

= The Gold @-@ Bug =

" The Gold @-@ Bug " is a short story by Edgar Allan Poe published in 1843 . The plot follows William Legrand who was bitten by a gold @-@ colored bug . His servant Jupiter fears that Legrand is going insane and goes to Legrand 's friend , an unnamed narrator , who agrees to visit his old friend . Legrand pulls the other two into an adventure after deciphering a secret message that will lead to a buried treasure .

The story , set on Sullivan 's Island , South Carolina , is often compared with Poe 's " tales of ratiocination " as an early form of detective fiction . Poe became aware of the public 's interest in secret writing in 1840 and asked readers to challenge his skills as a code @-@ breaker . He took advantage of the popularity of cryptography as he was writing " The Gold @-@ Bug " , and the success of the story centers on one such cryptogram . The characterization of Legrand 's servant Jupiter has been criticized as racist from a modern perspective , especially because his speech is written in dialect and because of his often comical dialogue .

Poe submitted " The Gold @-@ Bug " as an entry to a writing contest sponsored by the Philadelphia Dollar Newspaper . His story won the grand prize and was published in three installments , beginning in June 1843 . The prize also included \$ 100 , probably the largest single sum that Poe received for any of his works . " The Gold @-@ Bug " was an instant success and was the most popular and most widely read of Poe 's works during his lifetime . It also helped popularize cryptograms and secret writing .

= = Plot summary = =

William Legrand has relocated from New Orleans to Sullivan 's Island in South Carolina after losing his family fortune , and has brought his African @-@ American servant Jupiter with him . The story 's narrator , a friend of Legrand , visits him one evening to see an unusual scarab @-@ like bug he has found . The bug 's weight and lustrous appearance convince Jupiter that it is made of pure gold . Legrand has lent it to an officer stationed at a nearby fort , but he draws a sketch of it for the narrator , with markings on the carapace that resemble a skull . As they discuss the bug , Legrand becomes particularly focused on the sketch and carefully locks it in his desk for safekeeping . Confused , the narrator takes his leave for the night .

One month later , Jupiter visits the narrator and asks him to come immediately , fearing that Legrand has been bitten by the bug and gone insane . Once they arrive on the island , Legrand insists that the bug will be the key to restoring his lost fortune . He leads them on an expedition to a particular tree and has Jupiter climb it until he finds a skull nailed at the end of one branch . At Legrand 's direction , Jupiter drops the bug through one eye socket and Legrand paces out to a spot where the group begins to dig . Finding nothing there , Legrand has Jupiter climb the tree again and drop the bug through the skull 's other eye ; they choose a different spot to dig , this time finding two skeletons and a chest filled with gold coins and jewelry . They estimate the total value at \$ 1 @.@ 5 million , but even that figure proves to be below the actual worth when they eventually sell the items .

Legrand explains that on the day he found the bug on the mainland coastline , Jupiter had picked up a scrap piece of parchment to wrap it up . Legrand kept the scrap and used it to sketch the bug for the narrator ; in so doing , though , he noticed traces of invisible ink , revealed by the heat of the fire burning on the hearth . The parchment proved to contain a cryptogram , which Legrand deciphered as a set of directions for finding a treasure buried by the infamous pirate " Captain Kidd . " The final step involved dropping a slug or weight through the left eye of the skull in the tree ; their first dig failed because Jupiter mistakenly dropped it through the right eye instead . Legrand muses that the skeletons may be the remains of two members of Kidd 's crew , who buried the chest and were then killed to silence them .

= = = The cryptogram = = =

The story involves cryptography with a detailed description of a method for solving a simple substitution cipher using letter frequencies . The encoded message is :

53 ? ? ? 305 ) ) 6 \* ; 4826 ) 4 ? . ) 4 ? ) ; 806 \* ; 48 ? 8  
¶ 60 ) ) 85 ; ; ] 8 \* ; : ? \* 8 ? 83 ( 88 ) 5 \* ? ; 46 ( ; 88 \* 96  
\* ? ; 8 ) \* ? ( ; 485 ) ; 5 \* ? 2 : \* ? ( ; 4956 \* 2 ( 5 \* ? 4 ) 8  
¶ 8 \* ; 4069285 ) ; ) 6 ? 8 ) 4 ? ? ; 1 ( ? 9 ; 48081 ; 8 : 8 ?  
1 ; 48 ? 85 ; 4 ) 485 ? 528806 \* 81 ( ? 9 ; 48 ; ( 88 ; 4  
( ? ? 34 ; 48 ) 4 ? ; 161 ; : 188 ; ? ? ;

