Name _____ Class _____ Date _____



Eldorado

by Edgar Allan Poe

Grades 5–8 · Common Core RL.6.4, RL.6.2, RL.6.5

Poe published "Eldorado" in 1849, the year of the California Gold Rush and the year he died. El Dorado ("the golden one") was a legendary city of gold that Spanish explorers searched for in South America. The poem has four six-line stanzas; the word "shadow" appears in each.

THE POEM

Gaily bedight,
A gallant knight,
In sunshine and in shadow,
Had journeyed long,
Singing a song,
In search of Eldorado.

But he grew old--
This knight so bold--
And o'er his heart a shadow
Fell as he found
No spot of ground
That looked like Eldorado.

And, as his strength
Failed him at length,
He met a pilgrim shadow--
"Shadow," said he,
"Where can it be--
This land of Eldorado?"

"Over the Mountains
Of the Moon,
Down the Valley of the Shadow,
Ride, boldly ride,"
The shade replied,
"If you seek for Eldorado!"

VOCABULARY

gaily — cheerfully

bedight — dressed, decorated

gallant — brave and noble

journeyed — traveled

pilgrim — a traveler on a long, often holy, journey

shade — a ghost or spirit; also shadow

boldly — bravely

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Describe the knight in stanza 1. How does he feel about his quest?

2. What has changed by stanza 2?

3. Follow the word “shadow” through the four stanzas. What does it mean each time?

4. Where does the pilgrim shadow say Eldorado is? Is that a real place?

5. What might Eldorado stand for in your life or in anyone’s?

WRITING PROMPT

Write a short ballad (3–4 six-line stanzas) about someone searching for a dream. Repeat one word in every stanza and let its meaning change.

Eldorado — Answer Key

1. “Gaily bedight, / A gallant knight,” singing as he travels “In sunshine and in shadow.” He is happy and hopeful.
2. “he grew old,” and “o’er his heart a shadow / Fell” because he found “No spot of ground / That looked like Eldorado.” He is discouraged.
3. Stanza 1: shade, the hard times of life; stanza 2: sadness; stanza 3: a ghost (“pilgrim shadow”), nearing death; stanza 4: “the Valley of the Shadow,” death itself.
4. “Over the Mountains / Of the Moon, / Down the Valley of the Shadow.” No, it is unreachable in this life, perhaps found only beyond death.
5. Accept supported answers, e.g. wealth, happiness, a perfect life: a dream we chase that may never be reached.

Read the full poem online: poetrycatalog.com/eldorado-edgar-allan-poe/