

“The Tell-Tale Heart” Comprehension and Style Activities

I. PLOT QUESTIONS FOR “THE TELL-TALE HEART” By EDGAR ALLAN POE

1. Title: Based on the title, predict what the story will be about.	
2. First paragraph: From whose point of view is this story told?	
3. First paragraph: To whom do you think the narrator is speaking to?	
4. First paragraph: Why does he say, “But why will you say that I am mad?”	
5. Second paragraph: What is the narrator’s problem (Conflict)?	
6. Third paragraph: Write down what you think the author means by “I went to work.”	
7. Third paragraph: Why does the narrator treat the old man so well in the mornings?	
8. Sixth paragraph: Why doesn’t the narrator leave when he realizes the old man is awake?	
9. Seventh paragraph: What is the sound the narrator hears?	
10. Tenth paragraph: Whose heart do you think the narrator is hearing?	
11. Fourteenth Paragraph: Who is at the door?	
12. Paragraph sixteen and seventeen: What is the noise?	
13. Paragraphs sixteen and seventeen: What is the narrator feeling right now?	
14. Paragraph (s): How do/does the paragraph(s) end?	

II. Irony – Listen to story again and track different types of irony. Find at least 1 kind of each type of irony.

Verbal Irony	Situational Irony	Dramatic Irony
<p>-occurs when there is a difference between what a character says and what another character understands Ex. Scar says, “It’s to die for.”</p> <p>Example from Tell-Tale Heart: (Hint: what does the narrator say about himself?)</p>	<p>-when the opposite of what one would expect to happen actually happens Ex. My dog Lucky was hit by a car.</p> <p>Example from Tell-Tale Heart:</p>	<p>-when the reader/audience knows something that a character doesn’t Ex.</p> <p>Example from Tell-Tale Heart:</p>

What is the effect of this irony on the reader?

III. Literary Elements

1. **Mood, or atmosphere**, is the overall feeling in the story. How would you describe the mood in this story? What details does Poe use to create the mood?

2. **Symbolism**: What does the heartbeat noise symbolize in the story? Provide evidence from the story.

3. How does first paragraph **foreshadow**, or hint at, the events of the story? Be specific (use a quote)!

4. The final paragraph in the story builds to a kind of mad **climax**. How does the writer use words and punctuation to create tension - an even rhythm of a heartbeat? Be specific!

IV. Style – Analyze Poe’s Stylistic Devices

Find examples (quotes) of each stylistic device used in the story and its effect on the reader
(See Poe’s Sinister Stylings OR notes if you need to review these devices.)

Device	1 Example	Effect on Reader
Word Repetition	2 <u>different</u> words that are repeated: Quote showing one of the examples listed above:	What is the effect of the passage you selected on you, the reader?
Dashes/Italicized Words	2 examples of dashes or italicized words being used: Quote showing one of the examples listed above:	What is the effect of the passage you selected on you, the reader?
Short, Choppy Sentences	Identify a passage where Poe uses short, choppy sentences. (The excerpt must have at least two short, choppy sentences.):	What is the effect of the passage you selected on you, the reader?

V. Unreliable Narrator

1. From whose **point of view** is this story told?

2. How does this point of view help create the “single effect”?

3. What does the narrator repeatedly claim about himself?

4. Does this establish the narrator as a reliable source of information? Why or why not? In other words, provide 3 examples where the narrator is trying to establish his sanity and 3 examples where the narrator's sanity is called into question. You're looking for quotes here.

SAFE	INSAFE