

2025

HALLOWEEN

&

THE BLACK CAT

BY EDGAR ALLAN POE



Full name

Class

This booklet contains 3 versions of the story. The two first versions are simplified and adapted for learners of English.

For an online version with word explanations, go to

<https://poestories.com/read/blackcat>

You can find numerous other writings by and information on Edgar Allan Poe on the site.

<https://poestories.com/index.php>

For audio versions of the story, go to

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=the+black+cat+edgar+allan+poe+audio

For a short film, go to

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GKN_l6ouswg

Gamers with sufficient money (\$13.99) and an Apple computer can have some fun at the following site

<https://www.macgamestore.com/product/1854/Dark-Tales-Edgar-Allan-Poes-The-Black-Cat-Collectors-Edition/show-all/>

For an analysis of the story, go to

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s0q-6lfAyJQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v9B7LnjwsrY>

Halloween - characters

Match the pictures (1-13) with the words (a-m) in the box.

1. count Dracula
2. devil / Satan
3. Frankenstein's monster
4. ghost
5. goblin

6. grim reaper
7. mummy
8. skeleton
9. vampire

10. werewolf
11. witch
12. wizard
13. zombie

				
1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
				
6.	7.	8.		
				
9.	10.	11.	12.	13.



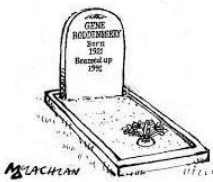
Q: Why didn't the skeleton go to the halloween party?

A: Because he had **no body** to go with.

Halloween - vocabulary

Match the pictures (1-25) with the words (a-y) in the box.

- | | | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------|---------------------|
| a. bat | f. coffin | k. grave yard / cemetery | p. owl | u. spider |
| b. black cat | g. crow | l. haunted castle | q. pumpkin | v. spider web |
| c. broom | h. eyeball | m. jack o lantern | r. tree | w. sweets / candy |
| d. candle | i. grave / tomb | n. lantern | s. scarecrow | x. witch hat |
| e. cauldron | j. grave stone | o. moon | t. skull | y. zombie awakening |

				
1. grave yard / cemetery	2.	3.	4.	5.
				
6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
				
11.	12.	13.	14.	15.
				
16.	17.	18.	19.	20.
				
21.	22.	23.	24.	25.

Find the correct shadow

Be prepared to talk about your choice.



Spot 10 differences.

Be prepared to describe the differences.



‘Allerhellegen’ and ‘Trauliicht’¹

Nights have become significantly longer, leaves are falling, and the last sunny days of autumn are giving way to winds and rain. Nowadays, this is the time when in Luxembourg the dead are being remembered and when an old tradition from the North of the country - the ‘*Trauliicht*’ is being revived and reinstated.



All Saints

In Christian countries, ‘Allerhellegen’ – ‘All Saints’ Day’ - is celebrated on 1 November. It is the feast of all the Christian saints, including those that were not canonised (declared as saints by the church) or whose sanctity is only known to God.

On this occasion, families gather in cemeteries to commemorate their deceased close ones and lay down candles, flowers and wreaths for their sake and memory. This is common practice throughout the country and is accompanied by a mass and the blessing of the graves.

‘Allerséilen’ on 2 November is ‘the day of the souls’. It is dedicated to all the dead who, according to Catholic doctrine, are in purgatory and have not yet been fully united with God.



An activity for young and old: hollowed-out turnips are decorated with grimaces and placed in front of the house to keep evil spirits away.

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The ‘Trauliicht’, a way of driving evil spirits away

In the north of Luxembourg, a particular tradition is currently experiencing a revival: the ‘Trauliicht’. In October and November, people hollow out turnips and ‘decorate’ them with horrible faces. Lit by a candle, these ‘Trauliichter’ are then placed on village walls and close to the windows of homes to protect the respective households against the souls of the dead and evil spirits, which are said to be particularly active on those days.

Until the 1970s the ‘Trauliicht’ was a widespread tradition in the Ardennes in northern Luxembourg. There has been a revival of the practice in the entire country since the 1990s when Halloween, the ‘Americanised’ version, became popular.

While the two variants share the same roots, the ‘Trauliicht’ is a more traditional, less commercial festival than its transatlantic equivalent.

¹ Adapted from [Allerhellegen and Trauliicht - Luxembourg \(public.lu\)](https://luxembourg.public.lu/en/society-and-culture/festivals-and-traditions/all-saints-and-trauliicht.html) - <https://luxembourg.public.lu/en/society-and-culture/festivals-and-traditions/all-saints-and-trauliicht.html>

Read the article and answer the questions.

1. The weather is bad in Luxembourg in autumn.
A ☐ true B ☐ false C ☐ doesn't say

2. The 'Trauliicht' has always been a popular tradition.
A ☐ true B ☐ false C ☐ doesn't say

3. The 'Trauliicht' is a festival that is only celebrated in Luxembourg.
A ☐ true B ☐ false C ☐ doesn't say

4. There are saints that people don't know.
A ☐ true B ☐ false C ☐ doesn't say

5. 'Allerhellegen' is celebrated all over Luxembourg.
A ☐ true B ☐ false C ☐ doesn't say

6. The dead in Purgatory suffer a lot.
A ☐ true B ☐ false C ☐ doesn't say

7. 'Trauliichter' are lamps that are above all used to illuminate houses.
A ☐ true B ☐ false C ☐ doesn't say

8. The 'Trauliicht' tradition is replacing Halloween tradition in Luxembourg.
A ☐ true B ☐ false C ☐ doesn't say

9. Businesses more money with Halloween than with the 'Trauliicht' tradition.
A ☐ true B ☐ false C ☐ doesn't say

10. The 'Trauliicht' and Halloween are related.
A ☐ true B ☐ false C ☐ doesn't say



Q: Why didn't Dracula have any friends ?

A: Because he was a pain in the neck.



