

THE TELL-TALE HEART		Student/Class Goal Students need to develop familiarity with genres. Students are preparing to take the GED reading test and will have to read and understand literary prose as part of the test.
Outcome <i>(lesson objective)</i> Students listen and critically read fictional prose to answer prediction questions at designated stopping points, and then give a summary of this short story.		Time Frame Three 45 minute sessions
Standard <i>Read with Understanding</i>		NRS EFL 3-6
COPS Determine the reading purpose.	Activity Addresses Components of Performance 75% of the GED reading test deals with literacy text and 45% of that is fiction. According to reading surveys conducted in class, students seldom read fiction and need practice in this area.	
Select reading strategies appropriate to the purpose.	Students will need to use several strategies that have been taught in class previously. They will read along with a taped version of fiction story, <i>The Tell-Tale Heart</i> by Edgar Allan Poe, discuss questions on handout, determine word meaning in context, use context clues to comprehend, retell, paraphrase and summarize, make inferences and predictions, sequence, draw conclusions and question.	
Monitor comprehension and adjust reading strategies.	Tape will be stopped periodically for oral discussion of questions on handout. Students may re-read or scan portions of the text, or look up unfamiliar words.	
Analyze information and reflect on its underlying meaning.	Student will complete the teacher created handout with questions in comprehension, analysis, application, and synthesis, and will complete a plot summary in their own words.	
Integrate it with prior knowledge to address reading purpose.	Students may use skills practiced in this activity to complete other fiction passages and questions in preparation for the GED test.	
Materials Biography of Edgar Allan Poe <i>The Tell-Tale Heart</i> text (unabridged audiotape found at library) <i>Poe Critical Reading Handout</i> Vocabulary Overview Guide		
Learner Prior Knowledge This lesson followed an introduction to the standard and reading strategies with emphasis on retelling, sequencing, and summarizing. Students were given reading surveys earlier to determine kinds of reading materials they choose to read for pleasure.		
Instructional Activities Step 1 - Make students aware of the literary prose content of the GED reading test. Introduce Poe by distributing and discussing copies of his biography to help students make the connection between his tough life and style of writing. Explain what genre of fiction he wrote. Ask students what elements they would expect to find in a scary story. Tell students that they will be reading, listening to and discussing elements of a Poe story. Step 2 - Students will read from a hard copy of <i>The Tell-Tale Heart</i> while listening to a taped recording. Give each student a copy of the text and the <i>Poe Critical Reading Handout</i> . Have them use highlighters to mark key words, phrases, or unfamiliar vocabulary as they read along with the tape. Stop the tape periodically to discuss and answer instructor-prepared questions (1-18) about the story thus far. Discussion will focus on how word usage and writing style contribute to the feeling of the story. Step 3 - Using the highlighted unfamiliar vocabulary, complete a Vocabulary Overview Guide. 1. Discuss the main topic or theme of the selection, and note how the highlighted words connect to the topic or theme. Identify the most important categories within this topic. 2. Assign several students to examine the context of each new word in the text and assign others to look up dictionary definitions. Substitute a word or phrase that seems to work within the general parameters of the context. Enter these definitions on the guide. 3. Brainstorm with students possible clues to help them learn each new word. These clues help link new words to their background knowledge. Encourage students to personalize their clues because a clue that works for one student may not connect for another.		

Step 4 - Students will provide written answers to the short answer, sequencing, and vocabulary questions on the handout. They may choose to re-listen to the tape. Instructor will collect and assess handouts. These items focus on skills such as critical reading, comprehension, summarizing, sequencing, and vocabulary. Instructor will provide answers and overall discussion will take place.

Assessment/Evidence *(based on outcome)*

Participation and demonstration of appropriate comprehension answers
Vocabulary Overview Guide
Completed critical reading handout

Teacher Reflection/Lesson Evaluation

This was a great lesson during the Halloween season. Students were familiar with reading strategies as we had just finished a lesson on that. We gathered the tables into a configuration where we could all face each other. The title and author were written on the board. No one had read the story previously, but some had heard of Poe.

Everyone listened very attentively during the story, and participation during the questions and discussions was good. Students enjoyed the story and remarked that the taped version was exciting. All marked some words with highlighters and took turns looking up definitions in the dictionary. They learned that many words were used differently in the story than they are today. The level of reading and way the story was written could have been difficult for students without the taped version. I believe it was a real asset to those students. Stopping the tape periodically was beneficial as well.

We touched upon the style of writing and how the word usage contributed to the feeling of the story. After the story, students marked specific words that helped create the mood. They were able to determine that Poe's writings might have influenced modern writers such as Stephen King.

Overall, a good activity. I will use this method again especially in poetry reading. One change I would make is to have the copy of the text larger and the font easier to read.

Next Steps

Students could read selections of fiction prose from GED text or GED practice test to practice skills and strategies learned and used in this activity.

Technology Integration

The Poe Museum www.poemuseum.org
Poe Biography <http://www.online-literature.com/poe>

Purposeful/Transparent

Students knew that fiction prose was included on the GED test and that they need practice with this genre.

