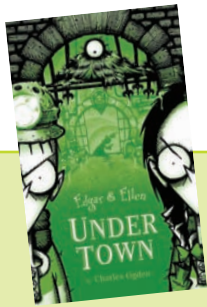


A Guide for Fiendishly Clever Teachers



UNDER TOWN

By Charles Ogden
Illustrations by
Rick Carton

www.edgarandellen.com

Even reluctant readers will find this breezy read engaging. The antics of Edgar and Ellen are so outlandish and impractical, readers will look forward to how their impossible plans crash around them. That's why this book is marvelous classroom material; an irresistible story can become a teachable one, too. We hope these guides make the lessons as unforgettable as the characters.

Plot Synopsis

Despite the efforts of twins Edgar and Ellen, the Knightlorian Hotel breaks ground in the former Gadget Graveyard. A wave of ingenious pranks, executed with admirable precision by a phantom prankster known only as “The Mason,” befalls Nod’s Limbs. The Mason’s tricks—bricking over the entrance to a covered bridge, unleashing a storm of confetti on the town, and catapulting beehives into the construction site of the Knightlorian—all bear suspicious resemblance to Edgar and Ellen’s schemes. Like the townspeople, the twins have a vested interest in discovering the phantom’s identity, and they retreat to the extensive network of sewers beneath Nod’s Limbs to find the culprit. Edgar and Ellen discover a laboratory and several tunnels, including one

that leads to the shed of their estate’s caretaker, Heimertz. Eventually, the twins uncover the identity of the Mason, only to find that they all share a similar objective: to stop construction of the Knightlorian Hotel. The twins and the Mason, a.k.a. builder Eugenia Smithy, appear close to success: they plan an elaborate trick that sends four cement mixers crashing into the Knightlorian’s foundation. However, Mayor Knightleigh jumps to the conclusion that the Smithy family’s rival, Smelterburg Construction Company, is to blame and promises the job to Eugenia. Edgar & Ellen have lost out again, and construction on the Knightlorian will proceed after all.

Vocabulary

alchemy
assailant
banshee
bedraggled
bellow
bemoan
blather
blustery
bramble
chagrin

clamber
conical
decrepit
depravity
epitaph
flourish
furrow
gargoyle
imperceptible
knavery

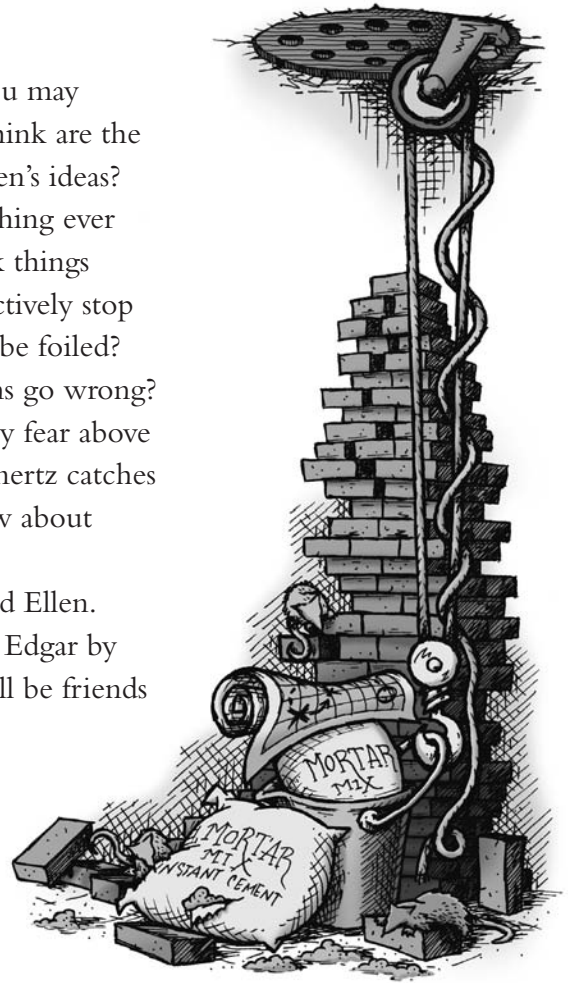
mangy
mausoleum
momentous
negotiate
nuisance
occultism
odorous
ottoman
plummet
ramshackle

ruse
scamper
shroud
synchronize
teeming
traitorous
traumatize
turbine
unkempt
wither

Prediction Questions

Ask the following questions at appropriate times during the course of *Under Town*:

