

POE FOR YOUR PROBLEMS

*Surprisingly Great Advice on Love, Money, Art, Sex and Career
from Edgar Allan Poe, the World's Most F*cked-Up Writer*



By Catherine Baab-Mugira

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR POE FOR YOUR PROBLEMS

- “Books about people’s successes are common. Books where you can learn from someone’s painful demons and failures are rarer—but far more meaningful. Cat's writing on Poe is insightful, funny and important.”—**Ryan Holiday**, author of *The Obstacle is the Way* (Portfolio, 2014) and *Ego is the Enemy* (Portfolio, 2016)

- “Fresh, page-turning, deeply informed and often funny, Catherine Baab-Muguirá’s *Poe for Your Problems* brings us a sorely overdue Poe-meets-modernity perspective that won’t simply make its readers happier but smarter and even saner, too.”—**Alan Pell Crawford**, author of *How Not to Get Rich: The Financial Misadventures of Mark Twain* (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017) and *Twilight at Monticello: The Final Years of Thomas Jefferson* (Random House, 2008)

- “This is more like an *anti*-self-help book, a guide to accepting yourself for the substance-abusing, sexually suspect fuckup you already are; a how-to for cultivating grudges, nurturing petty jealousies and vendettas, scheming the destruction of your enemies and indulging delusions of grandeur. I endorse this.”—**Tim Kreider**, author of *I Wrote This Book Because I Love You* (Simon & Schuster, 2018) and *We Learn Nothing* (Simon & Schuster, 2012)

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OVERVIEW

At first glance, Edgar Allan Poe may appear to be the *least likely* self-help guru in history.

Poe's own life was a dumpster fire. Everyone he ever loved got sick and died. He never had any money, and had to compose his masterpieces in cold, dirty, rented rooms. At times, he and his family were starving in the literal sense, with nothing to eat—for weeks on end—but bread and molasses. On top of all this, Poe drank and, out of envy or a simple lack of self-control, he blasted his closest friends, even his patrons, in print. Every hand that fed him, he bit. Every opportunity he could screw up, he seized.

You could say Edgar Allan Poe was a great big fuck-up, and you'd be right. But Poe also succeeded so wildly as to put almost every other writer to shame, and on a scale so vast it boggles the mind. His work has been translated into all 23 major languages and inspired so many film and TV adaptations—from *The Simpsons* to *South Park*, Netflix's *Altered Carbon* to Jordan Peele's *Us*—it would take 10 pages to list them all. Though he never dreamed of such a technology, Poe now counts nearly 4 million fans on Facebook. Once you clock the size of his platform, and the zeal and devotion of Poe's fan-tribe, you realize few celebrities of any stripe or discipline can touch him. People cosplay as Poe at Comic Con, even tattoo his face on their bodies.

So the question we really ought to be asking is, *what's his secret?* How did Poe fail, feud, starve, drink and default his way into the history books? What perverse formula for success can he offer us, and how might we learn to approach our own problems a little differently, according to his example?

I give you *Poe for Your Problems*—the world’s first self-help book based on Edgar Allan Poe’s life and thought. Broken into 30 chapters, each focusing on an episode from his life and offering context and application for the reader, *Poe for Your Problems* is a fresh, literary-minded work of practical nonfiction. In structure, it works much like Ryan Holiday’s 2014 blockbuster about Stoic philosophy, *The Obstacle is the Way*, as well as Russ Roberts’ 2014 *How Adam Smith Can Change Your Life*. The twist is that Poe was, and is, an antihero who did everything the “wrong” way—so all the lessons he has to teach us fly smack in the face of conventional wisdom. In fact, Poe’s supposed failures are *precisely* what qualifies him to instruct the average person. We fuck-ups need a patron saint, and Poe is our natural champion.

It’s true that until now, we haven’t seen Poe as a hero or an inspirational figure, and no one at all has ever read Poe for self-help. But who had a more difficult life—or a more cantankerous personality—yet still achieved so much? By the same token, most people know Poe as a poet or a short story writer, not as an aphoristic or philosophical writer, and this when the man had a strong opinion on everything from sex to housecats. Poe’s essays and correspondence, I’ve discovered, are chockfull of sharp-eyed observations about love, work and money, plus a wealth of professional and artistic advice. The material is by turns perverse, darkly funny and bitterly ironic—a goldmine of negative insight.

And right now is the perfect cultural moment to bring it forward. A self-help book based on Edgar Allan Poe will tickle and delight Poe fans, sure, but the potential readership stretches much wider. In recent years, popular titles such as Sarah Knight’s 2015 *The Life-Changing Magic of Not Giving a F*ck*—or even Jia Tolentino’s 2019 *Trick Mirror: Reflections on Self-Delusion*—have introduced a wave of contrarian,

“anti-self-help” thinking. This novel approach acknowledges life’s dark side while offering more grounded strategies for success. *Poe for Your Problems* will work in the same vein, mining a fucked-up icon for counterintuitive advice on how to navigate the daily dumpster fire of our own lives.

Though Poe died almost 200 years ago, he’s never been more relevant. In fact, as you’ll see in the chapter summaries that follow, Poe’s life experiences read like a millennial laundry list. Just for starters, Poe:

- came of age amidst a dire economic recession
- had to drop out of college with mounting debts
- got hired, fired and laid off from a series of journalism jobs at a time of profound change in the industry
- was forced to freelance in a burgeoning gig economy
- and lived in an America so extremely divided that even the dimmest observers could catch the whiff of impending civil war.

Modern readers can relate. They’ll pore over chapters like “How to Have a Nervous Breakdown” and “Why You Should Sell Out as Soon as Possible,” discovering a Poe they’ve never known before—a wise and weary fellow traveler who, like them, can’t stop complaining and wishing everything were different. They’ll learn to see their own flaws and failures with new eyes, understand how to better cope with their damage, and pick up unique, surprisingly effective strategies for dealing with life’s indignities. Most importantly, they’ll discover how to put their bitterest disappointments to good use. All this will make *Poe for Your Problems* a conversation piece with staying power—a book that friends dog-ear, highlight, and pass on to each other for years to come.

I know this not just because Poe has already helped me tackle my own problems in novel ways, changing my life for the better, but because the admiring articles I've written about him have turned out to be such considerable hits, offering proof of concept. For instance, my September 2017 essay for The Millions, "[Edgar Allan Poe Was a Broke-Ass Freelancer](#)," was picked up and shared by a host of other publications, from *Arts & Letters Daily* to *Publishers Weekly*, becoming one of the site's dozen-most popular articles of the year, and earning shout-outs from Chris Gillebeau and even Michiko Kakutani. Then my May 2019 essay for The Millions, "[Was Jordan Peele's 'Us' Inspired by an Edgar Allan Poe Story?](#)," was shared by the official Poe page on Facebook—putting it in front of 4 million of his biggest fans—and highlighted in LitHub's email digest.

