

LITERATURE & CRITICISM  
*Short Works of Literature with Contrasting Critical Interpretations*

EDGAR ALLAN POE, "ANNABEL LEE" (1849)

**Booth, Bradford A. "The Identity of Annabel Lee."**

*College English*, vol. 7, no. 1, Oct. 1945, pp. 17-19.

Some key ideas: The "kinsmen" are probably a poetic way of referring to the "angels" who are mentioned later in the poem (18); some details suggest Annabel Lee is a representation of Sarah Elmira Royster Shelton (17-18), while other details suggest Annabel Lee is a representation of Virginia Poe (18), but this is a poem rather than an exact autobiography (18-19).

<http://doi.org/10.2307/371416>

**Jones, Buford and Kent Ljungquist. "Poe, Mrs. Osgood, and 'Annabel Lee.'"**

*Studies in the American Renaissance*, 1983, pp. 275-280.

Some key ideas: The poem "Annabel Lee" was inspired by another poem featuring angels and demons.

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/30227518>

**Richardson, Mark. "Who Killed Annabel Lee?: Writing about Literature in the Composition Classroom."**

*College English*, vol. 66, no. 3, Jan. 2004, pp. 278-293.

Some key ideas: Either the narrator, or Annabel Lee's relatives, killed her or let her die (286).

<http://doi.org/10.2307/4140749>

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, GETTYSBURG ADDRESS (1863)

To compare different versions of the speech:

<https://quod.lib.umich.edu/l/lincoln/lincoln7/1:40?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>

To compare with Lincoln's other speeches and writings: <https://quod.lib.umich.edu/l/lincoln/>

**Huston, James L. "The Lost Cause of the North: A Reflection on Lincoln's Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural."**

*Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, vol. 33, no. 1, winter 2012, pp. 14-37.

Some key ideas: Huston argues that Lincoln's Gettysburg Address does not use the phrase "all men are created equal" to attack slavery, but merely to talk about the American republic; the point of the address (according to Huston) is that the Civil War was about preserving the Union and its form of government, not about slavery (27-30). Later, in his Second Inaugural Address, Lincoln rejects the point he made in the Gettysburg Address and says the war was caused by slavery (16-17, 35, 37).

Huston defends his point that preserving the Union was Lincoln's focus in the Gettysburg Address by using Lincoln's arguments in other speeches and writings that secession from the Union was illegal (17-24) and that secession threatened majority rule and therefore the form of government of the republic (24-25), as well as other Northerners' perception at the time that the Civil War was about preserving the Union, not about slavery (29-30).

<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41342665>

**Elmore, A. E. “The Heart of the Message.”**

*Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address: Echoes of the Bible and Book of Common Prayer*. Southern Illinois University Press, 2014, pp. 190-218, 247-249.

Some key ideas: Elmore argues that Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address uses the phrase “all men are created equal” to attack slavery (190, 200, 205-208, 217-218). According to Elmore, Lincoln was responding to writers and speakers such as Ross, Calhoun, who defended slavery by criticizing the Declaration of Independence and its idea that all men are created equal (200, 203-205). Lincoln had earlier argued that the phrase “all men are created equal” applied to African Americans (206-207), an idea which his political opponent Douglas rejected (205-206).

To give further context and support for this point, Elmore argues that, in the early years of the United States, both North and South hoped slavery would eventually come to an end but did not know how to end it (190-193), but that after slavery became more profitable, and German political scientists suggested that inequality was necessary for social organization (193-195), Southern thinkers rejected their own earlier criticism of slavery and concluded that slavery was a good thing (195-200). Stephens, a congressman from Georgia who knew Lincoln, rejected the anti-slavery idea of racial equality (208-209), and he and other Southern thinkers saw slavery and ideas about race as the cause of the Civil War until nearly the end of the war (208-215). According to Elmore, Lincoln’s use of the phrase “all men are created equal” from the Declaration of Independence was thus a reminder that North and South had previously agreed in moral opposition to slavery, and that only more recently had Southern thinkers rejected the idea of human equality.

*Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address: Echoes of the Bible and Book of Common Prayer* (Google Books):  
<https://books.google.com/books?id=0PVc-rDIKR0C&printsec=frontcover>

*KATE CHOPIN, “THE STORY OF AN HOUR” (1894)*

**Toth, Emily. “Girls and Women.”**

*Unveiling Kate Chopin*. University Press of Mississippi, 1999, pp. 3-21.

Some key ideas: The story “can be read as a criticism of marriage itself, as an institution that traps women” (10).

*Unveiling Kate Chopin*: [https://archive.org/details/unveilingkatecho00toth\\_0](https://archive.org/details/unveilingkatecho00toth_0)

**Berkove, Lawrence I. “Fatal Self-Assertion in Kate Chopin’s ‘The Story of an Hour.’”**

*American Literary Realism*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2000, pp. 152–58.

Some key ideas: “There is evidence of a deeper level of irony in the story which does not regard Louise Mallard as a heroine but as an immature egotist and a victim of her own extreme self-assertion” (152).

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/27746974>

**Cunningham, Mark. “The Autonomous Female Self and the Death of Louise Mallard in Kate Chopin’s ‘Story of an Hour.’”**

*English Language Notes*, vol. 42, no. 1, Sept. 2004, pp. 48-55.

Some key ideas: She didn’t see her husband, and merely died of joy because of her sense of liberation.

<https://doi.org/10.1215/00138282-42.1.48>

**Foote, Jeremy. "Speed That Kills: The Role of Technology in Kate Chopin's 'The Story of An Hour.'"**

*The Explicator*, vol. 71, no. 2, 2013, pp. 85-89.

Some key ideas: The husband's train commute may have caused/exacerbated problems in marriage, and the speed of telegram led to the misunderstanding about his death. (These technologies were both relatively new at the time.)

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00144940.2013.779222>

**ROBERT FROST, "MENDING WALL" (1914)**

**Davis, Matthew. "The Laconic Response: Spartan and Athenian Mindsets in Robert Frost's 'Mending Wall.'"**

*Literary Imagination*, vol. 7, no. 3, 2005, pp. 289-305.

Some key ideas: "The neighbor's reply... is Laconic [i.e., Spartan] not only in its brevity but also in its reliance on ancestral wisdom" (295).

"In Frost's poem, the neighbor's reply is Laconic in a third sense, too; that is, in its function, which is to cut off further discussion" (296).

"Like [the Athenian] Socrates, the speaker proceeds by asking questions, and the questions are clearly designed to encourage questioning of old truths" (298).

"Some readers have assumed that Frost identified primarily with the neighbor; others have argued that he sides with the speaker. ...Frost, always cagey in such matters, insisted that he could not be simply identified with either character" (303).

<https://doi.org/10.1093/litimag/7.3.289>

**Trachtenberg, Zev. "Good Neighbors Make Good Fences: Frost's 'Mending Wall.'"**

*Philosophy and Literature*, vol. 21, 1997, pp. 114-122.

Some key ideas: "The neighbor and the narrator... have opposing views of property" (116).

"The poem shows the neighbor rejecting the human connectedness that constitutes membership in community, in favor of the personal security of his own property... the notion that property's primary function is to mark off separate domains within which individuals are independent of each other" (116).

"The narrator understands that property and community are not necessarily opposing concepts... property divisions must be actively maintained, and this activity can be the basis of community" (116).

<https://doi.org/10.1353/phl.1997.0013>