



# Altonio and the Raven

by Elmore Wenzholz, Harrison School - Winner Year 7-8 category 2023

1. The keys **clacked** as his thin, **white** fingers played over the tiles with practised ease, the metal pegs **branding** the flaky paper with a rich **red** ink. There was a subtle **clicking** outside, and as the typist looked up, he saw it was a large raven. His **black** feathers **ruffled** out as much as possible in the **chilly Burian air**. Andrew. The **air-head maid** had named him Andrew. Andrew was always coming back to the balcony, waiting for Fracella, the maid, to 'accidentally' drop a spare fruit cake or bread slice for him to **salvage**.

2. Altonio, the typist, got up from his chair. He was a Governor, a head of the Tertiary court, the court of public justice. He had a lot of **power** over the court, and in turn, over the laws and **restrictions** that **controlled** the Burian citizens.

3. He **strode lankily** over to the glass double doors, his **ebony cane** tucked under his armpit. The doors swung **open soundlessly** as the politician drew closer to the balcony, his boots **ringing out** as he **loped** over the threshold and out the door into the **brisk outside air**.

The author sets the battle scene between the protagonist and antagonist, juxtaposing the **characters** of Andrew and Altonio. Andrew's feathers are ruffled out as much as possible, showing confidence. 'Airhead maid' shows Altonio's condescending character.

The **context** is also set - the time is last century - typewriter (not a computer). Buria is a place in India or perhaps a fictional place as the names sound Italian or Spanish and English - Andrew, a funny name for a raven.

**Appeal to senses:** The reader's imagination is triggered through hearing and sight using **literary devices** such as **alliteration** - 'keys clacked' and 'rich red ink' and **onomatopoeia** - 'clacked' and 'clicking'. **Juxtaposition** of 'clacked' - inside, and 'clicking' - outside.

**Description** through adjectives - 'thin, white fingers' and 'chilly Burian air', and strong verbs - clacked, branding, ruffled, salvaged.

**Symbolism:** Colour motifs: 'Rich **red** ink' - symbolises aggression or evil or signing in blood; **Black** raven and **ebony** cane - black symbolises death, power, wealth; **White** is spiritual; with 'thin white fingers' suggests ghostly.

We learn more about Altonio and how powerful he is as governor. This introduces important **theme topics** of power and control. The reader infers that Altonio abuses his powerful role through the word 'restrictions' so another theme topic of tyranny is introduced.

The reader infers more about the **character** of Altonio. Ebony is black timber and very strong so the cane is a **symbol** to show the power and status of the politician (not just for old people). His power is also shown through the **vocabulary**: strong verbs - 'strode lankily', 'loped'. There is an **appeal to our senses** of hearing - 'boots ringing out' and 'doors swung open soundlessly' and feeling the cold through 'brisk outside air'.

4. Andrew turned to face Altonio in an **annoyingly playful** way as he **trod grumpily** towards the raven. He had been in this situation before, and the man had never gotten the best of him. His eyes **glinted with mischief** with the anticipation of the ensuing kerfuffle.

5. Altonio lazily took his ebony cane out and waved it in Andrew's direction, hoping to get this inconvenience over with as quickly as possible.

Andrew didn't move.

Altonio stepped forward and flicked his cane down onto the balustrade no more than an inch away from the rascal.

Andrew didn't so much as flinch.

6. Tired of this repeated nuisance, Altonio sought to end this routine and **swung** his cane at Andrew, but it just **cut through the air**, as Andrew **fluttered** over towards the lookout.

7. The lookout was a small rectangular peninsula that hung out over the crowded cityscape, presenting the viewer with a **grand panorama of steel and smoke**.

8. Altonio **stamped** over towards the raven, getting more **irritable** as the cold got to him. He **swung** his cane around **tempestuously**, hoping it would scare off the **audacious avian**, but he should have known better.

Andrew just **croaked** in a mocking fashion.

Altonio **cracked** the ebony down on the copper railing right where the bird sat, but it only dented the soft metal. Andrew **fluttered** noisily up and landed on top of the cane, staring **gleefully** into Altonio's **raging** eyes. The connection was electric.

9. Before Altonio could **retaliate**, Andrew was already sitting at the very end of the lookout. As Altonio **glowered** at the raven, a small, **sharp-edged** feather drifted down and landed right on the tip of his nose. Altonio's face **flushed red** and he blew the feather off his nose, then turned his **gaze** to the bird. He stamped over towards the raven, his **intent** clear in his **blazing** eyes. He was gaining speed as he grew closer and closer to his **would-be victim**, but the bird barely seemed aware of his **imminent demise**, the edges of his **beak curling up into a mischievous smile**.

10. Altonio's rage swelled as he got closer and closer, and clutched his cane, **his knuckles white with rage-fuelled exertion**. His footsteps shook the lookout such was the force of his stride as he raised his right hand.