You'll find a more detailed breakout of the potential audience for *Poe for Your Problems* in the next few pages, and I think you'll come to agree the sheer most amazing fact is that such a book hasn't already been done. Speaking for myself, I have never seen a phenomenon like the online community of Poe fans, either in terms of its sheer scale or the intensity of its engagement. Like most people, I was more or less unaware of its existence until I started writing about Poe, and all the emails and group invitations started rolling in. His fans are legion, and even beyond those who call themselves fans, everyone feels some kind of connection to him, whether from childhood or from the innumerable references that permeate our culture. *Everyone on the planet knows Poe*. Now it's time he receives the darkly inspiring self-help hero treatment that he's always deserved—and that we've always deserved, too.

EXHIBIT A: Poe products, including lunchboxes sold on display tables at Hot Topic. Entire websites are devoted to selling gifts to and for Poe fans.

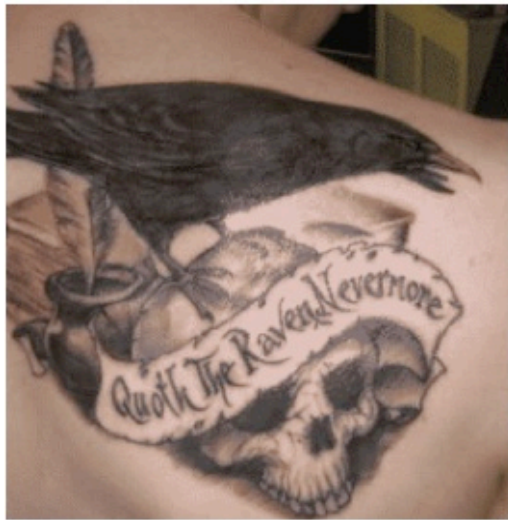
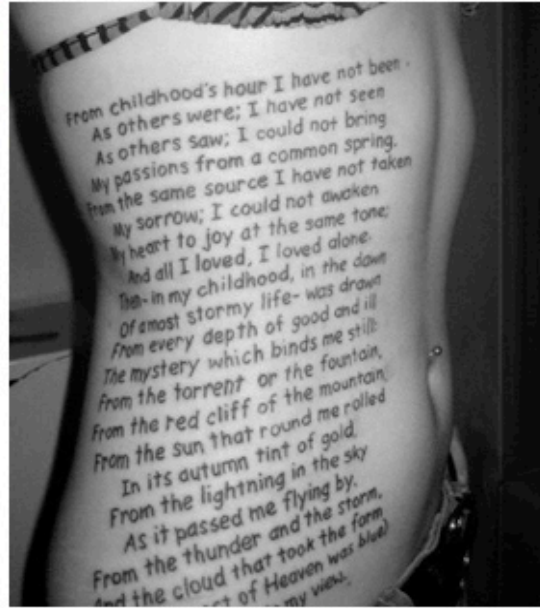


EXHIBIT B: Poe movies, including John Cusack playing Poe in 2012.

Nearly 400 adaptations of Poe's work have been made for film and TV.



EXHIBIT C: Poe tattoos. A staggering number of people have Poe ink— just try googling “Poe tattoo.”



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In addition to being a rabid Poe fan, I'm a writer and journalist who's contributed to Slate, CNBC, NBC News, *New York Magazine's* The Cut, Shondaland, Playboy.com, Salon.com, FastCompany.com, Flavorwire, and Refinery29, among others.

My June 2016 Quartz essay, "[Millennials Are Obsessed with Side Hustles Because They're All We've Got](#)," has been shared on Facebook more than 50,000 times, discussed in the *Columbia Journalism Review* and in numerous books, including Chris Hughes' *Fair Shot*, and also became the focus of an April 2017 episode of NPR's *On Point*. My June 2018 Slate article, "[The TV Tourist](#)," is being developed for television by Trevor O'Neil of Hideout Productions. Most relevantly, my September 2017 essay for The Millions, "[Edgar Allan Poe Was a Broke-Ass Freelancer](#)," was picked up and shared by a host of other publications, from *Arts & Letters Daily* to *Publishers Weekly*, becoming one of the site's most popular articles of the year, and my May 2019 essay for The Millions "[Was Jordan Peele's 'Us' Inspired by an Edgar Allan Poe Story?](#)," was shared by the official Edgar Allan Poe fan page on Facebook and highlighted in LitHub's email digest.

I am also a frequent podcast and radio guest, with appearances on Lifehacker's Upgrade podcast; the Head, Heart & Hustle podcast; the F*cking Shakespeare podcast; WBUR; Philadelphia's Wurd Up Radio; and Canada's *The Andrew Lawton Show*. I have an M.A. in creative writing from the University of Auckland, New Zealand, where I taught under the direction of Brian Boyd, Nabokov's biographer. My website is www.CatherineBaabMugira.com.

THE AUDIENCE

I've had numerous ideas for nonfiction books over the years, but I ran with this Poe idea because the commercial potential was obvious to me from the beginning. It's simple, and by now, probably obvious to you, too: Poe is the polar opposite of an obscure figure or snooty philosopher, far more widely recognized than, say, the Stoics or Adam Smith. Whole websites are devoted to selling gifts to fans and for fans, including Poe ties, socks, mugs, tote bags, plush-toy ravens and even infants' onesies. What other writer has ever inspired so much merchandising, or become so beloved and iconic that people wear t-shirts with his face printed on them, or actually get tattoos of his face? Not just his face, either. The actress Evan Rachel Wood has the final two lines of "A Dream Within a Dream" inked in black across her upper back. Other fans have entire Poe poems tattooed down their torsos.

The fact is Edgar Allan Poe boasts a platform to rival J.K. Rowling, Stephen King, E.L. James, even George R.R. Martin—and we can measure this platform with a great deal of precision, too. The official Poe Facebook page counts more than 3.8 million fans, but private groups also exist alongside the public ones, representing an even more deeply engaged audience. I'm personally a member of a private Facebook Poe fan club with more than 19,000 members and another with nearly 8,000 members; these groups are extremely active, constantly discussing Poe's work and swapping Poe memes. Other Poe fan groups gather on Quora (64,000 fans following the Poe topic), Wattpad (20,000 fans on the site's official Poe page), Reddit (3,500 fans on the Poe subreddit) and on the lively Poe discussion boards on GoodReads. Needless to say, all these online communities are made up of avid readers.

about that already! What we want to find out is why he was so wonderfully and creatively nuts!”

