Welcome to the Edgar Allan Poe Cottage!

This workbook is designed to teach you about Edgar Allan Poe and his life in The Bronx!

Did you know Poe lived in The Bronx before it was The Bronx? It was called Fordham Village in the county of Westchester.

Edgar Allan Poe is known as the first mystery writer in the United States and we are proud that he called The Bronx his home in the last years of his life.

Continue reading to learn more about this fascinating man and have fun with the activities!

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Edgar Poe was born in 1809 in Boston, Massachusetts to actors! He would travel with his mother to shows she performed in. Sadly, she died, but the Allan family took him in and raised him. This is how he took the Allan name.

When he grew up he moved around a lot. He lived in Richmond, Virginia, London, England, Baltimore, Maryland, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Boston, Massachusetts, and New York City, New York writing poetry and short stories! He even studied at West Point Military Academy for a time. It was in Baltimore where he met and married his wife Virginia. Virginia and her mother, Maria Clemm, moved to New York City with Edgar. Edgar would spend the rest of his life in New York City until his own untimely death in 1849. He was only 40 years old.

If you could move anywhere, where would you go and why?

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Edgar Allan Poe lived in many different places during his life. Can you identify the city and state where he lived?

Why do you think Edgar Allan Poe moved so much during his life?
Edgar Allan Poe married Virginia in 1836. She was the love of his life, but contracted tuberculosis and died at Fordham in 1847.

“Ever with thee I wish to roam –
Dearest my life is thine.
Give me a cottage for my home
And a rich old cypress vine…”
-Excerpt from Virginia’s “Valentine Poem”

She was Poe’s mother-in-law who lived with them in New York City. She also helped Poe with his writing career, getting jobs for him.

“...he was the last I had to cling to and love.”
Maria Clemm letter to friend on finding out Edgar had died.

She was Virginia Poe’s nurse the last few months of her life.

Less Virginia may never see you more – she bids me say that she sends you her sweetest kiss of love and will die blessing you.”
Letter from E.A. Poe to Marie Shew.

She was one of Poe’s confidantes and friends throughout his life. He wanted to marry her, however his life was cut short in 1849.

“How often have I heard men and even women say of you – “He has great intellectual power, but no principle – no moral sense.”
- Letter from Sarah Whitman to E.A. Poe

Acquaintance of the Poe Family. She wrote Reminiscenses of Edgar Allan Poe, describing a trip she took up to Fordham to see Poe.

“We made one excursion to see Fordham to see Poe. We found him, and his wife, and his wife’s mother living in a little cottage at the top of the hill.”
He made New York City his home starting in 1844. He was hoping that because the city was so big and very well known to writers, he could be successful with his writing. He was right! He wrote a story for the newspaper the New York Sun about a fantastical flying machine that flew for 75 hours and people loved it! He also wrote for the newspaper The Mirror and The Broadway Journal. In 1845, he wrote one of his most famous works, “The Raven.”

Poe and his family moved many times in New York City. From uptown to downtown, he was trying to make ends meet for him and his family. He was famous, but he did not make a lot of money. Unfortunately, his wife was suffering from a terrible disease called tuberculosis and he decided to move his family north to a village called Fordham for the clean air and countryside.

Cover Your Mouth!

Diseases During Poe's Time

19th century New York City was a place of opportunity, but it also included some nasty diseases. If you weren't careful, sickness could spread very quickly.

**Tuberculosis (Consumption)** – a disease of the lungs. Symptoms included coughing up blood, tiredness, and the “wasting away” of the patient.

"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." – The Mask of the Red Death’ by Poe

"Consumption! But it is a path I have prayed to follow. I would wish all I love to perish of that gentle disease. How glorious!" – ‘Metzengerstein’ by Poe

**Dysentery (the Bloody Flux)** – caused by contaminated water and food. Symptoms included stomach pains, diarrhea, vomiting, and dehydration.

"Diseases During Poe’s Time”

**TREATMENTS**

- **Laudanum** – painkiller, recommended for cough, diarrhea
- **Bloodletting** – relief of swelling, lower fevers, drawing infection from the body
- **Camphor** – given in small quantities by mouth for fatigue and to control diarrhea and used on skin to control bleeding
- **Morphine** – pain reliever, controlled vomiting

What treatment(s) do you think would be best to treat the diseases?

- Tuberculosis: _____________________________________________________
- Yellow Fever: ____________________________________________________
- Cholera: _________________________________________________________
- Dysentery: _______________________________________________________
Edgar Allan Poe moved with his wife Virginia and her mother, Mrs. Maria Clemm, to the village of Fordham in June 1846. He hoped that Virginia would feel better by being in the countryside. He moved into a small cottage overlooking the village and the grounds of St. John’s College (which is Fordham University today). He could even see as far as Long Island. His favorite spot to visit was the High Bridge.

