

Continuum of Greatness

*The Hall of Fame for Great Americans
at Bronx Community College, CUNY*



Edgar Allan Poe

1809 -1849

*“A poem deserves its title only inasmuch as
it excites by elevating the soul.”*

from “The Poetic Principle”

Hall of Fame Facts

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849)

- Elected into Hall of Fame: 1910
- Poe was listed on the top 50 list of names submitted to the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* for Hall of Fame nominees.
He received 358 votes for this nomination.
- Poe was listed as one of the most famous men who came within 20 votes of the 51 votes required for the first ballot of the first election in 1900.

- Total votes received for Hall of Fame 1900 election: 38 votes.
- Poe was elected in the third Hall of Fame election held in 1910. There were 97 electors, so 49 votes were required for election. Poe received 69 votes.
- There had been some criticism about Poe’s election since he was not elected in either the 1900 or 1905 election.

For more information, go to <http://www.trivia-library.com/b/hall-of-fame-for-great-americans.html>.

Edgar Allan Poe

January 19, 1809 - October 7, 1849

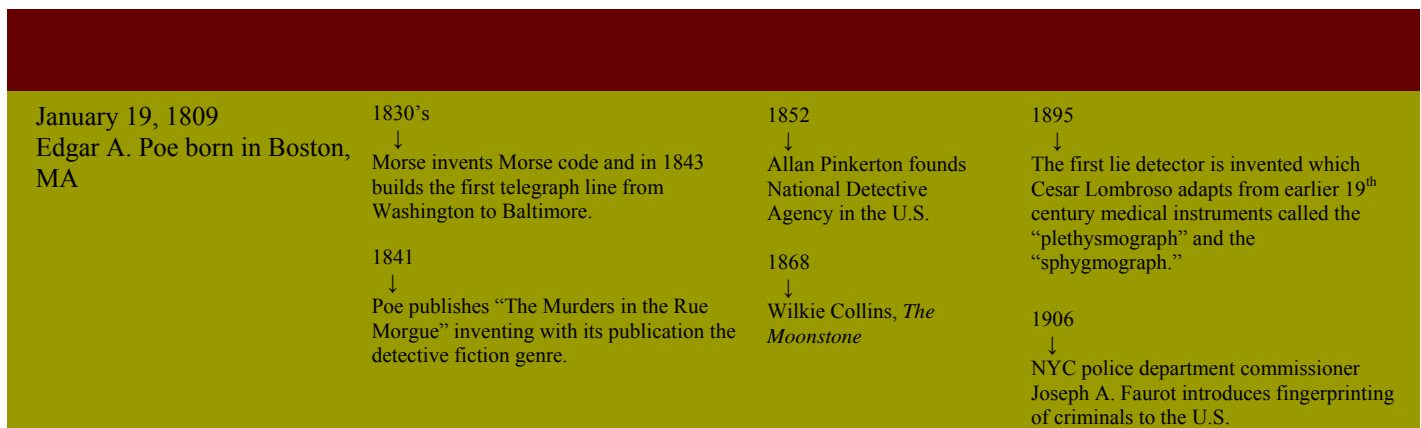


Edgar A. Poe, commonly referred to as “Edgar Allan Poe,” never signed his work as such and was never legally adopted by John Allan after his mother’s death. In fact, in only one letter after John Allan’s death, did Poe sign his name as Edgar Allan Poe. Otherwise, he signed his name as E. A. Poe or Edgar A. Poe (Silverman 126). Poe is well-known for his gothic tales of horror, the macabre, and sensation tales that allow a reader to experience a particular feeling or sensation generally of terror or fright. An accomplished critic, editor, and poet, Poe is also known for his infamous poem “The Raven,” which was, after its publication, reprinted at least ten times and praised by the *New World* who called it “wild and shivery,” and written in “a stanza unknown before to gods, men, and booksellers” (Silverman 237). Poe is also notably credited with having invented the detective fiction genre. At the time that Poe wrote, the word “detective” did not exist in English (Silverman 173). Poe’s tale “Murders in the Rue Morgue,” published in April 1841 in *Graham’s*, established Poe as the first detective writer in America and also introduced the first fictional detective

