

The Cask of Amontillado

Student Name

Course Title

Professor Name

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## THE CASK OF AMONTILLADO

In Edgar Allan Poe's unnerving short story, *The Cask of Amontillado*, the brutal side of humanity is depicted where a man seeks revenge on a person by sealing him shut below a vast tomb surrounded by dead bodies with nothing but skeletal remains. The main character seeks for retribution in the worst way possible. Readers wonder what the moral of the story is when it comes to what is to be learned. This is not only a revenge story, it is a warning to man's unpredictability whenever evil consumes the mind of the individual.

The beginning of the story highlights a carnival season that is described as a "supreme madness." This setting foreshadows the madness and depravity behind Montresor's evil act to take revenge through murder. A gloomy atmosphere of the carnival along with the atmosphere of the crypt are also intimidating to experience. The resting place for the dead also implies murder and death; this way, murder is constantly foreshadowed by the setting of the story. The damp vaults where Montresor leads Fortunato signifies a deteriorated state of the human condition. A man has to be cruel in nature to come up with such a vile act of revenge: "His ability to calmly describe his carefully orchestrated motive should immediately cause fear and terror due to recognizing a man devoid of conscience" ("Terror and Horror," 2017). The readers are never made aware of what Fortunato actually did to Montresor to deserve such a horrid fate. It is only known that he was insulted by him, but the exact details are never revealed. Readers can only make a connection between the man's family tomb and his motivation for vengeance.

The dead bodies surrounding the crypt symbolize a deserted and the world of the dead where no man should ever intrude upon. In addition, the crypt filled with the remains of Montresor's ancestors is an indication that he is seeking vengeance for his family in some way. By the quote: "As Montresor lies dying; his family motto 'no one provokes me with impunity' has been maintained, and so his motivation to confess seems to stem from pride, not remorse", it

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is clear that Montresor finds the pleasure to kill a man under a place he is connected to rather than in some other isolated location (Lucas, 2014). The surroundings of the crypt are similar to the catacombs of Paris which is the world of the dead. The reader can take a moment to realize the absurdity behind a catacomb underneath a city, serving as a reminder of the death always being next to us.

There is almost a sense of irony regarding the location where Fortunato is murdered. The remains of Fortunato are now located near Montresor's ancestors. The readers may ask the question why would someone have an enemy killed at the same location where one's family is laid to rest. This is one of the mysteries that remains unexplored by Edgar Allan Poe. One is led to assume that perhaps Fortunato was not the only victim of Montresor. He might have killed one or more of his ancestors. The overall setting of the story is quite effective in making the reader have a glimpse into the mind of a madman driven by psychopathic ambition which ultimately leads him towards a path devoid of empathy and reason.

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## References

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