Sadly, Virginia did not improve and she died in the cottage on January 30, 1847. Edgar was heartbroken. It took him over a year to feel better. He visited the professors at St. John’s College and enjoyed his long walks to the High Bridge. He even felt good enough to start a literary magazine call The Stylus. People loved his idea and wanted to fund the magazine. He decided to go on a tour to introduce The Stylus. One of his stops was Richmond, Virginia, where he once lived. Unfortunately, on his way home to New York, Edgar Allan Poe died in Baltimore. Strange thing is that we are not sure how he died. It just adds to the mystery of the author!

Poe wrote some of his most famous works in The Bronx. The Bells, The Cask of Amontillado, and Annabel Lee were all published while he lived in Fordham. The church bells ringing near the cottage inspired The Bells.
"The Bells" is a lyric poem. It expresses a feeling. What is the feeling being expressed?

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How does Poe show that the bells are continuously ringing throughout the poem?

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What is onomatopoeia? Find three examples of onomatopoeia in "The Bells."

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Bells were a very common sound to hear during Poe's life in the 19th century. What sound do you think would be heard if you were to write this poem in the 21st century?

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The Bells
By Edgar Allan Poe, published in 1849.

I. Hear the sledges with the bells—
Silver bells!
What a world of merriment their melody foretells!
How they tinkle tinkle, tinkle,
In the icy air of night!
While the stars that oversprinkle
All the heavens, seem to twinkle
With a crystalline delight;
Keeping time, time, time,
In a sort of Runic rhyme
To the tintinnabulation that so musically wells
From the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells—
From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

II. Hear the mellow wedding bells,
Golden bells!
What a world of happiness their harmony foretells?
Through the balmy air of night
How they ring out their delight!
From the molten-golden notes,
And all in tune,
What a liquid ditty floats
To the turtle-dove that listens, while she gloats
On the moon!
Oh, from out the sounding cells,
What a gush of euphony voluminously wells!
How it swells!
How it dwells!
On the Future! How it tells
Of the rapture that impels
To the swinging and the ringing
Of the bells, bells, bells,
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,
Bells, bells, bells—
To the rhyming and the chiming of the bells!
What is an aqueduct?
An aqueduct is a system of moving water from one place to another. Aqueducts can supply water to major cities (like New York City) or to farms for irrigation. The water may travel through underground tunnels, as canals, or over bridges, like the High Bridge. This method of moving water from one place to another started with the ancient Romans.

The High Bridge is New York City’s oldest bridge, connecting The Bronx to Manhattan. High Bridge was built between 1839 and 1848 as part of the Croton Aqueduct water system, which brought clean drinking water to New York City. The water traveled from the Croton River in Westchester County to New York City - over 40 miles!

One of Edgar Allan Poe’s favorite walks was from his home in Fordham to the High Bridge.

You too can visit the High Bridge and walk in the steps of Edgar Allan Poe!

Follow the Croton Aqueduct! You can find parts of the old aqueduct in The Bronx and Manhattan!

- The Aqueduct Trail and the Weir Building in Van Cortlandt Park.
- Jerome Park Reservoir
- Aqueduct Walk from West Kingsbridge Road to Morton Park in The Bronx.
- The High Bridge
- Gatehouses on Amsterdam Avenue at 135th, 119th, and 113th streets in Manhattan.
- Central Park north of the 86th Street Transverse.
About The Society

The Bronx County Historical Society, founded in 1955, is a private, non-profit, educational and cultural institution chartered by the New York State Board of Regents. The BCHS, the historical agency for The Bronx, a county of New York State and a borough of the city of New York, is dedicated to the collection, preservation, documentation and interpretation of the history of The Bronx and lower Westchester County from its earliest historical references in the 17th century through the present.

The BCHS disseminates information to the general public, schools, students, historians, urban planners and staff of other museums and libraries on the historical, social and economic development of The Bronx. It utilizes its collections in exhibitions, both in-house and traveling, historical research, oral history projects, production of publications and educational and cultural programming. BCHS operates a research library, The Bronx County Archives and two national landmark historic house museums, the Edgar Allan Poe Cottage and the Museum of Bronx History at the Valentine-Varian House.

The common theme in all of these activities is the restoration of pride in The Bronx through awareness of the borough’s true place in the history and development of the region and the nation. The buildings maintained by BCHS are major attractions and also serve as anchors around which stable neighborhoods can develop and thrive.