Goth texts 1 name: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**TEXT 1: "The Black Cat" by Edgar Allan Poe**

AUDIO: http://etc.usf.edu/lit2go/147/the-works-of-edgar-allan-poe/5235/the-black-cat/

[NOTE: I have significantly cut this text down from Poe's original.]

*BACKGROUND: The narrator begins this story by describing how, in his youth, he was a gentle, sensitive boy. Often mocked by his companions, the narrator as a child found friendship in animals. Grown up, he was able to find a wife who shared a similar love for animals. They owned many animals, but the most loyal companion among them was a large black cat named . . .*

Pluto\*—this was the cat’s name—was my favorite pet and playmate. I alone fed him, and he attended me wherever I went about the house. It was even with difficulty that I could prevent him from following me through the streets.

Our friendship lasted, in this manner, for several years. During this time, my general temperament and character experienced a radical alteration for the worse. I grew, day by day, more moody, more irritable, more regardless of the feelings of others. I used intemperate language to my wife. At length, I even offered her personal violence.

5 My pets, of course, were made to feel the change in my disposition. I not only neglected, but ill–used them.

But my disease grew on me—and what a disease is alcohol! At length even Pluto, who was now becoming old, and consequently somewhat peevish\*—even Pluto began to experience the effects of my ill temper.

One night, returning home, much intoxicated, from one of my haunts about town, I fancied that the cat avoided my presence. I seized him; when, in his fright at my violence, he inflicted a slight wound upon my hand with his teeth.

10 The fury of a demon instantly possessed me. I took from my pocket a penknife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket!

I blush, I burn, I shudder, while I pen the damnable atrocity.

When I had slept off the fumes of the night’s debauch\*—I experienced a sentiment half of horror, half of remorse, for the crime of which I had been guilty. I again plunged into excess, and soon drowned in wine all memory of the deed.

15 In the meantime the cat slowly recovered. The socket of the lost eye presented, it is true, a frightful appearance, but he no longer appeared to suffer any pain. I soon became irritated with the cat and gave myself over to *perverse* thoughts.

One morning, in cool blood, I slipped a noose about its neck and hung it to the limb of a tree;—hung it with the tears streaming from my eyes, and with the bitterest remorse at my heart;—hung it because I knew that it had loved me, and because I felt it had given me no reason of offense;—hung it because I knew that in so doing I was committing a sin—a 20 deadly sin that would so jeopardize my immortal soul as to place it—if such a thing wore possible—even beyond the reach of the infinite mercy of the Most Merciful and Most Terrible God.

On the night of the day on which this cruel deed was done, I was aroused from sleep by the cry of fire. The curtains of my bed were in flames. The whole house was blazing. It was with great difficulty that my wife, a servant, and myself, made our escape. The destruction was complete. My entire worldly wealth was swallowed up, and I resigned myself thenceforward to 25 despair.

On the day succeeding the fire, I visited the ruins. The walls, with one exception, had fallen in. This exception was found in a compartment wall, not very thick, which stood about the middle of the house, and against which had rested the head of my bed. About this wall a dense crowd were collected, and many persons seemed to be examining a particular portion of it with very minute and eager attention. The words “strange!” “singular!” and other similar expressions, excited my curiosity.

30 I approached and saw, as if graven upon the white surface, the figure of a gigantic cat. There was a rope about the animal’s neck.

For months I could not rid myself of the phantasm of the cat. I began to look among the vile haunts\* which I now habitually frequented, for another pet of the same species, and of somewhat similar appearance.

One night as I sat, half-stupefied, my attention was suddenly drawn to some black object. I approached it, and touched it 35 with my hand. It was a black cat—a very large one—fully as large as Pluto, and closely resembling him in every respect but one. Pluto had not a white hair upon any portion of his body; but this cat had a large, although indefinite splotch of white, covering nearly the whole region of the breast.

Upon touching him, he immediately arose, purred loudly, rubbed against my hand, and appeared delighted with my notice. This, then, was the very creature of which I was in search.

40 I continued my caresses, and, when I prepared to go home, the animal evinced\* a disposition to accompany me. I permitted it to do so; occasionally stooping and patting it as I proceeded. When it reached the house it domesticated itself at once, and became immediately a great favorite with my wife.

For my own part, I soon found a dislike to it arising within me. This was just the reverse of what I had anticipated.