The decoded message is :

53 ? ? ? 305 ) ) 6 \* ; 4826 ) 4 ? . ) 4 ? ) ; 806 \* ; 48 ? 8  
agoodglassinthebishopshostelinthede  
¶ 60 ) ) 85 ; ; ] 8 \* ; : ? \* 8 ? 83 ( 88 ) 5 \* ? ; 46 ( ; 88 \* 96  
vilsseattwentyonedegreesandthirteenmi  
\* ? ; 8 ) \* ? ( ; 485 ) ; 5 \* ? 2 : \* ? ( ; 4956 \* 2 ( 5 \* ? 4 ) 8  
nutesnortheastandbynorthmainbranchse  
¶ 8 \* ; 4069285 ) ; ) 6 ? 8 ) 4 ? ? ; 1 ( ? 9 ; 48081 ; 8 : 8 ?  
venthlimbeastsideshootfromthelefteyeo  
1 ; 48 ? 85 ; 4 ) 485 ? 528806 \* 81 ( ? 9 ; 48 ; ( 88 ; 4  
ftdeathsheadabeelinefromthetreeth  
( ? ? 34 ; 48 ) 4 ? ; 161 ; : 188 ; ? ? ;  
roughtheshotfiftyfeetout

The decoded message with spaces , punctuation , and capitalization is :

A good glass in the bishop 's hostel in the devil 's seat  
twenty @-@ one degrees and thirteen minutes northeast and by north  
main branch seventh limb east side  
shoot from the left eye of the death 's @-@ head  
a bee line from the tree through the shot fifty feet out .

Legrand determined that the " bishop 's hostel " referred to the site of an ancient manor house , where he found a narrow ledge that roughly resembled a chair ( the " devil 's seat " ) . Using a telescope and sighting at the given bearing , he spotted something white among the branches of a large tree ; this proved to be the skull through which a weight had to be dropped from the left eye in order to find the treasure .

= = Analysis = =

" The Gold @-@ Bug " includes a cipher that uses a simple substitution cipher . Though he did not invent " secret writing " or cryptography ( he was probably inspired by an interest in Daniel Defoe 's Robinson Crusoe ) , Poe certainly popularized it during his time . To most people in the 19th century , cryptography was mysterious and those able to break the codes were considered gifted with nearly supernatural ability . Poe had drawn attention to it as a novelty over four months in the Philadelphia publication Alexander 's Weekly Messenger in 1840 . He had asked readers to submit their own substitution ciphers , boasting he could solve all of them with little effort . The challenge brought about , as Poe wrote , " a very lively interest among the numerous readers of the journal . Letters poured in upon the editor from all parts of the country . " In July 1841 , Poe published " A Few Words on Secret Writing " and , realizing the interest in the topic , wrote " The Gold @-@ Bug " as one of the few pieces of literature to incorporate ciphers as part of the story . Poe 's character Legrand 's explanation of his ability to solve the cipher is very like Poe 's explanation in " A Few Words on Secret Writing " .

The actual " gold @-@ bug " in the story is not a real insect . Instead , Poe combined characteristics of two insects found in the area where the story takes place . The *Callichroma splendidum* , though not technically a scarab but a species of longhorn beetle ( *Cerambycidae* ) , has a gold head and slightly gold @-@ tinted body . The black spots noted on the back of the fictional bug can be found on the *Alaus oculatus* , a click beetle also native to Sullivan 's Island .

Poe's depiction of the African servant Jupiter is often considered stereotypical and racist from a modern perspective. Jupiter is depicted as superstitious and so lacking in intelligence that he cannot tell his left from his right. Poe probably included the character after being inspired by a similar character in *Sheppard Lee* (1836) by Robert Montgomery Bird, which he had reviewed. Black characters in fiction during this time period were not unusual, but Poe's choice to give him a speaking role was. Critics and scholars, however, question if Jupiter's accent was authentic or merely comic relief, suggesting it was not similar to accents used by blacks in Charleston but possibly inspired by Gullah.

