* **Another Interpretation**

Others interpret the 7 rooms in "The Masque of the Red Death" as a symbol of Prospero's indulgence in the seven deadly sins:

* 1. **Pride/Vanity** - Pride is the excessive belief in one's own abilities, similar to vanity, which is setting one's heart on things of little value. Prospero's belief that he is more powerful than death is a vivid demonstration of pride.
  2. **Envy** - It is unclear who the Prince might envy, but he sure is trying hard to impress someone.
  3. **Gluttony** - Gluttony is the act of consuming more than one is required. Instead of using his means to protect more people, something he is obligated to do as prince, he lavishes his guests with "ample provisions" and "the appliances of pleasure."
  4. **Lust** - Lust is an excessive craving for the pleasures of the body, usually associated with sex. The era in which Poe wrote prohibited the explicit or implicit description of sex, but what do you think was going on at an anything goes party?
  5. **Anger** - The Prince becomes angry with the uninvited guest and attacks it.
  6. **Greed** - Although it is apparent Prince Prospero shares his wealth with a thousand guests, he helps those who need it least and withholds his substance from those in need.
  7. **Sloth** - Sloth is the absence of work. The prince seems like a hard worker; his work, however, is on the physical realm not the spiritual realm.

Many consider "The Masque of the Red Death" an allegory. The seven rooms, therefore, represent the life of all humans. It differs in respect to Shakespeare's monologue insomuch that death (symbolized by the sounding of the ebony clock) oft intervenes in the six rooms preceding death. The physical arrangement of the seven rooms also lends itself to this allegorical interpretation:

(1) the first room lies furthest East, or where the sun rises;

(2) the last room lies furthest West, or where the sun sets;

(3) the rooms are arranged in such a manner "that vision embraced but little more than one at a time" in the same way life only provides short glimpse into the future.

### Color Symbolism

Colors play an important role in this story:

**Red** - The most obvious color symbolism in "The Masque of the Red Death" is in its title. Red symbolizes death and blood. The gruesome description of the Red Death gives the color a ghastly connotation, especially in light of the red window panes contained in the death room at the far western end of the imperial suite.

**Black/Ebony** - The seventh room was "closely shrouded in black velvet tapestries that hung all over the ceiling and down the walls, falling in heavy folds upon a carpet of the same material and hue" (146). This seventh room contains "no light of any kind" and represents the darkness of death. In this room stands the ebony clock. Upon hearing its chimes the guests were reminded of death: "the giddiest grew pale, and the more aged and sedate passed their hands over their brows as if in confused reverie or meditation" (147).

**Blue/Purple/Green/Orange/White/Violet** - These are the colors of the first six rooms in the imperial suite. I will address them together insomuch that they represent a prism and therefore reflect a progression, lending credence to the interpretation that the story is an allegory for life. This interpretation, however, is complicated by the fact that the color of Prospero's room do not occur in the same sequence as they do in a prism, possibly reflective of Prospero's twisted sense of fairness or an attempt by the author to associate particular colors with a specific period in life.