1. Edgar turns into quite the detective in *Under Town*. As you may know, every good detective needs suspects. Who do you think are the key suspects who might be guilty of stealing Edgar and Ellen's ideas?
2. Despite all of Edgar and Ellen's scheming and plotting, nothing ever quite seems to go their way in the end. How do you think things will turn out for the twins in *Under Town*? Will they effectively stop construction of the Knightlorian Hotel, or will their plans be foiled? How might they stop construction? How might their plans go wrong?
3. The twins are forced to confront Heimertz, a character they fear above all others. What do you think will happen to them if Heimertz catches them looking around in his shed? What is it that you know about Heimertz that leads you to make your predictions?
4. In the past, the character of Pet has often avoided Edgar and Ellen. Why do you think that Pet is suddenly paying attention to Edgar by nuzzling his foot? Do you predict that Edgar and Ellen will be friends with Pet in the future? Why or why not?



Discussion

Ask the following questions:

1. Why are the twins so upset about the idea of someone "stealing" their plans? Where in *Under Town* do the twins seem most upset? Why? Do the twins have a right to be upset about new neighbors?
2. One of the most difficult things that happens to Ellen is that she loses her beloved plant Berenice. How does she feel about the death of Berenice, and what does she do that shows how she feels? (This might also be an opportunity for students to make a connection to their own experiences with grief).
3. Gus, the foreman of the Smelterburg Construction Company, accuses the twins of being strange. Likewise, he says that people in his town refer to Nod's Limbs as "Nod's Loons." What makes the twins different from other children? Why might an outsider accuse everyone in Nod's Limbs of being "loons"?
4. The character Eugenia Smithy has what is called a dilemma. A dilemma involves a choice between two equally undesirable choices. What is Eugenia Smithy's dilemma? How does she resolve it? Does she make the right choice? Why or why not?

Major Themes

•**Critical Thinking:** Edgar and Ellen gather evidence and apply it in a logical fashion to solve the mystery of the Mason and to attempt to stop construction of the hotel. The twins' strategizing and inventive problem-solving skills demonstrate their intelligence and creativity.

•**Character Motivation:** Stopping construction of the Knightlorian Hotel is very important to both Eugenia Smithy and the twins. Their motivations, however, are very different. The way these individuals act upon their needs and desires helps define each as a unique character.

•**Corruption:** The dark side of Nod's Limbs is exposed in several ways in *Under Town*. Mayor Knightleigh lies about the identity of the Mason and frames his intern as the criminal. Eugenia Smithy is willing to go to extreme measures in order to achieve her goal. It appears that Nod's Limbs may not be the perfect place its citizens believe it to be.



Curriculum-Based Activities

MATH

1. Edgar and Ellen have a large pile of bricks to move from the Gadget Graveyard to the Grammar School. They decide that the best way to move the bricks is with a wagon. The wagon holds 15 bricks. If there are 400 bricks to move, how many trips will it take for Edgar and Ellen to transport the bricks? If it takes Edgar and Ellen 35 minutes to make each trip, how many hours will it take them to move all of the bricks?
2. Edgar is trying to improve his skills at playing the pipe organ. An expert on television advises him to practice the pipe organ for 5 minutes on Mondays, 15 minutes on Tuesdays, 15 minutes on Thursdays, and 25 minutes on Saturdays. If Edgar is unable to practice on Wednesdays, Fridays, or Sundays, how many weeks will it take for him to practice the pipe organ for 4 hours?

For the Fiendishly Clever

3. Edgar and Ellen come across a number of building materials. They have a bag of nails, screws, and wingnuts, 16 in total. What are all of the possible combinations of these three things that they could have? Each combination must include at least one screw, nail, and wingnut.

ANSWERS

1. $400/15 = 26$ remainder 10; therefore 27 trips would be required with the wagon. $27 \times 35 = 945$ minutes. $945/60 = 15.75$, or 15 hours and 45 minutes.
2. Edgar will practice 60 minutes per week. Therefore, it will take him 4 weeks to practice 4 hours.
3. There are 105 possible combinations. Starting out with a given item, such as 1 screw, students will discover there are 14 possible combinations with 1 screw. With 2 screws, there are 13 possible combinations. With 3 screws, there are 12 possible combinations. Noticing the pattern, students can add the total number of combinations from 14 to 1 to find the total number of combinations possible.

SOCIAL STUDIES

1. At one point in *Under Town*, the issue of community development arises. Edgar and Ellen are against the mayor's new hotel because they love the Gadget Graveyard and worry about the fate of their beloved plant Berenice. Some would argue that development is a good thing, that it is beneficial to tear down something old and replace it with something new. Others, however, might point to examples that suggest otherwise. Think about the development that has gone on in your own community, using the incidents in *Under Town* as a basis for your discussion. What are some examples of positive development? What are some examples where development may not be so positive?

