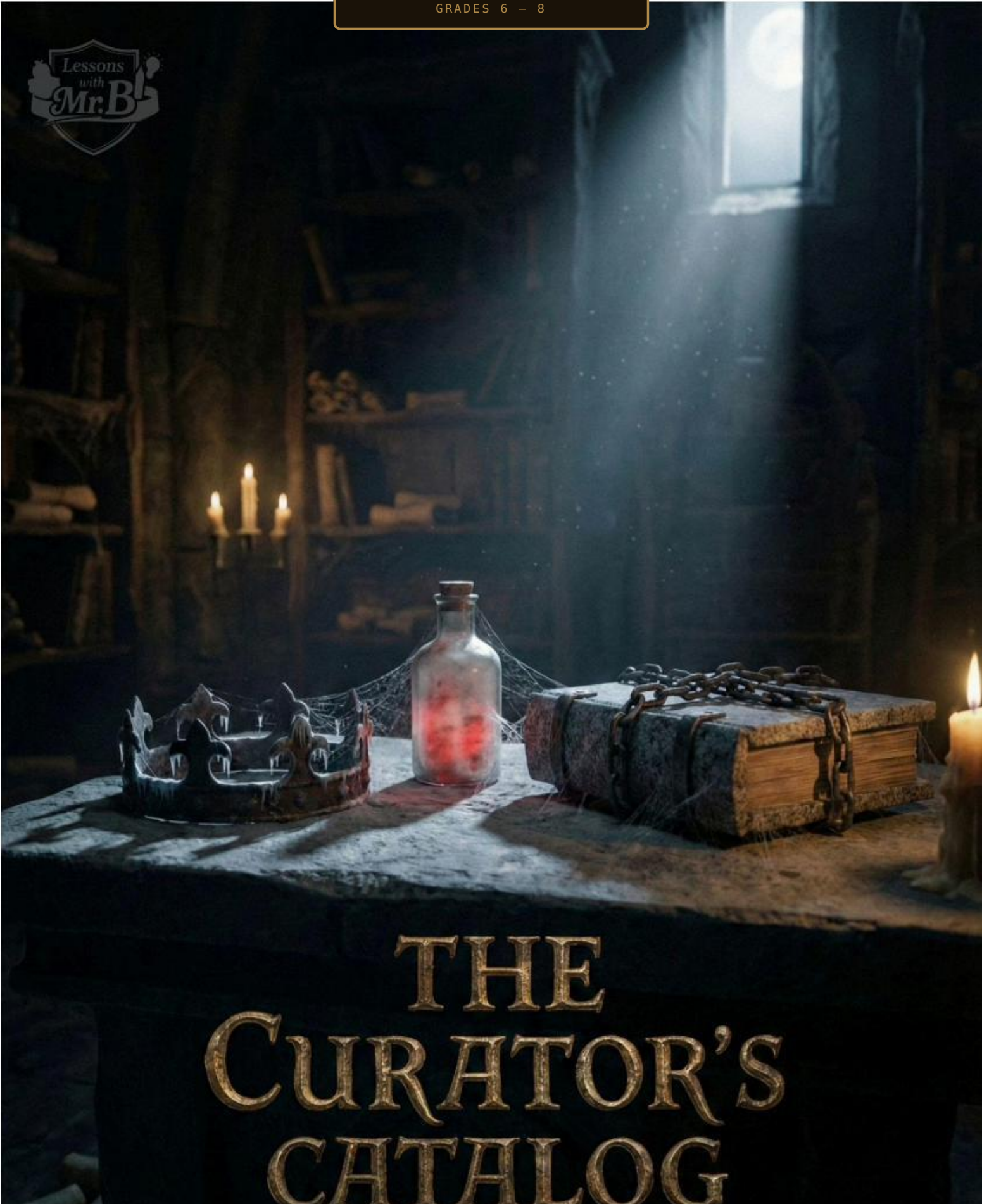


ACADEMIC TIER
MIDDLE SCHOOL
GRADES 6 – 8



THE CURATOR'S CATALOG



Welcome.

A B7 Collective project
v2 · Case File Edition

Inside this folder is a small, finite world with one job: *to make a kid's writing better*. No app. No streak. No leaderboard. Just paper documents and a project that takes about two weeks to run.

The folder is built to be opened, marked up, drawn on, and stapled back together. **Rip it. Spill coffee on it. Print it twice.** It's already been printed by other families this week.

01 / THE BUSINESS

One purchase. One household.

A single purchase covers every kid under your roof, forever. Print it as many times as you need.

If you're running these with kids from other families — co-op, microschool, private school, classroom, after-school program — pick up a copy for each family or email us about group licensing. We answer those notes ourselves and we make it work.