The Black cat

A1/A2 VERSION

I was a very quiet boy. I liked reading and writing. My school friends often laughed at me because I was very clever. My parents said I was helpful. I loved animals and my dog adored me. I often took it for a walk in the park and fed the ducks. I visited my grandparents every Saturday, and I helped them in the house and garden. I went to church every Sunday.

Yes, I was a perfect child!

When I was twenty, I met my wife. We worked in the same office, and I saw her every day. She was a pretty girl and I loved her very much. We married young. She liked reading and writing too. She also liked animals. She filled our house with every kind of animal. We had many types of birds: canaries, budgerigars, a parrot and a magpie. They made a lot of noise. We also had goldfish, rabbits, a beautiful dog, a small monkey that talked all the time – and a CAT! The house was like a zoo.

My favourite pet and friend was the cat. It was entirely black. Its name was Pluto. It followed me in the house, in the sitting-room, in the bedroom and in the bathroom. Every time I sat down, it jumped on my knee. Every evening it went to sleep in the kitchen. In the morning it was always asleep in my bed! It was always behind me. When I went out it followed me along the street to my office and to my club. It followed me everywhere! Pluto and I were friends for several years.

Then I began to change. I was always angry and nervous. I didn't want to go out. I didn't want to do anything. Everything annoyed me. I was always bored. Nothing interested me. I didn't like people and I didn't like animals. I didn't like my wife very much either! I was often bad to her and our pets. Pluto was the only animal I avoided.

The only place I went to was my club. I drank a lot and played cards. I often lost. I hated losing! One evening I came home from my club. I was angry and bad tempered. The cat, as usual, walked between my feet purring stupidly. I fell down and hurt my head.

I was furious! I went to the kitchen for a knife. I called the cat and when it came purring to me I took the beast and cut one of its eyes out! The next day I was very sorry for the cat. Pluto recovered but naturally it avoided me. This made me angry again! When I called the cat, it didn't come to me, it went to my wife! I went to a shop and bought some rope. It was difficult



to find the cat so I put some of its favourite food in the kitchen and waited. When it came, I took it, tied the rope round its neck and hung it from a tree in the garden! I was very unhappy and I cried. I stayed with Pluto until it was dead.

The night I hung Pluto, there was a fire in my house. There was smoke everywhere. My wife and I ran into the garden and watched the house burn to the ground. Everything burnt: the furniture, all our clothes and all our belongings. The firemen tried to stop the fire but it was impossible. Everything was destroyed! In the morning, there were a lot of people looking at the only wall not burnt. There was an enormous picture of a cat on the wall! It had a rope around its neck!

I was nasty to the people in my office and to my boss. Finally, I was sacked and I couldn't find another job. I didn't have much money now and we lived in an old house in a dirty part of the town.

After dinner, I usually sat outside my house. One evening, I saw a black object walking towards me. It was a cat! A big black cat not unlike Pluto. The only difference was a small white mark on its neck. I gave the cat some milk. It drank it all. Then it jumped on the stool near me and went to sleep. It didn't go away. It stayed and took Pluto's place.

My wife was happy to have a cat. She didn't know where Pluto was. This cat was very friendly. It always purred when it saw me and followed me around. I disliked the cat because it only had one eye – the same as Pluto. The small white mark on its neck got bigger and bigger. To my horror I saw that the mark was identical to the gallows. It was a nightmare!

One evening I was very nervous, so I went down to the cellar for a bottle of wine. We didn't have much money but I had a few bottles. When I felt particularly depressed, I drank a bottle. My wife came with me and the stupid cat too. It ran between my feet, jumped up and put its claws in my leg. I yelled and dropped the bottle of wine. My precious wine! I picked up an old chair that was in the corner to hit the cat. I missed!

The cat wasn't there. I hit my wife! I called my wife but she didn't move. There was blood on her face. It was terrible! My poor wife was dead!

Where was the cat? I wanted to kill it! I called it but I couldn't find it.

Where could I put my wife's body?

My neighbours always looked out of the windows. I couldn't carry her out of the door. I could put her in the fridge, but it wasn't very big. I could put her down the well in the garden at night, but she might pollute the water. Then I had a brilliant idea! I could put her in the wall. I inspected



the walls in the cellar. The house was old and in one wall the bricks were easy to remove. I worked very slowly and carefully. I took away each brick and made a space in the wall. I put my poor wife's body in the hole and built the wall again. I cleaned the cellar of bits of brick and cement and put the bottles of wine back in the same place. The wall looked exactly the same as the other walls. I was very satisfied with my work!

My work in the cellar was finished, now I wanted to kill the cat. The beast was the cause of all my trouble. I looked in the house and in the garden. I put its favourite food and a saucer of milk in the kitchen. The cat was obviously very frightened and was avoiding me.

