

Learning English

American Stories

The Tell-Tale Heart

by Nathaniel Hawthorne

Lesson Plan
by Jill Robbins, Ph.D.

Introduction

This lesson plan is to accompany the American Stories series episode, *The Tell-Tale Heart* by Edgar Allan Poe.

A transcript of the story is included at the end of this lesson to print so students can read as they listen. Teachers who cannot play the audio from the website can read the story aloud or have students read it.

This lesson plan is based on the CALLA Approach. See the end of the lesson for more information and resources on teaching with the CALLA approach. The following slide shows the five parts of this lesson plan.

Lesson Elements

Prepare

Present

Practice

Self-Evaluate

Expand

Prepare

Introduce the story. “Today we will read an American story by Edgar Allen Poe. It is in the style we call ‘Gothic Fiction’ or ‘Horror.’ Similar works are Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein* and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*. What do you know about horror stories?”

Listen to students’ comments about their knowledge of the horror genre.

Explain that some people enjoy the feeling of being frightened by stories of murder and madness, while others do not. “If you dislike horror stories, just look at this story as a piece of writing. What does Poe, the writer, do to make the reader afraid? We will analyze that today.”

Explain the meaning of the title. “The title of this story is “The Tell-Tale Heart. Do you know the meaning of ‘telltale?’”

Let students explain their understanding of the expression, *telltale*.

Explain that “Telltale is an adjective. That is a word that comes before a noun. It means the thing it describes is indicating or showing that something exists or has occurred.” After we read the story, I’m going to ask you about the title. Keep that in mind as we read.”

Then, teach the rest of the vocabulary for the story.

Vocabulary

underworld - *n.* the place where dead people go in Greek myths

vulture - *n.* any one of several large birds that eat dead animals and have a small and featherless head

lantern - *n.* a light that has usually a glass covering and that can be carried by a handle

terror- *n.* a very strong feeling of fear

well - *v.* to rise to a surface and flow out — usually + up

horrible - *adj.* very bad or unpleasant

Present

Introduce the task to students: “As we read the story today, we will practice the strategy *classify* to think about how Edgar Allen Poe tells this horror story. *Classifying* helps us to organize our thoughts as we read. Let’s listen to the first part. We will classify two things: *what* the narrator says about him/herself, and *how* the narrator describes the events in the story. (note, since we do not know the gender of the narrator, we will use ‘they/them’ to refer to the narrator in the lesson.)”

Make sure students can read along with the audio or your reading aloud by providing the text on paper or on a screen. Play or read aloud to “You should have seen how wisely and carefully I went to work!”

Model the strategy by thinking aloud as you complete the chart on the board or on a screen.

The Narrator's Self-Description	Description of the Events
I am nervous It's a disease (nervousness) that makes my senses sharper My hearing is very sharp I can hear everything in heaven/earth/the underworld (hell) Seeing the old man's eye bothered me I am sane (not mad or crazy) I am calm	When the eye looked at the narrator, it made their 'blood run cold' The narrator decided to kill the old man

Check for understanding: “Do you understand now how we are classifying? Let’s do the next part together. Make a chart on your paper or notebook. As you listen to the next part of the story, write down notes on the chart. ”

Play or read aloud to ‘The beating grew louder, I say, louder every moment!’

Ask students to share what they have written, “What did you classify?”

Write on the chart as the students tell the descriptions or events they classified in this part of the story.

Write and discuss the students' classification of descriptions & events:

The Narrator's Self-Description	Description of the Events
<p>I felt sorry for the old man I knew the terror he felt I felt the same terror many times</p>	<p>Narrator was kind to the old man N. looked into the old man's room every night for seven nights N. shone a light from the lantern on the eye It was closed Eighth night: made a sound Old man sat up & asked who it was N. stood still a long time The old man made a sound of terror The man had been lying awake</p>

Practice

“Now it’s your turn. Let’s read some more. This time, work with a neighbor to *classify*. Write the descriptions and events on one chart.”

Play or read aloud to ‘The beating grew louder, I say, louder every moment!’

Direct students to work together and write their notes on their chart. Ask, “ Can you begin to see what makes this a horror story? How is the eye described? We know the narrator is ‘mad’ – but we read this is ‘over-sensitivity.’ We are told the heart of the old man is beating loudly. What do you think? Can you hear another person’s heartbeat from across a room?