GROUP LICENSING → lessonswithmrb@b7collective.com

02 / THE REAL ONE

If you can't afford it, take it anyway.

If the cost is genuinely what's keeping this out of a kid's hands, take it anyway. No application. No income proof. No paperwork.

Email lessonswithmrb@b7collective.com, tell us which kit your kid wants to run, and we'll send it. We'd rather the work happen than the work sit on a shelf.

What this teaches.

Tier · MIDDLE SCHOOL (6–8)
Subject · ELA · Literature · Creative Writing
Project type · Atmospheric Creative Writing

This project is designed for kids in **grades 6–8** and aligns with the Common Core State Standards listed below. It runs for about **two weeks** with roughly 45–60 minutes per day. The deliverable is graded against a four-category rubric inside the folder; the rubric maps directly to these standards.

STANDARDS MET · CCSS GRADES 6–8

Common Core alignment.

CCSS.ELA-W.6-8.3	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences using descriptive details.
CCSS.ELA-RL.6-8.4	Determine the meaning of words and analyze impact of word choice on tone.
CCSS.ELA-RL.6-8.5	Analyze how an author's choices about structure contribute to meaning.
CCSS.ELA-L.6-8.5	Demonstrate understanding of figurative language and nuances in word meanings.
CCSS.ELA-W.6-8.4	Produce clear and coherent writing appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

WHAT TWO WEEKS LOOKS LIKE

Week 1 — Reading & Drafts: Source-gathering, evidence log, ugly first draft. **Week 2 — Polish & Final:** Self-audit using rubric, banned-word check, polished final filed in the archive.

The Brief.

How to run this project.

The Curator's Catalog

AT A GLANCE

DURATION 2 weeks ~45–60 min/day	DELIVERABLE Three short catalog entries	ROLE Chief Archivist <i>Atmospheric</i> <i>Creative Writing</i>	STANDARDS 5 CCSS aligned to MS 6–8
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THE PROJECT ARC

1 PHASE 1 READING Days 1–3 Read the Poe. Highlight every color and every sound.	2 PHASE 2 DRAFTS Days 4–7 Field-note each artifact. Draft each entry in its own mood.	3 PHASE 3 POLISH Days 8–9 Self-audit. One specific feeling, not named.	4 PHASE 4 FILE Day 10 File all three entries. Each has its own atmosphere.
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HOW IT RUNS

▶ WHAT'S INSIDE	▶ THE DELIVERABLE	▶ WHAT YOU NEED
- Letter from the Director + three exhibit photographs - Four pages of Poe's <i>Masque of the Red Death</i> - Field Notes + drafting templates (3 of each) - Two gold-standard catalog entries + grading rubric	- Three short catalog entries (150–250 words each) - Each produces a distinct mood (cold, fevered, weighted) - Graded on Detective Work, Mood-Match, Banned Words, Sentence Variety	- Highlighter (essential for the Poe reading) - Notebook + pen - Computer optional — paper-driven project

WHEN TO STEP IN

Mostly, don't. The packet is built for the kid to run.

- 1** Kid skips the Poe reading — the project depends on it
- 2** All three entries feel the same — they need 3 distinct moods
- 3** The writing names the feeling instead of evoking it

FILE № CC-001 / VAULT OF RESTRICTED ITEMS
THE CURATOR'S CATALOG

RESTRICTED

FOR THE ARCHIVIST

A vault of artifacts.

Inside, you'll find: a brief, three exhibits, a reading log, a field-notes worksheet, two field guides, three catalog templates, two model entries, and a rubric. Total damage: ~2 weeks.

— MB.

LESSONS WITH MR. B

DIRECTOR · VAULT OF RESTRICTED ITEMS

File № CC-001 · Re: Your assignment

Day One of Ten.

Archivist —

Welcome to the Vault. Three artifacts have been recovered from an excavation. They are not safe. Your job is to *describe them so accurately* that the next person who opens this folder doesn't have to touch them at all.

A **catalog entry** is a sworn record — physical evidence first, sensory observation second, history third. The reader should feel the room without being told a single thing about how it feels.

Your job: **read Poe's "Masque of the Red Death" first.** Steal his trick — color, sound, texture, never a label. Then write three catalog entries. One per artifact. *One mood per entry.*

Three rules of the desk before we begin:

1. Be a detective, not a judge. Show me clues.
2. ~~The crown was scary.~~ That archivist does not get the byline.
3. The banned-words list is the law of the Vault.

Yours from the desk,

Mr. B.