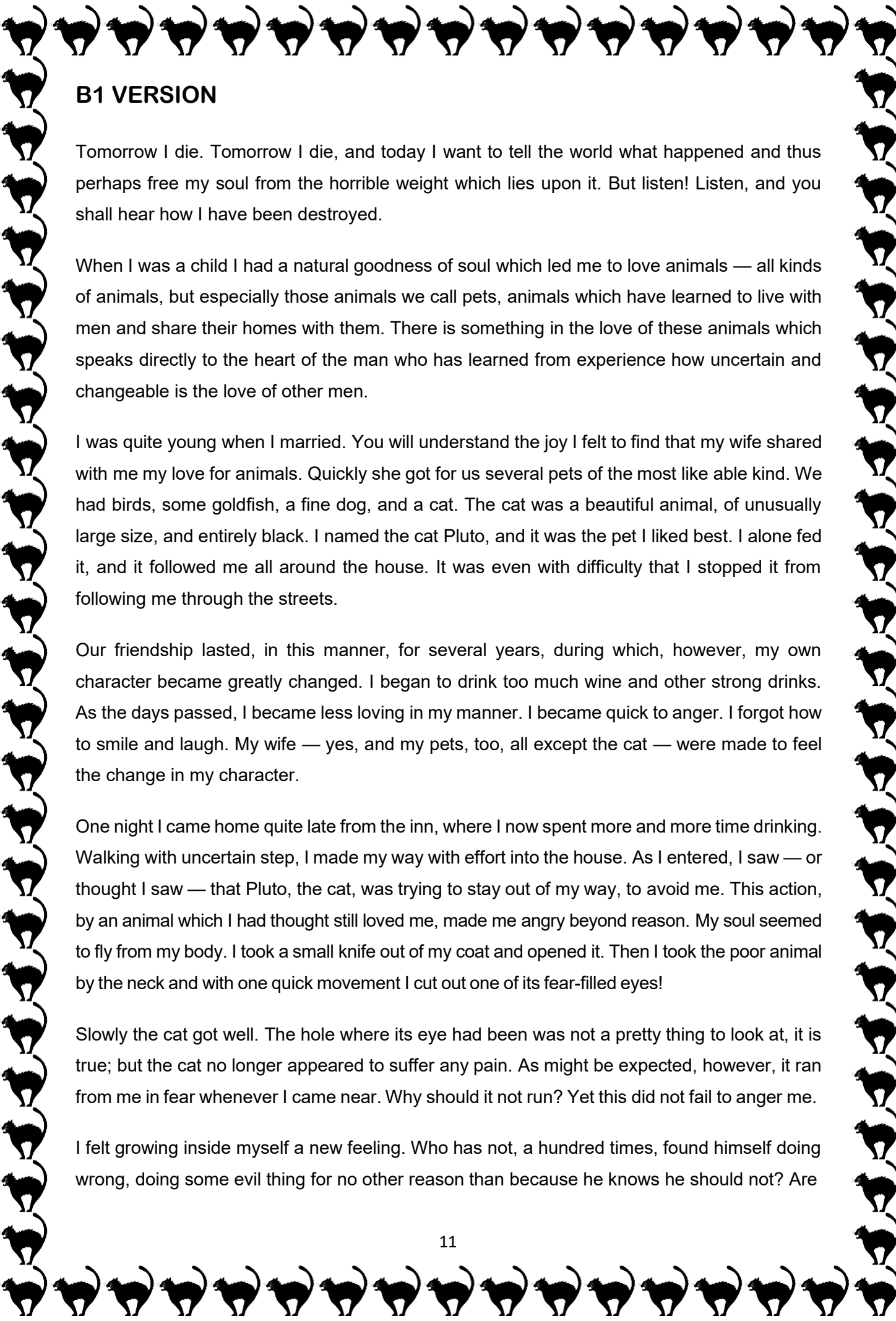
When my neighbours asked about my wife, I said her mother was ill and she was visiting her. A suspecting neighbour informed the police. They came and asked me a few questions, but they went away again quite quickly.

The following day, the police came again. They asked me more questions about my wife. I told them she was with her mother, but they weren't satisfied. They searched the bedroom and the sitting-room. They looked in all the cupboards and wardrobes. They searched the garden and looked down the well. They even looked in the fridge. I wasn't worried. I was absolutely sure that they couldn't find anything.

Then they went down into the cellar!

The police didn't find anything, of course. This time they were completely satisfied. 'We are sorry for searching your house,' they said. 'Some neighbours are very nosy!' 'Not at all. When my wife returns, I shall send her to see you.'

'This is a very nice old house,' said one policeman and with his hand hit the wall that was my wife's tomb! A strange, terrifying noise came from the wall. It was inhuman! The police quickly pulled down the wall and the body of my wife fell out. Sitting on her head was the cat! I had closed the wall with the beast inside!



B1 VERSION

Tomorrow I die. Tomorrow I die, and today I want to tell the world what happened and thus perhaps free my soul from the horrible weight which lies upon it. But listen! Listen, and you shall hear how I have been destroyed.

When I was a child I had a natural goodness of soul which led me to love animals — all kinds of animals, but especially those animals we call pets, animals which have learned to live with men and share their homes with them. There is something in the love of these animals which speaks directly to the heart of the man who has learned from experience how uncertain and changeable is the love of other men.

I was quite young when I married. You will understand the joy I felt to find that my wife shared with me my love for animals. Quickly she got for us several pets of the most like able kind. We had birds, some goldfish, a fine dog, and a cat. The cat was a beautiful animal, of unusually large size, and entirely black. I named the cat Pluto, and it was the pet I liked best. I alone fed it, and it followed me all around the house. It was even with difficulty that I stopped it from following me through the streets.

Our friendship lasted, in this manner, for several years, during which, however, my own character became greatly changed. I began to drink too much wine and other strong drinks. As the days passed, I became less loving in my manner. I became quick to anger. I forgot how to smile and laugh. My wife — yes, and my pets, too, all except the cat — were made to feel the change in my character.

One night I came home quite late from the inn, where I now spent more and more time drinking. Walking with uncertain step, I made my way with effort into the house. As I entered, I saw — or thought I saw — that Pluto, the cat, was trying to stay out of my way, to avoid me. This action, by an animal which I had thought still loved me, made me angry beyond reason. My soul seemed to fly from my body. I took a small knife out of my coat and opened it. Then I took the poor animal by the neck and with one quick movement I cut out one of its fear-filled eyes!

Slowly the cat got well. The hole where its eye had been was not a pretty thing to look at, it is true; but the cat no longer appeared to suffer any pain. As might be expected, however, it ran from me in fear whenever I came near. Why should it not run? Yet this did not fail to anger me.

I felt growing inside myself a new feeling. Who has not, a hundred times, found himself doing wrong, doing some evil thing for no other reason than because he knows he should not? Are



not we humans at all times pushed, ever driven in some unknown way to break the law just because we understand it to be the law? One day, in cold blood, I tied a strong rope around the cat's neck, and taking it down into the cellar under the house I hung it from one of the wood beams above my head. I hung it there until it was dead. I hung it there with tears in my eyes. I hung it because I knew it had loved me, because I felt it had given me no reason to hurt it, because I knew that my doing so was a wrong so great a sin so deadly that it would place my soul forever outside the reach of the love of God!

