**Reading Pointers for Sharper Insights to Poe’s Work**

As you read these stories and poems, pay attention to the following:

**Poe's depiction of death:**

* Death is not only inevitable, but it also can be beautiful, especially as it is portrayed in the poems.
* Death can be horrific when someone realizes it is imminent.
* Guilt, hatred, or revenge are appropriate justifications for murder.
* Impending death can be postponed, but not always.
* Death may actually enhance a loved one's beauty.

**Poe's portrayal of love and beauty, especially in the poems:**

* Love is chosen by the individual, not determined merely by fate.
* Love has historical, sometimes mythological, references.
* Love has no boundaries, not even in death.
* Beauty is only an idea, one that even death cannot weaken.
* Beauty in its ideal form cannot be attained.

**Poe's innovative and unusual use of words in both genres:**

* Words are frequently used for the way they sound, as well as for their meanings.
* Poe's rhythm and internal rhyme becomes almost hypnotic in many poems.
* The difficult vocabulary reflects the style of Poe's time.
* Every important word is intended to evoke a mood or atmosphere in the reader, and Poe aimed for the same effect regardless of whether the work was prose or poetry.

**Poe's ability to instill fear in the reader, primarily in the short stories:**

* Poe builds suspense throughout the stories, revealing some facts while withholding others.
* Because the element of danger is usually present, the reader can feel the intensity of the emotions.
* The narration is frequently first person, which makes the reader's connection to the story more intimate.
* Poe's descriptions are usually minutely detailed to give a sense of verisimilitude to the stories, despite their supernatural atmosphere.
* The use of irony and black humor is common.
* Gothic elements are usually prominent in his writing: the supernatural, evil animals, and dark, gloomy settings
* Poe's depictions of how the human mind works heighten a reader's connection to the story.
* The surprise endings provide a reason to go back through the work to look for clues missed on the first reading