Contextual

Since many of them enjoyed scary movies, they were open to reading something along the same line. They realized that Stephen King movies began in the written form.

Building Expertise

This activity built up the students' self-confidence in reading this type of material. The discussions helped to validate their opinions and encouraged them to express themselves. They said that they would be open to reading more of Poe's works. Everyone who participated showed comprehension of the story.

Edgar Allan Poe - Biography

<http://www.online-literature.com/poe/>

Edgar Allan Poe (1809-1849), American poet, a master of the horror tale, credited with practically inventing the detective story.

Edgar Allan Poe was born on January 19, 1809 in Boston, Massachusetts, to parents who were itinerant actors. His father David Poe Jr. died probably in 1810 and his mother Elizabeth Hopkins Poe in 1811. Edgar was taken into the home of a Richmond merchant John Allan and brought up partly in England (1815-20), where he attended Manor School at Stoke Newington. Never legally adopted, Poe took Allan's name for his middle name.

Poe attended the University of Virginia (1826) but was expelled for not paying his gambling debts. This led to a quarrel with Allan, who later disowned him. In 1827 Poe joined the U.S. Army as a common soldier under an assumed name and age. In 1830 Poe entered West Point and was dishonorably discharged the next year, for intentional neglect of his duties.

Little is known about his life in this time, but in 1833 he lived in Baltimore with his father's sister. After winning a prize of \$50 for the short story "MS Found in a Bottle," he started a career as a staff member of various magazines, among others the *Southern Literary Messenger* in Richmond (1835-37), *Burton's Gentleman's Magazine* in Philadelphia (1839-40), and *Graham's Magazine* (1842-43). During these years he wrote some of his best-known stories.

In 1836 Poe married his 13-year-old cousin Virginia Clemm. She burst a blood vessel in 1842, and remained a virtual invalid until her death from tuberculosis five years later. After the death of his wife, Poe began to lose his struggle with drinking and drugs. He addressed the famous poem "Annabel Lee" (1849) to her.

Poe suffered from bouts of depression and madness, and he attempted suicide in 1848. In September the following year he disappeared for three days after a drink at a birthday party and on his way to visit his new fiancée in Richmond. He turned up in a delirious condition in Baltimore gutter and died on October 7, 1849.

THE TELL-TALE HEART

1843

Edgar Allan Poe

1) TRUE! - Nervous - very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am; but why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses - not destroyed - not dulled them. Above all was the sense of hearing acute. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in hell. How, then, am I mad? Hearken! And observe how healthily - how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

2) It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. 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! He had the eye of a vulture - a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees - very gradually - I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.

3) Now this is the point. You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded - with what caution - with what foresight - with what dissimulation I went to work! I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it - oh so gently! And then, when I had made an opening sufficient for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, so that no light shone out, and then I thrust in my head. Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I thrust it in! I moved it slowly - very, very slowly, so that I might not disturb the old man's sleep. It took me an hour to place my whole head within the opening so far that I could see him as he lay upon his bed. Ha! Would a madman have been so wise as this, and then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern cautiously-oh, so cautiously - cautiously (for the hinges creaked) - I undid it just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye. And this I did for seven long nights - every night just at midnight - but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who vexed me, but his Evil Eye. And every morning, when the day broke, I went boldly into the chamber, and spoke courageously to him, calling him by name in a hearty tone and inquiring how he has passed the night. So you see he would have been a very profound old man, indeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept.

4) Upon the eighth night I was more than usually cautious in opening the door. A watch's minute hand moves more quickly than did mine. Never before that night had I felt the extent of my own powers - of my sagacity. I could scarcely contain my feelings of triumph. To think that there I was, opening the door, little by little, and he not even to dream of my secret deeds or thoughts. I fairly chuckled at the idea; and perhaps he heard me, for he moved on the bed suddenly, as if startled. Now you may think that I drew back - but no. His room was as black as pitch with the thick darkness, (for the shutters were close fastened, through fear of robbers,) and so I knew that he couldn't see the opening of the door, and I kept pushing it on steadily, steadily.

5) I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in the bed, crying out - "Who's there?"

6) I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening; -just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.

7) Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief - oh, no! - It was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying

to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself - "It is nothing but the wind in the chimney - it is only a mouse crossing the floor," or "It is merely a cricket, which has made a single chirp". Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions: but he had found all in vain. All in vain; because Death, in approaching him had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel - although he neither saw nor heard - to feel the presence of my head within the room

8) When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little -a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it - you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily -until, at length a simple dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and fell full upon the vulture eye.

9) It was open - wide, wide open - and I grew furious as I gazed upon it. I saw it with perfect distinctness -all a dull blue, with a hideous veil over it that chilled the very marrow in my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person: for I had directed the ray as if by instinct, precisely upon the damned spot.

10) And have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-acuteness of the senses? - Now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew that sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage.

