

# *The Mask of the Red Death*



A terrible disease called the Red Death has struck the country. It is incredibly fatal, horribly **gruesome**, and it has already killed off half the kingdom. But the ruler of these parts, Prince Prospero, does not seem to care about his poor, dying **subjects**. Instead, he decides to let the kingdom take care of itself while he and a thousand of his favourite knights and ladies shut themselves up in a fabulous castle to have one never-ending party. Wine, women, music, dancing, fools—Prospero's castle has it all. After the last **guest** enters, no one else can get in—the Prince has welded the doors shut. That means no one can get out, either...

About five or six months into his stay, Prospero decides to have a spectacular **masquerade** ball (a ball where the guests wear masks and costumes). The

setup is **weird and wild**, just like the Prince who designs it. The ball takes place in a suite of seven rooms, each one dressed up in a different color: blue, purple, green, orange, white, violet, and black. The black room, which looks like death, is awfully **creepy**—it is got dark black walls, blood red windows, and big black clock which chimes so eerily every hour that everybody at the party stops dancing and laughs nervously. Most of the **frolicking** masqueraders are too weirded out to go into the black room.

Anyway, the party's **in full swing** and everybody is having a wild time when the clock strikes midnight. Everyone stops dancing and falls momentarily silent, as usual. Then some of the dancers notice a guest no one had seen before, wearing a scandalous costume. Whoever the new guest is, he's decided to dress as **a corpse**, a corpse who died of... the Red Death. He's so frighteningly lifelike (deathlike?) he **freaks everybody out**, and he slowly starts "stalking" through the frightened crowd. When Prince Prospero sees the ghostly guest, he's furious that someone would have the nerve to wear such a costume and orders him to be **seized** and unmasked. But no one has the guts to do it, including Prospero himself.



The Red Death masquerader passes within a few feet of the Prince and starts to walk through the rooms, **heading** toward the black room. Prospero loses it and runs after him in a **rage**, drawing his dagger as he approaches. But just as Prospero reaches the edge of the black room, the corpselike guest suddenly whirls around to face him, and Prospero falls to the ground, dead. The shocked crowd throws itself at the guest, only to discover in horror that there is nothing underneath the mask and costume. The Red Death itself has come to the party. One by one the guests die, spilling their blood all over Prospero's **lavish** rooms. The candles go out, leaving only "darkness, **decay**, and the Red Death."

## 1/ VOCABULARY

**WRITE THE WORDS IN YELLOW AND LOOK UP THEIR MEANING IN THE DICTIONARY.**

1	Gruesome	Very unpleasant or violent, usually involving injury or death
2	Subjects	Someone who is from a particular country.
3	Guest	someone who comes to visit you in your home, at a party, etc.
4	Masquerade	A party where everyone is wearing masks as costume.
5	Weird and wild	Very strange and unusual, unexpected, or not natural. Uncontrolled, savage, violent, or extreme.
6	Creepy	Strange or unnatural and making you feel frightened
7	Frolicking	To play and behave in a happy way
8	In full swing	In full operation, at the highest level of activity.
9	A Corpse	A dead body, usually of a human being.
10	Freak everybody out	Informal to be or cause to be in a heightened emotional state, such as that of fear, anger, or excitement
11	Seized	To take hold with force; grasp:
12	Heading	Heading is defined as the direction a person or thing is moving.
13	Rage	Angry fury; Violent anger.
14	Lavish	Spent, given, produced, or occurring in great amounts:
15	Decay	To (cause to) become decomposed;

## 2/ THE STORY

- **PROSPERO MAKES A HUGE MISTAKE. WHICH ONE?**

The mistake was that Prospero, when the red death comes, he did not seem to care about his poor, dying subjects. Instead, he decides to let the kingdom take care of itself while he and a thousand of his favorite knights and ladies shut themselves up in a fabulous castle to have one never-ending party.

- **WHY IS A CLOCK SO IMPORTANT IN THIS STORY?**

Because all the party and the lives of all the guest ended at midnight.

- **WHICH MORAL CAN BE LEARNED FROM THE STORY?**

We can learn a lot from this story, the prince made a huge mistake not caring care about the poor people, and only doing things for himself because he was a selfish person, and the red death that came to the party, like a punishment for his actions.

No one can foresee his death and fate, and no matter how much the prince tries to prevent the red death from reaching the castle against his advantages he could not get it.

So, we have to keep in mind the consequences of our actions and what they affect in other people's lives.