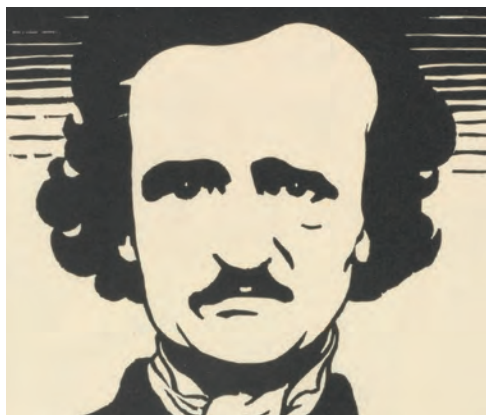




OCTOBER 2009

## Poe in Black and White

Félix Vallotton | *To Edgar Poe*



### VISIT THE BMA

and scare yourself  
silly with illustrations  
of Poe stories.

*Edgar Allan Poe:  
A Baltimore Icon,  
October 4, 2009 –  
January 17, 2010.*

Félix Vallotton (French, born Switzerland, 1865-1925). Detail, *To Edgar Poe*. 1894. Woodcut. 6 5/16 x 4 7/8 inches. The Baltimore Museum of Art: The Cone Collection, formed by Dr. Claribel Cone and Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland, BMA 1950.12.375



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This is the face of a man who wrote alarming tales about black cats, mournful clanging bells, ominous shadows, a rat-infested pit, a terrifying whirlpool that sucks ships into the depths of the sea, and a raven that comes tapping at the window. Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) was an American author whose mystery stories and poems send chills up and down your spine, even if you know that his bizarre fiction couldn't possibly be true. Poe created some of his tales of suspense and dread while living in a garret in a small row house on Amity Street in Baltimore.

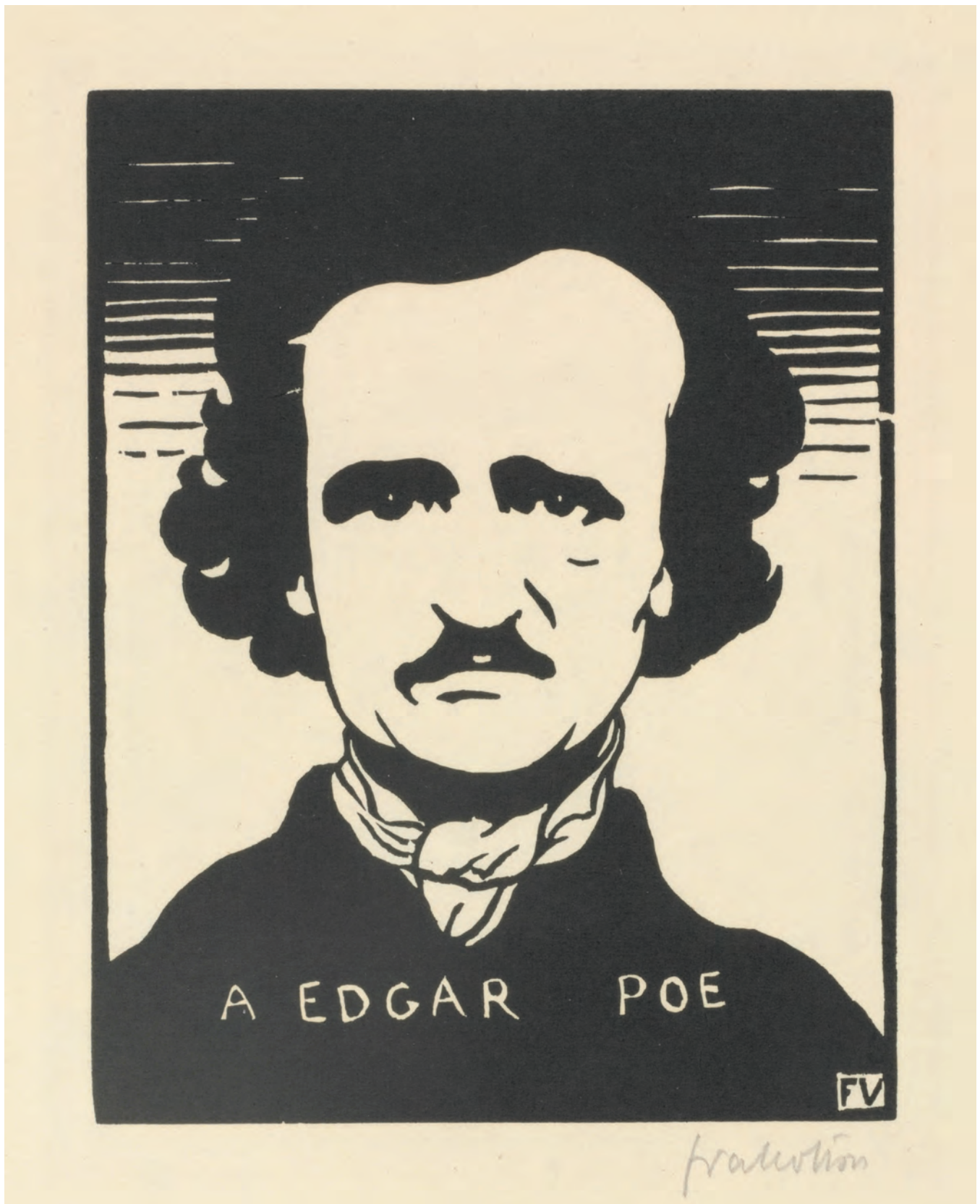
Far away in France, an artist named Félix Vallotton admired Poe's ability to use words to stimulate fearsome images that reveal the darker side of human nature. He honored Poe's achievement by creating this woodcut portrait. Since he had never met Poe, he probably based his 1894 image on an engraving of a daguerreotype (an early form of photography), made before the author's mysterious death 45 years earlier.