That same night, as I lay sleeping, I heard through my open window the cries of our neighbours. I jumped from my bed and found that the entire house was filled with fire. It was only with great difficulty that my wife and I escaped. And when we were out of the house, all we could do was stand and watch it burn to the ground. I thought of the cat as I watched it burn, the cat whose dead body I had left hanging in the cellar. It seemed almost that the cat had in some mysterious way caused the house to burn so that it could make me pay for my evil act, so that it could take revenge upon me. Months went by, and I could not drive the thought of the cat out of my mind.

One night I sat in the inn, drinking, as usual. In the corner I saw a dark object that I had not seen before. I went over to see what it could be. It was a cat, a cat almost exactly like Pluto. I touched it with my hand and petted it, passing my hand softly along its back. The cat rose and pushed its back against my hand. Suddenly I realized that I wanted the cat. I offered to buy it from the innkeeper, but he claimed he had never seen the animal before. As I left the inn, it followed me, and I allowed it to do so. It soon became a pet of both my wife and I.

The morning after I brought it home, however, I discovered that this cat, like Pluto, had only one eye. How was it possible that I had not noticed this the night before? This fact only made my wife love the cat more. But I, myself, found a feeling of dislike growing in me. My growing dislike of the animal only seemed to increase its love for me. It followed me, followed me everywhere, always. When I sat, it lay down under my chair. When I stood up it got between my feet and nearly made me fall. Wherever I went, it was always there. At night I dreamed of it. And I began to hate that cat!

One day my wife called to me from the cellar of the old building where we were now forced to live. As I went down the stairs, the cat, following me as always, ran under my feet and nearly threw me down. In sudden anger, I took an axe and struck wildly at the cat. Quickly my wife put out her hand and stopped my arm. This only increased my anger and, without thinking, I turned and put the axe deep into her head! She fell to the floor and died without a sound. I spent a few moments looking for the cat, but it was gone.

And I had other things to do, for I knew I must do something with the body, and quickly. Suddenly I noted a place in the wall of the cellar where stones had been added to the wall to cover an old fireplace which was no longer wanted. The walls were not very strongly built, and I found I could easily take down those stones. Behind them there was, as I knew there must be, a hole just big enough to hold the body. With much effort I put the body in and carefully put the stones back in their place. I was pleased to see that it was quite impossible for anyone to know that a single stone had been moved.

Days passed. Still there was no cat. A few people came and asked about my wife; but I answered them easily. Then one day several officers of the police came. Certain that they could find nothing, I asked them in and went with them as they searched. Finally, they searched the cellar from end to end. I watched them quietly, and, as I expected, they noticed nothing. But as they started up the stairs again, I felt myself driven by some unknown inner force to let them know, to make them know, that I had won the battle. "The walls of this building," I said, "are very strongly built; it is a fine old house." And, as I spoke, I struck with my stick that very place in the wall behind which was the body of my wife. Immediately I felt a cold feeling up and down my back as we heard coming out of the wall itself a horrible cry. For one short moment the officers stood looking at each other. Then quickly they began to pick at the stones, and in a short time they saw before them the body of my wife, black with dried blood and smelling of decay. On the body's head, its one eye filled with fire, its wide-open mouth the colour of blood, sat the cat, crying out its revenge!





ORIGINAL VERSION - C1/C2 VERSION

For the most

wild, yet most homely narrative which I am about to pen, I neither expect nor solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence. Yet, mad am I not - and very surely do I not dream. But to-morrow I die, and to-day I would unburden my soul. My immediate purpose is to place before the world, plainly, succinctly, and without comment, a series of mere household events. In their consequences, these events have terrified - have tortured - have destroyed me. Yet I will not attempt to expound them. To me, they have presented little but horror - to many they will seem less terrible than *baroques*. Hereafter, perhaps, some intellect may be found which will reduce my phantasm to the commonplace - some intellect more calm, more logical, and far less excitable than my own, which will perceive, in the circumstances I detail with awe, nothing more than an ordinary succession of very natural causes and effects.

From my infancy I was noted for the docility and humanity of my disposition. My tenderness of heart was even so conspicuous as to make me the jest of my companions. I was especially fond of animals and was indulged by my parents with a great variety of pets. With these I spent most of my time, and never was so happy as when feeding and caressing them. This peculiarity of character grew with my growth, and, in my manhood, I derived from it one of my principal sources of pleasure. To those who have cherished an affection for a faithful and sagacious dog, I need hardly be at the trouble of explaining the nature of the intensity of the gratification thus derivable. There is something in the unselfish and self-sacrificing love of a brute, which goes directly to the heart of him who has had frequent occasion to test the paltry friendship and gossamer fidelity of mere *Man*.

I married early and was happy to find in my wife a disposition not uncongenial with my own. Observing my partiality for domestic pets, she lost no opportunity of procuring those of the most agreeable kind. We had birds, goldfish, a fine dog, rabbits, a small monkey, and a *cat*.

This latter was a remarkably large and beautiful animal, entirely black, and sagacious to an astonishing degree. In speaking of his intelligence, my wife, who at heart was not a little tinctured with superstition, made frequent allusion to the ancient popular notion, which regarded all black cats as witches in disguise. Not that she was ever *serious* upon this point - and I mention the matter at all for no better reason than that it happens, just now, to be remembered.



Pluto - this was the cat's name - was my favourite pet and playmate. I alone fed him, and he attended me wherever I went about the house. It was even with difficulty that I could prevent him from following me through the streets.