DIRECTOR, VAULT OF RESTRICTED ITEMS

P.S. The Reading is due at the end of Day Two. Highlight every color and every sound in the Poe. We will steal them.

Poe didn't tell you to be scared. He showed you the ebony clock.

A verdict kills the mood. A clue builds it.

If you find yourself typing "scary" — stop. Describe what's making it scary instead.
— MB

Three artifacts.

— each one demands a different mood.

A. The Iron Crown

mood: cold · silence · stasis

→ make the reader feel the absence of heat. the absence of life.

B. The Glass Vial

mood: heat · fever · sickness

→ humidity, viscosity, decay. the reader should feel feverish.

C. The Stone Codex

mood: weight · pressure · age

→ density, burden, the passage of time. the reader's shoulders should ache.

Each entry has
one feeling.
If all three
of yours feel
the same —
you missed it.

EXHIBIT A · FILE № CC-001

THE IRON CROWN

mood: cold · silence · stasis



EXHIBIT B · FILE № CC-001

THE GLASS VIAL

mood: heat · fever · sickness



EXHIBIT C · FILE № CC-001

THE STONE CODEX

mood: weight · pressure · age



LESSONS WITH MR. B

DIRECTOR · VAULT OF RESTRICTED ITEMS

File № CC-001 · Re: House Rules

REJECTED IF MISSING

Archivist –

Below: the things every catalog entry must do. Not negotiable. The Vault is a craft, not a checklist – but here is where the checklist wins.

// FORMAT

- [] Three entries, one per artifact. Total 3–5 pages.
- [] Each entry has four parts: Physical, Sensory, Historical, Containment.
- [] Title each entry with the artifact name.

// EVIDENCE

- [] Highlights from the Poe submitted as proof of reading.
- [] Each entry matches its mood (Cold / Heat / Weight).
- [] Show – don't tell – the feeling of each room.

// VOICE

- [] Active verbs. *Rust ate the metal*, not *the metal was rusty*.
- [] Don't start every sentence with "The."
- [] Zoom in. One detail. Then the next.
- [] **Banned words – every one of these costs a point:**

scary spooky creepy terrifying old ancient
antique
bad evil cursed magic magical shiny
bright big huge giant

"The metal was cold enough to burn skin" → THIS.

Every banned word in your draft = one point off. Use them none.

Don't tell me the crown is "scary."
Show me the teeth.

— MB

P.S. "Cursed" is the laziest word in this building. If something is cursed, prove it with rust, with smell, with chains.

— A TWO-WEEK PLAN —

Four milestones. Three *artifacts*.

1.

The Reading. — *Day 2.*

Read "The Masque of the Red Death." Highlight every color and every sound. Submit physical highlighted copy.

*read it twice.
once is a
glance.*

2.

The Drafts. — *Day 6.*

Three full catalog entries, drafted. Each entry: Physical → Sensory → Historical → Containment. Doesn't have to be perfect — has to be finished.

*notes first,
sentences later.*

3.

The Polish. — *Day 8.*

Self-audit using the rubric. Highlight every active verb. Hunt down every banned word. Read aloud.

*read it aloud.
your ear knows.*

4.

Final Submission. — *Day 10.* ★ **file it**

Hand in the final, clean copy of the Curator's Catalog. Bound or stapled. Filed in the Vault permanent record.

Are you *actually* ready?

Three index cards. Three checks. Tear them off. Mark them up. Staple.

CHECKLIST • № 01

The Reading. *Did you steal Poe's trick?*

- ☐ Read "Masque of the Red Death" in full. (twice. once is a glance.)
- ☐ Highlighted every color word in one color.
- ☐ Highlighted every sound word in another.
- ☐ Did **not** highlight random adjectives like "tall" or "sudden."

CHECKLIST • № 02

The Drafts. *Are all three entries written?*

- ☐ All three artifacts have a full entry drafted.
- ☐ Each entry has all four sections (Physical / Sensory / Historical / Containment).
- ☐ Three "muscle verbs" used per entry (gnaw, fracture, weep, etc.).
- ☐ The mood (Cold / Heat / Weight) is detectable in each entry.

CHECKLIST • № 03

The Polish. *Could a stranger feel the room?*

- ☐ Crown reads cold. Vial reads feverish. Codex reads heavy.
- ☐ Zero banned words. Audit twice.
- ☐ No two sentences in a row start with "The."
- ☐ Read aloud. Each entry produces its mood without naming it.
- ☐ Bound or stapled. Track letter visible on cover.

The color & sound *hunt*.