**Infer** more about Andrew – playful, annoying, competitive, mischievous – 'glinted with mischief'; Altonio – 'trod grumpily'.

**Oxymoron**: 'annoyingly playful'.

The story is told from **third person POV** with an omniscient narrator who knows everything about characters' thoughts and motivations.

**Action** (complex sentences) with repetition of 'Altonio...' and **reaction** (simple sentences) with repetition of 'Andrew...'. There is a **rhythm** in the **pattern of sentences**, using **anaphora** (repetition of a word or phrase at the beginning of successive clauses) to bring attention to the tension between the man and the bird and the jostle for power. This is repeated later in the story.

**Assonance and alliteration** in 'flicked', 'inch', 'flinch'.

The roles of protagonist and antagonist change.

**Writing through the senses**: Cane 'cut through the air' describes a sound and movement.

**Onomatopoeia** – 'swung', 'cut', 'fluttered'.

The reader learns more about the setting through the introduction of an **environmental theme** about how factories and air pollution are destroying the environment. Usually a lookout is scenic but here the panorama is of a crowded city.

Also **Alliteration** in 'steel and smoke'.

Beginning of another series of paragraphs using the two characters names to show the **rhythm** of the battle. **Description** of both main characters through strong verbs and adverbs – 'stamped', 'swung tempestuously', and interesting adjectives – 'irritable', 'audacious avian' (alliteration). The reader infers more about characters.

**One sentence paragraph** for emphasis.

**Onomatopoeia** – 'croaked', 'cracked', 'fluttered'.

**Juxtaposition** of 'gleefully' (Andrew) and 'raging' (Altonio).

**Language choices** – interesting vocabulary (wow words) – 'retaliate', 'glowered', 'flushed red', 'gaze', 'intent', 'blazing', 'would-be victim', 'imminent demise', 'mischievous'.

**Anthropomorphism**: beak curling up into a mischievous smile.

**Sentence variety: Compound Sentence** – 'Before Altonio could retaliate, Andrew .....end of the lookout.'

**Complex sentence** – 'He was gaining speed as he grew closer and closer ..... mischievous smile.'

**Compound adjectives** (hyphens): 'rage-fuelled' (others are 'air-head' and 'sharp-edged').

**Colour Motif**: 'white knuckles'

**Repetition** of 'closer' builds suspense.

11. The next moments ensued in this order.

Andrew **fluttered effortlessly** towards Altonio.

Altonio's cane **cracked** down onto the balustrade, breaking both the railing and the ebony.

Altonio **flinched** to the side in order to avoid the **rambunctious** raven.

Altonio **tripped** over his hard soled boots and **flailed** forward.

Altonio **swung helplessly** from the thin plating at the end of the lookout, his right hand the only thing keeping his body from the **sickening plummet**.

Andrew slowly **fluttered** down onto the metal peninsula, his head tilted down, seemingly **oblivious** to the dire situation. Either that, or he was enjoying the Governor's **utter fear**.

Altonio's eyes **widened in terror** as he saw the **sheer joy** burning in the **raven's dark eyes**. His hand was **rapidly weakening** as all his blood **flooded** to his brain. His hand was tired already, with the **vigorous exercise of his attempted extermination**.

12. If it wasn't for his **villainous intent**, then Altonio might not have slipped free from the lookout.

If he had let the raven be, (then) he might not have **felt** the **polluted air** rushing against his skin.

If he hadn't gotten up from his typewriter, then his last **sight** might not have been a raven's **joyful eyes** slowly growing further and further away.

Narration breaks the fourth wall: narrator addressing the reader directly. Shows the author experimenting with form.

Anaphora in following 7 paragraph openings – repetition creates a rhythm that emphasises the power struggle between the two characters.

Short sentences again show the sequence of action and reaction in the duel between man and bird.

**Neutral words** linked to Andrew: 'fluttered effortlessly', 'rambunctious'.

**Negative Words** linked to Altonio: 'cracked', 'breaking', 'flinched', 'avoid', 'tripped', 'flailed', 'swung helplessly', 'thin', 'end', 'sickening plummet'.

**Juxtaposition:** First sentence – a bird – oblivious  
Second sentence – evil intent of the bird.

The reader infers evil intent in the bird through the 'raven's dark eyes' as well as in Altonio through his 'attempted extermination' of the raven.

**Descriptive language** to capture Altonio's death – 'widened in terror', 'sheer joy', 'dark eyes', 'rapidly weakening', 'flooded', 'vigorous', 'attempted extermination'.

Anaphora in triple - repetition of sentence structure- (If...then) creates rhythm in sentences and emphasises themes.

Reader infers from the **imagery** created through writing to the senses – felt, sight.

**Description in noun groups** – villainous intent, polluted air, joyful eyes.

**Fable like quality to narrative:** is there a moral to the story or is it an allegory for something?