

Name:

Date:

**Before Reading Activity**

What's your favorite color?

Read through the following colors. What concrete nouns come to mind when you think of each color? What other meanings can these colors possess? An example has been done for you.

Color	Concrete Nouns	Other Meanings
Yellow	Sunflowers, Sun, Chick, Banana, Lemon, Daffodils	Happiness, Hope, Friendship
Blue		
Purple		
Green		
Orange		
White		
Violet		
Black		
Red		

Name:

Before Reading Journaling

Date:

Answer each of the following questions in a minimum of three sentences each.

1. What are the privileges of being wealthy? List the advantages and explain how they are beneficial.

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2. What are some things money can't buy? How can you acquire these things if not money?

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3. Can money keep you safe? Why or why not?

**PREVIEW**

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Name:

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### "The Masque of the Red Death"

by Edgar Allan Poe

The "Red Death" had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been 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 bleeding 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 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 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.

Define pestilence:

*dissolution: the shutting down of the body*

What is the "red death"?

Define sagacious:

Describe the abbey (the building) where Prince Prospero is staying. Why does he stay there and with whom does he stay with?

Define folly:

*The Improvisatori: were a group of Italian improvisational poets*

Why does the Prince decide to throw a party?

It was a voluptuous scene, that masquerade. But first let me tell of the rooms in which it was held. These 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 colour 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 lighted 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 colour of the windows failed to correspond with the decorations. The panes here were scarlet—a deep blood colour. 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 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 illuminated 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.

Define voluptuous:

How many rooms are in Prince Prospero's castle?  
How is each one unique?

*hue*: a color or shade

What was irregular about the arrangement of the rooms?

What is different about room number 7?

*candelabrum*: a large branched candlestick

Define gaudy:

Define ghastly:

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 the minute-hand made the circuit of the face, and the hour was to be stricken, there came 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 of 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 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 colours 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 movable embellishments of the seven chambers, upon occasion of this great *fête*; and it was his own guiding taste which had given character to 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.

*pendulum*: a swinging weight in a clock used as its timekeeping element

*monotonous*: repetitious, lacking in variation in tone or pitch

Define disconcert:

What figurative language is used here? What is its significance? "...when the minute-hand made the circuit of the face, and the hour was to be stricken, there came from the brazen lungs of the clock a sound which was clear and loud and deep and exceedingly musical..."

How did people react when the clock struck every hour? How did it make them feel?

Define tremulousness:

Define revel:

What is odd about Prince Prospero?

*fête*: celebration

Define grotesque:

*piquancy*: the quality of being pleasantly stimulating or exciting

There were 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, for a moment, 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 redder light through the blood-coloured 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 indulged in the more remote *gaieties* of the other apartments.

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 rumour 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.

*wanton*: frolicking in an unrestrained way

Define writhed:

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How is the masquerade like a dream? Use an example from the text.

*sable*: black

Define emphatic:

gaieties: the state or quality of being lighthearted or cheerful

What happens when the ebony clock strikes midnight?

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How do the guests feel about the masked figure?

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Define disapprobation:

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 licence 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 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 the Prince Prospero fell upon this spectral image (which, with a slow and solemn movement, as if more fully to sustain its role, 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.

*phantasm*: a figment of the imagination; an illusion or apparition

Herod was the King of Judea who according to the Bible ordered the deaths of all male babies in an attempt to kill Jesus. To Out-Herod by definition is to exceed in violence or extravagance

Define jest:

*gaunt*: describes an excessively thin and lean person

Describe the masked figure:

How does Prince Prospero react to the masked figure?

Define blasphemous:

*hoarsely*: in a harsh voice

What does the Prince want the guests to do?

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 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 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.

How do the guests react to the Prince's demand?  
Why?

Define impetuosity:

What type of weapon did Prince Prospero use?

*prostrate: lying stretched out on the ground with one's face downward*

How does the Prince die?

What happens when the revellers seize the masked figure?

*cerements: waxed cloth for wrapping a corpse.*

What can be inferred from the following quote?  
"....And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all."

## Answer Key

### "The Masque of the Red Death"

by Edgar Allan Poe

The "Red Death" had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been 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 bleeding 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 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 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.

Define pestilence:

a fatal epidemic disease

*dissolution*: the shutting down of the body

What is the "red death"?

A fictional disease where one suffers from profuse bleeding and dizziness, then death.

Define sagacious:

having good judgment

Describe the abbey (the building) where Prince Prospero is staying. Why does he stay there and with whom does he stay with?