Before you can write atmosphere, you have to see how a master built one. *Read like a thief.*

★ HIGHLIGHT EVERY COLOR

"blood-tinted panes"
"ebony clock"
"scarlet stains"
"sable drapery"

★ HIGHLIGHT EVERY SOUND

"dull, heavy, monotonous clang"
"brazen lungs of the clock"
"muffled peal"
"chiming"

Poe doesn't say "dark." He picks *specific* colors. ebony. sable. blood-tinted. you'll do the same.

the clock's clang is what makes the story scary. not the masque. not the death. *the sound*.

Poe makes you feel dread without ever using the word.

He gives you *colors* and *sounds* and lets the dread assemble itself in your head.

That's the trick. You're going to steal it three times.

— MB

The Masque of the Red Death

By Edgar Allan Poe · 1842 · public domain

The "Red Death" had long devastated the country. No pestilence had been ever so fatal, or so hideous. Blood was its Avatar and its seal – the redness and the horror of blood. There were sharp pains, and sudden dizziness, and then profuse bleedings at the pores, with dissolution. The scarlet stains upon the body and especially upon the face of the victim, were the pest-ban which shut him out from the aid and from the sympathy of his fellow-men. And the whole seizure, progress and termination of the disease were the incidents of half an hour.

But the Prince Prospero was happy and dauntless, and sagacious. When his dominions were half depopulated, he summoned to his presence a thousand hale and light-hearted friends from among the knights and dames of his court, and with these retired to the deep seclusion of one of his castellated abbeys. This was an extensive and magnificent structure, the creation of the prince's own eccentric yet august taste. A strong and lofty wall girdled it in. This wall had gates of iron. The courtiers, having entered, brought furnaces and massy hammers and welded the bolts. They resolved to leave means neither of ingress nor egress to the sudden impulses of despair from without or of frenzy from within. The abbey was amply provisioned. With such precautions the courtiers might bid defiance to contagion. The external world could take care of itself. In the meantime it was folly to grieve, or to think. The prince had provided all the appliances of pleasure. There were buffoons, there were improvisatori, there were ballet-dancers, there were musicians, there were cards, there was Beauty, there was wine. All these and security were within. Without was the "Red Death."

It was towards the close of the fifth or sixth month of his seclusion, and while the pestilence raged most furiously abroad, that the Prince Prospero entertained his thousand friends at a masked ball of the most unusual magnificence. It was a voluptuous scene that masquerade.

But first let me tell of the rooms in which it was held. There were seven – an imperial suite. In many palaces, however, such suites form a long and straight vista, while the folding doors slide back nearly to the walls on either hand, so that the view of the whole extent is scarcely impeded. Here the case was very different, as might have been expected from the duke's love of the bizarre. The apartments were so irregularly disposed that the vision embraced but little more than one at a time. There was a sharp turn at every twenty or thirty yards, and at each turn a novel effect. To the right and left, in the middle of each wall, a tall and narrow Gothic window looked out upon a closed corridor which pursued the windings of the suite. These windows were of stained glass whose color varied in accordance with the prevailing hue of the decorations of the chamber into which it opened. That at the eastern extremity was hung, for example, in blue – and vividly blue were its windows. The second chamber was purple in its ornaments and tapestries, and here the panes were purple. The third was green throughout, and so were the casements. The fourth was furnished and litten with orange – the fifth with white – the sixth with violet. The seventh apartment was closely shrouded in black velvet tapestries that hung all over the ceiling and down the walls, falling in heavy folds upon a carpet of the same material and hue. But, in this chamber only, the color of the windows failed to correspond with the decorations. The panes here were scarlet – a deep blood color. Now in no one of the seven apartments was there any lamp or candelabrum, amid the profusion of golden ornaments that lay scattered to and fro or depended from

...The Masque of the Red Death, continued.

the roof. There was no light of any kind emanating from lamp or candle within the suite of chambers. But in the corridors that followed the suite, there stood, opposite to each window, a heavy tripod, bearing a brazier of fire that projected its rays through the tinted glass and so glaringly illumined the room. And thus were produced a multitude of gaudy and fantastic appearances. But in the western or black chamber the effect of the fire-light that streamed upon the dark hangings through the blood-tinted panes, was ghastly in the extreme, and produced so wild a look upon the countenances of those who entered, that there were few of the company bold enough to set foot within its precincts at all.