This indicates a market for a book on exactly how Poe managed to accomplish all he did, despite his many, *many* personal flaws, and brings me to the second large audience for *Poe for Your Problems*—fans of practical nonfiction, who are likely to relish the focus on how to overcome even the most tragic circumstances as well as one’s own failings. In tone and sensibility, the book will recall irreverent, savvy, internet-friendly and millennial-minded works of “anti-self-help,” such as Sarah Knight’s *The Life-Changing Magic of Not Giving a F*ck*. This potential audience also numbers in the millions and is made up of avid book buyers, too.

Lastly, there is a tremendous audience of mystery and true-crime lovers, for whom Poe is a foundational figure—hardly surprising given that Poe essentially invented these genres with 1841’s “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” and 1843’s “The Mystery of Marie Rogêt.” This audience numbers in the hundreds of thousands and is highly organized, both online and off, with associated blogs, websites, podcasts, magazines and conferences that would all be natural venues in which to publicize *Poe for Your Problems*. For instance, the Mystery Writers of America hosts an annual conference, the culmination of which is its Edgar Awards ceremony, “honoring the best in mystery fiction, non-fiction and television.” That the genre’s most prestigious honor is named for Poe speaks to his stature in this community as well as the potential for *Poe for Your Problems* to connect with these readers.

To be clear, though Poe is a major figure in the history of literature, I’m not aiming for a stuffy, academic readership. Instead, from the title to the last word of the book, I want to ensure a rewarding, entertaining and worthwhile read for the broadest

possible audience. *Poe for Your Problems* will be just as at home on a display table at Urban Outfitters as it will be in the personal growth or even the humor section at Barnes and Noble. On Amazon, it will work neatly into the larger Poe algorithm that shows fans new works on this author.

COMPETING AND COMPLEMENTARY TITLES

Poe for Your Problems will detail the surprisingly valuable, often darkly humorous and counterintuitive lessons we can learn from the world's most famously miserable author. It's *The Obstacle is the Way* for Poe fans, English majors, millennials and avid readers. Similar titles include (in the more distant past) Alain de Botton's 1995 *How Proust Can Change Your Life* to Russ Roberts' 2014 *Adam Smith Can Change Your Life* and Jeff Wilser's 2016 *Alexander Hamilton's Guide to Life*. And though *Poe for Problems* is not solely a gift book, its "gift-ability" and display-table appeal also bring to mind straightforward literary gift titles such as 2013's *Tequila Mockingbird: Cocktails with a Literary Twist* as well 2014's *Texts from Jane Eyre* and *What Would Jane Do? Quips and Wisdom from Jane Austen*.

***The Obstacle is the Way: The Timeless Art of Turning Trials into Triumph*, by Ryan Holiday. Portfolio, 2014. \$25, hardcover, 224 pages. ISBN 978-1591846352.**

Holiday's *The Obstacle is the Way* shows the potential for taking what seems like dusty history and giving it a modern spin. As he argues, the same habits of mind that served the Greeks and Romans can help us achieve career breakthroughs, find more satisfying personal relationships and become "unstuck, unfucked, and unleashed." Speaking to the *New York Times* in 2016, Holiday was unapologetic: "Stoicism is a philosophy designed for the masses, and if it has to be simplified a bit to reach the masses, so be it." The success of his unabashedly pop approach shows how hungry readers are for highbrow self-help written in an unpretentious style.

***How Adam Smith Can Change Your Life: An Unexpected Guide to Human Nature and Happiness*, by Russ Roberts. Portfolio, 2014. \$28.95, hardcover, 269 pages. ISBN 978-1591846840.**

Adam Smith is primarily known for his economic treatise, *The Wealth of Nations*, but Russ Roberts examines a far lesser known work, Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, to make the case that Adam Smith knew as much as anyone ever has about how human beings function on an emotional and social basis. Roberts is working a tried-and-true formula—admirer takes prominent but poorly understood historical figure and humanizes him or her, writing a popular book in the process. That this can work even for obscure texts like Smith's *Theory of Moral Sentiments* proves how effective this formula can be.

***Alexander Hamilton's Guide to Life*, by Jeff Wilser. Three Rivers Press, 2016. \$17, hardcover, 336 pages. ISBN 978-0451498090.**

Just like Roberts did with *How Adam Smith Can Change Your Life*, Jeff Wilser brushes off dusty history for life lessons relevant to today's reader—in this case through the lens of Founding Father Alexander Hamilton. Though Hamilton died more than 200 years ago, the qualities that helped him succeed can help us succeed today, Wilser argues, especially Hamilton's work ethic, entrepreneurialism and deft (if dark) take on human nature. Each chapter is drawn from an episode of Hamilton's life and offers a distinct contemporary lesson for the reader, with examples including "Find Time for the Quills and the Bills," "Learn from Your Enemies" and "Don't. Press. Send." The book's five-star Amazon rating and enthusiastic reception further demonstrate the appetite for the life-lessons-from-historical-figures format.

***What Would Jane Do?: Quips and Wisdom from Jane Austen*, by Potter Gifts. Potter Style, 2014. \$10, hardcover, 224 pages. ISBN 978-0804185622.**

A straightforward collection of Jane Austen quotes organized by theme, *What Would Jane Do* addresses a substantial market niche of Austen fans who view the 19th-century writer as an expert on relationships, self-care and fine living. The quotes and quips, each of which takes up its own page, come from Austen’s personal correspondence as well as her more famous novels. As you’d expect, the advice is relatively straightforward, witty yet simple to grasp, including gems such as “One can never have too large a party” and “Those who do not complain are never pitied.” Poe fans are at least as big an audience as Austen fans, but there’s not yet been a similarly fun and gift-able book about him.

***Tequila Mockingbird: Cocktails with a Literary Twist*, by Tim Federle. Running Press, 2013. \$15, hardcover, 160 pages. ISBN 978-0762448654.**

Here’s a gift book for people who loves books. In *Tequila Mockingbird*, author Tim Federle adeptly positions his appeal to hardcore readers and more casual lovers of literature by saying: “Even if you don’t have a BA in English, tonight you’re going to drink like you do.” Then Federle welcomes the reader to a smorgasbord of literary cocktails including “Love in the Time of Kahlua,” “Silas Marnier” and “The Turn of the Screwdriver.” The book has been so successful it spawned a sequel, 2018’s *Are You There, God? It’s Me, Margarita: More Cocktails with a Literary Twist*, and even an imitator, 2019’s *Gin Austen: 50 Cocktails to Celebrate the Novels of Jane Austen*.

