Lesson Plan

Edgar Allan Poe

The Tell-Tale Heart

Introduction to Edgar Allan Poe



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| **Common**Core Standards* Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.
* Compare and contrast the structure of two or more texts and analyze how the differing structure of each text contributes to its meaning and style
* Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

**Goals**and Objectives*Students will...* 1. Read and comprehend the short story. 2. Learn literary terms and figurative language of symbolism, point of view, and suspense. 3. Watch the short story cartoon following the film and compare it to that of the story while identifying literary terms using a Venn Diagram. 4. Understand information about the author and how his personal life has impacted his writing doing background research on Edgar Allan Poe.Picture |   |

Introduction on Edgar A. Poe

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIp4m_v9xGs>

<http://www.schooltube.com/video/c62ca729ba4541ecb724/Edgar%20Allen%20Poe%20-%20Profile%20of%20the%20Author>

Tell Tale Heart

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LUFqBKUwRe8>

**The Tell-Tale Heart** by Edgar Allan Poe

**Short Story Synopsis:**  Professing that his disease is not madness, but nervousness and sensory acuteness, an unnamed narrator recounts what he believes to be a clever, carefully planned murder of a kind old man.  His motive, he claims, is his repugnance for the old man's pale blue eye.  The narrator looks in the old man's room each midnight but finds him asleep; since his eye is closed, the narrator goes no further.  One night the old man awakens.  The narrator sees the eye, smothers the old man, and dismembers and buries the corpse.  Policemen arrive, explaining that the neighbors heard a scream.  The narrator lets them search, confident that they will nothing.  He invites them to sit down with him.  As they talk, the narrator becomes convinced that the sound in his ears is the beating of the old man's heart.  The narrator talks more loudly; the heart beats more loudly.  The policemen seem to notice nothing.  Unable to bear the tension, the narrator hysterically confesses to the crime.

Short Story Cartoon

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wDLLHTdVSgU>

**PREDICTION QUESTIONS**

**FOR** *THE TELL-TALE HEART* **BY EDGAR ALLAN POE**

**Title:** Based on the title, predict what you think this story will be about.

**First paragraph:** Who do you think the narrator is speaking to?

**Third paragraph:** Write down what you think the author means by

“the work.”

**Third paragraph:** Why does the narrator treat the old man so well in

the mornings?

**Fourth paragraph:** Why doesn’t the narrator leave when he realizes

the old man is awake?

**Fifth paragraph:** Would you like to change your original prediction

of what this story is about?

**Sixth and seventh paragraphs:** Whose heart do you think the narrator is hearing?

**Seventh paragraph:** In one sentence, predict the ending of the story.

**Midway through**

**Eighth paragraph:** Who is at the door?

**Ninth paragraph:** What is the noise?

**Tenth paragraph:** What is the narrator feeling right now?

**End of story:** Were any of your original predictions about the story correct?

*The Tell-Tale Heart*

**Vocabulary Worksheet**

**Foresight:** Thoughtful regard for the future

**Dissimulation:** Hidden under a false appearance

**Vexed:** Troubled, distressed, caused agitation

**Sagacity:** Sound judgment

**Hearkening:** Giving careful attention

**Awe:** A mixed feeling of reverence, fear, and wonder

**Distinctness:** Unmistakable, clearly defined

**Over-acuteness:** Very keen

**Concealment:** A means of hiding

**Waned:** To grow gradually less

**Scantlings:** Small quantities or amounts

**Suavity:** Gracefulness, politeness

**Bade:** Urged, compelled

**Audacity:** Bold courage, daring

**Reposed:** To lay at rest

**Derision:** Contempt, ridicule

Study Questions

* 1. **Question**: What does the story's title mean?

**Answer**: The story's title refers to the beating heart that eventually drives the narrator to confess his crime. The reader is led to believe it is the beating of the old man's heart he hears, an impossibility, considering the old man has been murdered and dismembered, leaving three possibilities: (1) the narrator is insane; (2) the narrator feels guilt over the crime and hears his own heart; (3) both.

* 1. **Question**: The narrator claims he is not mad. What evidence do we have that he is?

**Answer**: (1) He murders an old man because of his "vulture eye"; (2) He hears sounds from hell; (3) He dismembers the dead man's corpse; (4) He hears the beating of a dead man's heart; (5) He is paranoid; (6) He is "nervous--very, very dreadfully nervous."

* 1. **Question**: What does the narrator do with the dead man's body?

**Answer**: The narrator dismembers the body and carefully places it under a few floor boards in the old man's room. He's confident that his crime will not be discovered, even inviting the investigator to sit on a chair directly above the dead body.

* 1. **Question**: Why does the narrator want to kill the old man?

**Answer**: I'll let him tell you: "Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this!" (172).

* 1. **Question**: The narrator visits the old man's bedroom every night for seven nights before killing him on the eighth night. What finally causes him to commit the act?

**Answer**: He hears the old man's heart. The narrator says, "It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into rage...the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant...I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me--the sound would be heard by a neighbor! The old man's hour had come!" (174-5).

* 1. **Question**: The two controlling symbols in the story are the eye and the heart. What might these two symbols represent?

**Answer**: The old man's eye is "pale blue, with a film over it," indicating a lack of visual clarity and reliability. In this sense the eye symbolizes the narrator insomuch that all the information we receive comes through his distorted mind, much in the same way everything the old man sees is filtered through his distorted eye. Furthermore, the story is told through the narrator's perspective, who claims his actions are on account of the distorted eye, which suggests the point of view is literally and symbolically filtered through the old man's eye. Traditionally the heart symbolizes the emotional center of the individual. In "The Tell-Tale Heart," it symbolizes the narrator's guilt.

* 1. **Question**: Give examples of how Poe creates suspense in the story?

**Answer**: (1) Foreshadowing - "I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him." (172). Pacing - the narrator describes the murder over several pages; (3) Dangerous Action - the narrator invites the police officer to sit directly above the dead body.