It was in this apartment, also, that there stood against the western wall, a gigantic clock of ebony. Its pendulum swung to and fro with a dull, heavy, monotonous clang; and when its minute-hand made the circuit of the face, and the hour was to be stricken, there came forth from the brazen lungs of the clock a sound which was clear and loud and deep and exceedingly musical, but of so peculiar a note and emphasis that, at each lapse of an hour, the musicians in the orchestra were constrained to pause, momentarily, in their performance, to harken to the sound; and thus the waltzers perforce ceased their evolutions; and there was a brief disconcert of the whole gay company; and, while the chimes of the clock yet rang, it was observed that the giddiest grew pale, and that the more aged and sedate passed their hands over their brows as if in confused reverie or meditation. But when the echoes had fully ceased, a light laughter at once pervaded the assembly; the musicians looked at each other and smiled as if at their own nervousness and folly, and made whispering vows, each to the other, that the next chiming of the clock should produce in them no similar emotion; and then, after the lapse of sixty minutes, (which embrace three thousand and six hundred seconds of the Time that flies,) there came yet another chiming of the clock, and then were the same disconcert and tremulousness and meditation as before.

But, in spite of these things, it was a gay and magnificent revel. The tastes of the duke were peculiar. He had a fine eye for colors and effects. He disregarded the decora of mere fashion. His plans were bold and fiery, and his conceptions glowed with barbaric lustre. There are some who would have thought him mad. His followers felt that he was not. It was necessary to hear and see and touch him to be sure that he was not.

He had directed, in great part, the moveable embellishments of the seven chambers, upon occasion of this great fête, and it was his own guiding taste which had given character to the costumes of the masqueraders. Be sure they were grotesque. There were much glare and glitter and piquancy and phantasm – much of what has been since seen in "Hernani." There were arabesque figures with unsuited limbs and appointments. There were delirious fancies such as the madman fashions. There was much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the bizarre, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust. To and fro in the seven chambers there stalked, in fact, a multitude of dreams. And these – the dreams – writhed in and about, taking hue from the rooms, and causing the wild music of the orchestra to seem as the echo of their steps. And, anon, there strikes the ebony clock which stands in the hall of the velvet. And then, momentarily, all is still, and all is silent save the voice of the clock. The dreams are stiff-frozen as they stand. But the echoes of the chime die away – they have endured but an instant – and a light, half-subdued laughter floats after them as they depart. And now again the music swells, and the dreams live, and writhe to and fro more merrily than ever, taking hue from the many-tinted windows through which stream the rays from the tripods. But to the chamber which lies most westwardly of the seven there are now none of the maskers who venture; for the night is waning away; and there flows a ruddier light through the blood-colored panes; and the blackness of the sable drapery appals; and to him whose foot falls upon the sable carpet, there comes from the near clock of ebony a muffled peal more solemnly emphatic than any which reaches their ears who indulge in the more remote gaieties of the other apartments.

...*The Masque of the Red Death, continued.*

But these other apartments were densely crowded, and in them beat feverishly the heart of life. And the revel went whirlingly on, until at length there commenced the sounding of midnight upon the clock. And then the music ceased, as I have told; and the evolutions of the waltzers were quieted; and there was an uneasy cessation of all things as before. But now there were twelve strokes to be sounded by the bell of the clock; and thus it happened, perhaps, that more of thought crept, with more of time, into the meditations of the thoughtful among those who revelled. And thus, too, it happened, perhaps, that before the last echoes of the last chime had utterly sunk into silence, there were many individuals in the crowd who had found leisure to become aware of the presence of a masked figure which had arrested the attention of no single individual before. And the rumor of this new presence having spread itself whisperingly around, there arose at length from the whole company a buzz, or murmur, expressive of disapprobation and surprise – then, finally, of terror, of horror, and of disgust.

In an assembly of phantasms such as I have painted, it may well be supposed that no ordinary appearance could have excited such sensation. In truth the masquerade license of the night was nearly unlimited; but the figure in question had out-Heroded Herod, and gone beyond the bounds of even the prince's indefinite decorum. There are chords in the hearts of the most reckless which cannot be touched without emotion. Even with the utterly lost, to whom life and death are equally jests, there are matters of which no jest can be properly made. The whole company, indeed, seemed now deeply to feel that in the costume and bearing of the stranger neither wit nor propriety existed. The figure was tall and gaunt, and shrouded from head to foot in the habiliments of the grave. The mask which concealed the visage was made so nearly to resemble the countenance of a stiffened corpse that the closest scrutiny must have had difficulty in detecting the cheat. And yet all this might have been endured, if not approved, by the mad revellers around. But the mummer had gone so far as to assume the type of the Red Death. His vesture was dabbled in *blood* – and his broad brow, with all the features of the face, was besprinkled with the scarlet horror.

When the eyes of Prince Prospero fell upon this spectral image (which, with a slow and solemn movement, as if more fully to sustain its rôle, stalked to and fro among the waltzers) he was seen to be convulsed, in the first moment with a strong shudder either of terror or distaste; but, in the next, his brow reddened with rage.