Our friendship lasted, in this manner, for several years, during which my general temperament and character - through the instrumentality of the fiend Intemperance - had (I blush to confess it) experienced a radical alteration for the worse. I grew, day by day, more moody, more irritable, more regardless of the feelings of others. I suffered myself to use intemperate language to my wife. At length, I even offered her personal violence. My pets, of course, were made to feel the change in my disposition. I not only neglected but ill-used them. For Pluto, however, I still retained sufficient regard to restrain me from maltreating him, as I made no scruple of maltreating the rabbits, the monkey, or even the dog, when by accident, or through affection, they came in my way. But my disease grew upon me - for what disease is like alcohol? - and at length even Pluto, who was now becoming old, and consequently somewhat peevish - even Pluto began to experience the effects of my ill-temper.

One night, returning home, much intoxicated, from one of my haunts about town, I fancied that the cat avoided my presence. I seized him; when, in his fright at my violence, he inflicted a slight wound upon my hand with his teeth. The fury of a demon instantly possessed me. I knew myself no longer. My original soul seemed, at once, to take its flight from my body; and a more than fiendish malevolence, gin-nurtured, thrilled every fibre of my frame. I took from my waistcoat pocket a penknife, opened it, grasped the poor beast by the throat, and deliberately cut one of its eyes from the socket! I blush, I burn, I shudder, while I pen the damnable atrocity.

When reason returned with the morning - when I had slept off the fumes of the night's debauch - I experienced a sentiment half of horror, half of remorse, for the crime of which I had been guilty; but it was, at best, a feeble and equivocal feeling, and the soul remained untouched. I again plunged into excess, and soon drowned in wine all memory of the deed.

In the meantime, the cat slowly recovered. The socket of the lost eye presented, it is true, a frightful appearance, but he no longer appeared to suffer any pain. He went about the house as usual, but, as might be expected, fled in extreme terror at my approach. I had so much of my old heart left, as to be at first grieved by this evident dislike on the part of a creature which had once so loved me. But this feeling soon gave place to irritation. And then came, as if to my final and irrevocable overthrow, the spirit of PERVERSENESS. Of this spirit philosophy takes no account. Yet I am not more sure that my soul lives, than I am that perverseness is one of the primitive impulses of the human heart - one of the indivisible primary faculties, or sentiments, which give direction to the character of man. Who has not, a hundred times, found himself committing a vile or a silly action, for no other reason than because he knows he should *not*?



Have we not a perpetual inclination, in the teeth of our best judgment, to violate that which is *Law*, merely because we understand it to be such? This spirit of perverseness, I say, came to my final overthrow. It was this unfathomable longing of the soul *to vex itself* - to

offer violence to its own nature - to do wrong for the wrong's sake only - that urged me to continue and finally to consummate the injury I had inflicted upon the unoffending brute. One morning, in cool blood, I slipped a noose about its neck and hung it to the limb of a tree - hung it with the tears streaming from my eyes, and with the bitterest remorse at my heart - hung it *because* I knew that it had loved me, and *because* I felt it had given me no reason of offence - hung it *because* I knew that in so doing I was committing a sin - a deadly sin that would so jeopardize my immortal soul as to place it - if such a thing were possible - even beyond the reach of the infinite mercy of the Most Merciful and Most Terrible God.

On the night of the day on which this cruel deed was done, I was aroused from sleep by the cry of 'Fire!' The curtains of my bed were in flames. The whole house was blazing. It was with great difficulty that my wife, a servant, and myself, made our escape from the conflagration. The destruction was complete. My entire worldly wealth was swallowed up, and I resigned myself thenceforward to despair.

I am above the weakness of seeking to establish a sequence of cause and effect between the disaster and the atrocity. But I am detailing a chain of facts and wish not to leave even a possible link imperfect. On the day succeeding the fire, I visited the ruins. The walls, with one exception, had fallen in. This exception was found in a compartment wall, not very thick, which stood about the middle of the house, and against which had rested the head of my bed. The plastering had here, in great measure, resisted the action of the fire - a fact which I attributed to its having been recently spread. About this wall a dense crowd were collected, and many persons seemed to be examining a particular portion of it with very minute and eager attention. The words 'strange!' 'singular!' and other similar expressions, excited my curiosity. I approached and saw, as if graven in bas-relief upon the white surface, the figure of a gigantic *cat*. The impression was given with an accuracy truly marvellous. There was a rope about the animal's neck.

When I first beheld this apparition - for I could scarcely regard it as less - my wonder and my terror were extreme. But at length reflection came to my aid. The cat, I remembered, had been hung in a garden adjacent to the house. Upon the alarm of fire, this garden had been immediately filled by the crowd - by some one of whom the animal must have been cut from the tree and thrown, through an open window, into my chamber. This had probably been done with the view of arousing me from sleep. The falling of other walls had compressed the victim of my cruelty into the substance of the freshly spread plaster;



the lime of which, with the flames and the *ammonia* from the carcass, had then accomplished the portraiture as I saw it.

Although I thus readily accounted to my reason, if not altogether to my conscience, for the startling fact just detailed, it did not the less fail to make a deep impression upon my fancy. For months I could not rid myself of the phantasm of the cat; and, during this period, there came back into my spirit a half-sentiment that seemed, but was not, remorse. I went so far as to regret the loss of the animal, and to look about me, among the vile haunts which I now habitually frequented, for another pet of the same species, and of somewhat similar appearance, with which to supply its place.

One night as I sat, half-stupefied, in a den of more than infamy, my attention was suddenly drawn to some black object, reposing upon the head of one of the immense hogsheads of gin, or of rum, which constituted the chief furniture of the apartment. I had been looking steadily at the top of this hogshead for some minutes, and what now caused me surprise was the fact that I had not sooner perceived the object thereupon. I approached it, and touched it with my hand. It was a black cat - a very large one - fully as large as Pluto, and closely resembling him in every respect but one. Pluto had not a white hair upon any portion of his body; but this cat had a large, although indefinite, splotch of white, covering nearly the whole region of the breast.

Upon my touching him, he immediately arose, purred loudly, rubbed against my hand, and appeared delighted with my notice. This, then, was the very creature of which I was in search. I at once offered to purchase it of the landlord; but this person made no claim to it - knew nothing of it - had never seen it before.