***Texts from Jane Eyre: And Other Conversations with Your Favorite Literary Characters*, by Mallory Ortberg. Henry Holt and Co., 2014. \$26, hardcover, 240 pages. ISBN 978-1627791830.**

Literary humor geared to a millennial, internet-savvy audience? It can be done, and done well. As the title suggests, in *Texts from Jane Eyre*, Mallory Ortberg imagines text conversations between dozens of famous literary characters, from Achilles to the Wife of Bath to the Wakefield Twins of the *Sweet Valley High* series. The conversations generally turn on plot points from the original works and are obviously written to humor the reader (imagine Plato texting a friend, “okay so I want you to imagine a cave full of prisoners”). While plenty of people seem to have purchased *Texts from Jane Eyre* for themselves, the Amazon reviews suggest at least as many bought it as a gift for the avid reader in their lives—a market niche *Poe for Your Problems* will neatly fit, too.

MARKETING PLAN

For the last decade, in my day job, I've worked as a marketing copywriter, so I have deep experience in developing sales campaigns both online and off. And I see multiple angles to work here that do not require a significant budget, yet still promise a splashy launch and an enduringly popular book. The novelty factor, the highly-organized audiences one doesn't necessarily have to purchase ads to reach, and Poe's enduring, worldwide popularity (which has lasted 170 years and counting) will all help to attract organic attention over the short and long term. The potential for word-of-mouth and gift sales—particularly at Halloween, Christmas and graduation season—is excellent.

“POE CAN SAVE YOUR LIFE” EMAIL NEWSLETTER

Pre-market. I have already published a 2,100-word story on Poe's financial life in *The Millions*, which was so well received by readers that it became one of the site's most-popular articles of 2017—as well as a further essay in May of 2019 on Poe and Jordan Peele, which was shared by the official Poe Facebook fan page. Over the next 12 months, I'll be writing a dedicated Poe newsletter and, in the process, building a dedicated email list of fans and prospective book buyers.

OUTREACH TO POE MUSEUMS AND INSTITUTIONS

I will approach each of the four existing Poe museums—in New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Richmond—to arrange readings and get *Poe for Your Problems* for sale in their gift shops. I've already begun this process, speaking at Richmond's Poe museum in

January of 2017 on the anniversary of Poe's birthday, while later this year, I'll be a special guest in a Poe seminar at Virginia Commonwealth University.

ONLINE STRATEGY

I will concentrate heavily on reaching Poe fans online, where they congregate in dedicated groups. As I've said, I'm a member of two private Facebook groups that are extremely active and have nearly 30,000 members between them. I will give online readings in these channels using Facebook Live, and engage viewers by giving away a few free copies of the book. I'll host a Reddit AMA about Poe, and I will also break out parts of *Poe for Your Problems* into a series of short, fun YouTube videos about Poe—taking advantage of the existing volume of Poe-related searches. At the end of these videos, and in the listing information on each video, I will plug the book. I will plug the book to my own 2,500+ Twitter followers, too, and set up a dedicated Facebook group to connect with readers.

PUBLISHING EXCERPTS AND RELATED ARTICLES

Sections of *Poe for Your Problems* will be easy to break out as individual pieces, so I will use my connections at national and regional publications to place excerpts from and articles related to the book. These publications include:

- Slate (21 million unique visitors monthly)
- NBCNews.com (58 million unique visitors monthly)
- Quartz (22 million unique visitors monthly)
- HuffPost (64 million unique visitors monthly)
- *Richmond Times-Dispatch* (1 million unique views each month; combined print and web circulation approaching 700,000 weekly)

- *Style Weekly* (200,000 unique views each month; 80,000 print readers per week).

PODCAST AND RADIO APPEARANCES

Of course, I would also make myself available for interviews, reaching out to contacts in radio and podcasting. I'd also approach the public radio stations in Richmond, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston and New York—all cities in which Poe lived or lectured—including WCVE, WYPR, WHYI, WBUR and WNYC. I've previously appeared on WBUR and recorded at WNYC.

LOCAL READINGS

Richmond, Virginia is a Poe town, and no wonder, because he's a native son. Using my local connections—because Richmond is my hometown, too—I will arrange to give a reading and Q&A session at the two most popular independent bookstores, Chop Suey Books and Fountain Books, as well as at Poe's Pub and Parterre, a Poe-themed restaurant. I'll also contact the half-dozen major chain bookstores in the area; the three universities and dozen-plus high schools that might welcome a guest author; and finally, James River Writers, the active local writers' organization, which sends a monthly newsletter regarding local literary events and counts 4,500 subscribers to its email list.

CHAPTER SUMMARIES

PREFACE: EDGAR ALLAN POE—LOSER OR LIFE-HERO?

On a cold October day in 1849, Edgar Allan Poe died penniless and alone. Just days later, his worst enemy published a merciless obituary dismissing Poe as a friendless, depraved drunk whom no one would mourn.

And yet, in keeping with Poe's unlikely path to success, even this hit job came to serve him, raising his profile, helping him to become better known and more widely read. Today, Poe is recognized as one of the world's most popular, original and influential writers—and not despite his many flaws and failures but *because of his many flaws and endless failures*. Like other historical figures spurned in their own times and later vindicated, Poe's unconventional thinking, uniquely dark sensibility and refusal to conform all helped to make his name.

So, here's the question: If Poe failed his way to the top, how might you and I do the same? This book will explore the surprising, counterintuitive and timeless lessons Poe can teach us, all drawn from the not-so-great man's life and writings.

INTRODUCTION: THE POWER OF POE-SITIVE THINKING

Wherever this book finds you—whether you're unhappily working a day job, reeling from a breakup or falling short of your loftiest creative goals—you're welcome here. Who among us does not secretly feel like a hopeless, godforsaken fuck-up? That's precisely why Poe's fucked-up life and career can comfort, inspire and motivate us, giving us a new perspective on five crucial areas of our lives.

PART 1. STARTING OUT

LESSON #1: CHOOSE AN ANTI-HERO

To paraphrase Poe, complacent people and conventional thinkers rarely make history. If you *really* want to make a name for yourself, don't listen to virtuous heroes or some dumb life coach—listen to the fuck-ups, the crazies, the upstarts.

LESSON #2: EMBRACING YOUR INNER NEUROTIC

Your weirdness can help you stand out from the pack, so lean into your difficult personality and discover the upside of your endless neuroticism (and comorbid self-loathing!), as demonstrated by Edgar Allan Poe.

LESSON #3: CHIP ON YOUR SHOULDER? GOOD!

Feeling indignant, disgruntled, aggrieved? Excellent. Poe hated pretty much everything, too, so he can show you what to do with your deepest resentments. Discover how to jerry-rig your bitterness and turn it into a renewable energy source, like Poe did.

LESSON #4: LOSE EARLY, LOSE OFTEN

Because early pain can inspire us to ask big questions and become seekers of knowledge, even your very shitty childhood may have an upside. As Poe shows us (and believed himself), an unhappy childhood is a primo qualification for a creative career.