C. Auguste Dupin. The third chapter in Voltaire’s 1748 *Zadig* came close to establishing the genre, but not quite. In it, a hero engages in some analysis, but not on the same level or in the same ways. Poe’s detective tale, often called a tale of “ratiocination,” simply means to think or argue logically. The narrator of such tales provides the clues and facts of the case to both readers and the investigating detective so that the readers, as well as the detective, participate mentally in solving the crime. Since forensic science was not yet a science, Poe emphasized the “readability” of human behavior which included body language, unusual noises, and human guilt (the act of confession). In “The Tell-Tale Heart,” both the reader and the detective read a criminal’s response to an interrogation session. Between 1837 and 1844, Poe produced the Dupin trilogy and other detective stories like “The Gold Bug” and “The Man of the Crowd.” Poe was also influenced by the work of Samuel F. B. Morse (also in The Hall of Fame) whose encoded secret writing fascinated Poe. Based upon the sequencing of long and short electrical pulses of information tapped out on a mechanical key, and transmitted through a wire, the telegraph was another way to communicate (Thomas 43).



Samuel F. B. Morse
(1791-1872)
Elected into the Hall of
Fame in 1900.



Poe wrote many essays on cryptographic writing and was fascinated with Morse's patterns of human communication (Morse Code).

While Poe's reading of coded human and guilty behavior is not directly responsible for the invention of the first lie detector test that was adapted by Cesare Lombroso in 1895, the increased and loud heartbeat and rapid breathing in "The Tell Tale Heart" clearly anticipated forensic developments and the need to "monitor" human responses to information and evidence. Poe's style of analysis in his work also anticipated the work of Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and the novels of Wilkie Collins. Other writers influenced by Poe were Dostoyevsky, Jorge Luis Borge, Agatha Christie as well as many others. Filmmaker Alfred Hitchcock was also influenced by Poe's work. Poe's invention of the detective tale and contributions are so important that the Mystery Writers of America named their achievement award "The Edgar."

Even Poe's death remains a mystery. While many believe that Poe died of "congestion of the brain," the cause of Poe's death is not known for sure and few clues were left for Poe scholars to discern the *exact* cause of Poe's death. In 1996 and in an analysis almost 147 years after his death, doctors, specifically Dr. R. Michael Benitez, at the University of Maryland Medical Center believe that Poe may have died as a result of rabies. Since no autopsy was conducted at the time of Poe's death, doctors and speculators rely on modern medical methods and clues about his physical state to make their determinations. Poe's death, ironically, is one of the most mysterious deaths in literary history and has yet to be solved.

Consulted Sources:

Silverman, Kenneth. *Edgar A. Poe: Mournful and Never-Ending Remembrance*. New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1991.
 Thomas, Ronald R. *Detective Fiction and the Rise of Forensic Science*. New York, NY: Cambridge UP, 1999.



Edgar Allan Poe Cottage (c. 1812). This cottage in Fordham, the Bronx, was the home of Edgar Allan Poe. The site is owned by the City of New York Parks and Recreation and operated by the Bronx Historical Society. It is located at Poe Park, Grand Concourse and East Kingsbridge Road, Bronx, NY 10458. (718) 881-8900.

www.nyc.gov/parks

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Ben E. Kuhl

1916
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 Last stagecoach robbery occurs at Jarbidge, Nevada and the driver was murdered at the scene. Ben Kuhl was convicted primarily on the basis of a bloody palm print. It was the first time that a palm print was used as evidence in a U.S. criminal prosecution.
 1960
 ↓
Psycho, (US film)
 Perry Mason TV series

