“The Sleeper” Edgar Allan Poe

Elements of Gothic literature:

At midnight, in the month of June,

I stand beneath the mystic moon.

An opiate\* vapor, dewy, dim, \*the drug opium; implying a drugged or drowsy state

Exhales from out her golden rim,

And softly dripping, drop by drop,

Upon the quiet mountain top,

Steals drowsily and musically

Into the universal valley.

The rosemary nods upon the grave;

The lily lolls upon the wave;

Wrapping the fog about its breast,

The ruin moulders\* into rest; \*to decay

Looking like Lethe\*, see! the lake \*river in the Underworld that causes forgetfulness

A conscious slumber seems to take,

And would not, for the world, awake.

All Beauty sleeps!—and lo! where lies

Irene, with her Destinies!

Where is the speaker?

Elements of Gothic literature:

Oh, lady bright! can it be right—

How is the wind acting?

This window open to the night?

The wanton airs, from the tree-top,

Laughingly through the lattice drop—

The bodiless airs, a wizard rout,

Flit through thy chamber in and out,

And wave the curtain canopy

So fitfully—so fearfully—

Above the closed and fringéd lid

Where is Irene?

’Neath which thy slumb’ring soul lies hid,

That, o’er the floor and down the wall,

Like ghosts the shadows rise and fall!

What is the speaker doing her? What literary device is it?

Oh, lady dear, hast thou no fear?

Why and what art thou dreaming here?

Sure thou art come o’er far-off seas,

A wonder to these garden trees!

Strange is thy pallor! strange thy dress!

Strange, above all, thy length of tress,

And this all solemn silentness!

Elements of Gothic literature:

The lady sleeps! Oh, may her sleep,

What does the speaker wish for Irene in this stanza?

Which is enduring, so be deep!

Heaven have her in its sacred keep!

This chamber changed for one more holy,

This bed for one more melancholy,

I pray to God that she may lie

Forever with unopened eye,

While the pale sheeted ghosts go by!

What does the speaker wish for Irene in this stanza?

My love, she sleeps! Oh, may her sleep,

As it is lasting, so be deep!

Soft may the worms about her creep!

Far in the forest, dim and old,

For her may some tall vault unfold—

Some vault that oft hath flung its black

And wingéd pannels fluttering back,

Triumphant, o’er the crested palls

Of her grand family funerals—

Some sepulchre, remote, alone,

What does the speaker say Irene might have done as a child?

Against whose portals she hath thrown,

In childhood, many an idle stone—

Some tomb from out whose sounding door

She ne’er shall force an echo more,

Thrilling to think, poor child of sin!

It was the dead who groaned within.

1. What is the tone of the poem? Support with specific examples from the poem.

2. How does Poe use alliteration to impact the mood of the poem?

3. What message about love is being conveyed through the poem?