

The Tell-Tale Heart

BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

Before Reading

Summary

In Poe's famous story "The Tell-Tale Heart" (1843), the narrator decides he has no choice but to kill a helpless old man because he has the eye of a vulture.

Vocabulary

ivulture—large, dark bird of prey that eats mainly the flesh of dead animals.

lantern—candle in a metal and glass case.

mortal terror—deadly fear.

hideous—horrible, ugly.

gestures—movements.

film—a thin covering or coating.

cautiously—showing or practicing caution; careful.

latch—a fastening, as for a door or gate, consisting of a bar that fits into a notch or slot and is lifted from either side by a lever or string.

pitied—to have felt sympathy or sorrow for.

dim—lacking in brightness.

(Tested vocabulary used in the online vocabulary quiz is underlined.)

During Reading

Use the **Study Guide** on the next page as a way to work through the selection and improve your comprehension.

After Reading

Answer the questions below as a way to deepen your interpretation of the selection.

1. How does the narrator try to convince us that he is not mad? What is it about him that makes you think otherwise?
2. What factors cause the narrator to go through with his plan?
3. What is your impression of the narrator's final demise? What, if anything, does the old man's beating heart represent or symbolize?
4. How did you feel while reading the story? Why? What circumstances—or which of Poe's literary devices—elicited your strongest reactions?
5. Imagine that you worked for the man who happened to have a vulture eye. How would you react? What would you do about this strange situation?

6. Name and explain the 6 motifs from this story.

Name _____

The Tell-Tale Heart

by Edgar Allan Poe

Use the Building Comprehension exercise below as a way to improve your comprehension of the selection.

Story Pyramid—The Secret Plan to Murder the Man with the Vulture Eye

1. Name the main character

2. Two words describing the main character

3. Three words describing the setting

4. Four words stating the problem

5. Five words describing one event

6. Six words describing second event

7. Seven words describing third event

8. Eight words describing fourth event

9. Nine words describing solution
