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Poe Response

Central Idea of the Black Cat

Ever been in an episode of rage that you cannot control? Alcohol and many other substances can influence anger. Being angry can lead to violent, impulsive, and irreversible actions that have many consequences. In the story of The Black Cat by Edgar Allen Poe, the narrator is in his prison cell and is writing about the problems in his life, how his life fell apart. The narrator has an alcohol addiction and is driven insane. His life was influenced by alcohol, being extremely violent to others around him, especially his pets. The narrator is fascinated with animals but doesn’t take good care of his pets and is often harmful. For instance, he stabbed his cat, Pluto, in the eye with a pocketknife and killed his wife with an axe. As the narrator does worse things, the guilt and consequences would stack up. The narrator had transformed from once a joyful person to an insane person by having guilt control his life. In all, guilt is inevitable and has many consequences.

Symbolism is the literary element used to prove that guilt is inescapable and has consequences. In the story, The Black Cat, many sources of symbolism are shown. For example, Pluto, a black cat, symbolizes bad luck and death, and the fire represents the narrator’s moral decay. Moreover, the narrator slashing the eye of his black cat, Pluto, describes the loss of good. The loss of Pluto’s eye represents when the narrator lost his moral senses and became almost primal. According to the text on page 5, “I experienced a sentiment half of horror, half of remorse, for the crime of which I had been guilty; but it was, at best, a feeble and equivocal feeling, and the soul remained untouched.” This quote shows that after the narrator cut Pluto’s eye, he had felt guilty for his actions the following morning. The stabbing of the eye of Pluto was the beginning of the downfall of his morals and virtues. Then, due to his guilt, the narrator hung his cat from a tree in his garden. The murder of Pluto is an instance of the consequences of the narrator’s guilt. The narrator makes impulsive and unhealthy choices from his guilt. In addition, the fact that the narrator had an uncertain feeling after he cut Pluto’s eye meant he regretted his actions. Eventually, the narrator stumbles upon another black cat, appearing out of nowhere. The black cat is a symbol of guilt since Poe is trying to express that guilt cannot be evaded until justice has been served. Then, until that justice has been served, shame will always continue to follow in your steps. The black cat represents the occasion when conviction and misconduct sneak into the life of the narrator. This is what Poe is trying to say when guilt cannot be avoided. The story on page 9 states, “By slow degrees, these feelings of disgust and annoyance rose into the bitterness of hatred. I avoided the creature; a certain sense of shame, the remembrance of my former deed of cruelty, preventing me from physically abusing it.” This proves that the second black cat symbolizes guilt. Shame follows the narrator, and he cannot escape from his guilt. Besides, this guilt of the second black cat becomes too overwhelming, and the narrator tries to kill the cat with an axe. The intention of killing the cat indicates the narrator trying to destroy the guilt within him. However, the narrator’s wife tries to save the cat’s life by blocking the narrator’s axe swing. The interference infuriates the narrator, taking his rage out on his wife by striking her head with the axe. The narrator’s source of guilt, the cat, couldn’t be destroyed. After the police find the corpse of his wife, the narrator claims, “…the hideous beast whose craft had seduced me into murder, and whose informing voice had consigned me to the hangman.” This implies the cat (guilt) cannot be avoided and eventually leads to murder. The consequence of his guilt would be the death of the narrator because the hangman refers to the Gallows. In all, the central idea of the story is that guilt cannot be avoided. You always have to face your consequences and shame will always follow around no matter what.

Edgar Allen Poe’s *The Black Cat* was a very unique twist and is very interesting to read. There were many dark twists and unexpected turns in the novel. The guilt experienced by the narrator could not be dodged no matter what the narrator does. His convictions and shame will be right behind him. Until he faces the consequences, the guilt felt by the narrator worsens. Although the sociopath couldn’t truly feel emotions, it was evident the narrator felt remorse while his dreadful violent actions towards the innocent. No matter what, he cannot destroy the feeling of guilt inside of him. Whatever he tries, it is always there. Then, in the end, he gets arrested for his crimes and executed.