2. Because their parents are "out of town", Edgar and Ellen do pretty much as they please. While this may sound fun, if everyone acted like the twins, life probably wouldn't be very pleasant. Try and put yourself in the position of someone who has to govern Edgar and Ellen. Create a mini-constitution for Edgar and Ellen by getting into small groups and coming up with five rules to keep the twins in line. See if you can design rules that are fair but effective enough to keep Edgar and Ellen from getting into too much trouble.

ART



1. Edgar and Ellen encounter gargoyles (like Yumley and Horace) while they explore the cavernous expanses of Nod's Limbs' unique sewer system. A popular superstition holds that gargoyles were meant to serve not only as downspouts, but also as guards against evil spirits. Whatever the case, gargoyles and grotesques are certainly attention-getters.

2. Find some pictures of gargoyles and grotesques to share with your students. Define some common features of gargoyles and grotesques, then have students create a personal gargoyle by molding a medium-sized ball of clay with modeling tools or other available implements. Allow students to personalize their gargoyles by adding distinctive noses, horns, and ears until they have crafted a unique creature that would look at home perched on a building or over a downspout.

(Art activity extension)

3. A bestiary is a book filled with illustrations of imaginary animals. Using the gargoyles and grotesques from the activity above, create a class bestiary by taking pictures of students' creations and pasting them into a binder. If you would like to tie this activity to language arts, have students write a story about their gargoyles and include the stories in the bestiary.

CREATIVE WRITING

Edgar & Ellen are always happy to receive any poems, songs or short stories your class writes. (They also love to see reviews of their book and ideas for schemes to try next.) Because the Edgar & Ellen Web site will publish many submissions of fan writing, some of your students may see themselves published if the twins like what they see. Send your class's creations to us via mail (Edgar & Ellen, c/o Star Farm Productions, 1015 W. Lake Street #2W, Chicago, IL 60607), e-mail (submissions@edgarandellen.com), or visit edgarandellen.com to submit through the site.

SCIENCE ¹

Arches

The sewers in Under Town are described as an architectural marvel complete with vaulted ceilings and numerous archways. To help students better understand the concept of arches, have them perform the following physical activities. First, instruct the students to stand in pairs, face to face. They should put their hands up and press their weight forward, palm to palm, gradually stepping their feet back (caution students about their balance). The students will feel a push on their hands as opposed to a pull. Next, while the first two students are holding up their “arch,” have a third student pull down on the arch from beneath. The arch will be easy to pull down. Have students come up with ways they might increase the strength of the arch, encouraging them to consider how stable the base of the arch (their legs) feel. They might conclude that having additional support, or a buttress, at the base of the arch supports will make the arch stronger by using inward force to balance the outward force pushing down on the arch. Other students can act as buttresses by kneeling at a perpendicular angle behind the standing students’ legs and using their weight to support the outward force.

Domes

A three-dimensional arch is called a dome. If you would like students to explore the structural concept of a dome, have them get into groups of five. Have students stand in a circle around a basketball or other ball you might use for recess. Next, have the students lean down together and pick up the ball. As they lift the ball, have students gradually, and carefully, push their feet back. As with the previous activity, guide students to notice that the top of their structure is the weakest, and ask them how to improve on the structure. You might illustrate this point by pushing down on the ball. Next, add buttresses around the base of the structure in order to improve its strength, explaining that, as in the previous activity, the inward force pushing in on the structure balances the outward force pushing down on it.

¹The activities here are based on activities that can be found at www.pbs.org/wgbh/buildingbig

LANGUAGE ARTS

Have your students read Edgar Allan Poe’s short story “The Cask of Amontillado” (an abridged version in this guide can be easily photocopied). In a classic tale of horror, the narrator delivers a first-person account of how he seals his nemesis inside an underground tomb. Use the story to explore firsthand accounts, and how the narrator might have something to gain from telling a story his own way. Poe’s narrator seems to boast of his own cleverness while never fully describing the reasons he seeks revenge. Ask students: Is Montresor, the narrator, a reliable source? Why do you think he never fully describes the insult of Fortunato? Why is Montresor telling this story? Does Poe want us to sympathize with Montresor, or to judge him? Does Poe want us to be shocked? Afraid? Could he be warning us about the dangers of vengeful thoughts? Have students compare this horror tale with others; note how the fear coming from this tale is mostly from suspense, and how little action actually takes place.



