

Name _____



Mind's Descent

In *The Black Cat* by Edgar Allan Poe, the narrator's mental state changes drastically throughout the story. At first, he appears to be a kind and loving man, especially toward animals. He has a strong bond with his pet cat, Pluto, and treats him with affection. However, as time passes, the narrator begins to change.

One major turning point is his growing addiction to alcohol. As he drinks more, his emotions become unstable. He starts feeling angry and irritable, lashing out at those around him. His once-deep love for Pluto turns into cruelty. One night, in a drunken rage, he harms Pluto in a terrible way. At first, he feels guilty, but instead of stopping his violent behavior, he only becomes worse.

After Pluto is gone, the narrator's mind continues to unravel. He sees strange things, like the image of a cat burned onto his wall after a fire. He tries to convince himself that it is just a coincidence, but his fear and guilt grow stronger. Then, a second black cat appears—almost exactly like Pluto. At first, he is relieved to have another pet, but soon, he becomes terrified. He believes the cat is watching him, judging him, even haunting him. His paranoia increases, and he starts to believe the white mark on the cat's chest is changing into the shape of a noose, a symbol of punishment.

His fear turns into madness. In another violent outburst, he harms someone he loves. Thinking he can escape punishment, he hides his crime behind a wall. But his paranoia makes him careless. When the police arrive, he feels so confident that he even taps on the wall where his secret is hidden. At that moment, a loud cry comes from inside—revealing his crime.

By the end of the story, the narrator has completely lost his grip on reality. His guilt and fear have consumed him, and his own actions lead to his downfall. Through the narrator's slow descent into madness, Poe shows how guilt, addiction, and violence can destroy a person's mind.