It was a large castle: impressive, eccentric, with a wall girdled in it. It's full of necessities and entertainers, so that they can quarantine for a prolonged period of time without problems. He stays there to avoid The Red Death and he invited 1,000 friends to join him.

Define folly:

foolish

*The Improvisatori*: were a group of Italian improvisational poets

Why does the Prince decide to throw a party?

To distract himself and his guests from the boredom and fear of their seclusion.

It was a **voluptuous** scene, that masquerade. But first let me tell of the rooms in which it was held. These 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 colour 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 lighted 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 colour of the windows failed to correspond with the decorations. The panes here were scarlet—a deep blood colour. 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 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.

Define **voluptuous**:

luxurious and appealing

How many rooms are in Prince Prospero's castle?  
How is each one unique?

There are 7 rooms, each a different color: blue, purple, green, orange, white, violet, black. Each room is decorated entirely in that color, even the windows.

*hue*: a color or shade

What was irregular about the arrangement of the rooms?

They were arranged in a row from east to west.  
"The apartments were so irregularly disposed that the vision embraced but little more than one at a time." You could only see one room at a time from the room you were standing in.

What is different about room number 7?

Room number 7 is the black room. Unlike the other rooms, the windows did not correspond with the color. Instead, they were a deep red like blood.

*candelabrum*: a large branched candlestick

Define **gaudy**:

extravagantly bright or showy

Define **ghastly**:

causing great horror or fear

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 the minute-hand made the circuit of the face, and the hour was to be stricken, there came 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 of 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 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 colours 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 movable embellishments of the seven chambers, upon occasion of this great *fête*; and it was his own guiding taste which had given character to 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.

*pendulum*: a swinging weight in a clock used as its timekeeping element

*monotonous*: repetitious, lacking in variation in tone or pitch

Define **disconcert**: an unsettling feeling

What figurative language is used here? What is its significance? "...when the minute-hand made the circuit of the face, and the hour was to be stricken, there came from the brazen lungs of the clock a sound which was clear and loud and deep and exceedingly musical..."

The ebony clock is personified (personification). The "lungs" of the clock make a deep, loud, and peculiar noise. These lines suggest that the clock is alive and it is boldly reminding guests that time is fleeting; they are getting closer to death.

How did people react when the clock struck every hour? How did it make them feel?

The guests and musicians felt controlled to stop and compelled to listen. They would pause momentarily in a nervous, unsettling manner; some grew pale. After the sound ceased, they would laugh at their foolishness, but when another hour would go by, they would be frightened by the clock again.

Define **tremulousness**:

The act of trembling with fear and nervousness

Define **revel**:

lively and noisy enjoyment, especially with drinking and dancing

What is odd about Prince Prospero?

He has a unique taste in art and fashion. The decor of the party was intense and so bizarre that it was almost uncultured; the Prince is a wild, artistic genius who enjoys concepts that are repulsive and exciting to look at.

*fête*: celebration

Define **grotesque**:

comically or repulsively ugly or distorted

*piquancy*: the quality of being pleasantly stimulating or exciting

There were 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, for a moment, 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 redder light through the blood-coloured 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 indulged in the more remote *gaieties* of the other apartments.

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 rumour 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.

*wanton*: frolicking in an unrestrained way

Define writhed: making twisting movements or contortions of the body to the rhythm of the music

How is the masquerade like a dream? Use an example from the text.

The music is wild, the lighting is unusual, and people are having fun dancing and moving in delirium. “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.” There is no light in any of the rooms which makes it feel like they are in a dream. Instead, a tripod with fire illuminates light through the windows and creates a distorted light effect.

*sable*: black

Define emphatic: showing or giving emphasis; expressing something forcibly and clearly

*gaieties*: the state or quality of being lighthearted or cheerful

What happens when the ebony clock strikes midnight?

A masked individual arrives at the party that no one has ever seen before.

How do the guests feel about the masked figure?

They are terrified and disgusted by the masked individual.

Define disapprobation: strong disapproval

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 licence 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 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 the Prince Prospero fell upon this spectral image (which, with a slow and solemn movement, as if more fully to sustain its role, 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.

*phantasm*: a figment of the imagination; an illusion or apparition

Herod was the King of Judea who according to the Bible ordered the deaths of all male babies in an attempt to kill Jesus. To Out-Herod by definition is to exceed in violence or extravagance

Define *jest*: a joke

*gaunt*: describes an excessively thin and lean person

Describe the masked figure:

He looks like a corpse, thin, tall, and scary. His face is bloodstained like he's a victim of the red death; he also has blood on his clothes.

How does Prince Prospero react to the masked figure?

He is appalled and angered that the masked figure would jokingly dress as the red death. He finds it extremely insulting.