What added, no doubt, to my hatred of the beast, was the discovery, on the morning after I brought it home, that, like 45 Pluto, it also had been deprived of one of its eyes. This circumstance, however, only endeared it to my wife, who, as I have already said, possessed, in a high degree, that humanity of feeling which had once been my distinguishing trait, and the source of many of my simplest and purest pleasures.

Although I longed to destroy it with a blow, I was yet withheld from so doing, partly by a memory of my former crime, but chiefly—let me confess it at once—by absolute dread of the beast.

50 The reader will remember that the white mark on the cat's breast, although large, had been originally very indefinite; but, by slow degrees, it had assumed a rigorous distinctness of outline. It was now the representation of an object that I shudder to name—and for this, above all, I loathed, and dreaded, and would have rid myself of the monster had I dared—it was now, I say, the image of a hideous—of a ghastly thing—of the GALLOWS\*!—oh, mournful and terrible engine of Horror and of Crime—of Agony and of Death!

55 Alas! neither by day nor by night knew I the blessing of Rest any more! During the day the creature left me no moment alone; and at night, I started, hourly, from dreams of unutterable fear, to find the hot breath of the thing upon my face, and its vast weight upon my heart!

Beneath the pressure of torments such as these, the feeble remnant of the good within me succumbed. My uncomplaining wife, alas! was the most usual and the most patient of sufferers.

60 One day she accompanied me, upon some household errand, into the cellar of the old building which our poverty compelled us to inhabit. The cat followed me down the steep stairs, and, nearly throwing me headlong, exasperated me to madness. Uplifting an axe, and forgetting, in my wrath, the childish dread which had hitherto stayed my hand, I aimed a blow at the animal which, of course, would have proved instantly fatal had it descended as I wished. But this blow was arrested by the hand of my wife. Goaded, by the interference, into a rage more than demoniacal, I withdrew my arm from 65 her grasp and buried the axe in her brain. She fell dead upon the spot, without a groan.

This hideous murder accomplished, I set myself forthwith, and with entire deliberation, to the task of concealing the body. I knew that I could not remove it from the house, either by day or by night, without the risk of being observed by the neighbors. Many projects entered my mind. At one period I thought of cutting the corpse into minute fragments, and destroying them by fire. At another, I resolved to dig a grave for it in the floor of the cellar. Again, I deliberated about 70 casting it in the well in the yard—about packing it in a box, as if merchandise, with the usual arrangements, and so getting a porter to take it from the house. Finally I hit upon what I considered a far better expedient than either of these. I determined to wall it up in the cellar—as the monks of the middle ages are recorded to have walled up their victims.

I made no doubt that I could readily displace the bricks in the wall, insert the corpse, and wall the whole up as before, so that no eye could detect anything suspicious. And in this calculation I was not deceived. By means of a crow–bar I easily 75 dislodged the bricks, and, having carefully deposited the body against the inner wall, I propped it in that position, while, with little trouble, I re–laid the whole structure as it originally stood. I prepared a plaster which could not be distinguished from the old, and with this I very carefully went over the new brickwork. When I had finished, I felt satisfied that all was right. The wall did not present the slightest appearance of having been disturbed.

My next step was to look for the beast which had been the cause of so much wretchedness, but it was nowhere to be 80 found. With the beast gone, I soundly and tranquilly slept; aye, slept even with the burden of murder upon my soul!

The second and the third day passed, and still my tormentor came not. Once again I breathed as a freeman. The monster, in terror, had fled the premises forever! I should behold it no more! My happiness was supreme! The guilt of my dark deed disturbed me but little. Some few inquiries had been made, but these had been readily answered. Even a search had been instituted—but of course nothing was to be discovered.

85 Upon the fourth day of the assassination, a party of the police came, very unexpectedly, into the house, and proceeded again to make rigorous investigation of the premises. The officers bade me accompany them in their search. They left no nook or corner unexplored. At length they descended into the cellar. I quivered not in a muscle. My heart beat calmly as that of one who slumbers in innocence. I walked the cellar from end to end. I folded my arms upon my bosom, and roamed easily to and fro. The police were thoroughly satisfied and prepared to depart. The glee at my heart was too strong to be 90 restrained. I burned to say if but one word to assure myself that they suspected nothing.

“I delight to have allayed\* your suspicions. I wish you all health, and a little more courtesy. By the bye, gentlemen, this— this is a very well-constructed house.” [In the rabid desire to say something easily, I scarcely knew what I uttered at all.]—”I may say an excellently well-constructed house. These walls are solidly put together;” and here, through the mere frenzy of bravado\*, I tapped heavily, with a cane which I held in my hand, upon that very portion of the brickwork behind which 95 stood the corpse of my wife.

