

# The Black Cat

by Edgar Allan Poe

Retold by Carmela Battaglia



That darn cat!

NATIONAL  
ENDOWMENT  
FOR THE ARTS



A Big Read Project 2009

Wood Library Adult Services in Partnership with  
Writers for Literacy & Literacy Volunteers Ontario-Yates  
Story Editors: Kathi Nacca and Barbara Henry

# The Black Cat

by Edgar Allan Poe

Retold by Carmela Battaglia

I am about to tell you my story. You will not believe what I am about to tell you. I do not care. I am not mad. Tomorrow I will die. So today I will tell my story. I need to tell you what has happened to me. These things have been scary to me. I need to tell someone in a very calm way.

I have always been a very happy person. I was happy as a child. I love people and animals. I had many pets to care for. They cared about me, too. I love to feed and touch them. Dogs are very good pets to have. I married when I was very young. She was a woman very much like me. She saw that I liked pets. She helped me get birds, fish, a dog, rabbits, a monkey and a cat.

Our cat was very pretty. He was black. He was very smart. My wife thought he was a witch's cat. His name was Pluto. I liked him the best of all of my pets. He liked to follow me when I went for a walk. He was my good friend for many years.

Then I became unhappy. I was angry with everyone. I was angry with my wife. Sometimes I said bad things to my wife. I even hurt her. I did not care for my pets any more. But I still liked my cat Pluto. I did not hurt him. I became more and more unhappy. I began to drink. This

made me even angrier. Soon I began yelling at Pluto.

One night I had too much to drink. I saw Pluto run away from me. This made me very mad. I picked up the cat. I took out a knife. I cut out one of his eyes. I was very sad. I drank some more. I drank to help me forget. The cat got better. But he ran when he saw me. This made me sad at first. Later I became very angry. One morning, I picked up the cat. I tied a rope around his neck. I hung him from a tree. He died. I was very sad about what I had done. I began to cry.

That night, I woke up. My house was on fire. My wife, servant and I ran from the house. Everything was gone. I went back to the house. There were many people looking at a wall. On the wall was a drawing of a large cat. It had a rope around its neck. Someone must have taken Pluto from the tree. They must have thrown him into the fire. It must have burned the cat to the wall.

My wife and I moved to a new apartment. I could not forget what I had done to that cat.

I could not forget the drawing of the cat on the wall. To forget I drank some more. One night I saw something outside. It was a very large black cat. He had a large white chest. Pluto did not have that. But like Pluto he had only one eye. I brought the cat home. My wife loved the cat. Soon I began to hate this cat, too. I did not hurt this cat. I still felt bad for hurting Pluto. This cat seemed to love me. He always wanted to be near me.

The white on his chest looked like the gallows. This is the place they hang men who have done bad things like killing. I grew to hate all things, even my wife. She never said a word.

One day, the cat followed me down the steps. My wife was close behind. I picked up an axe to hit the cat. The axe missed the cat. I hit my wife in the head. She was dead without even a cry.

I needed to hide the body of my wife. Where could I take it? I could not take it from the house. I knew what I needed to do. I hid it in the wall of the cellar. I removed the bricks. I placed the body inside. Then I put all the bricks back. No one could tell that the bricks had been moved.



Next, I looked for the cat. He could not be found. I looked for many days. He did not return. On the fourth day, the police came to my house. They were looking for my wife. They began to look everywhere in the house. I knocked on the wall with my cane. "Is this not a well built house?" I said. We then heard a cry and a scream. They began to pull away the bricks. They found the body of my wife. Upon her head sat the cat with the one eye. I am now going to die because of this cat. Tomorrow I will die.

### Words to Watch

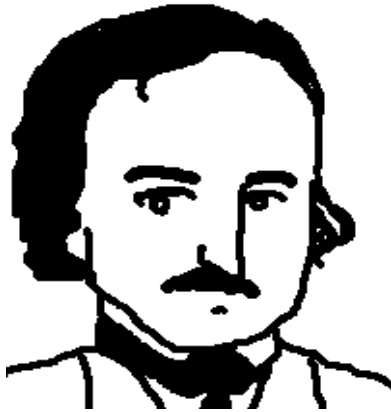
apartment

cellar

gallows

### Talk about the Story

1. Who was Pluto?
2. What happened to Pluto?
3. What happened to the man's wife?
4. Where did they find the wife?
5. Where did they find the new cat?
6. Why is the man going to die tomorrow?



**Edgar Allan Poe (1809–1849)** was born in Boston, Massachusetts. His parents were actors. He had a very sad life. His father left. Then, his mother died. He went to live with John and Frances Allan of Richmond, Virginia. John and Edgar did not get along. Poe had trouble with gambling and drinking. In 1836 he married his cousin. Her death a few years later was a big blow. Poe wrote many stories and poems. His mystery and horror tales are well known. He also used stories to poke fun at people and places. He invented the detective story. Poe's stories were very popular. Yet, he was poor. Writers did not earn much money. In 1849 he passed out on a street in Baltimore. He died a few days later. Poe's death is still a mystery.

Edgar Allan Poe wrote many stories.

Check ✓ the square next to the stories you have read.

Place a star ★ next to the ones you liked best.

- Berenice
- Black Cat
- Cask of Amontillado
- Devil in the Belfry
- Man That Was Used Up
- Mask of the Red Death
- Oblong Box
- Purloined Letter
- Tell Tale Heart



Bring this list to your tutor or the Literacy Volunteers Office to get a free gift book from Wood Library while supplies last.