

# Dr. Heidegger's Experiment, by Nathaniel Hawthorne and The Masque of Red Death, by Edgar Allen Poe

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Both Nathaniel Hawthorne and Edgar Allen Poe are gothic writers who share many similarities in their stories. Both authors write about characters who live in their own and try to escape the real world around them. In Hawthorne's "Dr. Heidegger's experiment" four participants attempt to escape reality by drinking from a fountain of youth in order to return to make themselves younger. In Poe's "[The Masque of the Red Death](#)", Prince Prospero tries to escape the red death, a disease that is ravaging his city, by hiding in his own castellated abbey. The characters in the stories both attempt to avoid death and the inevitable, by hiding behind their barriers, but no matter what they try to do reality catches up to them and they succumb to what they originally try to avoid. In both stories, the protagonists hide behind barriers made by themselves, attempt to conquer death, and eventually give in to death.

In Nathaniel Hawthorn's "Dr. Heidegger's experiment" four participants hide behind a barrier which in this case is a fountain of youth; a concoction that makes the drinker younger. "... my respected friends, are welcome to so much of this admirable fluid as may restore to the bloom of your youth" (Hawthorne 5). Dr. Heidegger offers the participants a

drink of the magical liquid which will make them younger. The liquid serves as a barrier between the participants and death as though it protects them from the effects of aging and growing older.

When confronted by death, as the four participants were growing old and on the verge of death, they felt as though by drinking from the liquid they can conquer and defeat it. "give us more of this wondrous water!" cried they, eagerly" (Hawthorne 7). The participants thought that in order to conq...

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...e story is the same. The protagonists feel as though that they are above death and can defeat it with the slightest ease. In "Dr. Heidegger's experiment" the characters believe that simply drinking from the fountain of youth will allow them to conquer death, but it only prolongs its devastating effects. The liquid had worn off much too quickly and the characters became as old as they were when the experiment first started. In "The Masque of the Red Death" prince Prospero encounters the Red Death at his party and through his own ego chases it down until the very last room in the abbey. The prince chases the Red Death with a dagger as he believes he can overcome it, but the Red Death turns around and he and his guests drop to the floor one by one. Death is inevitable and although the characters feel as though they can defeat it, they all capitulate to its effects.

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