Though the story is often included amongst the short list of detective stories by Poe, "The Gold Bug" is not technically detective fiction because Legrand withholds the evidence until after the solution is given. Nevertheless, the Legrand character is often compared to Poe's fictional detective C. Auguste Dupin due to his use of "ratiocination". "Ratiocination", a term Poe used to describe Dupin's method, is the process by which Dupin detects what others have not seen or what others have deemed unimportant.

= = Publication history and reception = =

Poe originally sold "The Gold Bug" to George Rex Graham for Graham's Magazine for \$52 but asked for it back when he heard about a writing contest sponsored by Philadelphia's Dollar Newspaper. Incidentally, Poe did not return the money to Graham and instead offered to make it up to him with reviews he would write. Poe won the grand prize; in addition to winning \$100, the story was published in two installments on June 21 and June 28, 1843, in the newspaper. His \$100 payment from the newspaper may have been the most he was paid for a single work. Anticipating a positive public response, the Dollar Newspaper took out a copyright on "The Gold Bug" prior to publication.

The story was republished in three installments in the Saturday Courier in Philadelphia on June 24, July 1, and July 8, the last two appeared on the front page and included illustrations by F. O. C. Darley. Further reprintings in United States newspapers made "The Gold Bug" Poe's most widely read short story during his lifetime. By May 1844, Poe reported that it had circulated 300,000 copies, though he was probably not paid for these reprints. It also helped increase his popularity as a lecturer. One lecture in Philadelphia after "The Gold Bug" was published drew such a large crowd that hundreds were turned away. As Poe wrote in a letter in 1848, it "made a great noise." He would later compare the public success of "The Gold Bug" with "The Raven", though he admitted "the bird beat the bug".

The Public Ledger in Philadelphia called it "a capital story". George Lippard wrote in the *Citizen Soldier* that the story was "characterised by thrilling interest and a graphic though sketchy power of description. It is one of the best stories that Poe ever wrote." Graham's Magazine printed a review in 1845 which called the story "quite remarkable as an instance of intellectual acuteness and subtlety of reasoning". Thomas Dunn English wrote in the *Aristidean* in October 1845 that "The Gold Bug" probably had a greater circulation than any other American story and "perhaps it is the most ingenious story Mr. POE has written; but ... it is not at all comparable to the 'Tell Heart' and more especially to 'Ligeia'". Poe's friend Thomas Holley Chivers said that "The Gold Bug" ushered in "the Golden Age of Poe's Literary Life".

The popularity of the story also brought controversy. Within a month of its publication, Poe was accused of conspiring with the prize committee by Philadelphia's Daily Forum. The publication called "The Gold Bug" an "abortion" and "unmitigated trash" worth no more than \$15. Poe filed for a libel lawsuit against editor Francis Duffee. It was later dropped and Duffee apologized for suggesting Poe did not earn the \$100 prize. Editor John Du Solle accused Poe of stealing the idea for "The Gold Bug" from "Imogine; or the Pirate's Treasure", a story written by a schoolgirl named Miss Sherburne.

"The Gold Bug" was republished as the first story in the Wiley & Putnam collection of Poe's Tales in June 1845, followed by "The Black Cat" and ten other stories. The success of this collection inspired the first French translation of "The Gold Bug" published in November 1845.

by Alphonse Borghers in the Revue Britannique under the title , " Le Scarabée d 'or " , becoming the first literal translation of a Poe story into a foreign language . In the French version , the enciphered message remained in English , with a parenthesized translation supplied alongside its solution . The story was translated into Russian from that version two years later , marking Poe 's literary debut in that country . In 1856 , Charles Baudelaire published his translation of the tale in the first volume of Histoires extraordinaires . Baudelaire was very influential in introducing Poe 's work to Europe and his translations became the definitive renditions throughout the continent .

