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The Cask of Amontillado

Edgar Allan Poe’s anecdote is an account of revenge which is furthered by an array of symbolism and irony. Montresor, the protagonist is adamant on taking revenge from Fortunato because he insulted him. He cites his family motto *‘no one assails me with impunity’* as inspiration to seek vengeance on Fortunato. Montresor’s plan is to use Fortunato’s love for wine to lure him to his own grave.

The symbolism begins with the title of the anecdote. *‘Cask’* is a container that holds beverages but is also the root word of 'casket'. So, when Montresor informs Fortunato that he is taking him to a cask, he means that he is, in fact, leading him to his own casket to take revenge for insulting him. Moreover, the phrase *‘supreme madness of the carnival season’* is actually a reflection of Montresor’s state of mind, since he is obsessed with revenge. Another instance of symbolism that relates to revenge is Fortunato’s dress which is described as *‘tight-fitting parti-striped’*. This can be interpreted as an unwise choice of clothing which symbolizes how foolish Fortunato really is.

The irony in the story supports the theme of revenge as well. The name Fortunato translates to ‘the fortunate one’ but it is clear towards the end that he is anything but fortunate. Furthermore, Montresor informs him that he is a ‘mason’ which Fortunato interprets as Montresor being a member of the secret society but is, in fact, an ironic statement since he is about to bury Fortunato alive using his masonry skills. Another ironic statement is made by Montresor during the journey as he drinks to Fortunato’s long life, which is ironic since he is about to end it.

The cask of Amontillado is a tale of revenge made potent by the irony and symbolism that is evident throughout the tale.