

# 1

## Lesson One

### FOCUS: Word Choice and the Value of a Dictionary

#### VOCABULARY WORDS

From “Romance”:

**Romance**, *n.*

1. A love affair
2. Inclination toward the romantic or adventurous; romantic spirit

**Condor**, *n.*

A vulture of the Western Hemisphere

**Lyre**, *n.*

A stringed instrument of the harp family

For Lessons 1–5, begin discussion of each poem by reading it aloud in class.

Before a poem can be appreciated for its deeper meanings, it must first be read literally. We often overlook words we can already define. Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote in *Nature*, “Every word . . . if traced to its root, is found to be borrowed from some material appearance. *Right* means *straight*; *wrong* means *twisted*. *Spirit* primarily means *wind*; *transgression*, the crossing of a *line*; *supercilious*, the *raising of the eyebrow*.” Encourage your students to utilize the footnotes or endnotes when reading poetry. They should even look up words that are commonly understood, to understand better the careful, conscious choices poets make. To develop your students’ vocabulary, several words from each lesson’s assigned texts are defined in the color margins of this Teacher’s Guide.



### Discussion Activities and Writing Exercise



The poem “Romance” (pp. 339–340) is one that students may not fully understand, especially because they are likely to be familiar with only one meaning of the title word, which is a very modern one. The 1913 edition of *Webster’s Revised Unabridged Dictionary*, for instance, gives five definitions for “romance,” but doesn’t even include “a love affair or relationship between lovers.” Poe uses “romance” in the sense that was common to his time, to signify the spirit of imagination or fancy (itself a term whose appropriate meaning may have to be supplied). Explain to your students that words sometimes change meanings over time, and that the poem must be read in light of the earlier meaning of the title in order to be properly understood.

Read the poem aloud. The two stanzas contrast the freedom to indulge the imagination in the idleness of youth with the lack of such opportunities in the careworn, workaday world of maturity. Lead your students to see how these contrasting states are symbolized by the contrasting symbols of the parakeet and the condor. Read the poem again, and follow with a discussion focused on understanding the meanings of the terms in the poem. Have the students write a one-page essay to explain how those terms are relevant to the meaning of the poem. Does this new awareness change their first reading? Does it deepen their understanding of the poem?



### Homework

Distribute Handout One. Read the poems “The Bells” (p. 315) and “The City in the Sea” (p. 322). Pay attention to sound and tone in the poems as ways of creating mood.