I continued my caresses, and when I prepared to go home, the animal evinced a disposition to accompany me. I permitted it to do so; occasionally stooping and patting it as I proceeded. When it reached the house, it domesticated itself at once, and became immediately a great favourite with my wife.

For my own part, I soon found a dislike to it arising within me. This was just the reverse of what I had anticipated; but - I know not how or why it was - its evident fondness for myself rather disgusted and annoyed me. By slow degrees, these feelings of disgust and annoyance rose into the bitterness of hatred. I avoided the creature; a certain sense of shame, and the remembrance of my former deed of cruelty, preventing me from physically abusing it. I did not, for some weeks, strike, or otherwise violently ill- use it; but gradually - very gradually - I came to look upon it with unutterable loathing, and to flee silently from its odious presence, as from the breath of a pestilence.



What added, no doubt, to my hatred of the beast, was the discovery, on the morning after I brought it home, that, like Pluto, it also had been deprived of one of its eyes. This circumstance, however, only endeared it to my wife, who, as I have already said, possessed, in a high degree, that humanity of feeling which had once been my distinguishing trait, and the source of many of my simplest and purest pleasures.

With my aversion to this cat, however, its partiality for myself seemed to increase. It followed my footsteps with a pertinacity which it would be difficult to make the reader comprehend. Whenever I sat, it would crouch beneath my chair, or spring upon my knees, covering me with its loathsome caresses. If I arose to walk, it would get between my feet, and thus nearly throw me down, or, fastening its long and sharp claws in my dress, clamber, in this manner, to my breast. At such times, although I longed to destroy it with a blow, I was yet withheld from so doing, partly by a memory of my former crime, but chiefly - let me confess it at once - by absolute *dread* of the beast.

This dread was not exactly a dread of physical evil - and yet I should be at a loss how otherwise to define it. I am almost ashamed to own - yes, even in this felon's cell, I am almost ashamed to own - that the terror and horror with which the animal inspired me, had been heightened by one of the merest chimeras it would be possible to conceive. My wife had called my attention, more than once, to the character of the mark of white hair, of which I have spoken, and which constituted the sole visible difference between the strange beast and the one I had destroyed. The reader will remember that this mark, although large, had been originally very indefinite; but, by slow degrees - degrees nearly imperceptible, and which for a long time my reason struggled to reject as fanciful - it had, at length, resumed a rigorous distinctness of outline. It was now the representation of an object that I shudder to name - and for this, above all, I loathed, and dreaded, and would have rid myself of the monster *had I dared* - it was now, I say, the image of a hideous - of a ghastly thing - of the GALLOWS! - oh, mournful and terrible engine of horror and of crime - of agony and death!

And now was I indeed wretched beyond the wretchedness of mere humanity. And a *brute beast* - whose fellow I had contemptuously destroyed - a *brute beast* to work out for *me* - for me, a man, fashioned in the image of the High God - so much of insufferable woe! Alas! neither by day nor by night knew I the blessing of rest anymore! During the former the creature left me no moment alone; and, in the latter, I started, hourly, from dreams of unutterable fear, to find the hot breath of *the thing* upon my face, and its vast weight - an incarnate nightmare that I had no power to shake off - incumbent eternally upon my *heart*!



Beneath the pressure of torments such as these, the feeble remnant of the good within me succumbed. Evil thoughts became my sole intimates - the darkest and most evil of thoughts. The moodiness of my usual temper increased to hatred of *all* things and of all mankind; while, from the sudden, frequent, and ungovernable outbursts of a fury to which I now blindly abandoned myself, my uncomplaining wife, alas! was the most usual and the most patient of sufferers.

One day she accompanied me, upon some household errand, into the cellar of the old building which our poverty compelled us to inhabit. The cat followed me down the steep stairs, and, nearly throwing me headlong, exasperated me to madness. Uplifting an axe, and forgetting, in my wrath, the childish dread which had hitherto stayed my hand, I aimed a blow at the animal which, of course, would have proved instantly fatal had it descended as I wished. But this blow was arrested by the hand of my wife. Goaded, by the interference, into a rage more than demoniacal, I withdrew my arm from her grasp, and buried the axe in her brain. She fell dead upon the spot, without a groan.

This hideous murder accomplished, I set myself forthwith, and with entire deliberation, to the task of concealing the body. I knew that I could not remove it from the house, either by day or by night, without the risk of being observed by the neighbours. Many projects entered my mind. At one period I thought of cutting the corpse into minute fragments and destroying them by fire. At another, I resolved to dig a grave for it in the floor of the cellar. Again, I deliberated about casting it into the well in the yard - about packing it in a box, as if merchandise, with the usual arrangements, and so getting a porter to take it from the house. Finally I hit upon what I considered a far better expedient than either of these. I determined to wall it up in the cellar - as the monks of the Middle Ages are recorded to have walled up their victims.

For a purpose such as this the cellar was well adapted. Its walls were loosely constructed and had lately been plastered throughout with a rough plaster, which the dampness of the atmosphere had prevented from hardening. Moreover, in one of the walls was a projection, caused by a false chimney, or fireplace, that had been filled up and made to resemble the rest of the cellar. I made no doubt that I could readily displace the bricks at this point, insert the corpse, and wall the whole up as before, so that no eye could detect anything suspicious.

And in this calculation, I was not deceived. By means of a crowbar I easily dislodged the bricks, and having carefully deposited the body against the inner wall, I propped it in that position, while, with little trouble, I relaid the whole structure as it originally stood. Having procured mortar, sand, and hair, with every possible precaution, I prepared a plaster which could not be distinguished from the old, and with this I very carefully went over the new brickwork. When I had finished, I felt satisfied that all was right. The wall did not present the slightest appearance



of having been disturbed. The rubbish on the floor was picked up with the minutest care. I looked around triumphantly, and said to myself, 'Here at least, then, my labour has not been in vain.'