LESSON #5: HUBRIS, OR HOW TO COPE WITH YOUR DAMAGE

Stop trying to rein in your own bullshit. In this chapter you will learn to adopt a self-serving value system, buy wholeheartedly into your deepest self-delusions, and take incredible pride in your work—no matter who denigrates it.

LESSON #6: DEALING WITH REJECTION (AND VOWING YOUR REVENGE)

Poe was rejected by snobs in his hometown and even by his adoptive family. But this arguably set him on a path to bigger things, and ultimately, he got his revenge in spades. You too can leave home and *show them all*, as Poe did.

PART 2. CAREER & PERSONAL FINANCE**LESSON #7: FAST-TALKING YOUR WAY INTO YOUR FIRST “REAL” JOB**

In this chapter, you’ll learn the story of how Poe, in his mid-20s, fast-talked his way into a job for which he wasn’t qualified. You’ll discover why making grand claims about industries you’re not familiar with is such a good way of seeming savvy and in-the-know.

LESSON#8: FUDGING YOUR RESUME; INVENTING YOUR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Poe’s simplest career tip is to “act like you’ve been here before” even if you haven’t. Here’s why, like Poe, you should take liberties with your resume and vastly inflate any contributions you’ve made to your workplace.

LESSON #9: WORKAHOLISM AS THE BEST ISM

Forget alcohol, forget opium. Work is the ultimate drug. Edgar Allan Poe, the O.G. self-loathing overachiever, wants you to know that workaholism—alone among the isms—really *can* take you out of yourself.

LESSON #10: SHOULD YOU ASK TO BORROW MONEY?

Poe touched everyone for loans, constantly: His employers, colleagues, friends as well as random cousins. Using Poe’s example, you will learn the dos and don’ts of extracting cash—with something like dignity, even—from those gentle folk richer than you.

LESSON #11: REFUSE TO BE INTIMIDATED, EVER

No matter how intimidated you feel, take a tip from Poe: Don't let anyone make you feel outclassed. You are the equal of everyone you meet (and those you'll never meet, too). And refusing to be intimidated by whatever hierarchy will make people respect *you*.

LESSON #12: TROLLING AS A FINE ART

Rain down judgement upon the world, but choose your targets wisely. As Poe—the proto internet-troll—learned, your biting wit can come back to bite you. In this chapter, we'll look at the pros and cons of trolling as a career move, even a fine art.

LESSON #13: HOW TO CONDUCT YOURSELF IN A FEUD

Handling a boss who is dumber than you is an important life-skill. This chapter invites you to grumble along with Poe, who also worked for morons (and wrote about it, at length). Come for the one-liners, stay for the clapbacks. Here are Poe's tips for feuds.

LESSON #14: USE RIVALRIES TO DRIVE YOURSELF TO SUCCEED

Poe was jealous of almost everyone he knew and he was the victim of other people's jealousy, too. But wrestling with your nemeses turns out to be good exercise. Here's how to identify potential frenemies *and* channel your career-envy into career success.

PART 3. SEX & DEATH**LESSON #15: LOVE IS BASICALLY A KIND OF HAUNTING**

Poe believed that it's impossible to stop constantly falling in love with people, that love is the kind of haunting spirit that will never leave you, full stop. Here's how to lean in to being a hopeless romantic, straight from the world's most famous hopeless romantic.

LESSON #16: SLIDING INTO THEIR DMs (AND OTHER DISASTERS)

Poe conducted a number of extramarital quasi-affairs, mostly through lengthy correspondences with women writers of his age—the 1840s equivalent of sliding into someone’s DMs. Here’s how, if you’re craving a *really* big disaster, you can do the same.

LESSON #17: SO YOU’VE MARRIED THE WRONG PERSON

If you find yourself in the wrong marriage, all is not lost. Here’s how to recover the situation and make music out of a wrong match, like Poe did. Remember: you’re still learning something even when your relationship feels hard.

LESSON #18: TO HAVE KIDS OR TO NOT HAVE KIDS

Edgar Allan Poe never had any children with his wife (or any illegitimate children that we know of). By examining the reasons Poe didn’t have kids, you too can clarify your own thinking about whether you want to reproduce—or perhaps not.

LESSON #19: HOW TO HAVE A NERVOUS BREAKDOWN

Following his wife’s death, Poe had an epic nervous breakdown in which he came to believe he’d discovered all the physical and metaphysical secrets of the universe. This is your example: If you’re going to have a nervous breakdown, go big or go home.

LESSON #20: IF YOU CAN’T BE WITH HER, MAKE HER IMMORTAL

So you can’t be with the person you really want to be with, because they don’t want to be with you, or maybe they’re not even alive. Poe’s advice for coping with lost love is to immortalize the person in great art and poetry (as well as bad art and bad poetry).

PART 4. MAKING ART**LESSON #21: THE CASE FOR BEING UNBALANCED**

Poe believed that artistic genius was the result of a profound mental imbalance. Isn't this good news, considering how unbalanced you are? In this chapter, we'll look at what Poe considered to be the great creative advantages of disturbed mental states.

LESSON #22: YOUR BAD TASTE MAY BE YOUR GREATEST ASSET

Commercial genres from horror to romance are generally seen as less-than, not worthy of serious attention or effort. Yet, as Poe knew, commercial genres *sell*. So if you're drawn to cheesy schlock, be glad. You're way ahead of those with higher-brow tastes.

LESSON #23: WHY YOU SHOULD SELL OUT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

We often think of commercial influence as corrupting, but Poe's track record shows how *positive* an influence the market can be. Not only was Poe's best work written for the money, he became a much better artist in the process. The same goes for you.

LESSON #24: SHORING UP YOUR DELUSIONS IN MID-CAREER

Many of us reach mid-career in a state of burnout, unsure of ourselves or how to keep moving forward without our youthful energy. Poe's answer? Seek out those who can help you remember and shore up your youthful delusions.

Lesson #25: THRIVING THROUGH SELF-SABOTAGE

No one understood the tendency to self-sabotage better than Poe—it's arguably his great subject. And no wonder. Poe's arrogance shipwrecked his plans over and over again. He responded by developing even grander plans. You can, too.

LESSON #26: CONGRATS! ATTRACTING HATERS MEANS YOU HAVE ARRIVED

At first, you may be surprised and hurt to find you have detractors. But haters can be the best thing to ever happen to you, as Poe knew. Not only can they inspire you to get better at your work, they signal to other people that you're someone worth recognizing.

PART 5. THE POE-POSE DRIVEN LIFE: ADVANCED TECHNIQUES**LESSON #27: VICES AS A SOURCE OF GROWTH**

Most of us have at least one bad habit (if not four or five). But your vices and guilty pleasures can be sources of material, force you to confront your own fallibility, and encourage you to feel empathy for your fellow sufferers, as they did for Poe.