11) But even yet I refrained and kept still. I scarcely breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I tried how steadily I could maintain the ray upon the eye. Meantime the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant. The old man's terror must have been extreme! It grew louder, I say, louder every moment! - Do you mark me well. I have told you that I am nervous: so I am. And now at the dead hour of the night, amid the dreadful silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I refrained and stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! 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! With a loud yell, I threw open the lantern and leaped into the room. He shrieked once - once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more.

12) If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body. The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.

13) I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye - not even his - could have detected any thing wrong. There was nothing to wash out - no stain of any kind - no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all - ha! Ha!

14) When I had made an end of these labors, it was four o'clock - still dark as midnight. As the bell sounded the hour, there came a knocking at the street door. I went down to open it with a light heart, - for what had I now to fear? There entered three men, who introduced themselves, with perfect suavity, as officers of the police. A shriek had been heard by a neighbor during the night; suspicion of foul play had been aroused; information had been lodged at the police office, and they (the officers) had been deputed to search the premises.

15) I smiled, - for what had I to fear? I bade the gentlemen welcome. The shriek, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I mentioned, was absent in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I bade them search - search well. I led them, at length, to his chamber. I showed them his treasures, secure, undisturbed. In the enthusiasm of my confidence, I brought chairs into the room, and desired them here to rest from their fatigues, while I myself, in the wild audacity of my perfect triumph, placed my own seat upon the very spot beneath which

reposed the corpse of the victim.

16) The officers were satisfied. My manner had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat, and while I answered cheerily, they chatted of familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears: but still they sat and still chatted. The ringing became more distinct: - It continued and became more distinct: I talked more freely to get rid of the feeling: but it continued and gained definiteness - until, at length, I found that the noise was not within my ears.

17) No doubt I now grew *very* pale; - but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased - and what could I do? It was a low, dull, quick sound - much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I gasped for breath - and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly - more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why would they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men - but the noise steadily increased. Oh God! What could I do? I foamed - I raved - I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder - louder - louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God! - No, no! They heard! - They suspected! - They knew! - They were making a mockery of my horror! - This I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die! And now - again! - Hark! Louder! Louder! Louder! Louder!

18) "Villains!" I shrieked, "dissemble no more! I admit the deed! - Tear up the planks! Here, here! - It is the beating of his hideous heart!"

THE END

Flesch-Kincaid 4.1

A. Critical Reading and Listening – Participate in group discussion. Numbers indicate which paragraph from the reading.

- 1) What is your first impression of the narrator? Where do you think the sounds he heard were coming from?
- 2) What do you think the relationship was between the old man and the narrator? What could have been the reason for the old man’s “vulture eye”?
- 3) Why does the narrator go into the room for seven nights? What words describe how he entered the room?
- 6) What are “the death watches in the wall”?
- 7) How does the old man react when he realizes someone is in the room? Why does the narrator say that he knows what the old man feels? What are the “terrors that distracted” him?
- 9) How does the narrator react to the open eye?
- 10) How did the narrator describe the beating of the old man’s heart? How did he react to it?
- 11) How does the narrator kill the old man?
- 13) How did the narrator conceal his crime? Does he fear being caught?
- 14/15) Why did the police come to the house? What story does the narrator tell the police?
- 17) What sound does the narrator think he hears after the murder? In reality, what could it be? Why does it get louder and louder?
- 18) What does the narrator do?

B. Short Answer - Answer the following questions. Use the back of handout to finish answers.

Do you think the narrator was mad? What particular actions or words make you think so?

Do you think the narrator would have killed the old man if he did not have an “evil eye”?

Write a brief plot summary in your own words.

C. SEQUENCING - NUMBER THESE EVENTS AS THEY HAPPENED IN THE STORY.

- ___ The heart beat very loudly.
- ___ The storyteller asked the old man how he slept.
- ___ The police came.
- ___ The young man looked into the old man’s room.
- ___ The floor was torn up.
- ___ The old man made a low moan.

D. Vocabulary - Choose the correct definition of the word, according to its use in the story.

4) Sagacity

- (a) sound judgment (b) nickname for Saginaw (c) quickness

8) Stealthily

- (a) in a confused state (b) moving easily (c) slowly and secretly

11) Tattoo

- (a) drawing on skin (b) continuous drumming or rapping
(c) small person on Fantasy Island

15) Audacity

- (a) arrogant boldness (b) stereo system (c) comedy

VOCABULARY OVERVIEW GUIDE FOR *THE TELL-TALE HEART*

TOPIC _____

CATEGORY		
WORD	WORD	WORD
DEFINITION	DEFINITION	DEFINITION
CLUE	CLUE	CLUE

CATEGORY		
WORD	WORD	WORD
DEFINITION	DEFINITION	DEFINITION
CLUE	CLUE	CLUE

CATEGORY		
WORD	WORD	WORD
DEFINITION	DEFINITION	DEFINITION
CLUE	CLUE	CLUE

CATEGORY		
WORD	WORD	WORD
DEFINITION	DEFINITION	DEFINITION
CLUE	CLUE	CLUE