To make his woodblock, Vallotton cut Poe's image into a plank of wood, removing every area that should remain untouched by ink, from the author's high forehead to the smallest spots of light in his piercing eyes. These areas would remain the color of the paper. Merging the heavy eyebrow, eyeball, and shadow into a single shape, and combining the mustache with the edge of the lower lip, he created raised areas that would receive black ink and form Poe's image. Carefully placed lines suggesting chin, nose, cheek, and bags under weary eyes are all that are needed to complete the brooding face of this melancholy man.

### CHALLENGE FOR STUDENTS

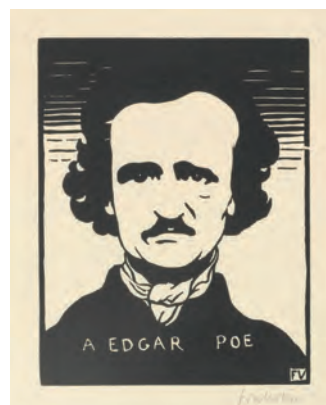
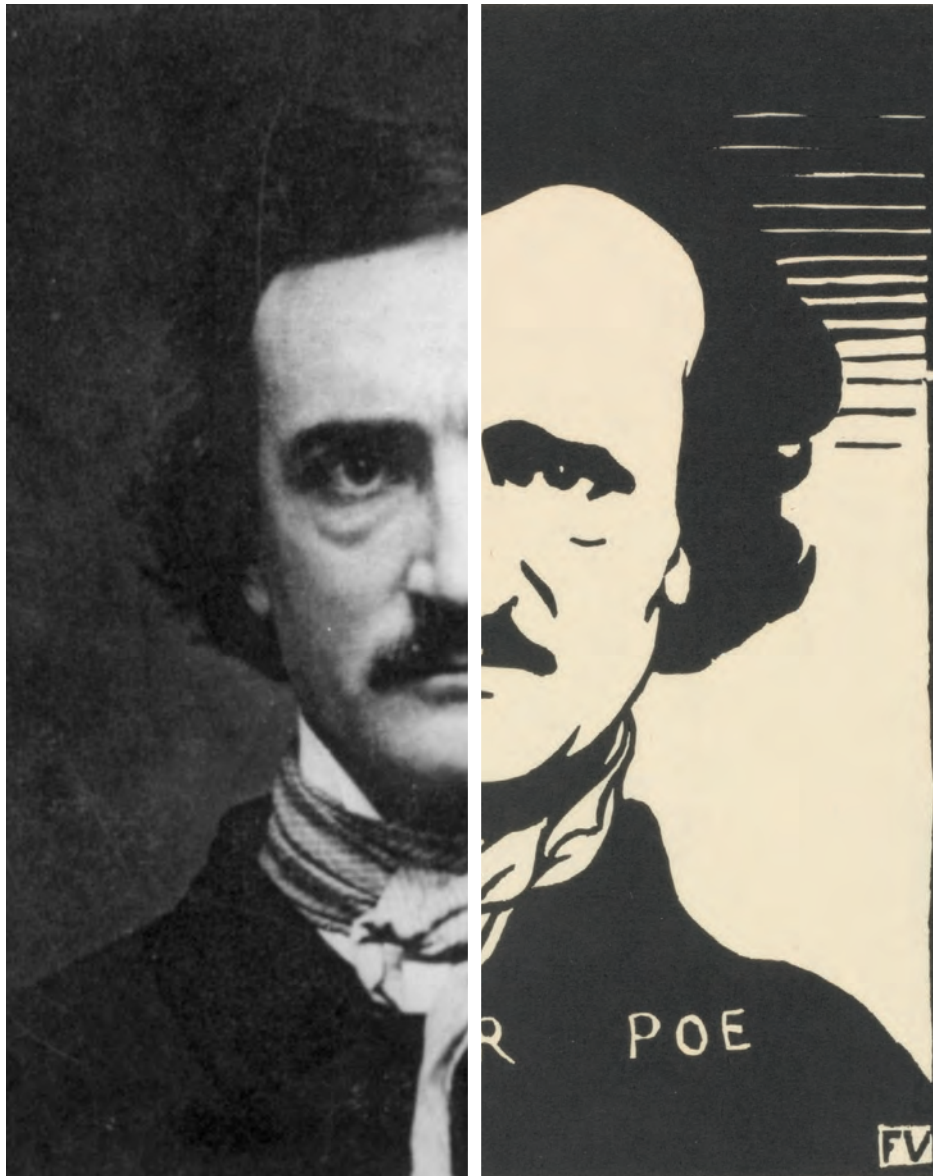
Compare Vallotton's woodcut of Poe with Poe's photograph (see page 3). What did Vallotton simplify? Eliminate? Flatten? What changes did he make to the shoulder line, eyebrows, eyelids, hair, and shadows on skin? Select a newspaper or magazine photograph with a range of black, white, and gray tones. Using cut paper, translate the image into black and white only, feeling free to emphasize, simplify, or eliminate details. To learn more about Poe or his 200th birthday celebration, visit [www.poestories.com](http://www.poestories.com), [www.eapoe.org](http://www.eapoe.org), and [www.nevermore2009.com](http://www.nevermore2009.com)

**PRINT THE IMAGES ON PAGES 2 & 3 FOR YOUR STUDENTS.**



Félix Vallotton. *To Edgar Poe.*

1894. Woodcut. 6 <sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub> x 4 <sup>7</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches. The Baltimore Museum of Art: The Cone Collection, formed by Dr. Claribel Cone and Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland, BMA 1950.12.375



*Left:* Daguerreotype of Edgar Allan Poe, taken by W.S. Hartshorn in 1848, published in 1880, and photographed by C.T. Tatman in 1904. This digital copy of 1904 photograph is provided Courtesy of the Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division [LC-USZ62-10610]

*Right:* Félix Vallotton (French, born Switzerland, 1865-1925). *To Edgar Poe*. 1894. Woodcut. 6 5/16 x 4 7/8 inches. The Baltimore Museum of Art: The Cone Collection, formed by Dr. Claribel Cone and Miss Etta Cone of Baltimore, Maryland, BMA 1950.12.375