliza and David Poe, who are performing there.
- 1811: Eliza Poe dies from an illness. David Poe apparently died soon thereafter, and he had probably already abandoned the family at the time of Eliza's death. Poe and his two siblings are taken into different foster homes. Poe is taken into the home of John and Frances Allan, a wealthy family in Richmond Virginia; they never adopted Poe.
- 1815: Allans move to London, where Poe attended school for several years.
- 1820: Allans return to the States.
- 1826: Poe enters the University of Virginia. He studies ancient and modern languages. He gambles, gets into debt, and falls out of favor with his foster father, in part because of his chronic need for money. John Allan refuses to honor debts and Poe leaves school in December and returns to Richmond.
- 1827: Poe and foster father cannot get along; Poe moves to Boston and publishes his first collection of poetry, *Tamerlane and Other Poems*. Poe enlists in the army under an assumed name and is ordered to Fort Moultrie, South Carolina.
- 1828: Poe rises to rank of sergeant major and gains appointment at West Point Military Academy with the help of foster father. Foster mother dies.
- 1830: Poe enters West Point Military Academy.
- 1831: Poe dislikes military life, disobeys orders deliberately, and is expelled. Before leaving he asks fellow cadets for subscriptions to publish a book of poetry. *Poems* is published in New York City, dedicated to "The US Corps of Cadets." Poe moves to Baltimore. Brother dies.
- 1833: Poe's short story "MS Found in a Bottle" wins first prize in a Baltimore literary contest.
- 1834: John Allan dies, leaving nothing of his large fortune to Poe in his will.
- 1835: Poe moves to Richmond and becomes editor of *The Southern Literary Messenger*.
- 1836: Poe marries his cousin, Virginia Clemm, who is 13 years old; he lives with Virginia and her mother thereafter.
- 1837: Poe gets fired from job at *Southern Literary Messenger*.

- 1838: Poe and family move to Philadelphia. Short stories are published in Philadelphia magazines.
- 1839: Poe becomes editor of *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine*. Collection of short stories, *Tales of the Grotesque and Arabesque*, published.
- 1841: Poe assumes editorial position at *Graham's Magazine*, a distinguished literary journal based in Philadelphia. Poe continues to publish short stories and poems. A talented magazine writer and editor, Poe always had trouble making a living and had difficulty holding down a steady job. He tended to get into fights with important people, and his employers repeatedly complained that he drank too much. He wrote short stories, poems, and reviews for magazines. He always said he preferred to write poetry and thought it was a superior genre, but regretted the fact that one can't make a living as a poet.
- 1844: Poe moves family to New York in 1844; works for popular paper *New York Evening Mirror*
- 1845: The publication of "The Raven" in the *Evening Mirror* causes a tremendous sensation and makes Poe famous. He publishes "The Philosophy of Composition," a story of how he wrote "The Raven," soon afterwards. He publishes a collection, *The Raven and Other Poems*, in November. Becomes editor and then owner of *The Broadway Journal*. Publishes and re-publishes many of his poems and short stories in the *Journal*.
- 1846: *The Broadway Journal* can't survive financially, and Poe stops publication.
- 1847: Poe's wife dies of tuberculosis. Poe has increasing difficulty maintaining stability after her death.
- 1848: Poe becomes engaged to Sarah Helen Whitman after he pledges to stop drinking. About a month later, he breaks his pledge and the engagement is called off.
- 1849: Poe travels to Richmond, encounters childhood sweetheart Elmira Shelton, and apparently becomes engaged. Joins a temperance society and pledges not to drink.
- 1849: In September, Poe leaves Richmond and dies after he is found delirious on a street in Baltimore; there are debates about how he ended up there. He dies without regaining consciousness in a hospital.