Encourage students to continue classifying with the next section.
“Let’s read more of the story. Remember to look for how the narrator and the events are described.”

Play or read aloud to ‘But it continued until, at length, I found that the noise was not within my ears.’

Ask students to write on their paper what they classified. When the pairs have finished, ask several students to help complete the list on the screen or the board.

Write and discuss the students' classification of descriptions & events:

The Narrator's Self-Description	Description of the Events
<p>I was afraid the neighbors would hear the heart beat</p> <p>I was calm – at ease – talking with police officers</p> <p>I started to feel weak</p>	<p>N. shouted and opened the lantern</p> <p>Old man cried out</p> <p>N. pulled the bed over the old man</p> <p>Heart beat continued</p> <p>Heart beat stopped</p> <p>N. took apart the body</p> <p>N. hid the body under the floor</p> <p>Police came; searched house, asked questions</p> <p>N. heard a ringing sound in ears</p>

Encourage students to continue classifying with the last section.
“Let’s read to the end of the story. Remember my question about the title. Keep on classifying as you listen/read.”

Play or read aloud to the end of the story.

Ask students to write on their paper what they classified. Encourage them to comment on the events of the last section. Ask students, “Now, what do you think about the title, ‘The Tell-Tale Heart?’ Whose heart is showing that something happened?”

Listen as students propose alternative answers – the narrator or the old man?

Self-Evaluate

Ask students to stay with their partner and talk about their work on the story. “What do you think about using this strategy, *classify*, when you read? Did it help you think about the meaning of the story? Did it help you to understand the events? Write a sentence or two on your paper to turn in about how **classifying** helped you today.”

Expand

Ask students, “Are there other times when doing your schoolwork when you can *classify*?”

Listen to students’ responses. Possible answers may be: reading science texts or learning about history.

Continue, “This strategy is helpful in reading when you want to think carefully about the style and the content of the story. It gives you a way to organize your thoughts after you read.”

Try using this strategy tonight when you do your homework, or in your next class. Let me know how it goes!”

Today we present the short story "The Tell-Tale Heart" by Edgar Allan Poe. Here is Shep O'Neal with the story.

True! Nervous -- very, very **nervous** I had been and am! But why will you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses -- not destroyed them.

Above all was the sense of hearing. I heard all things in the heaven and in the earth. I heard many things in the **underworld**. How, then, am I mad? Observe how healthily -- how calmly I can tell you the whole story.

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain. 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 bird, a **vulture** -- a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell on me, my blood ran cold; and so -- very slowly -- I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and free myself of the eye forever.

Now this is the point. You think that I am mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely and carefully I went to work!

I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, late at night, I turned the lock of his door and opened it -- oh, so gently! And then, when I had made an opening big enough for my head, I put in a dark **lantern**, all closed that no light shone out, and then I stuck in my head. I moved it slowly, very slowly, so that I might not interfere with the old man's sleep. And then, when my head was well in the room, I undid the lantern just so much that a single thin ray of light fell upon the vulture eye.

And this I did for seven long nights -- but I found the eye always closed; and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not the old man who was a problem for me, but his Evil Eye.

On the eighth night, I was more than usually careful in opening the door. I had my head in and was about to open the lantern, when my finger slid on a piece of metal and made a noise. The old man sat up in bed, crying out "Who's there?"

I kept still and said nothing. I did not move a muscle for a whole hour. During that time, I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening -- just as I have done, night after night.

Then I heard a noise, and I knew it was the sound of human **terror**. It was the low sound that arises from the bottom of the soul. I knew the sound well. Many a night, late at night, when all the world slept, it has **welled** up from deep within my own chest. I say I knew it well.

I knew what the old man felt, and felt sorry for him, although I laughed to myself. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him.

When I had waited a long time, without hearing him lie down, I decided to open a little -- a very, very little -- crack in the lantern. So I opened it. You cannot imagine how carefully, carefully. Finally, a single ray of light shot from out and fell full upon the vulture eye.