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If you have comments or suggestions about how we can make our Teacher Guide better, please let us know. Drop us a line at:
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EDGAR & ELLEN: UNDER TOWN

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5

The Cask Of Amantillado

An abridged short story by Edgar Allan Poe

The thousand injuries of Fortunato I had borne as I best could, but when he ventured upon insult I vowed revenge. You, who so well know the nature of my soul, will not suppose, however, that I gave utterance to a threat. At length I would be avenged.

It must be understood that neither by word nor deed had I given Fortunato cause to doubt my good will. I continued, as was my wont, to smile in his face.

He had a weak point, this Fortunato. He prided himself on his **connoisseurship** in wine.

It was about dusk, one evening during the supreme madness of the **carnival** season, that I encountered my friend. He accosted me with excessive warmth, for he had been drinking much. The man wore **motley**. He had on a tight-fitting **parti-striped** dress, and his head was surmounted by the conical cap and bells. I was so pleased to see him that I thought I should never have done **wringing his hand**.

I said to him—"My dear Fortunato, you are luckily met. How remarkably well you are looking to-day. But I have received a **pipe** of what passes for **Amontillado**, and I have my doubts."

"How?" said he. "Amontillado? Impossible! And in the middle of the carnival!"

"I have my doubts," I replied; "and I was silly enough to pay the full Amontillado price without consulting you in the matter. You were not to be found, and I was fearful of losing a bargain."

"Amontillado!"

"As you are engaged, I am on my way to Luchresi. If any one has a critical **turn** it is he. He will tell me—"

"Luchresi cannot tell Amontillado from **Sherry**."

"And yet some fools will have it that his taste is a match for your own."

"Come, let us go."

"Whither?"

"To your **vaults**."

"My friend, no; I will not impose upon your good nature. I perceive you have an engagement. Luchresi—"

"I have no engagement;—come."

"My friend, no. It is not the engagement, but the severe cold with which I perceive you are afflicted. The vaults are insufferably damp. They are encrusted with **nitre**."

"Let us go, nevertheless. The cold is merely nothing. Amontillado!"

Thus speaking, Fortunato possessed himself of my arm; and putting on a mask of black silk and drawing a **roquelaire** closely about my person, I suffered him to hurry me to my palazzo.

I took from their **sconces** two **flambeaux**, and giving one to Fortunato, bowed him through several suites of rooms to the archway that led into the vaults. I passed down a long and winding staircase, requesting him to be cautious as he followed. We came at length to the damp ground of the catacombs.

The gait of my friend was unsteady, and the bells upon his cap jingled as he strode.

"The pipe," he said.

"It is farther on," said I; "but observe the white web-work which gleams from these cavern walls."

wont: habit

connoisseurship: expertise

Carnival: Mardi Gras, a celebration of excessive living before Lent, a 40-day fast observed in the Catholic church

motley: colorful jester's clothing

parti-striped: multi-colored striped

wringing his hand: shaking hands

pipe: 126-gallon barrel

Amontillado (a-mon-tee-YAH-doe): a rare, dry liquor

turn: a comment

Sherry: a kind of liquor

vaults: here, the grand underground caverns of fine palaces where wine is stored and ancestors are buried

nitre: potassium nitride, a crusty chemical compound that forms naturally underground

roquelaire: a knee-length, fur-trimmed coat

sconces: wall bracket for holding torches

flambeaux: lit torches

He turned towards me, and looked into my eyes with two filmy orbs that distilled the **rheum** of intoxication.

“Nitre?” he asked, at length.

“Nitre,” I replied. “How long have you had that cough?”

“Ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!—ugh! ugh! ugh!”

My poor friend found it impossible to reply for many minutes.

“It is nothing,” he said, at last.

“Come,” I said, with decision, “we will go back; your health is precious. You are rich, respected, admired, beloved; you are happy, as once I was. We will go back; you will be ill, and I cannot be responsible. Besides, there is Luchresi—“

“Enough,” he said; “the cough’s a mere nothing. I shall not die of a cough.”

He again took my arm, and we proceeded. We had passed through long walls of piled skeletons, with casks and **puncheons** intermingling, into the inmost recesses of the catacombs. I paused again.

“The nitre!” I said; “see, it increases. It hangs like moss upon the vaults. We are below the river’s bed. The drops of moisture trickle among the bones. Come, we will go back ere it is too late. Your cough—“

“It is nothing,” he said; “let us go on.”

I broke and reached him a **flagon of De Grave**. He emptied it at a breath. His eyes flashed with a fierce light. He laughed and threw the bottle upwards with a gesticulation I did not understand.

I looked at him in surprise. He repeated the movement—a grotesque one.

“You do not comprehend?” he said.

“Not I,” I replied.

“Then you are not of the brotherhood.”