Define **blasphemous**:

Describes something that is sacrilegious or extremely disrespectful against God or anything sacred/holy

*hoarsely*: in a harsh voice

What does the Prince want the guests to do?

"Seize him and unmask him—that we may know whom we have to hang, at sunrise, from the battlements!"

He wants his guests to all lunge toward him, detain him, and remove his mask.

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 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 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.

How do the guests react to the Prince's demand?  
Why?

No one seizes the masked figure. They are too afraid.

Define impetuosity:

To do something in a way that is impulsive, passionate, and headstrong

What type of weapon did Prince Prospero use?

A dagger

*prostrate*: lying stretched out on the ground with one's face downward

How does the Prince die?

He dies of the red death.

What happens when the revelers seize the masked figure?

There is nothing behind the mask, "untenanted by any tangible form," and then they drop dead one by one.

*cerements*: waxed cloth for wrapping a corpse.

What can be inferred from the following quote?

"...And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all."

There are no limits as to what death can do; it can and will conquer all. Nobody escapes death.

Name:

Date:

**"The Masque of the Red Death" by Edgar Allan Poe**  
**After Reading Questions**

1. What are the symptoms of the Red Death? How long does it take to die?

**PREVIEW**

2. An **allegory** is a story or poem that implies a hidden meaning about a real-world issues (typically a moral or political one). What message does Poe convey in "The Masque of the Red Death" (published in 1842)? What is it an allegory for?

**NOT FOR EDUCATIONAL USE**

3. Why do the party guests wear masks? What does it symbolize?

**PREVIEW**

4. What does the masked figure symbolize?

**NOT FOR EDUCATIONAL USE**

6. What does the location of the black chamber at the western end of the suite suggest?

7. What does the gigantic clock of ebony symbolize?

**PREVIEW**

8. Did Prince Prospero and the others deserve their fate? Why or why not?

**NOT FOR EDUCATIONAL USE**

9. What emotion do you think Poe was trying to provoke from readers? What is the mood?

10. Write an objective summary using all of the words in the box below.

castle  
suffer

disease  
masquerade

revelry  
fear

**PREVIEW**

**NOT FOR EDUCATIONAL USE**

## Answer Key

### "The Masque of the Red Death" by Edgar Allan Poe After Reading Questions

1. What are the symptoms of the Red Death? How long does it take to die?

The symptoms are sharp pains, sudden dizziness, profuse bleeding at the pores, and death. It takes half an hour to die.

2. An **allegory** is a story or poem that implies a hidden meaning about a real-world issues (typically a moral or political one). What message does Poe convey in "The Masque of the Red Death" (published in 1842)? What is it an allegory for?

Prince Prospero represents the wealthy and privileged upper class. He is able to build a castle and invite his friends to a party where they are supposedly safe from the plague. However, the masked figure infiltrates the party and kills everyone, sending the message that wealth cannot protect one from death. Poe may be comparing the red death to tuberculosis or any plague that has become an epidemic. In medieval times, the plague was responsible for the deaths of millions of people in Europe.

3. Why do the party guests wear masks? What does it symbolize?

The revelers are wearing masks and costumes to hide from the disease, the Red Death. The masks symbolize how the partygoers attempt to avoid death, but are unsuccessful.

4. What does the masked figure symbolize?

The individual represents the Red Death. In the end, nobody can escape death and the disease (or masked figure) kills everyone.

5. What type of character is Prince Prospero? Heroic? Foolish? Explain.

Prince Prospero is selfish and entitled. He spends his time drinking, dancing, laughing, and taking part in the lavish pleasures of life while outside, the world is suffering greatly from the Red Death. He is having fun and is not trying to save the people he rules for (aside from his friends that he invites to his gigantic castle). Some people may see him as slightly heroic, as he plunges at the masked figure to kill him at the end and his refusal to let anything get him down shows he has a resilient spirit.

6. What does the location of the black chamber at the western end of the suite suggest?

The black chamber is located at the far west side, symbolizing the end of daylight and life.

7. What does the gigantic clock of ebony symbolize?

The clock represents the time remaining in all of their lives. Every hour it strikes, the revellers come closer to the end.

8. Did Prince Prospero and the others deserve their fate? Why or why not?

Answers will vary.

9. What emotion do you think Poe was trying to provoke from readers? What is the mood?

Poe was trying to instill fear, horror, and despair. The atmosphere is foreboding, grim, gruesome, and terrifying.

10. Write an objective summary using all of the words in the box below.

castle  
suffer

disease  
masquerade

revelry  
fear

Answers will vary.