

# Edgar Allan Poe: Journalist Trickster

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849) was a poet and author, but he was also a journalist. In 1844 he wrote a newspaper story about a hot air balloon crossing the Atlantic Ocean in three days. This was totally impossible at that time. Today airplanes can cross the ocean in just hours. Balloons can cross in a few days, but it is still impossible to cross the Atlantic in three days without engines to speed the balloon.

The New York *Sun* printed Poe's story on April 13, 1844 as a true news account. There was much excitement about the story at the time. Two days later, however, the newspaper issued a retraction, explaining that it was in error.

Below is the headline and first lines of the story.

## Astounding News

by *Express, via Norfolk!*

### The Atlantic Crossed in Three Days!

#### Signal Triumph of Mr. Monck Mason's Flying Machine!

Arrival at Sullivan's Island, near Charlestown, S.C., of Mr. Mason, Mr. Robert Holland, Mr. Henson, Mr. Harrison Ainsworth, and four others, in the Steering Balloon, "Victoria," after a passage of Seventy-five Hours from Land to Land!

#### Full Particulars of the Voyage!!!

The great problem is at length solved! The air, as well as the earth and the ocean, has been subdued by science, and will become a common and convenient highway for mankind. The Atlantic has been actually crossed in a Balloon! and this too without difficulty—without any great apparent danger—with thorough control of the machine—and in the inconceivably brief period of seventy-five hours from shore to shore!

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Write your own newspaper hoax about something that is impossible to do today. Write a headline and at least four sentences describing what happened.



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**Student's choice**

