

Classic Short Stories

This “seeded” edition of classic short stories includes “seeds” of information about vocabulary, factual references, and phrasing that may have been easily understood in the 19th and 20th. In the 21st Century, however, some of these words and phrases are not so clearly understood and could make comprehension and interpretation of the text more difficult. Additionally words and phrases can have multiple meanings. Therefore, “seeds” of explanation are included here to focus the reader on the authors’ contextual meaning in the short stories. This contextual meaning is found in parentheses and brackets as noted in the key that follows.

KEY:

Vocabulary words are in **bold**, and the meaning is in (parentheses) i.e. “Tom's wife was a tall **termagant** (nagging person)... roots which **afforded** (gave) **precarious** (tricky and dangerous) **footholds** (places to walk) among deep **sloughs** (swamps)...”

Factual references are in *bold italics* and the meaning is in (parentheses) i.e. ‘How?’ said he. “*Amontillado* (dry/not sweet sherry wine), A *pipe* (large barrel holding 126 gallons)? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!”... there was a great amount of treasure buried by *Kidd the pirate* (Captain Kidd, hung in England in 1701 for being a pirate).”

Challenging phrases or sentence/s are underlined and the meaning is in [brackets] i.e. The old stories add, moreover, that the devil presided at the hiding of [decided where to hide] the money, and took it under his guardianship [guarded it]... in the fashion of [like] the great **catacombs** (underground graves) of Paris.”

The Cask of Amontillado

By Edgar Allan Poe

THE THOUSAND INJURIES (little bothers) of Fortunato I had borne (suffered) as I best could, but when he ventured upon [moved to] **insult** (an attack on my honor) I **vowed** (promised) revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat [know I said nothing out loud]. At length [Soon] I would be avenged; this was a point definitely, settled—but the very definitiveness with which [exact way] it was **resolved** (taken care of) **precluded** (did not allow) the idea of **risk** (danger). I must not only punish but punish with impunity [without getting caught or punished for it]. A wrong is **unredressed** (made better) when **retribution** (payback justice) overtakes its **redresser** (wrong-doer). It is equally **unredressed** (made better) when the avenger fails to make himself felt as such [known] to him who has done the wrong.

It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato **cause** (a reason) to doubt my good will. I continued, as was my **wont** (way) to smile in his face, and he did not **perceive** (see) that my smile *now* was at the thought of his **immolation** (destruction).

He had a weak point—this Fortunato—although in other **regards** (ways) he was a man to be respected and even feared. He prided himself on [was proud of] his **connoisseur-ship** (great knowledge) in wine. Few Italians have the true **virtuoso** (very skillful) spirit. For the most part [Usually] their **enthusiasm** (excited energy) is **adopted** (used) to suit the time and **opportunity** (chance), to practise **imposture** (trickery) upon the British and Austrian millionaires. In painting and **gemmary** (diamonds, rubies...), Fortunato, like his countrymen, was a **quack** (fake and dishonest), but in the matter of old wines he was **sincere** (honest). In this **respect** (same way) I did not differ from him **materially** (a lot);—I was skilful in the Italian **vintages** (wines) myself, and bought **largely** (a lot) whenever I could.

It was about dusk, one evening during the **supreme** (greatest) madness of the carnival season, that I **encountered** (met) my friend. He **accosted** (came up to) me with excessive warmth [very friendly], for he had been drinking much. The man wore **motley** (mixed and different colored clothing). He had on a tight-fitting **parti** (partly)-striped **dress** (clothes), and his head was **surmounted** (topped) by the **conical** (cone-like) cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him that I thought I **should** (would) never have done wringing [have stopped shaking] his hand.

I said to him—“My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to-day. But I have received a *pipe* (large barrel holding 126 gallons) of what passes for [is supposed to be] *Amontillado* (dry/not sweet sherry wine), and I have my doubts.”

“How?” said he. “*Amontillado* (dry/not sweet sherry wine), A *pipe* (large barrel holding 126 gallons)? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!”

“I have my doubts,” I **replied** (answered); “and I was silly enough to pay the full *Amontillado* price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain.”

“*Amontillado*(dry/not sweet sherry wine)!”

“I have my doubts.”

“*Amontillado*(dry/not sweet sherry wine)!”

“And I must satisfy them.”

“*Amontillado* (dry/not sweet sherry wine)!”

“As you are **engaged** (busy), I am on my way to Luchesi. If any one has a critical turn [skill] it is he. He will tell me—”

“Luchesi cannot tell *Amontillado* from **Sherry** [regular sherry].”

“And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own.”

“Come, let us go.”

“Whither?”

“To your **vaults** (cellars).”

“My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature [bother you]. I **perceive** (see) you have an engagement [a place to go]. Luchesi—”

“I have no **engagement** (place to go);—come.”

“My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I **perceive** (see) you are **afflicted** (bothered). The vaults are **insufferably** (terribly) damp. They are **encrusted** (covered) with *nitre* (potassium nitrate/saltpeter which used in making gunpowder).”

“Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is **merely** (just) nothing. *Amontillado!* You have been imposed upon (tricked). And as for Luchesi, he cannot **distinguish** (see the difference) Sherry from *Amontillado*.”

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of [took] my arm; and putting on a mask of black silk and drawing a *roquelaire* (cape) closely about my person, I **suffered** (convinced) him to hurry me to my *palazzo* (small mansion).

There were no **attendants** (servants) at home; they had **absconded** (run off) to make merry in honour of the time [because of the carnival]. I had told them that I should not return until the morning, and had given them **explicit** (exact) orders not to stir from [leave] the house. These orders were **sufficient** (enough), I well knew, to insure their immediate disappearance, one and all, as soon as my back was turned.

I took from their **sconces** (holders) two *flambeaux* (torches), and giving one to Fortunato, **bowed** (led) him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the **vaults** (cellars). I passed down a long and winding staircase, **requesting** (asking) him to be **cautious** (careful) as he followed. We came at length [soon] to the foot of the descent [bottom of the stairs], and stood together upon the damp ground of the **catacombs** (underground graves) of the *Montresors* (my family).

The **gait** (walk) of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he **strode** (walked).

“The **pipe** (barrel),” he said.

“It is farther on,” said I; “but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls.”

He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy **orbs** (“eye” balls) that **distilled** (held) the **rheum** (watery pools) of **intoxication** (being drunk).

“**Nitre** (Potassium nitrate/saltpeter which used in making gunpowder)?” he asked, at length.

“**Nitre** (Potassium nitrate/saltpeter which used in making gunpowder),” I **replied** (answered). “How long have you had that cough?”

“Ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!”

My poor friend found it impossible to **reply** (answer) for many minutes.

“It is nothing,” he said, at last.

“Come,” I said, with decision, “we will go back; your health is **precious** (valuable). You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. You are a man to be missed. For me it is no matter. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be **responsible** (blamed). Besides, there is Luchesi—”

“Enough,” he said; “the cough's a mere nothing; it will not kill me. I shall not die of a cough.”

“True—true,” I **replied** (answered); “and, indeed, I had no intention of alarming you unnecessarily—but you should use all proper caution. A **draught** (glass) of this **Medoc** (red wine from Bordeaux, France) will **defend** (protect) us from the **damps** (cold, wet air).”

Here I knocked off the neck of a bottle which I drew from a long row of its fellows [other bottles] that lay upon the mould.

“Drink,” I said, presenting him the wine.