

- The story follows many traditions of Gothic fiction and is often analyzed as an allegory (symbol) about the inevitability of death, though some critics advise against an allegorical reading. Many different interpretations have been presented, as well as attempts to identify the true nature of the titular (referring to title) disease.
- The multiple single-toned rooms may be representative of the human mind, showing different personality types.
- The plague may, in fact, represent typical attributes of human life and mortality. This would imply the entire story is an allegory about man's futile attempts to stave off death
- Blood, emphasized throughout the tale along with the color red, serves as a dual symbol, representing both death and life. This is emphasized by the masked figure – never explicitly stated to be the Red Death, but only a reveler in a costume of the Red Death – making his initial appearance in the easternmost room, which is colored blue, a color most often associated with birth.
- though Prospero's castle is meant to keep the sickness out, it is ultimately an oppressive structure. Its maze-like design and tall and narrow windows become almost burlesque in the final black room, so oppressive that "there were few of the company bold enough to set foot within its precincts at all. "Additionally, the castle is meant to be an enclosed space, but the stranger is still able to sneak inside, suggesting that control is an illusion.

- No matter how beautiful the castle, how luxuriant the clothing, or how rich the food, no mortal, not even a prince, can escape death. No matter how beautiful the castle, how luxuriant the clothing, or how rich the food, no mortal, not even a prince, can escape death.
- The rooms of the palace, lined up in a series, allegorically represent the stages of life. Poe makes it a point to arrange the rooms running from east to west. This progression is symbolically significant because it represents the life cycle of a day: the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, with night symbolizing death.

What transforms this set of symbols into an allegory, however, is the further symbolic treatment of the twenty-four hour life cycle: it translates to the realm of human beings. This progression from east to west, performed by both Prospero and the mysterious guest, symbolizes the human journey from birth to death. Poe crafts the last, black room as the ominous endpoint, the room the guests fear just as they fear death. The clock that presides over that room also reminds the guests of death's final judgment. The hourly ringing of the bells is a reminder of the passing of time, inexorable and ultimately personal.

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