LESSON #28: BEING GRATEFUL FOR YOUR SECOND-RATE EDUCATION

Very few of us get the education we would have hoped for—Poe certainly didn't. But a lack of high-class formal education can be a tremendous advantage when it comes to thinking and living unconventionally, like Poe.

LESSON #29: BURNING ALL THE BRIDGES

Most people are loathe to back themselves into a corner; most of us strive to preserve our options as long as possible. But Poe believed in burning bridges and spurning alternatives in his quest for greatness—an example you may want to follow, too.

LESSON #30: ACHIEVING IMMORTAL RENOWN THROUGH BAD BEHAVIOR

Few writers have ever been as thoroughly maligned and discredited as Edgar Allan Poe. Yet Poe's notoriety helped make him as famous and well known as he is today. This final chapter will explore ways that notoriety can help you, rather than hurt you, too.

POE-ST SCRIPT: 31 WAYS TO ROAST A RAVEN

As John Lennon sang, “You should have seen them kicking Edgar Allan Poe.” In this postscript, you’ll be treated to a full list of 31 of the worst insults ever lobbed at Poe, by everyone from Mark Twain to Harold Bloom. Seeing all the terrible things that have been said about Poe—and realizing how vastly successful he’s been *in spite of all this criticism*—will make even the gloomiest Poe fan cackle with glee, as I know firsthand.

FINAL THOUGHTS: POE WON BY LOSING AND YOU CAN TOO

To this day, we think of Poe’s life as solely a sad story, and Poe himself as a self-defeating ne’er-do-well. But the opposite is true—Poe won by losing. This final section ends with a stirring call to action, urging you to go forth and win by losing, too.

PREFACE

On a bleak day in October of 1849, Edgar Allan Poe collapsed in the street outside a Baltimore tavern. He never got up again. Acquaintances carried him to a nearby hospital, and when he finally regained consciousness some hours later, the man *who'd spent his entire career telling stories* could not even explain to the medical staff what was wrong. And for Poe, no loss could be greater. He had always been able, until that point, to craft narratives to explain himself and to cope with his misfortunes. But in his last days on earth, the system he'd developed to deal with what he'd once described as "this uncongenial, unsatisfactory and ungrateful life" collapsed, too.

It was the sorry end to a sorry existence, a tragic rags-to-rags story. Born to impoverished actors, Poe lost both his birth parents before age three. Then, in what seemed a stroke of good fortune, he was taken into a rich household, and at first enjoyed all the privileges of an upper-upper-middle class life. But by the time he reached his 20s, his adoptive mother was dead and his adoptive father had grown fed up with his surliness and constant begging for money. Poe found himself effectively disowned, and for the rest of his days he earned only poverty-level wages, penning his masterpieces in cold, dirty, rented rooms. Later, his beloved wife contracted the same disease that had killed his biological parents, and he became, at last, by his own account, "insane, with long intervals of horrible sanity." His lifelong, Mr. Hyde-like propensity to fuck up came to the fore and took over. Every hand that fed him, he chomped. Every bridge he could burn, he torched.

Poe's career of fuck-ups concluded in a more or less literal gutter. Yet what followed in the immediate aftermath was worse. Rufus W. Griswold, Poe's great frenemy and literary rival—at least in Griswold's own mind—wrote the obituary. Publishing his vitriol under a pseudonym, Griswold told the world that Poe was an arrogant, cynical, depraved drunk who'd only ever used his talent for spite. He had “few or no friends,” Griswold said, and no one at all would grieve his death.

The twist? That hit job of an obit turned out to be pretty good PR. Not only did Poe's colleagues and (in fact numerous) friends rush to his defense, the notoriety that the obit helped create caused the reading public to seek out his work as never before. You could say that, in the end, Poe's fuck-ups, mistakes and missteps worked out for him. Or you could say they weren't fuck-ups, mistakes or missteps at all—instead an astoundingly effective system for success.

Today, nearly two hundred years later, millions of people across the world know Poe and love him. He's now recognized as one of the most brilliant, original, and influential writers of all time. His poetry and short stories have been translated into every major language and adapted for every new technology, from illustrated editions to radio-plays to web series and Tumblr memes. The film and TV adaptations alone—from *The Simpsons* to *South Park*, even Netflix's *Altered Carbon* and Jordan Peele's *Us*—are so numerous it would take 10 pages to list them. He has an awfully long IMDB profile for someone born in 1809.

Poe's counted fans among high-brow cultural figures like Baudelaire and Nabokov, and he's enjoyed off-the-charts pop success, too. Baltimore named its NFL team for “The Raven.” Lou Reed, Joan Baez, and Stevie Nicks have all either recorded songs about Poe or put Poe's own words to music. The Beatles included him in the top

row, eighth from the left, on the cover of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*.

Britney Spears named a tour after “A Dream Within a Dream,” while the actress Evan Rachel Wood has the final two lines of that poem inked in black across the back of her neck. As we speak, Sylvester Stallone is trying to produce a Poe biopic. And if you should feel like raising a toast—well, in 2015, a Maryland brewery rolled out Annabel Lee White, “a wheat beer angels envy,” while in 2018, a Philadelphia distillery launched a whiskey called Fortunato’s Fate.

And yet the notoriety still lingers. Despite Poe’s unparalleled, globe-spanning renown, we continue to conceive of him as a ne’er-do-well—just some hopeless, almost Chaplin-esque loser—when the question we really ought to be asking is, *what’s his secret?* In a better world, Poe would be considered a self-help guru on par with Oprah or Deepak Chopra. As it is, we celebrate the work and sadly underrate the man.

Except we’re not making a mistake about just one man. We’re making a mistake about rebels and outcasts more generally. We’re also making a *very* big mistake in being so confident we know which creative, professional, and even existential strategies work—and which ones are dead ends. Success on Poe’s scale doesn’t just happen. It isn’t solely a matter of genius, either. It requires a unique vision and even more than that, the self-belief, fortitude, and determination—maybe even the insanity—to hew to that vision no matter what anyone else says. Greatness doesn’t happen any other way.

It is true Poe’s life was a dumpster fire. That’s precisely the point. He dealt with horrendous circumstances. He also had amply justifiable mental-health issues as well as a difficult personality, and he lived in an almost hilariously depressing era full of racism, sexism, classism, injustice, misfortune, poverty, disease and death. You and I live in such an era, too. In a fucked-up world, why not look to the most fucked-up writer of all

time for advice on navigating the daily dumpster fires of our own lives? Who better to inspire us as we're struggling through our own almost hilariously depressing time?

Personally, I love nothing more than when a misanthropic supposed loser is later wildly, spectacularly vindicated. What could be more reassuring? It is like hearing that your own life—no matter this awful problem you're facing, or the stupid job you're working right now—just might end in the best-case scenario, too. And no one could ever be more qualified than Poe when it comes to teaching us how to fight through our suffering, how to keep hustling in the face of depression, and how to succeed against long odds.

