

# Symbols in “The Masque of the Red Death”

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## **The Seven Apartments**

- Rooms described East to West, just as the sun rises in the East and sets in the West
- Sunrise or East or blue room = Birth
- # Sunset or West or black room = Death
- # Blue = Birth of boy (“The Seven Ages of **Man**”)
- # Orange is the noon of life
- # White = “Justice”
- # Black = “sans everything” or death
- # Purple and violet are similar colors, just as the schoolboy and silly, old man stages of life are similar (squeaky voice, dependence on others)
- # Folks are afraid of the black room, just as they are naturally fearful of death
- # Courtiers have only the ability to see into the next room, just as they can only see a little bit into their future or remember their past
- # Sharp turns every 20 or 30 yards = life also changes directions, including experiences, beliefs, and values
- # Novel effects around corners = surprises or experiences or obstacles
- # The masked figure (death) moves the prince and revelers through all seven rooms (ages) to the black room where they all die
- # The ebony clock is on the most westward wall in the black room.

## **• Ebony Clock**

- # It gets louder as you move from blue to black – as time passes
- # Revelers are afraid of the clock as one would be afraid of approaching death
- # Clock = Time (particularly passing time)
- # Clock = Life (in the earlier stages of life)
- # Clock = Death (in the later stages of life)
- # It’s on the most westward wall of the black room.
- # “The life of the ebony clock went out with that of the last of the gay.”
- # Each passing hour seems to catch the revelers off guard

- **Revelers**

- # Revelers = Everyman, Everywoman

- # Courtiers are masked in disguise, as if trying to hide from death

- # Their efforts to elude death by way of wall, gate and lock are futile

- # They pause at each passing hour, nervous, trembling, just as we briefly think about death and then go on living happily until dark thought creeps in again.

- # Each costume is different, suggesting individualism.

- # No revelers are brave enough to “arrest” death until they feel it’s time

- **The Masked Figure**

- # The deathly figure moves through all the apartments East to West and then vanishes in the shadow of the clock. This is the same way the sun moves before it dies for the day.

- # Masked figure = death

- # It ends life’s journey for the revelers (everyman, everywoman)

- **The Castellated Abby**

- # Represents security, protection and a place to hide from death

- # The courtiers weld the gates shut

- # The castle has a lofty wall that surrounds it

- # It’s well provisioned with all that’s necessary to sustain life

- **Other Symbolic Figures, Characters or Events**

- **Edgar Allan Poe Life Connections**