It was open -- wide, wide open -- and I grew angry as I looked at it. I saw it clearly -- all a dull blue, with a **horrible** veil over it that chilled my bones; but I could see nothing else of the old man's face or person. For I had directed the light exactly upon the damned spot.

And have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but a kind of oversensitivity? Now, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when inside a piece of cotton. I knew that sound well, too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my anger.

But even yet I kept still. I hardly breathed. I held the lantern motionless. I attempted to keep the ray of light upon the eye. But the beating of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every second. The old man's terror must have been extreme! The beating grew louder, I say, louder every moment!

And now at the dead hour of the night, in the horrible silence of that old house, so strange a noise as this excited me to uncontrollable terror. Yet, for some minutes longer I stood still. But the beating grew louder, louder! I thought the heart must burst.

And now a new fear seized me -- the sound would be heard by a neighbor! The old man's hour had come! With a loud shout, I threw open the lantern and burst into the room.

He cried once -- once only. Without delay, I forced him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled, to find the action so far done.

But, for many minutes, the heart beat on with a quiet sound. This, however, did not concern me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length, it stopped. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the body. I placed my hand over his heart and held it there

many minutes. There was no movement. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more.

If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise steps I took for hiding the body. I worked quickly, but in silence. First of all, I took apart the body. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.

I then took up three pieces of wood from the flooring, and placed his body parts under the room. I then replaced the wooden boards so well that no human eye -- not even his -- could have seen anything wrong.

There was nothing to wash out -- no mark of any kind -- no blood whatever. I had been too smart for that. A tub had caught all -- ha! ha!

When I had made an end of these labors, it was four o'clock in the morning. As a clock sounded the hour, there came a noise 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 said they were officers of the police. A cry had been heard by a neighbor during the night; suspicion of a crime had been aroused; information had been given at the police office, and the officers had been sent to search the building.

I smiled -- for what had I to fear? The cry, I said, was my own in a dream. The old man, I said, was not in the country. I took my visitors all over the house. I told them to search -- search well. I led them, at length, to his room. I brought chairs there, and told them to rest. I placed my own seat upon the very place under which lay the body of the victim.

The officers were satisfied. I was completely at ease. They sat, and while I answered happily, they talked of common things. But, after a while, I felt myself getting weak and wished them gone. My head hurt, and I had a ringing in my ears; but still they sat and talked.

The ringing became more severe. I talked more freely to do away with the feeling. But it continued until, at length, I found that the noise was not within my ears.

I talked more and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased -- and what could I do? It was a low, dull, quick sound like a watch makes when inside a piece of cotton. I had trouble breathing -- and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly -- more loudly; but the noise increased. I stood up and argued about silly things, in a high voice and with violent hand movements. But the noise kept increasing.

Why would they not be gone? I walked across the floor with heavy steps, as if excited to anger by the observations of the men -- but the noise increased. What could I do? I swung my chair and moved it upon the floor, but the noise continually increased. It grew louder -- louder -- louder! And still the men talked pleasantly, and smiled.

Was it possible they heard not? No, no! They heard! They suspected! They knew! They were making a joke of my horror! This I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this pain! I could bear those smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die! And now -- again! Louder! Louder! Louder!

"Villains!" I cried, "Pretend no more! I admit the deed! Tear up the floor boards! Here, here! It is the beating of his hideous heart!"

Words in This Story

nervous - *adj.* often or easily becoming worried and afraid about what might happen

underworld - *n.* the place where dead people go in Greek myths

vulture - *n.* any one of several large birds that eat dead animals and have a small and featherless head

lantern - *n.* a light that has usually a glass covering and that can be carried by a handle

terror- *n.* a very strong feeling of fear

well - *v.* to rise to a surface and flow out — usually + up

horrible - *adj.* very bad or unpleasant

About the CALLA Approach

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) is an instructional model for second and foreign language learners based on cognitive theory and research.

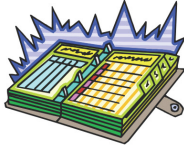



CALLA integrates instruction in priority topics from the content curriculum, development of the language skills needed for learning in school, and explicit instruction in using learning strategies for academic tasks.

The goals of CALLA are for students to learn essential academic content and language and to become independent and self-regulated learners through their increasing command over a variety of strategies for learning in school. CALLA can be used in ESL, EFL, bilingual, foreign language, and general education classrooms.