My next step was to look for the beast which had been the cause of so much wretchedness; for I had, at length, firmly resolved to put it to death. Had I been able to meet with it at the moment, there could have been no doubt of its fate; but it appeared that the crafty animal had been alarmed at the violence of my previous anger, and forbore to present itself in my present mood. It is impossible to describe, or to imagine, the deep, the blissful sense of relief which the absence of the detested creature occasioned in my bosom. It did not make its appearance during the night - and thus for one night at least, since its introduction into the house, I soundly and tranquilly slept; aye, *slept* even with the burden of murder upon my soul!

The second and the third day passed, and still my tormentor came not. Once again I breathed as a free man. The monster, in terror, had fled the premises for ever! I should behold it no more! My happiness was supreme! The guilt of my dark deed disturbed me but little. Some few inquiries had been made, but these had been readily answered. Even a search had been instituted - but of course nothing was to be discovered. I looked upon my future felicity as secured.

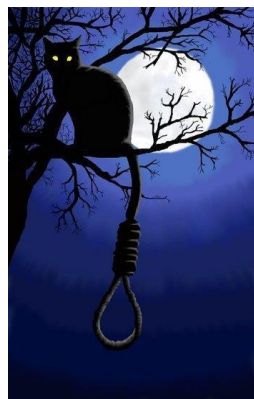
Upon the fourth day of the assassination, a party of the police came, very unexpectedly, into the house, and proceeded again to make rigorous investigation of the premises. Secure, however, in the inscrutability of my place of concealment, I felt no embarrassment whatever. The officers bade me accompany them in their search. They left no nook or corner unexplored. At length, for the third or fourth time, they descended into the cellar. I quivered not in a muscle. My heartbeat calmly as that of one who slumbers in innocence. I walked the cellar from end to end. I folded my arms upon my bosom and roamed easily to and fro. The police were thoroughly satisfied and prepared to depart. The glee at my heart was too strong to be restrained. I burned to say if but one word, by way of triumph, and to render doubly sure their assurance of my guiltlessness.

'Gentlemen,' I said at last, as the party ascended the steps, 'I delight to have allayed your suspicions. I wish you all health, and a little more courtesy. By-the-by, gentlemen, this - this is a very well-constructed house.' (In the rabid desire to say something easily, I scarcely knew what I uttered at all.) 'I may say an *excellently* well-constructed house. These walls - are you going, gentlemen? - these walls are solidly put together'; and here, through the mere frenzy of bravado, I rapped heavily, with a cane which I held in my hand, upon that very portion of the brickwork behind which stood the corpse of the wife of my bosom.

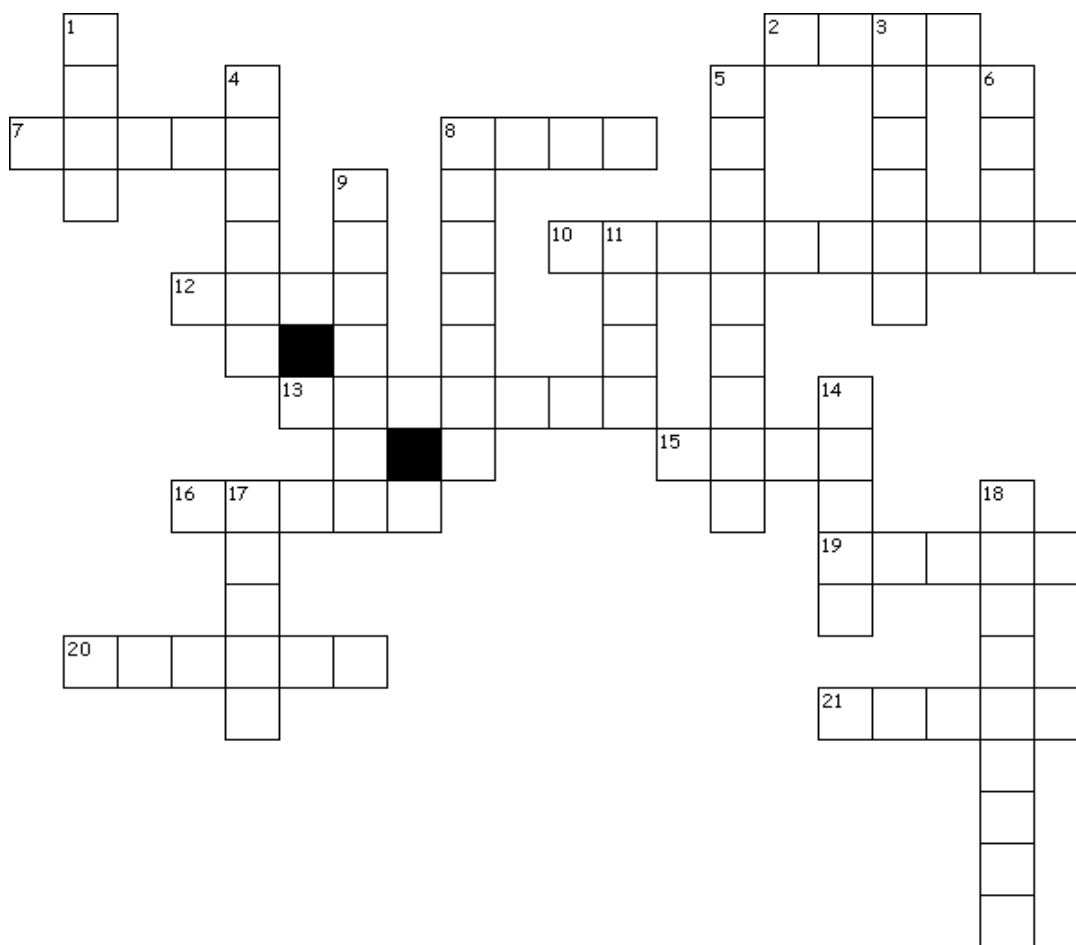
But may God shield and deliver me from the fangs on the Arch- Fiend! No sooner had the reverberation of my blows sunk into silence, than I was answered by a voice from within the tomb! - by a cry, at first muffled and broken, like the sobbing of a child, and then quickly swelling into one long, loud, and continuous scream, half of horror and half of triumph, such as might have arisen only out of hell, conjointly from the throats of the damned in their agony and of the demons that exult in the damnation.

