



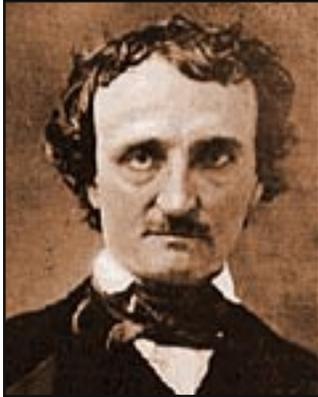
JEAN MUDGE PRODUCTIONS

Films, Videos & Books About Historic America

Study Guide for:

EDGAR ALLAN POE: ARCHITECT OF DREAMS

— Producer, Director, Writer - Jean Mudge



Poet Dave Smith presents the restless Poe, not as the stereotyped master of ghoulish horror tales or clever mysteries, but as a highly imaginative seeker after cosmic truths. A primary-colored vortex suggests his view of Creation's constant cycle, or "the plot of God." The divine plot, Poe believed, could be glimpsed in his dreams, seen either half-awake or asleep, inspiring a conscious "undercurrent" in his work. A companion theme runs throughout: the death of a beautiful woman, with deep roots in Poe's childhood and youth. Excerpts from classic poems and three of Poe's tales, each of a different genre, are dramatized: M.S. Found in a

Bottle, The Fall of the House of Usher, and The Purloined Letter. In finding forms for his view of "God's plot," Poe produced poems and stories justifying the program's title.

Topics for Discussion

1. Poe prided himself on his heritage as an educated southern gentleman with literary ambitions. How did this self-understanding develop when his wealthy benefactor had not formally adopted him?
2. Dave Smith first appears with Poe's book *Eureka* ("I've found it!" in Greek) to introduce Poe's largest vision, one encompassing the universe and setting a gigantic stage for his poems and stories. In this vision, why was the image of a vortex so important to him?
3. The theme of a beautiful, dead or dying woman is predictable in Poe's works. Who was this woman and what did she represent?
4. In each of the stories shown in the film, Poe's "plot of God" recurs in different form. How does each exhibit that plot?

Related Areas of Study

1. In Poe's day, alcoholism was a bi-product of social drinking, North and South. As the preferred drug of the day, describe how excessive drinking was then one of America's most pervasive social problems.

2. Once disinherited, Poe turned to a military career at West Point. How does his choice reflect his contemporary Southern culture immersed in Sir Walter Scott's novels and a romantic military tradition?

Film Facts

Poe's characters often resemble himself, psychologically and physically, so the actor playing Poe also plays the lead character in his stories. But in what ways are Poe's characters not true to his own life story?