

## Poe-inspired Print

by Brian Patterson, SDMA Educator

### Literature Inspiration

**Title:** *The Raven*

**Author:** Edgar Allen Poe (1809-1849)

**Publisher:** American Review 1845

**Grade Level:** High School (grades 9–12)

## General Description

The dark, emotional atmosphere that exists in the poetry and prose of 19th century American writer Edgar Allen Poe is also depicted in the expressive lithographic prints of 20th-century artist George Wesley Bellows. In this lesson, students will use the written imagery of Edgar Allen Poe's work, *The Raven*, and the printmaking technique of hatching and cross-hatching found in the lithographic works of Bellows to illustrate a scene from the poem.

*The Raven* is a story that is appreciated world wide and many variations appear to this day. By listening to Edgar Allen Poe's poem and reading it for themselves, students will have the opportunity to explore its emotional depths and to visualize the words that the author has written. By examining the printmaking techniques used in Bellows's work, students will have a better visual understanding of the art process they are about to explore. Students will then create their own images inspired by the text in *The Raven* and using carving methods that simulate the lithographic techniques found in the work of Bellows. Students will use foam boards to emulate lithography techniques and will learn how to ink and print their works onto paper.

## Objective

**Students will. . .**

- read and visually interpret Edgar Allen Poe's, *The Raven*.
- examine the work of artist George Wesley Bellows.
- learn about the process and language of printmaking, including techniques of hatching and cross-hatching, inking a printing plate and tray, and pulling a print.

**Project Time:** One hour, thirty minutes from start to completion.

## Adaptation Suggestions

**(for grades K–8)**

This project can be adapted to younger students by adjusting the literary source to one more appropriate for their grade level. Literature choices should use descriptive language so as to lend themselves well to visual interpretation. Examples might include the work of Shel Silverstein, Maya Angelou, or Japanese Haiku poetry.

## Materials

(Please see the **Resources** section at the end of this lesson for suggested books, images, and more)

- Scratch-foam board (foam printing plate), 6" x 9" (one sheet for every student)
- White drawing paper, 6" x 9" (one sheet for every student)
- Pencil or stylus (one for every student)
- Black water soluble ink (2 tubes for every twenty-five students)
- One plastic spoon (for removing excess ink from the ink tray)
- Rubber brayers (one brayer for every five students)
- Small sheet of Plexiglas, plastic ink tray, flat plate, or heavy weight, smooth cardboard (for rolling out the ink) (one for every five students)
- White block printing paper, 9" x 12" size (3–4 sheets for every student)
- Newspaper to cover the surfaces for the printing station
- Images of lithographs by George Wesley Bellows
- Copies of *The Raven* by Edgar Allen Poe (one copy for every student)



**Vocabulary** (Visual Art Vocabulary: **brayer, bust, crosshatching, hatching, Lithography, printing plate** and **stylus**; English-Language Arts Vocabulary: **Aidenn, beguiling, dirges, entreating, nepenthe, and obeisance**). Please see appendix for vocabulary definitions.

## California State Standards

Please see appendix



## Procedure

### Motivation

1. Read aloud or have students read on their own *The Raven* by Edgar Allen Poe.
2. Discuss the imagery created through the author's use of descriptive language.
3. Present visuals of the lithographic work of George Wesley Bellows. Use his works to point out to students the printmaking techniques that express an emotional and psychological atmosphere: hatching and cross-hatching, the artist's use of closely scribed parallel lines, as well as lines that are placed at an angle to one another.

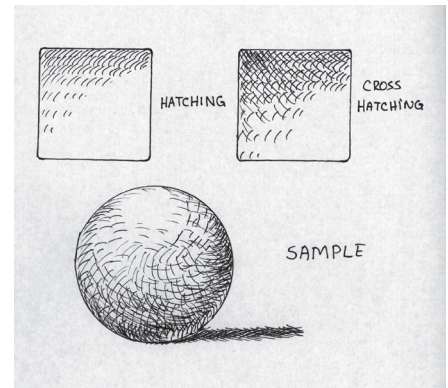
**Note:** With this technique, the quantity, thickness and spacing of line will affect the brightness of the overall image. By increasing quantity, thickness and closeness, a darker area will result. Students should observe these effects in the work of Bellows so that they might be inspired to try them for themselves in their own work.

