

## **INTRODUCTION TO “THE PURLOINED LETTER”**

**\*Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Purloined Letter” first appeared in the literary annual The Gift for 1845 (1844).**

**\*This detective story features the fictional detective C. Auguste Dupin.**

**\*There are no gothic elements, such as the gruesome descriptions of dead bodies.**

**\*This is the story that employs most effectively the principle of ratiocination (The activity or process of reasoning; thought or reasoning that is exact, valid and rational).**

**\*This story brilliantly illustrates the concept of the intuitive intellect at work as it solves a problem logically.**

**\*This story is told with utmost economy.**

### **MAJOR CHARACTERS IN “THE PURLOINED LETTER”**

- 1. C. Auguste Dupin, the famous Parisian amateur detective.**
- 2. Monsieur G, Prefect of the Paris police.**
- 3. Minister D, the villain of the story. He ‘purloined’ or stole a letter.**

### **THE EPIGRAPH**

**\*Epigraph is a short quotation or saying at the beginning of a book or chapter, intended to suggest its theme.**

**\*The epigraph to “The Purloined Letter”, “Nil sapientiae odiosus acumine nimio” is a quotation from Seneca. The English rendering of the epigraph is: “Nothing is more hateful to wisdom than excessive cunning”.**

### The Title

**\*'Purloined' means stolen.**

**\*In the story, a letter from the queen's lover has been stolen from her boudoir by the unscrupulous Minister D which has been rescued by the detective Dupin.**

### The Story in Brief

**The story is divided into two parts.**

#### **PART I**

**\*In the first part, Monsieur G , Prefect of Police in Paris, comes to Dupin with a problem.**

**\*The problem is that a letter containing personal secrets has been stolen from a royal personage and is being used to blackmail her .**

**\*The thief is known i.e. (Minister D )**

**\*The Prefect has searched Minister D 's home thoroughly, but found nothing.**

**\*Dupin's advice is that they thoroughly re-search the house.**

**\*A month later, Monsieur G returns, having found nothing.**

**\*This time, he says that he will pay fifty thousand francs to anyone who can obtain the letter for him.**

**\*Dupin invites him to write the cheque.**

**\*Dupin hands the Prefect the letter without any further comment.**

## **PART II**

**\*In the second half of "The Purloined Letter" Dupin explained how he got back the letter.**

**\*The case is so difficult to solve because it appears to be very simple.**

**\*Dupin uses the method of psychological deduction.**

**\*At first, he revised everything he knew about Minister D .**

**\*Then, he mentally revised what he knew about the case.**

**\* Dupin reconstructed the Minister's thinking, started thinking like the thief.**

**\*Dupin decided that the minister has hidden the letter in plain sight.**

**\*Dupin visited Minister D and found the letter in plain sight but boldly disguised.**

**\* He memorized the appearance of the letter, and he deliberately left a snuffbox as an excuse to come to D's house again .**

**\*Having duplicated the letter, he exchanged his facsimile for the original during a prearranged diversion. Retrieving his snuff-box, he departed.**