"Who dares?" he demanded hoarsely of the courtiers who stood near him – "who dares insult us with this blasphemous mockery? Seize him and unmask him – that we may know whom we have to hang, at sunrise, from the battlements!" It was in the eastern or blue chamber in which stood the Prince Prospero as he uttered these words. They rang throughout the seven rooms loudly and clearly, for the prince was a bold and robust man, and the music had become hushed at the waving of his hand. It was in the blue room where stood the prince, with a group of pale courtiers by his side. At first, as he spoke, there was a slight rushing movement of this group in the direction of the intruder, who at the moment was also near at hand, and now, with deliberate and stately step, made closer approach to the speaker. But from a certain nameless awe with which the mad assumptions of the mummer had inspired the whole party, there were found none who put forth hand to seize him; so that, unimpeded, he passed within a yard of the prince's person; and, while the vast assembly, as if with one impulse, shrank from the centres of the rooms to the walls, he made his way uninterruptedly, but with the same solemn and measured step which had distinguished him from the first, through the blue chamber to the purple – through the purple to the green – through the green to the orange – through this again to the white – and even thence to the violet, ere a decided movement had been made to arrest him. It was then, however, that the Prince Prospero, maddening with rage and the shame

...*The Masque of the Red Death, conclusion.*

of his own momentary cowardice, rushed hurriedly through the six chambers – while none followed him on account of a deadly terror that had seized upon all. He bore aloft a drawn dagger, and had approached, in rapid impetuosity, to within three or four feet of the retreating figure, when the latter, having attained the extremity of the velvet apartment, turned suddenly round and confronted his pursuer. There was a sharp cry – and the dagger dropped gleaming upon the sable carpet, upon which, instantly afterwards, fell prostrate in death the Prince Prospero. Then, summoning the wild courage of despair, a throng of the revellers at once threw themselves into the black apartment, and, seizing the mummer, whose tall figure stood erect and motionless within the shadow of the ebony clock, gasped in unutterable horror at finding the grave-cerements and corpse-like mask, which they handled with so violent a rudeness, untenanted by any tangible form.

And now was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. He had come like a thief in the night. And one by one dropped the revellers in the blood-bedewed halls of their revel, and died each in the despairing posture of his fall. And the life of the ebony clock went out with that of the last of the gay. And the flames of the tripods expired. And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all.

– END –

Curator's marginalia (read this twice):

Notice — Poe never uses the word "scary." Not once. He uses *scarlet* and *ebony* and *blood-tinted*. He uses *clang* and *brazen lungs* and *muffled peal*. The dread arrives without ever being named.

This is the trick you're going to steal.

FILED · PRIMARY SOURCE

The *thieves'* inventory.

From Poe's "Masque of the Red Death" — capture five of each.

Five colors. — exact words from the text.

e.g., "ebony" / "blood-tinted" / "sable" — not your own descriptions of the colors.

№ 1

№ 2

№ 3

№ 4

№ 5

Five sounds.

e.g., "clang" / "muffled peal" / "chiming" — physical, audible things.

№ 1

№ 2

№ 3

№ 4

№ 5

The single line you'll steal.

One sentence from the Poe whose rhythm or technique you'll borrow for one of your entries. Quote it exactly.

Judge mode. *Detective* mode.

A judge gives you the verdict. A detective gives you the clues. Your reader wants the clues.

x JUDGE MODE

The crown was scary, ancient, and evil-looking. It made me feel cold and creeped out. It was very old and probably cursed. Don't touch it.

WHAT'S WRONG:

- "scary," "evil-looking," "cursed" — labels.
- "made me feel cold" — tells, doesn't show.
- Five banned words in 30 words.
- The reader feels nothing.

✓ DETECTIVE MODE

Rust gnawed at the jagged iron edges. The metal was cold enough to burn the skin. Frost still clung to the inside band, three weeks after retrieval, despite the climate-controlled storage.

WHAT WORKS:

- "Rust gnawed" — active verb. Specific.
- "Cold enough to burn" — sensory inversion.
- "Three weeks after retrieval" — anchors it.
- Reader *feels* the cold. No labels needed.

A judge tells you the room is "scary."
A detective shows you the rust on the lock
and lets you decide.

Your reader is smarter than a label.
— MB

Five rules of the vault.

1. Hunt colors and sounds. *Steal them.*

Poe taught us. "ebony" not "dark." "clang" not "loud."

2. Be a detective, not a judge.

give the reader the *clues*. let them assemble the verdict.

3. Use the "zoom-in" camera.

don't describe a whole bottle. describe the green mold on the gold rim.

