

"I love the examples of how people's minds work and all the charts and diagrams." Charlotte, 13



THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE

EDGAR ALLAN POE

Here is a test, a puzzle for you. It is a faithful account of two most gruesome murders. Can you work out what actually happened in the early hours of one fateful morning in the Rue Morgue?

Before you start, here are a few tips. To be a good detective you need the same skills as a good card-player. You must consider and examine every detail, not just the obvious ones. You have to observe every change in a person's face, everything they say, everything they do and you must always expect the unexpected. And finally, you must remember it all.

In this most strange tale, you'll see a friend of mine at work. He has an astonishingly analytical mind. So, pit your own powers of analysis against his – and against mine. Can you solve the mystery of the murders in the Rue Morgue?



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Retold by Gill Tavner
Illustrated by Felix Bennett



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THE CHARACTERS



Monsieur Auguste Dupin

Intrigued by two recent murders, this young man attempts to use his sharp analytical skills to discover what happened in the Rue Morgue.

The narrator

He is keen to set you a challenge, and invites you to pit *your* analytical skills against those of his friend, Dupin.



You – the reader

How strong are your powers of analysis? Can you read minds?

Can you beat Dupin to an explanation of the gruesome events in the Rue Morgue?



The murderer

Two brutal murders for which there is no apparent motive. Escape when there is no means of escape. The murderer has the police confounded.

A sailor

Why is he so anxious when he visits Dupin's apartment?





THE MURDERS IN THE RUE MORGUE

The world's most puzzling mysteries – what song the Syrens sang, for example, or what name Achilles assumed when he hid himself among women – can still be guessed at. They may even yet be solved.

Do you enjoy solving puzzles? Do you like crosswords, sudoku and logic puzzles? How about a game of chess or draughts? Maybe you enjoy working out 'whodunnit' in thrillers or detective stories before anyone else can.

If it's not something that you particularly enjoy, perhaps you know somebody who does. You may even know somebody who is extremely good at these sorts of things.

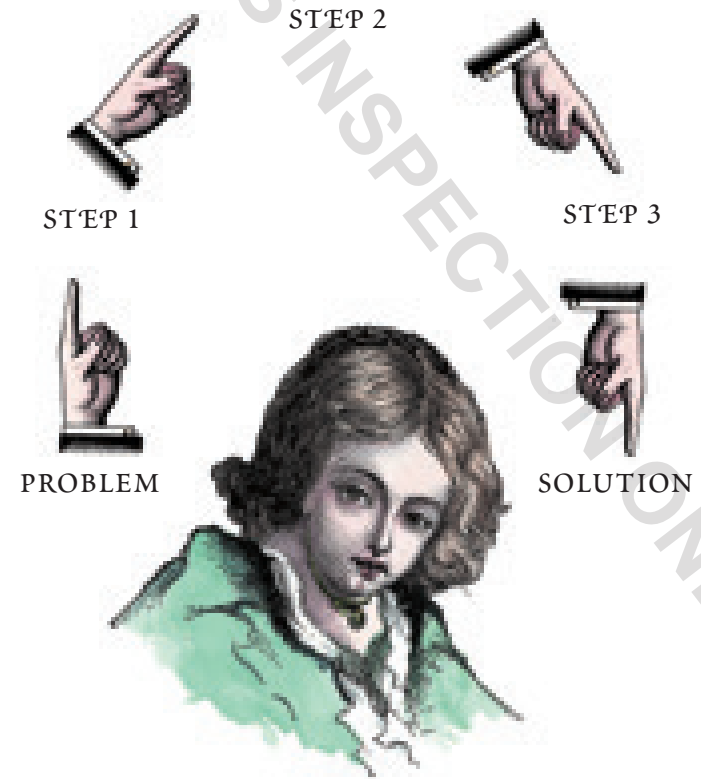
Quite often it seems to the rest of us that a person who is unusually good at puzzles, or is a good detective, is gifted with a sixth sense.

It seems as though they can just 'feel' the solution, as though they are 'inspired'. We can imagine that their mind works a bit like this:

MYSTERIOUS INSPIRATION



However, recent experiences are leading me to believe that this is not the case. In fact, quite contradicting the theory of 'inspiration', I would now argue that the minds of such people depend more upon logic than upon inspiration, like this:



of Poe's death, at the age of only forty, is not known. It is possible that he was a victim of cooping – a brutal kidnapping and drugging by which people were forced to vote a particular way in elections. However, this is not certain, and other causes such as tuberculosis or a brain haemorrhage are also possible.

As a writer, Poe is now best known for his *Tales of Mystery and Imagination*, of which *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* is one of the more famous. However, most of his life he earned money as a literary critic and assistant editor of periodicals. Although already a prolific writer of poetry and prose, it wasn't until the publication in 1845 of his poem *The Raven* that he became a household name.

Poe is considered to be the originator of the detective genre of fiction, with *The Murders in the Rue Morgue* being the first example. The word 'detective' didn't even exist in the English language at the time. Arthur Conan Doyle, the creator of Sherlock Holmes, once asked, rhetorically, 'Where was the detective story until

Poe breathed the breath of life into it?' Sherlock Holmes' methods of deduction are clearly influenced by those of Monsieur Auguste Dupin. After his introduction in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, Dupin also features in Poe's *The Mystery of Marie Roget* and *The Purloined Letter*.

The analytical process in which Dupin works can be seen as evidence of Poe's rejection of transcendentalism, a popular philosophy in the USA at the time. Transcendentalism valued intuition and spirituality above the physical and empirical. The extract below, taken from Poe's description of an analytical man early in *The Murders in the Rue Morgue*, argues his case: 'He is fond of enigmas, of conundrums, of hieroglyphics; exhibiting in his solutions of each a degree of acumen which appears to the ordinary apprehension preternatural. His results, brought about by the very soul and essence of method, have, in truth, the whole air of intuition.'

He is arguing that real analytical skill can often seem almost supernatural, although it is completely the opposite. In spite of this, Poe's