### Preparing the Print

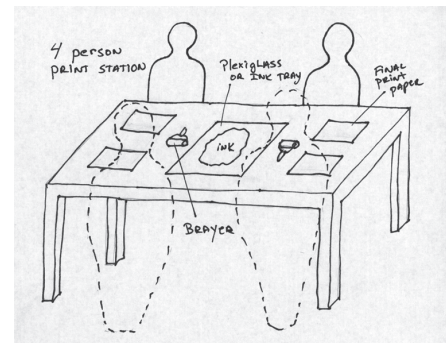
1. Demonstrate the techniques of hatching and cross-hatching to create shade and tonal value, as see in the works of Bellows. See technique illustrated above.
2. Using a pencil and scratch piece of paper, have students practice hatching and cross-hatching techniques.
3. When students are ready, have them move to a 6"x 9" sheet of paper to compose their final drawing. The drawing should illustrate a scene from *The Raven* and should employ the techniques of hatching and cross-hatching to create shaded areas and express a dark, emotional atmosphere similar to the one found in the poem.
4. Have students place their finished pencil drawing over top a foam printing plate of the same size (image side up). Line up the edges and secure both parts to the table with small pieces of masking tape placed on each of the four corners. Trace over the pencil lines with a pencil or stylus, with medium pressure.

### Printing

1. When students have finished tracing their images onto their foam printing plates, have them bring their plates over to the printing station (a few students at a time) along with their pre-cut block print paper (3-4 sheets per student).
2. Demonstrate for students the process of preparing the ink and ink tray for printing, rolling the ink onto the printing plate, and pulling the print. After demonstrating, allow students to work together in small groups to complete these steps.



Hatching and Crosshatching



Printing Station diagram

## Preparation

- Set up a printing station in the room on a flat surface, such as a table or countertop that is preferably not over carpet. *Please see diagram above.*
- Cut drawing paper and block printing paper to size
- Collect images of lithographic works by George Wesley Bellows (*Please see the **Resources** section at the end of this lesson for web and literary resources that include images of art work by Bellows.*)



## Preparing the Ink and Tray

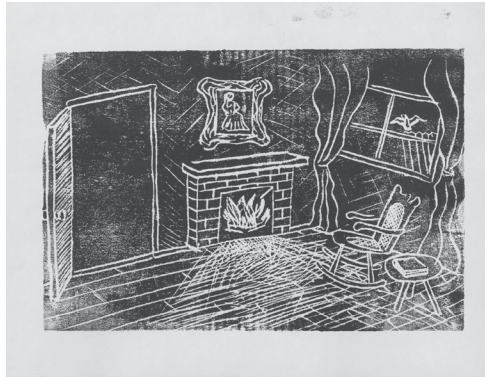
Squeeze out a single row of ink (like toothpaste on a toothbrush) onto the ink tray. Roll the brayer over the ink (back and forth, and side to side) to fill the tray with ink. The ink is ready when you hear a sticky sound, and the brayer should roll freely instead of sliding. If it begins to slide, you may have too much ink on the tray. Keep rolling it out or remove some of the ink from the tray using a plastic spoon.

## Rolling the Ink

Using a freshly inked brayer, carefully roll over the carved surface of the foam printing plate. Take the time to cover the entire plate with ink. You may need to roll the ink on with several coats to get good coverage. Work quickly as the ink dries quickly.



Inked printing plate



Pulled paper print

## Pulling the Print

Once the plate has been inked, carefully center the plate over the 9x12" block printing paper without setting it down (leaving an even border around the edges of the paper). When ready, turn the plate over (ink side down) onto the paper. Rub the entire back of the foam printing plate in circular motions. Carefully, peel back one corner of the foam printing plate and slowly remove it from the paper. Place the print in a safe place to dry. If time permits, students can make multiple prints of their image.

