Color Symbolism in Poe’s “The Masque of the Red Death”

As you might recall, each room led into the next, and each had a specific color and décor—it’s obvious that Poe is deliberate in his descriptions.

**Directions:** **With your group, discuss the significance of each color and room in Prince Prospero’s Abbey. Think about the color, décor, location, and order (certain colors coming before others—stages of life, etc.) of each room and determine what you believe each symbolizes in the chart below.**

**Room/Color Possible Symbolism**

**Room 1: Blue blue symbolizes:**

leads into

**Room 2: Purple purple symbolizes:**

leads into

**Room 3: Green green symbolizes:**

leads into

**Room 4: Orange orange symbolizes:**

leads into

**Room 5: White white symbolizes:**

leads into

**Room 6: Violet violet symbolizes:**

leads into

**Room 7: Black black symbolizes:**

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The seven rooms as corresponding through color symbolism with Shakespeare’s Seven Ages of Man from *As You Like It*:

**Blue:** The Infant (Shakespeare) the dawning of human life, as well as truth, intellect, and the void. It is also the color of nothing.

**Purple:**  The Schoolboy (Shakespeare) purple is blue plus red, and thus represents the quickening

of life, as well as power, justice and temperance.

**Green:**  The Lover (Shakespeare) green symbolizes growth, youth and aspiration, fertility,

change, and hope. A blend of blue and yellow—heaven and earth combined—green is

the mystic color, and combines the cold blue light of intellect with the emotional

warmth of the sun.

**Orange:** The Soldier (Shakespeare) orange is representative of midday, the high noon of

Existence, also of the harvest, and of pride and ambition.

**White:** The Judge (Shakespeare) white is all colors in one, associated with both life and love,

death and burial. It is also the color of winter and marks the approach of old age and

death.

**Violet:**  Second Childhood (Shakespeare) violet is colder than purple suggesting approaching

death. It is also a symbol of memory knowledge, religious devotion, sorrow, and

mourning.

**Black:**  The Dotard (Shakespeare) black is the no-color of primordial darkness, of the void, of

evil, and of death. It symbolizes nothingness, corruption, destruction, and despair.

Blood red is an appropriate hue to join with the black of the seventh and last room.