= = Influence = =

" The Gold @-@ Bug " inspired Robert Louis Stevenson in his novel about treasure @-@ hunting , Treasure Island ( 1883 ) . Stevenson acknowledged this influence : " I broke into the gallery of Mr. Poe ... No doubt the skeleton [ in my novel ] is conveyed from Poe . "

Poe played a major role in popularizing cryptograms in newspapers and magazines in his time period and beyond . William F. Friedman , America 's foremost cryptologist , initially became interested in cryptography after reading " The Gold @-@ Bug " as a child ? interest that he later put to use in deciphering Japan 's PURPLE code during World War II . " The Gold @-@ Bug " also includes the first use of the term " cryptograph " ( as opposed to " cryptogram " ) .

Poe had been stationed at Fort Moultrie from November 1827 through December 1828 and utilized his personal experience at Sullivan 's Island in recreating the setting for " The Gold @-@ Bug " . It was also here that Poe first heard the stories of pirates like Captain Kidd . The residents of Sullivan 's Island embrace this connection to Poe and have named their public library after him . Local legend in Charleston says that the poem " Annabel Lee " was also inspired by Poe 's time in South Carolina . Poe also set part of " The Balloon @-@ Hoax " and " The Oblong Box " in this vicinity .

O. Henry alludes to the stature of " The Gold @-@ Bug " within the buried @-@ treasure genre in his short story " Supply and Demand " . One character learns that the main characters are searching for treasure , and he asks them if they have been reading Edgar Allan Poe . The title of Richard Powers ' 1991 novel The Gold Bug Variations is derived from " The Gold @-@ Bug " and from Bach 's composition Goldberg Variations , and the novel incorporates part of the short story 's plot .

Jewish Russian author David Shrayer @-@ Petrov published " The House of Edgar Allan Poe " in 2011 Prose , with " The Gold Bug " serving as a major influence . Shrayer @-@ Petrov includes a beetle , also tied to a string , which finds treasure in the basement of the house of Sarah Helen Whitman , Poe 's love interest who lived in Providence , Rhode Island .

= = Adaptations = =

The story proved popular enough in its day that a stage version opened on August 8 , 1843 . The production was put together by Silas S. Steele and was performed at the American Theatre in Philadelphia . The editor of the Philadelphia newspaper The Spirit of the Times said that the performance " dragged , and was rather tedious . The frame work was well enough , but wanted filling up " .

In film and television , an adaptation of the work appeared on Your Favorite Story on February 1 , 1953 ( Season 1 , Episode 4 ) . It was directed by Robert Florey with the teleplay written by Robert Libott . A later adaptation of the work appeared on ABC Weekend Special on February 2 , 1980 ( Season 3 , Episode 7 ) . This version was directed by Robert Fuest with the teleplay written by Edward Pomerantz . A Spanish feature film adaptation of the work appeared in 1983 under the title En busca del dragón dorado . It was written and directed by Jesús Franco , using the alias " James P. Johnson " .

" The Gold Bug " episode on the 1980 ABC Weekend Special series starred Roberts Blossom as Mr. LeGrand , Geoffrey Holder as Jupiter , and Anthony Michael Hall . It won three Daytime Emmy Awards : 1 ) Outstanding Children 's Anthology / Dramatic Programming , Linda Gottlieb ( executive producer ) , Doro Bachrach ( producer ) ; 2 ) Outstanding Individual Achievement in Children 's Programming , Steve Atha ( makeup and hair designer ) ; and , 3 ) Outstanding Individual

Achievement in Children 's Programming , Alex Thomson ( cinematographer ) .

A simplified version of the story was included in Murders in the Rue Morgue , and The Gold Bug ( 1973 ) by Robert James Dixson , published by Regents Pub . Co .

A " post @-@ modern " , anti @-@ racist radio dramatization of the story was transmitted on BBC Radio 4 in 2001 . It was written by Gregory Evans , produced and directed by Ned Chaillet , and starred Clarke Peters , Rhashan Stone , and William Hootkins .

The cipher used in " The Gold Bug " was also used in the novel " The Man who Was Poe " by Avi . It was used in the story for the antagonists to communicate and is decrypted by its writer , Edgar Allan Poe .

" The Gold Bug " was produced as a full cast audio drama on the Journey Into ... Podcast . ( 2014 ) Producer : Marshal Latham . Voice actors : Big Anklevich and Rish Outfield .