## Extension Activities

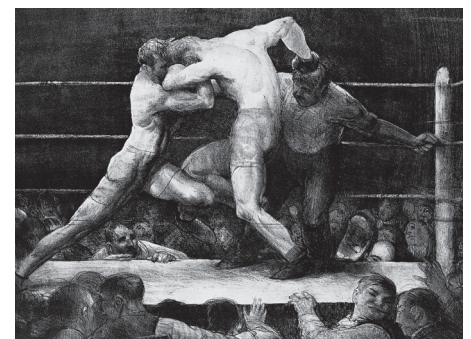
- Create a descriptive poem based on a lithograph by George Wesley Bellows.
- Have students recite their original poems in oral presentations to the class.
- Although this lesson is centered on *The Raven*, the ideas can be applied to any evocative and heavily descriptive poem or novel.
- Explore the use of other materials, such as Linoleum blocks and carving tools.
- A less expensive alternative to both Linoleum blocks and foam printing plates would be to use black scratch paper and etching tools.

## Teaching Tips

- Sharp, pointed pencils are best for more experienced students and more advanced designs. Rounded lead can be used without much risk and give students who are new to the process a much greater chance of success.

**Note:** Using a sharp pencil will produce a much finer line but the foam may develop small rips if the pencil is dragged over a curved line. A rounded lead on the pencil will much more easily create a long, rounded line but the line will be thicker and less crisp. If there is extra foam available, have students practice with both tools.

- The foam printing plate can be carved on both sides, but a hole may develop if the cuts are too deep and collide with those from the other side.
- Putting too much ink on the brayer will fill the cracks of the block print and will not render good visual results. If too much ink has been applied to the printing plate, simply wash it off, dry it, and try again.
- Insufficient ink will produce a light, faded look. If a darker image is preferred, simply apply more ink and try again on a new sheet of block printing paper.
- Be sure to prepare enough paper for each student to make several prints, as the first one or two may not print well.



George Wesley Bellows, *A Stag at Sharkey's*, lithograph, 1917. Museum purchase with funds from the Helen M. Towle Bequest, 1940:65.



## Resources

### About the author:

***The Best of Poe: The Tell-Tale Heart, The Raven, The Cask of Amontillado, and 30 Others*** (Paperback);

Publisher: Prestwick House, Inc. 2006

[http://www.poemuseum.org/poes\\_life/index.html](http://www.poemuseum.org/poes_life/index.html)

This is the official website for the Poe Museum in Richmond, Virginia. It includes biographical information on the author, selected works by the author, educational resources, and an online museum store.

### About the artist, George Wesley Bellows

[http://www.butlerart.com/pc\\_book/pages/george\\_wesley\\_bellows\\_1882.htm](http://www.butlerart.com/pc_book/pages/george_wesley_bellows_1882.htm),

This website includes biographical information on the artist George Wesley Bellows.

[http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight\\_objects/pd/g/george\\_bellows\\_stag.aspx](http://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/highlights/highlight_objects/pd/g/george_bellows_stag.aspx)

This website includes art historical information on the Bellows' lithograph, *A Stag at Sharkey's*.

## About Printmaking

Go here, <http://www.moma.org/exhibitions/2001/whatisaprint/flash.html>

to get a web based interactive presentation of Lithography from the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

<http://www.worldprintmakers.com/english/opm.htm>

This web site, *On Printmaking*, provides printmaking history, technique information and images, as well as basic terminology.

## Currently on view at SDMA

George Wesley Bellows, *Winter Road*, oil on canvas, 1912

George Wesley Bellows, *Lobster Cover, Monhegan Maine*, oil on board, 1913

*Young Art 2009: Expressing Literature* (April 18–May 31, 2009) will include several works from the Museum's permanent collection that are inspired by literature, including *In no one of their apartments was there any lamps (from Edgar Allen Poe's Mask of the Red Death)*, a lithographic work by Federico Castellón.

## Resources from the San Diego County Library

***Edgar Allen Poe: his life and legacy*** (1992) by Jeffery Meyers

B POE [Ages teen–adult]

A biographical account of the life and works of Edgar Allen Poe and the impact of his writing on other authors and artists.

***Printmaking*** (1973)

by Harlow Rockwell

J 760.28 ROC

Illustrated instructions for making prints using the hand, collage, potatoes, smoke, styrofoam, glue, and other materials.

***The vibrant metropolis: 88 lithographs by George Wesley Bellows***

(2002) selected by Carol Belanger Grafton

759.132 BEL [All ages]

This book includes a collection of 88 images of the lithographic work of George Wesley Bellows.