So—just how did Poe fail, flail, flounder his way into the history books? What perverse formula for success can he offer you, and how might you learn to approach your own problems a little differently, according to his example? That's what you're going to find in these pages. Let's seize the day. Or, since we're talking Poe here, seize the night.

Reading Edgar Allan Poe and parsing his life for instruction might at first seem like a ridiculous exercise. And I'll admit this book, in a sense, started as a dark joke—though I'm convinced that's a strength and not a weakness, very much in keeping with Poe's own morbid sense of humor. One night in 2016, I was telling a friend that reading Poe's work and the numerous biographies about his life had had the strange effect of helping me cope with the worst depressive episode I've ever experienced, reassuring me that life is worth living at a moment when nothing seemed to be going right for me, and giving me new energy for my own creative work. Giving me, of all things, *hope*.

"That sounds like a book," my friend said, lifting his glass.

“Oh yeah,” I deadpanned. “I’m going to write a book about reading Poe for self-help and call it ‘How to Say ‘Nevermore’ to Your Problems.’”

Which turned out to be just the working title. The real point is, Poe can change your life, too.

**INTRODUCTION: THE POWER OF POE-SITIVE THINKING
(AND THE FIVE MAJOR WAYS HE CAN CHANGE YOUR LIFE)**

You want to achieve your childhood dreams. You want to realize, at last, your full potential. Way back when, someone told you that you could grow up to be anything you want to be, and now the moment has come. At least, it's *supposed* to have come. You know you could create something amazing, something impactful and lasting, and you want to feel the satisfaction that comes from doing extraordinary work. (A little cash and recognition wouldn't hurt, either.)

But there's a problem. You don't come from money. There's no million-dollar trust fund at Chase Bank that frees you to do only what you choose. Instead, you have to hang on to some dumb job. You have debts you can't stop obsessing about, and bills piling up, and you were supposed to be at work 20 minutes ago. Now you're going to be late again, and it's because—admit it—you hate that place. The job is beneath you and you know it. It's hack work, something much less than what you deserve. How come everyone has a cooler, better gig than you? This is not the life you aimed for. You don't have the free time or the energy to chase your dreams, and the frustration is weighing on you like one of those lead aprons they claim will protect you from radiation at the dentist's office.

Maybe you didn't get into your first-choice college or grad school. Maybe instead of an acceptance, you received a form letter beginning "Dear Applicant." Or you couldn't even afford to apply. Just how are you going to get where you want to go when what you've got is a second-rate education? You see the people with *all* the advantages getting

all the chances, and it wears you down. You feel hopelessly behind, like there are a good half-dozen milestones you should have tagged by now, yet you haven't tagged them. Not even close. No one's ever going to call you a wunderkind success story now. The time is long past.

Maybe you're not living in the place you always envisioned living. Maybe you're still treading dirt in your dumpy, stagnant hometown, and the people you're surrounded by don't just understand you at all. Maybe you'd *really* rather live in Williamsburg or Silverlake, or even Portland or Austin, but the rents there read like a punchline to an unfunny joke, i.e. who can afford \$2,900 a month to rent a one-bedroom? Not you.

Maybe right now every one of your friends seems to be succeeding, just erupting like sparklers on the 4th of July with good news, and the envy is a low, mean fire in your gut while at the same time you're trying to talk yourself out of it. Because what kind of person resents their so-called friends' success? What kind of person hears a friend describe yet another win and thinks *oh God I can't take it not again?*

Maybe your relationship is ending when you don't want it to. Maybe the person you like—even the person you love—hasn't returned a text since God knows when. Maybe the dots appeared and then? Nothing. Everyone else has found a suitable life partner, and yet you're alone, and at night, you lay awake, staring at the ceiling, wondering if you'll *always* be alone.

But you've got a pretty good hunch why nothing's going right. Your personality is just the tiniest bit difficult, hard to manage. You've always been kind of a misfit toy, or at least felt like one. You say the wrong things sometimes. You can't always keep your emotions in check, even when it is very clearly in your best interest to do so, and you have an ingrained tendency to look on the dark side. You struggle with neuroses and

depression and anxiety and, on occasion, self-loathing. It's a full-time job except there's no salary and seemingly, no benefits—just one long never-ending unpaid internship of the mind. Maybe you had a big chance at some point, and you screwed it up, and all you're left with now is the nail-chewing conviction that you're your own worst enemy. A failure.

Maybe you should just give up.

In the face of these disappointments, most people *do* give up. Almost every adult you meet is toting around a big, bulging Hefty Bag of regrets—about what they did and what they failed to do—whether they admit it or not.

So you're feeling discouraged, lonely, poor. But guess what? It's normal. To put it another way, using that tiresome journalistic cliché: You're not alone. Wanting more is tough on the soul, no matter who you are or where you were born, and it is tempting to give up on your deepest ambitions rather than grind on them a single second longer. Why not join the legions who've punched off the clock, towed the sweat off their necks, and plopped down to binge Netflix instead?

Life is awful enough when you don't have lofty goals. We have student loans, troubled (ahem) romantic lives, difficult relationships with our can-of-worms families, persistent depression, and desolate hours when we stare at the cash register or the cubicle wall or our own face in the mirror and despair seems like the very air we're breathing. *Be realistic*, says the droning adult voice in our heads. *Life is disappointing. The End.*

Pardon me for being presumptuous, for pretending like I know you. But I think I do. If you're reading this book, then we're alike, and one thing we have in common is that most of the “inspirational” stories out there leave us cold. Who wants to read about

virtuous heroes and supposedly moral crusaders who did everything right? That just makes us feel worse, more tired, more alienated and less-than. Here we are, past the starting line of our journeys, and we're not exactly boasting flawless track records. And we can't go back and wipe the slate clean. We have to work with what we have, where we are right now.

The good news is that your disadvantages, your resentments, your petty jealousies, your disappointment and even your despair can all be made to work in your favor. In fact, those are *exactly* the qualities this book is designed to help you draw upon. Because doing everything the "right" way is only a recipe for conventional success. For unconventional success, an altogether different set of tactics is required. What's more, it's fully possible to capitalize on your weaknesses—so possible, in fact, that your weaknesses can become your greatest strengths.

All you need are some new strategies for managing your problems, plus that all-important negative hero to guide you on your way, and help you discover how to triumph not only in spite of but *because of* your alleged shortcomings. You didn't think you needed one? Well, you do. And this is where Edgar Allan Poe comes in, and how he can illuminate a new path for you as surely as a black-light in a sleazy motel room.

