

## The Raven

*Based on the poem by Edgar Allan Poe*

One dreary midnight in the middle of a bleak December, I sat and read quietly in front of a dying fire; each book telling me a story from days gone by. The idea was simple - by burying myself in my books, I might manage to forget my sorrow for my sweet Lenore. Even as I read, I could feel my eyes drooping. Suddenly, I was woken from my slumber by the sound of somebody - something - gently tapping at my chamber door. Startled, I repeated to myself that it was a visitor, and nothing more.

My first thought was a concern that the visitor may have been knocking for a while. "Sir, or madam, please forgive me. I was napping when you came rapping at my door," I muttered solemnly as I opened the door. Nothing. Darkness stared back at me. I stared back, afraid, envisioning terrible things in the night. Silence enveloped me. "Lenore?" I whispered. Out of the blackness, the night echoed back "Lenore!"

I waited to no avail, listening for anything further.

Inside me, my soul burned. I turned and sprinted back into my chamber and slammed the door. Not a moment had passed before I heard another tapping - this time louder than before. I spun on my heels and turned to face the window lattice. Once again, I reassured myself that it was just the wind, and nothing more. However, I was eager to explore and opened the window. In stepped a stately raven. He showed no obeisance; instead, he soared over to the bust above my door and sat there quietly, saying nothing but giving the sternest of looks.

"Though I am bald," I said with a quiver, "I am no coward. Tell me what your name is."

"Nevermore," said the raven with such feeling that I felt he had poured his entire soul into one word.

I don't know which shocked me more - the fact that there was such an ebony bird sat above my chamber door, or that it had spoken so plainly.

"You will not be the first friend to fly away tomorrow," I muttered sadly, remembering all those who had left me before. Not least, my sweet Lenore.

All the wretched bird could say was, "Nevermore."

I pulled a seat over to the door and sat down heavily. Confused and growing angry, I set about thinking

what this ominous bird of yore might mean when it croaked “Nevermore.” Hours passed as I sat there, bathed in lamp-light and my head resting back on the cushion of the seat and as the raven stared into my core. As if from nowhere, a heavenly scent wafted through the room. A familiar scent. I could easily have believed that my beloved was in the room with me.

Cursing at the devil sent to tempt me, I stood in a rage and screamed. It sat and stared and said, “Nevermore.”

No matter what threats of damnation or how deeply I implored it to explain its presence, I only ever heard the same response - “Nevermore.”

In the end, I took to ordering the damned fiend to leave. “Never return,” I shouted, “and make sure you leave no trace that you were here. Leave now and let me return to my loneliness.” I shouted until my throat was dry, and my voice a whisper.

Quoth the raven, “Nevermore.”

That night was many years ago and yet, to this day, still the raven is sitting on the stone bust above my chamber door. Every night, I curse his dark shadow in the lamp-light and shiver at his eyes: a grim reflection of a demon. In my heart, I know that now more than ever, the sadness for my lost Lenore, will be lifted nevermore.



## VOCABULARY FOCUS

1. Find a phrase that shows that the man was covered in light from a lamp.
2. Which word tells you how strongly the man asked the raven to explain why it was there?
3. What does the word “ebony” tell us about the bird?
4. In the phrase “Not least, my sweet Lenore”, what does the word **least** mean?
5. Rewrite the sentence “I waited to no avail”, replacing the word **avail** with a synonym.
6. Find the definition of the word **obeisance**.

## VIPERS QUESTIONS

I

When the man said he was shocked because “it had spoken so plainly”, why was that?

E

Explain how you know that the man wanted the bird to leave.

R

Which word does the raven speak each time it is spoken to?

E

Explain how the man felt towards Lenore, and how you know this.

Answers:

1. Bathed in lamp-light
2. Implored
3. That it is black in colour
4. Lenore leaving him was one of the most important people to leave
5. I waited but it was no help - or similar
6. Showing a large amount of respect

I: He didn't expect a bird to speak

E: He screamed and shouted at it, begged it to leave and tried to chase it away

R: Nevermore

E: He talks about her lovingly, refers to her as his sweet Lenore and talks of trying to forget her