

“The Tell-Tale Heart” by Edgar Allan Poe

Constructed Response Questions

Directions: Answer the questions in complete sentences using the RACE strategy. When you cite the text, be sure to introduce your quotation “According to the text...; the narrator states...; etc)

R—Restate the question

A—Answer the question

C—Cite textual evidence

E—Explain/Expand

1. How does the first paragraph set the mood for the story?
2. The narrator states that, “The disease had sharpened my senses...above all the sense of hearing is acute.” How does that become important to the climax of the story?
3. Why does the narrator clarify that he is nervous, but not ‘mad’?
4. How did the narrator treat the old man in the week before the actual murder?
5. What is the significance of the line, “A watch’s minute hand moves more quickly than did mine.”?
6. Why does Poe include the death watches in the story? What effect does it have?
7. On pg. 234, the narrator states that he ‘pitied’ the old man? Explain why the narrator felt sorry for the old man.
8. When the narrator focuses the lantern light on the eye, what is his reaction?
9. What is the irony of the narrator being driven to commit the murder when he heard the beating of the old man’s heart? (p. 235, paragraph 4)
10. What is the narrator’s demeanor when he actually commits the murder?
11. What character flaw does the narrator show when the police officers first arrive at the house?
12. How does the narrator convince the police officers that all is well in the house?
13. In your opinion, what is the narrator hearing at the end of the story? Support your answer.
14. Throughout the story, the narrator is trying to convince the reader of his sanity. Choose two statements he makes regarding his sanity and explain whether they show rational or irrational thoughts.
15. Choose a fact that you know about Poe’s life. Explain how a particular part of the story supports the idea that Poe’s life experiences greatly affected his work.