CALLA was developed by Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley, and is being implemented in approximately 30 school districts in the United States as well as in several other countries.

See a list of language learning strategies below.







Metacognitive Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES		
Plan / Organize	 <p>Planner</p>	<p>Before beginning a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Set goals. -Plan the task or content sequence. -Plan how to accomplish the task (choose strategies). -Preview a text.
Monitor / Identify Problems	 <p>Check</p>	<p>While working on a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Check your progress on the task. -Check your comprehension as you use the language. Do you understand? If not, what is the problem? -Check your production as you use the language. Are you making sense? If not, what is the problem?
Evaluate	 <p>I did it!</p>	<p>After completing a task:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Assess how well you have accomplished the learning task. -Assess how well you have used learning strategies. -Decide how effective the strategies were. -Identify changes you will make the next time you have a similar task to do.
Manage Your Own Learning	 <p>Pace Yourself</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Determine how you learn best. -Arrange conditions that help you learn. -Seek opportunities for practice. -Focus your attention on the task.

Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
		
Use Background Knowledge	 I know.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Think about and use what you already know to help you do the task. - Make associations between new information and your prior knowledge. -Use new information to clarify or modify your prior knowledge.
Make Inferences	 Use Clues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use context and what you know to figure out meaning. -Read and listen between the lines. -Go beyond the text to understand its meaning.
Make Predictions	 Crystal Ball	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Anticipate information to come. -Make logical guesses about what will happen in a written or oral text. -Make an estimate (math). -Make a hypothesis (science).
Personalize	 Me	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Relate new concepts to your own life, to your experiences, knowledge, beliefs and feelings.


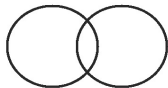


Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Transfer / Use Cognates	 Coffee/Café	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Apply your linguistic knowledge of other languages (including your native language) to the target language. -Recognize cognates.
Substitute / Paraphrase	 Make it work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use a synonym or descriptive phrase for unknown words or expressions.
  USE YOUR SENSES		
Use Images	 See it in your mind	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use or create an actual or mental image to understand and/or represent information. -Use or draw a picture or diagram.
Use Sounds	 Sound Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Say or read aloud a word, sentence, or paragraph to help your understanding. -Sound out/vocalize. - Use your "mental tape recorder" to remember sounds, words, phrases, and/or conversations.



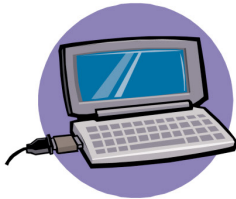


Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Use Your Kinesthetic Sense		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> --Act out a role, for example, in Readers' Theater, or imagine yourself in different roles in the target language. -Use real objects to help you remember words, sentences, or content information.
  USE YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS		
Find/Apply Patterns	 <p>abacus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Apply a rule. -Make a rule. -Recognize and apply letter/sound, grammar, discourse, or register rules. -Identify patterns in literature (genre). -Identify patterns in math, science, and social studies.
Classify/Sequence	 <p>Life cycle</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Categorize words or ideas according to attributes. -Classify living things; identify natural cycles. -Identify order and sequences in math, science, and social studies. -Sequence events in history.

Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
Take Notes	 <p>PDA</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Write down important words and ideas while listening or reading. -List ideas or words to include in speaking or writing..
Use Graphic Organizers	 <p>A Venn diagram</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use or create visual representations (such as Venn diagrams, time lines, webs, and charts) of important relationships between concepts.
Summarize	 <p>Main Idea</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Create a mental, oral, or written summary of information.
Use Selective Attention	 <p>Focus</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Focus on specific information, structures, key words, phrases, or ideas.

Task-Based Strategies

CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
TASK-BASED STRATEGIES		
 		
USE A VARIETY OF RESOURCES		
Access Information Sources	 <p>Look it up!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Use the dictionary, the internet, and other reference materials. -Seek out and use sources of information. -Follow a model -Ask questions
Cooperate	 <p>Together</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Work with others to complete tasks, build confidence, and give and receive feedback.
Talk Yourself Through It (Self-Talk)	 <p>I can do it!</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Use your inner resources. Reduce your anxiety by reminding yourself of your progress, the resources you have available, and your goals.