Forget everything you've ever assumed about Edgar Allan Poe. (Well, maybe not everything.) Far from being solely a sad story, Poe's own life has turned out to be an object lesson in persistence, resilience and the transcendent, death-defying power of art. In fact, he achieved a level of success that almost everyone dreams of, and even his staunchest critics have been forced to admit it. "He had the disposition of a fighter," wrote W.C. Brownell, in a 1909 book otherwise devoted to tearing Poe limb from literary

limb. “When his ambitious and sometimes arrogant plans met shipwreck, owing in general no doubt to his own evil genius, he made new ones.”

Evil genius may be taking it too far, but this much is hard fact: Being a hopeless weirdo and his own worst enemy worked out for Poe, and the story of his struggle with the world and himself is so epic and timeless it damn near rises to the level of myth. He died almost two centuries ago, and he’s never been more relevant. A lot less has changed in the last 170 years than you might think (or hope). Witness how his life experience reads like a millennial laundry list. Just for starters, Poe:

- came of age amidst a dire economic recession
- had to drop out of college with mounting debts
- constantly begged his (adoptive) parents for money
- got hired, fired and laid off from a series of journalism jobs at a time of profound change in the industry
- was forced to freelance in a burgeoning gig economy
- always longed to start his own business but could never afford to
- struggled to support his family in the face of crippling medical bills
- and lived in an America so extremely divided that even the dimmest observers could catch the whiff of impending civil war.

But this isn’t just a book for millennials, or just for dedicated Poe fans. This is a book for all the hopeless misfits and fuck-ups, like you, like me, whose adult lives aren’t working out quite as we hoped—which we’re looking to turn them around, somehow.

It’s only right that we should go back to the source. Most of us meet Poe in childhood, and he thrills us, terrifies us with his dark visions of the Spanish Inquisition, of being buried alive, or being bricked-up behind a basement wall. Later on, closer to

adulthood, we glimpse something more. This book is about that something more, about the deep sense of kinship we feel with Poe, because he speaks to psychological truths we intuit but can't always name.

This book is about embracing Poe's darkness, life's darkness, and our own private darkneses—not positive thinking but Poe-sitive thinking—so that we can move forward. It's about admitting that most day jobs suck, that some friendships are better burnt to the ground, that long-term relationships (including marriage) can be difficult in the extreme, and that the process of articulating your unique vision can bring you to the brink of despair. Then beyond it, into full-blown despair. Poe knew that despair, too, and he kept on working anyway. It's not a coincidence that hardly any other writer can touch him when it comes to describing pain, grief and horror.

This book is meant to inspire you to keep going no matter all the endless, horrible frustrations, and to encourage you to take comfort where you find it, even if that means laughing at some *very* sad realities. It's about following through on your deepest ambitions despite, well, everything.

- **The first way Poe can change your life:** He's going to reorient you. You'll see the world with new eyes—Poe's eyes—and discover the upside in your less-than-desirable circumstances. If you've ever wondered if you're on the right path in life, or privately bitched about how you never even got the right start, Poe is here to kvetch and sympathize.
- **The second way Poe can change your life:** If you've ever hated your job, been underemployed, or wanted to tell your bosses where they can stick it, this part is for you, to help you gain a new perspective on your working life. Poe had employability problems like no other, and he could be *extremely* funny about

workplace woes. Plus, his tricks of the journalism trade have applicability well beyond his industry and century.

- **The third way Poe can change your life:** Want to feel better about the state of your love life, such as it is? In the third part of this book, you'll discover a great deal of counterintuitive, darkly hilarious advice on sex and romance. Freshly dumped? Lusting after the recently deceased? Poe would like to personally welcome you.
- **The fourth way Poe can change your life:** For artists, writers, creators, and other permanently struggling professionals, Poe offers his secrets on how to harness—and most importantly, publicize—your true genius. You'll learn how to piss off your haters all the way to the top, like he did.
- **The fifth way Poe can change your life:** Finally, for the advanced student, here's the opportunity to master a few last lessons applicable to more sophisticated scenarios and stages, ensuring that you too may be famous and respected centuries from today.

All the quotes that you'll find in the following chapters come from Poe himself, drawn from his letters, essays, poems and stories, and all the examples come from his life. I've added interpretations to draw Poe out—doing my best to expand on his thinking and to accurately interpret his life story, drawing out the patterns, the consistent approaches, and the perverse but useful wisdom.

As you'll discover, far from being out of date, Poe's rueful, often cynical life-philosophy has stood the test of time. Take it from a man who is far more famous today than he ever was in his own lifetime.

POE-ST SCRIPT: 31 WAYS TO ROAST A RAVEN
[FIRST TWO PAGES]

As John Lennon sang, “You should have seen them kicking Edgar Allan Poe.”

Simply consider this list of 31 of the worst insults ever lobbed at Poe, by the critics of his own day *and* every subsequent generation of critics.

#1. W.H. Auden: “An unmanly sort of man whose love-life seems to have been largely confined to crying in laps.”

#2: George Orwell: “At worst... not far from being insane in the literal clinical sense.”

#3. Thomas Dunn English: “The very incarnation of treachery and falsehood.”

#4. George Gilfillan: “Poets, as a tribe, have been rather a worthless, wicked set of people; and certainly Edgar Poe, instead of being an exception, was probably *the* most wicked of all his fraternity.”

#5: Arthur Twining Hadley: “Poe wrote like a drunkard and a man who is not accustomed to pay his debts.”

#6: T.S. Eliot: “That Poe had a powerful intellect is undeniable: but it seems to me the intellect of a highly gifted person before puberty.”

#7. W.C. Brownell: “He evinced the singular cleverness of the children of this world... his writings lack the elements not only of great, but of real, literature.”

#8. Owen Dudley Edwards: “Endless self-indulgence, wallowing in atmosphere, incessant lecturing, ruthless discourse on whatever took the writer’s fancy, longueurs, trivialisations, telegraphing of punch-lines, loss of plot in effect, loss of effect in plot... In sum, what Poe lacked above all was a sense of his reader.”

#9. Rufus W. Griswold: “Poe exhibits scarcely any virtue in either his life or his writings. Probably there is not another instance in the literature of our language in which so much has been accomplished without a recognition or a manifestation of conscience.”

#10. Henry James (not forgetting to insult Poe’s fans, too): “An enthusiasm for Poe is the mark of a decidedly primitive stage of reflection.”

#11. H.G. Wells (ditto): “It is an inhuman and perverse judgement that finds in Poe the springs of truly great writing.”

#12. Harold Bloom (ditto): “No reader who cares deeply for the best poetry written in English can care greatly for Poe’s verse... I can think of no other American writer, down to this moment, at once so inescapable and so dubious.”

#13: Paul Elmer More (ditto): “The poet of unripe boys and unsound men.”