But may God shield and deliver me from the fangs of the Arch–Fiend\*! No sooner had the reverberation of my blows sunk into silence, than I was answered by a voice from within the tomb!—by a cry, at first muffled and broken, like the sobbing of a child, and then quickly swelling into one long, loud, and continuous scream, utterly inhuman—a howl—a wailing shriek, half of horror and half of triumph, such as might have arisen only out of hell, conjointly from the throats of the dammed in 100 their agony and of the demons that exult in the damnation.

Swooning, I staggered to the opposite wall. For one instant the party upon the stairs remained motionless. In the next, a dozen stout arms were toiling at the wall. It fell. The corpse, already greatly decayed and clotted with gore, stood erect before the eyes of the spectators. Upon its head, with red extended mouth and solitary eye of fire, sat the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder, and whose informing voice had consigned me to the hangman. I had walled the 105 monster up within the tomb!

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| Pluto (1): Pluto was the Roman god of the underworld and judge of the dead | peevish (7): | debauch (13): excessive (and, thus, immoral) behavior; especially excessive drinking |
| "vile haunts" (32): i.e., bars | evinced (40): | Gallows (53): the structure where one is hanged |
| allayed (91): diminished or put to rest | bravado (94): | "Arch-Fiend" (96): i.e., Satan |

1. What causes the narrator’s temperament to change?
2. How does the narrator react to cutting out the cat’s eye?
3. What “perverse thoughts” is the narrator subject to?
4. How does Poe use parallel structure in lines 17-21 to convey his attitude toward the narrator’s actions?
5. What supernatural experience occurs after the narrator’s house is destroyed?
6. Does he need another cat- no. Why does the narrator get another cat?
7. What supernatural thing happens to the cat’s appearance? Why do these supernatural things keep happening?
8. What is Poe trying to tell us about hidden evil?

**TEXT 2: "The Conqueror Worm" by Edgar Allan Poe**

Lo! ’t is a gala\* night

    Within the lonesome latter years!

An angel throng, bewinged\*, bedight\*

In veils, and drowned in tears,

5 Sit in a theatre, to see

     A play of hopes and fears,

While the orchestra breathes fitfully

    The music of the spheres\*.

Mimes\*, in the form of God on high,

    10 Mutter and mumble low,

And hither and thither\* fly—

   Mere puppets they, who come and go

At bidding of vast formless things

    That shift the scenery to and fro,

15 Flapping from out their Condor wings

   Invisible Wo!

That motley\* drama—oh, be sure

   It shall not be forgot!

With its Phantom chased for evermore

    20 By a crowd that seize it not,

Through a circle that ever returneth in

     To the self-same spot,

And much of Madness, and more of Sin,

    And Horror the soul of the plot.

25 But see, amid the mimic rout,

    A crawling shape intrude!

A blood-red thing that writhes from out

    The scenic solitude!

It writhes!—it writhes!—with mortal pangs

30 The mimes become its food,

And seraphs\* sob at vermin fangs

    In human gore imbued.

Out—out are the lights—out all!

    And, over each quivering form,

35 The curtain, a funeral pall,

    Comes down with the rush of a storm,

While the angels, all pallid and wan,

    Uprising, unveiling, affirm

That the play is the tragedy, “Man,”

    40 And its hero, the Conqueror Worm.

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| gala (1): PARTY TIME! HOORAY!!! SPRING BREAK!!! | bewinged (3): having wings | bedight (3): adorned or decorated with | music of the spheres (8): So I don't want to explain the whole concept, but basically this means heavenly or celestial music |
| mimes (9): People who pretend to be god-like or more important than they are | hither and thither (11): here and there | motley (17): of many different types | seraphs (31): a type of angel |

**TEXT 3: "Oh could I raise the darken'd veil" by Nathaniel Hawthorne**

Oh could I raise the darken’d veil,

Which hides my future life from me,

Could unborn ages slowly sail,

Before my view—and could I see

5 My every action painted there,

To cast one look I would not dare.

There poverty and grief might stand,

And dark Despair’s corroding hand,

Would make me seek the lonely tomb

10 To slumber in its endless gloom.

Then let me never cast a look,

Within Fate’s fix’d mysterious book.