

Name: _____

Edgar Allan Poe's Mystery Valentine

Always full of mystery, Edgar Allan Poe wrote this poem, "A Valentine," in 1849. The poem contains a riddle. Poe challenges his readers to solve the riddle to find out who the Valentine was written about.

A Valentine

For her this rhyme is penned, whose luminous eyes,
Brightly expressive as the twins of Loeda,
Shall find her own sweet name, that, nestling lies
Upon the page, enwrapped from every reader.
Search narrowly the lines!—they hold a treasure
Divine—a talisman—an amulet
That must be worn *at heart*. Search well the measure—
The words—the syllables! Do not forget
The trivialest point, or you may lose your labor!
And yet there is in this no Gordian knot

Which one might not undo without a sabre,
If one could merely comprehend the plot.
Enwritten upon the leaf where now are peering
Eyes scintillating soul, there lie *perdus*
Three eloquent words oft uttered in the hearing
Of poets, by poets—as the name is a poet's, too.
Its letters, although naturally lying
Like the knight Pinto—Mendez Ferdinando—
Still form a synonym for Truth—Cease trying!
You will not read the riddle, though you do the best *you* can do.

The answer to the riddle: Poe was writing about Frances Sargent Osgood, a prominent female poet at the time and a friend of Poe's. You know the answer now, but can you find the way that Poe embeds her name in the text of the poem? Write your answer below.

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Actual answers will vary.

Poe uses the first letter of the first line, the second letter of the second line, the third letter of the third line and so on to spell out her name.