# Audio file – From “Annabel Lee”

[30-Track-30.mp3](https://neagov-my.sharepoint.com/personal/travisd_arts_gov/Documents/Transcribed%20Files/30-Track-30.mp3)

Dana Gioia

Most poems tell stories. Even when a poem is made up just of images, those images tend to be arranged in a way that creates a narrative of emotions. In reciting a narrative poem, your purpose is to make the listener pay attention to the human drama being presented to feel the events in emotional terms and to understand their personal importance to the characters. That means that you need somehow to put that drama and those emotions into the words you're speaking.

Listen for example to the actress Khandi Alexander read the opening of Edgar Allan Poe's “Annabel Lee.” Notice how she suffuses the opening lines with joy, so that you feel the sadness of the ending later on, more powerfully.

Khandi Alexander

It was many and many a year ago,

In a kingdom by the sea,

That a maiden there lived whom you may know

By the name of Annabel Lee;

And this maiden she lived with no other thought

Than to love and be loved by me.

I was a child and she was a child,

In this kingdom by the sea,

But we loved with a love that was more than love—

I and my Annabel Lee—

With a love that the wingèd seraphs of Heaven

Coveted her and me.

Dana Gioia

Now listen to a few lines from the end of the poem. Can you feel how she is shifted the emotion?

Khandi Alexander

But our love it was stronger by far than the love

Of those who were older than we—

Of many far wiser than we—

And neither the angels in Heaven above

Nor the demons down under the sea

Can ever dissever my soul from the soul

Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;

For the moon never beams, without bringing me dreams

Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;

And the stars never rise, but I feel the bright eyes

Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;