4. Don't start every sentence with "The."

~~The book is heavy. The chains are tight.~~ X "Heavy chains bind the book shut." ✓

5. Use the five senses. *All of them.*

sound. touch. *smell*. the smell is what separates the pros.

Field notes.

CURATOR / DATE

ARTIFACT

REQUIRED MOOD

☐ A ☐ B ☐ C

1. Physical evidence. — the detective check.

Material? Texture? Damage? Be specific. Don't write "old."

MATERIAL

TEXTURE

DAMAGE / DECAY

2. Sensory check. — close your eyes. stand next to it.

Temperature, sound, smell. The smell is what separates the pros.

TEMPERATURE

SOUND

SMELL

3. The backstory. — make it dangerous.

Where was it found? Who last touched it? Why is it dangerous?

4. Three muscle verbs.

Strong, active. No "was" or "were." (e.g., gnaw, choke, leak, anchor, freeze.)

5. Containment protocol. — how to stop it from hurting anyone.

Lead box? Glass case? Underwater? Iron tongs? Be specific.

Catalog *entry*.

ENTRY TITLE · (e.g., "The Iron Crown")

I. Physical Analysis.

Materials, dimensions, decay. Active verbs. No "was."

II. Sensory Observation.

Temperature, sound, smell. Make the reader feel the room.

III. Historical Acquisition Note.

Where it was found. Who last touched it. Why it is dangerous.

IV. Containment Protocol.

How it must be stored. Temperature, lining, handling restrictions.

Field notes (*brainstorming*).

Before writing the entry, the curator looked at the object and wrote this:

ATMOSPHERE GOAL: ***Paranoia, Greed, and Sickness.***

The Coin of Avarice.



- ▶ **The Look:** It's gold, but soft. I can dent it with my fingernail. Edges are sharp like a saw.
- ▶ **The Damage:** There is a dark spot in the middle that looks like a bruise.
- ▶ **The Sound:** If you listen closely, it sounds like a heartbeat.
- ▶ **The Feel:** It is hot. Not just warm, but hot like a fever.
- ▶ **Muscle Verbs to use:** Gnaw, Thrum, Grip.

→ **notice:** not a single "scary." just clues. turn the page to see how these notes become a sworn entry.

★ STEP 2: THE FINAL ENTRY · WHAT "RIGHT" LOOKS LIKE

The Coin of Avarice.

Mood: Paranoia, Greed, Sickness | Sample, Vault Archive



I. Physical Analysis. The object appears to be a standard currency disc, but the gold is soft enough to retain the dent of a fingernail. The edges are not smooth; they are serrated, sharp enough to draw blood if gripped too tightly. Tarnish spreads from the center like a dark bruise.

II. Sensory Observation. The coin is unnaturally warm, matching the exact temperature of a human fever. In a silent room, a faint, rhythmic thrum is audible, mimicking a rapid heartbeat. Prolonged contact causes the skin to itch.

III. Historical Acquisition Note. Recovered from the estate of Lord Blackwood in 1893. Blackwood was found deceased in his vault, having barricaded the door from the inside. He had starved to death despite ample food supplies in the main house. The coin was found **clutched** in his rigor-mortis grip; it took three archivists to pry his fingers open.

IV. Containment Protocol. Must be stored in a lead-lined box with no viewing window. Personnel are forbidden from touching the item with bare skin. All transport requires iron tongs.

Director's note: Active verbs — *gnawed, worried, gripped, thrum*. Zero banned words. The reader feels the fever without being told. **This is the bar.**

Field notes (*brainstorming*).

Before writing the entry, the curator looked at the object and wrote this:

ATMOSPHERE GOAL: ***Drowning, Sorrow, and Decay.***

The Weeping Mirror.



- ▶ **The Look:** The wood is wet and bloated. The glass is cloudy.
- ▶ **The Damage:** Black mold is growing in the corners. The silver on the back is peeling off.
- ▶ **The Smell:** Smells like old ocean water and salt.
- ▶ **The Feel:** Cold and slimy.
- ▶ **Muscle Verbs to use:** Choke, Fracture, Weep.

→ **notice:** the curator never wrote "haunted." just *wet, bloated, cold, slimy, peeling.* the dread arrives anyway.

★ STEP 2: THE FINAL ENTRY · ENTRY № 02

The Weeping Mirror.

Mood: Drowning, Sorrow, Decay | Sample, Vault Archive



I. Physical Analysis. The frame consists of grey driftwood, bloated and soft from centuries of water damage. Black mold chokes the intricate carvings at the corners. The glass surface is not clear; the silver backing has peeled away in jagged flakes, leaving the reflection fractured and grey.