“How?”

“You are not of the **masons**.”

“Yes, yes,” I said; “yes, yes.”

“You? Impossible! A mason?”

“A mason,” I replied.

“A sign,” he said, “a sign.”

“It is this,” I answered, producing from beneath the folds of my roquelaire a trowel.

“You jest,” he exclaimed, recoiling a few paces.

“But let us proceed to the Amontillado”

“Be it so,” I said, replacing the tool beneath the cloak and again offering him my arm. He leaned upon it heavily. We passed through a range of low arches, descended, passed on, and descending again, arrived at a deep crypt, in which the foulness of the air caused our flambeaux rather to glow than flame.

At the most remote end of the crypt there appeared another less spacious. Its walls had been lined with human remains, piled to the vault overhead, in the fashion of the great catacombs of Paris. Three sides of this interior crypt were still ornamented in this manner. From the fourth side the bones had been thrown down, forming a mound of some size. Within the wall thus exposed by the displacing of the bones, we perceived a still interior crypt or recess, in depth about four feet, in width three, in height six or seven.

It was in vain that Fortunato, uplifting his dull torch, endeavoured to pry into the depth of the recess. Its **termination** the feeble light did not enable us to see.

“Proceed,” I said; “herein is the Amontillado. As for Luchresi—“

“He is an ignoramus,” interrupted my friend, as he stepped unsteadily forward, while I followed immediately at his heels. In an instant he had reached the extremity of the niche, and finding his progress arrested by the rock, stood stupidly bewildered. A moment more and I had fettered him to the granite. In its surface were two iron staples, distant from each other about two feet, horizontally.

rheum: mucous discharge from the eyes and nose

termination: end

puncheons: a cask smaller than a pipe

flagon of De Grave: a bottle of wine

masons: Fortunato refers to The Freemasons, a secret organization; but the narrator makes a sly joke using the other definition—a bricklayer

From one of these depended a short chain, from the other a padlock. Throwing the links about his waist, it was but the work of a few seconds to secure it. Withdrawing the key I stepped back from the recess.

“Pass your hand,” I said, “over the wall; you cannot help feeling the nitre. Indeed, it is very damp. Once more let me implore you to return. No? Then I must positively leave you. But I must first render you all the little attentions in my power.”

As I said these words I busied myself among the pile of bones of which I have before spoken. Throwing them aside, I soon uncovered a quantity of building stone and mortar. With these materials and with the aid of my trowel, I began vigorously to wall up the entrance of the niche.

I had scarcely laid the first tier of the masonry when I discovered that the intoxication of Fortunato had in a great measure worn off. The earliest indication I had of this was a low moaning cry from the depth of the recess. It was not the cry of a drunken man. There was then a long and **obstinate** silence. I laid the second tier, and the third, and the fourth; and then I heard the furious vibrations of the chain. The noise lasted for several minutes, during which, that I might **hearken** to it with the more satisfaction, I ceased my labors and sat down upon the bones. When at last the clanking subsided, I resumed the trowel, and finished without interruption the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh tier.

A succession of loud and shrill screams, bursting suddenly from the throat of the chained form, seemed to thrust me violently back. I reapproached the wall; I replied to the yells of him who clamored. I re-echoed, I aided, I surpassed them in volume and in strength. I did this, and the clamorer grew still.

It was now midnight, and my task was drawing to a close. There remained but a single stone to be fitted and plastered in. I struggled with its weight; I placed it partially in its destined position. But now there came from out the niche a low laugh that erected the hairs upon my head.

It was succeeded by a sad voice, which I had difficulty in recognizing as that of the noble Fortunato. The voice said--

“Ha! ha! ha!—he! he! he!—a very good joke, indeed—an excellent jest. We will have many a rich laugh about it at the **palazzo**—he! he! he!—over our wine—he! he! he!”

“The Amontillado!” I said.

“He! he! he!—he! he! he!—yes, the Amontillado. But is it not getting late? Will not they be awaiting us at the palazzo, the Lady Fortunato and the rest? Let us be gone.”

“Yes,” I said, “let us be gone.”

I thrust a torch through the remaining aperture and let it fall within. There came forth in return only a jingling of the bells. My heart grew sick; it was the dampness of the catacombs that made it so. I hastened to make an end of my labor. I forced the last stone into its position; I plastered it up. Against the new masonry I re-erected the old **rampart** of bones. For the half of a century no mortal has disturbed them. **In pace requiescat!**

obstinate: stubborn

hearken: listen closely

palazzo: grand palatial home

rampart: defensive wall

In pace requiescat: Latin for “May he rest in peace.”