

Plot

Exposition: Poe uses the beginning of the story to offer important background information; Prospero's kingdom is under attack from the Red Death, and Prospero locks his friends and himself into his castle to escape the plague.

Inciting Incident: Prospero's decision to hold a masquerade ball sets the main conflict with the Red Death into motion.

Rising Action: The description of the rooms, the chiming of the clocks, and details of the party increase the tone of anxiety and fear in the story. The conflict intensifies when the mummer (mummy) dressed as the Red Death appears and angers Prospero. Prospero's decision to chase him when the other knights in the castle back away from the unexpected guest in fear leads to the climax.

Climax: Prospero has reached the point of no return when he falls dead while attempting to kill the mummy.

Falling Action: The knights must react to Prospero's death in the climax of the story and they pull the sheet off the mummy only to find nothing there. They all fall dead.

Resolution: With all the knights and Prince Prospero dead, the conflict is resolved as the Red Death takes complete control of the kingdom.

Symbols

The ebony clock: The clock symbolizes the passage of time, the onset of death, and the life of the party goes (revelers). Poe builds the symbol by giving details on how the party stops and the partiers get nervous every time they hear the clock chime, and he finishes the meaning of the symbol when he states "And the life of the ebony clock went out with that of the last of the gay." The clock stops when life stops.

Irony



Prospero: Prospero's name is an obvious allusion to the word Prosperity or Prosperous: the condition of being successful or thriving; *especially* : economic well-being. **While Prospero is thriving at the beginning of the story, Poe creates irony when the Red Death is able to sneak into the party and kill the "most prosperous" man in the kingdom. Although Prospero thinks he is wealthy enough to escape death, he isn't.**

Characterization

