Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher”

Poe believed that all aspects of a story should help to focus on a single effect on the reader. Before reading this story, consider the effect that being in a cemetery by yourself at midnight might have on you. What if you suddenly heard an eerie, inexplicable noise?

p. 307
- define Single Emotional Effect
- define Gothic (4 parts)

As you read the story, notice the details Poe gives about the setting and complete the following.

1. “During the whole of a dull, ___________________, and soundless day in the __________________ of the year…” (p. )

2. “I looked upon the scene before me- …. - with an utter ___________________.” (p. )

3. “Nevertheless, in this mansion of gloom I now proposed to myself a sojourn of weeks. Its proprietor, Roderick Usher, had been one of my boon ____________________ in boyhood; but many years have elapsed since our last meeting.” (p. )

4. How does the narrator hear from Roderick? (p.)

5. “The writer spoke of acute bodily illness – of a __________________________ which oppressed him.”

6. What two things do the peasantry think the term “House of Usher” refer to? (p. )

7. Describe the room that Roderick Usher is staying in. Capture gothic elements here! (p. )

8. “Surely, man had never before so terribly _____________________, in so brief a period, as had Roderick Usher….a __________________________ of complexion, an eye large, liquid, and __________________________ beyond comparison; lips somewhat thin and very __________________________.” (p. )

9. The narrator is struck by Roderick’s excessive nervous agitation. However, he had been prepared for something like this. What had prepared him? (p. )

10. “His action was alternately __________________________ and __________________________.” (p. )

11. Roderick describes his illness to the narrator. What are some of the things he is bothered by? (Name at least 3.) (p. )

12. “He was enchanted by certain superstitious impressions in regard to the _____________ he tenanted, and whence, for many years, he had never __________________________.” (p. )

13. Roderick says that the house itself has “brought upon the _________________ of his existence.” (p. )

14. Who is Roderick’s only living relative? (p. )
15. While they speak, this relative walks through the room, apparently unaware of the narrator. The narrator regarded her with an utter astonishment not unmixed with ________________.” (p. )

16. Madeline’s long lasting illness baffled her doctors. She seemed to lose interest in life and physically she would occasionally experience a cataleptical seizure. What does “cataleptical” mean? (p. )

17. The narrator has been summoned here to help cheer Roderick. However, after spending time with Roderick, he understood “the futility of all attempt at cheering a mind from which darkness…poured forth upon all objects…of the universe in one unceasing radiation of ________________.” (p. )

18. To pass the time, what does Roderick do? (Name at least 2 things.) (p. )

19. What mood is set in stanzas I-IV of “The Haunted Palace”? In stanzas V-VI? (p. )

20. What kinds of books did the narrator and Roderick read? (p. )

21. When Madeline dies, what does Roderick plan to do with the body? Why? (p. )

22. Describe the vault in which the narrator and Roderick place Madeline’s coffin. (p. )

23. As they gaze on Madeline, the narrator commented on her resemblance to Roderick. What does he tell the narrator? (p. )

24. After Madeline’s death, how did Roderick change? (p. )

25. On the 7th or 8th night after Madeline’s death, why couldn’t the narrator sleep? (p. )

26. Roderick is up roaming the house and goes to the narrator’s room. What does he ask the narrator? (p. )

27. To pass the time and take their minds off the storm, the narrator begins to read to Roderick. What is he reading? (p. )

28. In the story that the narrator is reading, Ethelred beats open a wooden door. What does the narrator hear in the house? (p. )

29. In the story that the narrator is reading, the dragon shrieks when Ethelred kills him. What does the narrator hear in the house? (p. )

30. How does Roderick react to these sounds? (p. )

31. What does Roderick say is causing the sounds in the house? (p. )

32. How does Roderick die? (p. )

33. The narrator flees from the house out into the storm. A wild light appears behind him so he turns to see what caused it. What does he witness? (p. )