1965
 ↓
 Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*



1972
 ↓
The Godfather (US film) 1981-1987
 ↓
 Magnum PI TV series 1990
 ↓
 Walter Mosley, *Devil in a Blue Dress* 1991
 ↓
 Court TV airs (truTV)

1996
 ↓
 In *Tennessee v. Ware* mitochondrial DNA typing is admitted for the first time in a US court.
 1999
 ↓
 Law and Order series airs
 2000
 ↓
 CSI series airs



Famous fictional detectives

Some notable fictional detectives and their creators include:

Amateur detectives

- Father Brown — G. K. Chesterton
- C. Auguste Dupin — Edgar Allan Poe
- Jessica Fletcher — *Murder, She Wrote*
- Miss Marple — Agatha Christie
- Ellery Queen — Ellery Queen
- Lord Peter Wimsey — Dorothy L. Sayers

Private Investigators

- Mike Hammer — Mickey Spillane
- Sherlock Holmes — Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
- Thomas Magnum — *Magnum, P.I.*
- Adrian Monk — Monk (TV series)
- Hercule Poirot — Agatha Christie
- Sam Spade — Dashiell Hammett

Police detectives

- Lieutenant Columbo — *Columbo*
- James "Sonny" Crockett — *Miami Vice*
- Robert Goren — *Law & Order: Criminal Intent*
- Lt. Theo Kojak — *Kojak* (played by Telly Savalas)
- Inspector Morse — Colin Dexter
- Inspector Clouseau — Pink Panther

Forensic specialists

- Dr Donald "Ducky" Mallard — N.C.I.S. (NavalCriminal Investigative Services)
- Gil Grissom, Ph.D. — *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*
- Dr Quincy — *Quincy, M.E.*
- Dr. Kay Scarpetta — Patricia Cornwell
- Lt. Horatio Caine — CSI: Miami
- Detective Mac Taylor — CSI: New York

Government agents

- James Bond — Ian Fleming
- Fox Mulder and Dana Scully — *The X-Files*
- Agent Dale Cooper — *Twin Peaks*

Others

- Batman, a.k.a., Bruce Wayne
- The Hardy Boys — Franklin W. Dixon and others

Historical

- Cadfael monk (Middle Ages, England) — Edith Pargeter
- William of Baskerville British Friar (14 Century, Italy) — Eco

Science-fiction and Fantasy

- Elijah Baley — Isaac Asimov
- Dirk Gently — Douglas Adams
- Alastor "Mad-Eye" Moody — J. K. Rowling

See "Detective Fiction" at Wikipedia.com for more information.

For Further Reading:

Foye, Raymond, Ed. *The Unknown Poe*. San Francisco, CA: City Lights Pub., 1980.

Frank, Fredierck S and Magistrale, Anthony. *The Poe Encyclopedia*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1997.

Hoffman, Daniel. *Poe, Poe, Poe., Poe.* Baton Rouge, LA: LSU Press, 1998.

Meyers, Jeffrey. *Edgar Allan Poe: His Life and Legacy*. New York, NY: Cooper Square Press, 1992.

Rosenheim, Shawn James. *The Cryptographic Imagination: Secret Writing from Edgar Allan Poe to the Internet*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP, 1997.

Sova, Dawn. *Edgar Allan Poe: A to Z*. New York, NY: Checkmark Books, 2001.

Whalen, Terence. "Poe and the American Publishing Industry." In *A Historical Guide to Edgar Allan Poe*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Useful Poe websites:

- To browse for updates on Poe websites:
<http://anrdomeda.rutgers.edu/~ehrlich/poesites2001.html>.
- For the Poe museum in Richmond, VA complete with tours, instructional materials, and links to other Poe websites:
<http://www.poemuseum.org>

- For text sources on Poe:
<http://www.lib.utexas.edu/Libs/PCL/Etext.html>
- For instructional sources on Poe:
<http://www.fsu.edu/~CandI/ENGLISH/power/poe/>
<http://www.webenglishteacher.com/poe.html>