II. Sensory Observation. The object smells strongly of brine and stagnant salt water. It is cold to the touch, leaving a slimy residue on gloves. Occasionally, the sound of dripping water echoes from the glass, even when the surface is dry.

III. Historical Acquisition Note. Salvaged from the submerged ruins of the Argyle coastal manor during low tide. The manor had slid into the sea during a storm fifty years prior. Two members of the transport team reported hearing faint, choked sobbing from inside the crate during the night shift.

IV. Containment Protocol. The object must be kept in a humidity-controlled chamber lined with silica-gel packets. A drain must be installed beneath the display case to manage the saltwater weeping from the frame.

Director's note: Notice — the word "*haunted*" never appears. The mood arrives anyway. **This is the bar.**

The Director's review.

File № CC-001
Re: Final mark

CRITERIA	FILED · 4 pts	REVISION · 3 pts	SPIKED · 2 / 1 pt
1. Detective Work – the Poe highlights	Specific colors ("scarlet," "ebony") and sounds ("clang," "peal") highlighted. No random adjectives.	Most colors and sounds caught, but some random adjectives slipped in.	Few or no highlights. Missed the color/sound system entirely.
2. Matching the Mood – Cold / Heat / Weight	Crown reads cold. Vial reads feverish. Codex reads heavy. Each entry produces its mood without naming it.	Two of three moods land. The third is generic ("scary" without specificity).	Descriptions are interchangeable. Mood theme ignored.
3. Banned-Word Audit – the law of the Vault	Zero banned words used. Active verbs throughout ("rust ate" not "was rusty").	1–2 banned words slipped in. Mostly active verbs.	3+ banned words. Heavy reliance on "was/is" verbs.
4. Sentence Variety – the "robot test"	No two sentences in a row start with the same word. Some sentences are short, some are long.	A few sentences start with the same word back-to-back. Most flow well.	Many — or almost all — sentences start with "The" or "It." Reads choppy or robotic.

SCORE CONVERSION

- 15–16 pts** Filed in the Vault permanent archive. (A)
12–14 pts Filed pending minor revisions. (B)
09–11 pts Returned for major revision. (C)
00–08 pts Spiked. See the Director.

TOTAL SCORE

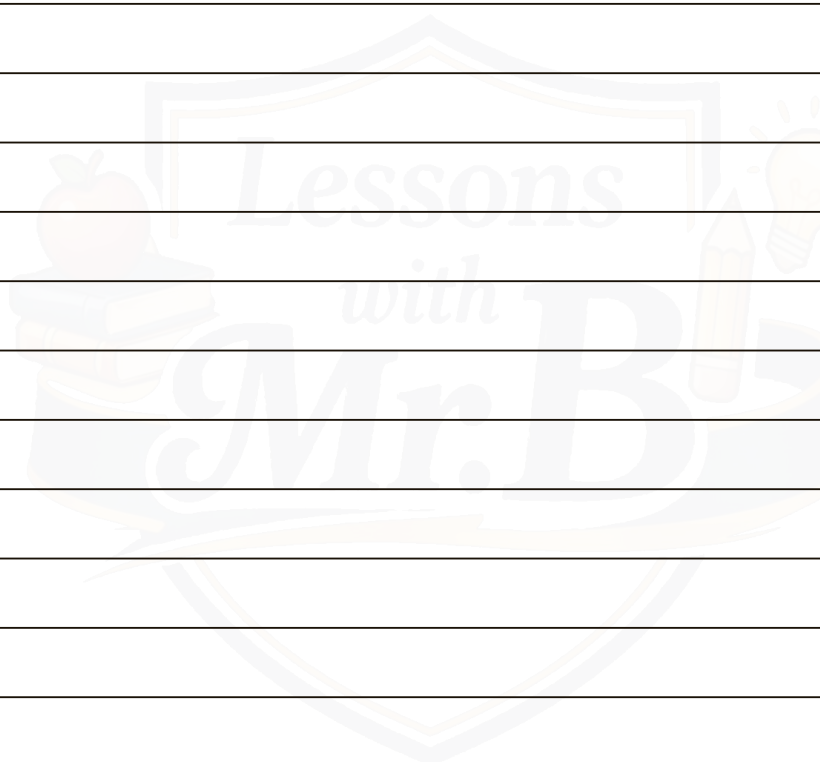
_____ / 16

DIRECTOR'S SIGNATURE

X _____

Notes *to self.*

What worked. What didn't. What you'll do differently next time.





VAULT · SEALED

The Curator's Catalog

FILE № CC-001 · FILED IN THE ARCHIVE

There are more folders on the desk.

More artifacts, more drafts, more worksheets that don't look like worksheets. Pick the next one.

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