

Tell-Tale Heart

 lessonplanspage.com/latelltaleheartdescriptlanghalloween8-htm/

By – Valerie R. Bos

OBJECTIVES

Students will be able to analyze Edgar Allen Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” and other pieces of literature in the future.

MATERIALS

Anticipation Guide

Copies of the short story

Story Map

Questions

Illustration instruction sheet

Standards:

QCCs 27, 30, 35, 40, 41, 57, 62, 63; NCTE/IRA 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 11, 12

Questions considered:

- What components of a scary story do students predict will be in the story?
- How reliable is our narrator regarding his sanity?
- How does Poe use images and phrases to create an atmosphere of horror?
- Why does the killer confess?
- Does the heartbeat really tell the tale of the murder?

Connections to past learning:

Students have been studying figurative language for approximately four weeks, and some students are already familiar both with Poe as a writer and with his other stories and poems. Students have previously read using the popcorn strategy and they enjoy using art to accompany the texts that they read. (Multiple ways to respond: illustrations, short-answer questions, and descriptive writing)

Attention to Diversity:

Having students read the story aloud benefits ESOL students and students with special needs by exposing them to the story through both reading along and listening. Stopping frequently while students read the story aloud allows students to ask questions and allows for the teacher to check for understanding. Students also work with the story's plot, language, and characters by answering questions, illustrating a memorable scene, and providing a written description.

Activities and Procedure:

1. Opening Activity:

- Begin by distributing the anticipation guide and explaining the instructions for Part A. students will have 5 minutes to brainstorm at least 5 things that they look for or expect to find in a scary story.
- Examples include: spiders, dark nights, full moon, vampires, and things underneath your bed.
- Then conduct a short whole-class discussion of their answers, discussing the following questions:

-What did they write down and why?

-Do they believe that these things add to the atmosphere of a scary story?

-Are they themselves scared by any of these things?

2. Teaching content:

- Next, students should work on Part B of the anticipation guide.
- Go over the 5 statements, reading them aloud and explaining them.
- Students are instructed not to call out their answers, but must decide silently whether they agree or disagree with the statements and place a check mark in the appropriate column.
- Next, start reading the biographical column on Edger Allen Poe.

Directions: Part B – First, read the following statements and decide whether you agree or disagree with them, placing a check mark in the correct column. After we've read the story, go back and decide if the author agrees or disagrees with these same statements.

You Agree	You Disagree	Statements	Author Agrees	Author Disagrees
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1. People who are insane always know that they are insane.
2. Sane people sometimes imagine that they hear things.
3. If you commit a major crime, sooner or later you will be caught.
4. When you've done something wrong, it's agony to wonder if you'll be caught.
5. All people share the same fears (i.e., the same things frighten all people.)

3. Building Content Knowledge:

- Briefly discuss Poe:

-Who was he?

-What kinds of stories, etc. did he write?

-Why is he considered the father of horror?

-Which current writers can the students name whom Poe might have inspired?

-With what other items by Poe are students familiar?

4. Use of Content in Context:

- Now we begin reading “The Tell-Tale Heart”.
- Start reading through the first paragraph or so in order to set the tone and model for students the voice and manner in which they should read.
- Students should continue reading the story aloud according to the popcorn strategy.

5. Building Interpretation and Practicing Content:

- During the reading, stop students and ask them questions about the story:

-After “how calmly I can tell you the whole story”, ask:

What is our first impression of the narrator?

To whom is he speaking? What does he say about his senses?

-After “rid myself of the eye forever”, ask:

What is it about the man that bothers the narrator? Why?

How does he describe the eye? What plan does he concoct?

-After “I looked in upon him while he slept”, ask:

What does the narrator do each night? Why?

How does he describe his nightly spying?

Do we believe him? Is he an honest, trustworthy source or is he exaggerating?

What in the story supports your opinion?

When does the narrator sneak into the man’s room? For how many evenings?

How does the narrator act towards the old man during the day?

Why doesn't he just kill the man during the day, when the eye is open?

-After the paragraph ends "heartbreaking to the death watches in the wall", ask:

What happens on the eighth night?

How does the old man react?

How does the narrator react?

What does the narrator say he's usually doing each night?

How does this fit in with what we already know about his mental state?

-After "the soldier into courage", ask:

What does the narrator feel upon seeing the old man's terror?

What does his momentary sympathy say about him?

How might we incorporate this feeling into our established impression of the narrator?

What does the narrator do to the old man?

What effect does the old man's eye have upon the narrator this time?

-After "I had been too wary for that", ask:

What happens here at the climax of the story?

How does the narrator kill the old man?

What do the steps that he takes to hide the crime say about him? About his mental state?

Do we believe that he is not insane?

Has your opinion of him changed?

-After "beneath which reposed the corpse of the victim", ask:

Why does the narrator no longer fear being caught?

How does he react when the police arrive?

Do you think that his confidence will wane?

-At the end of the story, ask:

What happens to shake the narrator's calm?

Why does he confess?

Would the crime have been discovered eventually? When? By these particular police? Why or why not?

Does the narrator really hear a heartbeat? Whose? Could it be his own that he hears?

6. Review of Content:

- Now that all the students are familiar with the story, distribute the story map sheet for students to work on individually.
- On this sheet, they must place the events of the story in correct order. (10 minutes)
- Review the sheet as a class.

7. Assessing Content in Context:

- Students will either work on the given questions in class or be assigned them for homework
- They should use complete sentences, use correct punctuation, and do their best spelling.
- They should include evidence from the story.

Questions for "The Tell-Tale Heart"

1. Describe the narrator in detail. What is your first impression of him?
2. What specifically is it about the old man that troubles the narrator? Why does it trouble him?
3. What does the narrator do every night? Why?
4. How does the narrator feel after he commits the murder? Is he worried about being caught?
5. Why does the killer confess?
6. Name 3 details, descriptions, or actions that the author uses to create an atmosphere of horror.

7. Closing Activity/ Assessing Content:

- After students finish answering their questions, they will begin working on the illustration activity.
- The purpose of this activity is to 1) push the students to know the story on a deeper level and 2) to have students become more aware of the power of descriptive language and use it in their own writing.
- During this activity, students must draw a memorable scene and provide a written description of that scene, using language that they create as well as two kinds of figurative language.
- Students will not be graded on artistic ability but rather clarity, appropriateness, and creativity of their description.
- Students should be given class time as well as time at home to work on this activity.

The Tell-Tale Heart Drawing Activity

You work for a newspaper as the staff's artist. One of your coworkers comes to you with a great story on Edgar Allen Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" and asks you to illustrate it. For this news assignment, you must do the following:

- Choose a memorable scene from the story (example: the murder scene, the confession scene, etc.) and illustrate it in color.
- Give an explanation of the picture – what is happening in this scene? Be as specific as possible.
- Finally, you must include two kinds of figurative language, which you come up with on your own, to make your description more interesting (choose two: alliteration, onomatopoeia, metaphor, simile, idiom, and personification)
- The newspaper's deadline is tomorrow.

Good luck!

E-Mail [Valerie R. Bos!](#)

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