Poe’s Theory of the Short Story
Horror, Romance, or Tale of Ratiocination (the process of exact thinking)

According to Poe, a short story should …

... be able to be read in one sitting

... contain a unified plot and conflict. The plot consists of the complication which is carefully built, the climax which is sharply defined, and the denouement which is rapid and brief.

... create a single effect and remain true to it from the opening sentence to the concluding sentence.

... use evocative language to create the mood

... pay strict attention to detail.

... be a general and gradual acquisition of knowledge.

Literary Conventions:

- Narrator who is not named.
- Narrator is a monomaniac
- Narrator kills for an insignificant reason
- Narrator claims he is not mad
- Narrator says the opposite of what he means
- Narrator gives himself away
- Narrator buries his victims
- Geographical movement downward
- Use of color and/or numbers
- Use of classical allusions
- Horror is grotesque (physical) or arabesque (mental)
- Dream experience which occurs in the mind.