Of my own thoughts it is folly to speak. Swooning, I staggered to the opposite wall. For one instant the party upon the stairs remained motionless, through extremity of terror and of awe. In the next, a dozen stout arms were toiling at the wall. It fell bodily. The corpse, already greatly decayed and clotted with gore, stood erect before the eyes of the spectators. Upon its head, with red extended mouth and solitary eye of fire, sat the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder, and whose informing voice had consigned me to the hangman. I had walled the monster up within the tomb!

Look at the pictures below. Which parts of the story are represented in the pictures?



Do the crossword below.



Down

1. alcoholic drink made of fermented grape juice
3. dismissed from a job
4. underground room often used for storing things
5. person who lives next door
6. flames which destroy the narrator's house
8. problems
9. structure on which people are killed by hanging
11. the narrator uses one to hang the cat
14. 'stone' made of clay used for building walls or houses
17. having strong feelings about something that he/she dislikes very much
18. dream that is frightening

Across

2. interested in things that are none of someone's business
7. the narrator uses one of them to cut the cat's eye out
8. place where a dead person is buried
10. afraid
12. the narrator hides his wife behind this part of a building
13. destroy the environment by adding dirty or harmful substances
15. sound made by a cat
16. reason for problems
19. piece of furniture for one person to sit on
20. look carefully for something or someone
21. name of the first cat



Answer the following questions on the story.

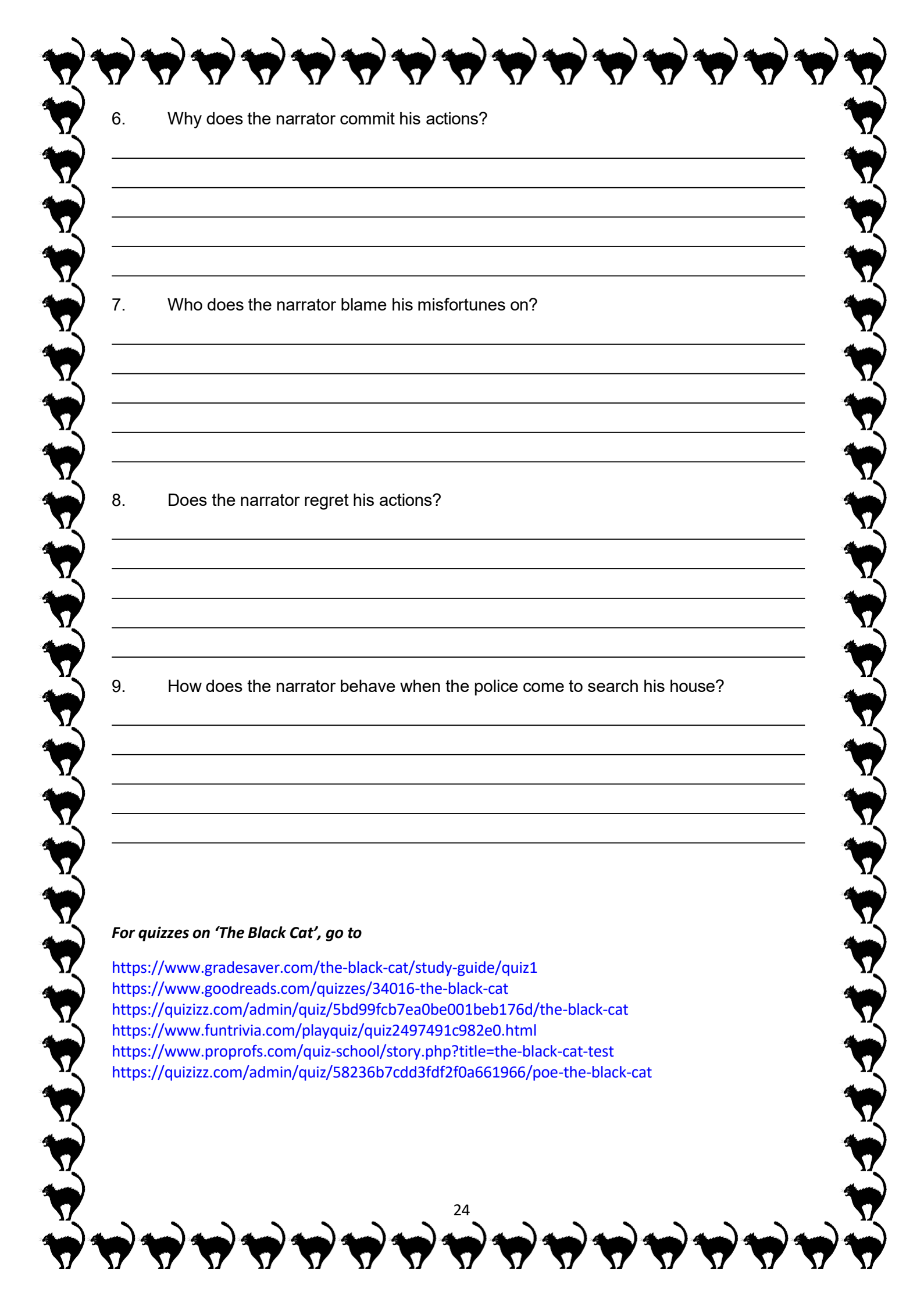
1. Where is the narrator at the beginning of the story? What is going to happen?

2. What is the name of the first cat? What do you associate with this name?

3. What does the first cat look like? What do its looks imply?

4. How does the narrator present himself at the beginning of the story?

5. How does he present himself throughout the story?



6. Why does the narrator commit his actions?

7. Who does the narrator blame his misfortunes on?

8. Does the narrator regret his actions?

9. How does the narrator behave when the police come to search his house?

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