

“Cask of Amontillado” Socratic Seminar Questions

1. “The Cask of Amontillado” is a chilling story, but Poe also uses humorous elements as the narrator recounts his experience with Fortunato.
 - Can you identify elements in the story that might be regarded as humorous?
 - What does the humor add to the story?
 - Can you think of any other stories, books, or movies that blend horror and humor in a similar way?
2. “The Cask of Amontillado” uses a first-person narrator (a narrator that is a character in the story), and, sometimes, first-person narrators can be unreliable.
 - How reliable or unreliable do you regard the narrator?
 - Are there any ways that the narrator might be manipulating the truth?
 - How would you describe the narrator’s attitude toward himself and his actions?
3. Although the narrator seems to assume that his actions are justified, he certainly can be interpreted as a villain.
 - What characteristics of the narrator make him an effective villain?
 - Can you think of any other villains from stories, books, television shows, movies, or “real life” that share some of the narrator’s villainous characteristics?
 - Is there anything about the narrator that you find attractive, likeable, or at least *relatable*?
4. The narrator never specifies why he hates Fortunato. Instead, he states only that Fortunato caused “a thousand injuries” to the narrator and eventually “ventured upon insult.”
 - What is your general impression of Fortunato?
 - Do any of Fortunato’s words and actions support the narrator’s belief that Fortunato is worthy of hatred?
 - Do any of Fortunato’s words and actions refute the narrator’s belief that Fortunato is worthy of hatred?
5. Every story must exist in a certain time and place, and we refer to the time and place of a story as the “setting.”
 - How does the setting of “The Cask of Amontillado” change as the story progresses?
 - Why do you think Poe chose to bring together in this story the dreariness of the catacombs and the festive atmosphere of the carnival?
 - What elements of the setting in this story would you consider typical of a horror story? What elements, however, seem unusual?
6. “Theme” can be defined as “a comment about the human condition that a writer makes

through his or her work,” and a theme or themes are often what make a work of literature relevant to all of our lives.

- Can you identify one or more themes in "The Cask of Amontillado"? In other words, can you identify any general comments about life and the human condition that Poe is suggesting through the specifics of this story?
- Can you think of any other stories, books, or movies that convey a similar theme?

7. In the non-fiction article of the incident with Miama Dolphins' Martin and Incognito, Martin was seen as someone who received "injuries" and "insults" (just as Montresor claimed he did) and Incognito is painted as the bullyer.

- To what extent do you think this basic premise is true? What evidence is there to suggest this?
- How does the outside world, in general, seem to treat Incognito? Martin? Provide evidence from the text.
- If you believe Incognito is innocent, how would you defend his innocence?
- If you believe Incognito is guilty, how would you point to his guilt?
- How can even the slightest form of cyber-bullying (even if it is misinterpreted) hurt? How can we use electronics positively to care about others?
- What happens when we only hear bits and pieces of stories and try to gather the information together to make sense of it, just like the community surrounding the Miami Dolphins did?