

# Learning English

## **American Stories** ***The Purloined Letter*** ***by Edgar Allan Poe***

Lesson Plan  
*by Jill Robbins, Ph.D.*

# Introduction

This lesson plan is to accompany the American Stories series episode, *The Purloined Letter*, 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 *The Purloined Letter*, by Edgar Allan Poe. Poe is known for his horror stories, but this is a detective story. What do you know about this type of story?”

Listen to students’ responses. If students do not know about the genre, give some examples from your own culture, or of stories about Sherlock Holmes.

Teach the vocabulary for the story.

# Vocabulary

**case** - *n.* a situation that is being investigated or managed by someone (such as a police officer or social worker) in an official way

**robbery** - *n.* the crime of stealing money or property

**embarrass** - *v.* to make someone feel confused, foolish or ashamed in front of other people

**puff** - *v.* to breathe smoke from a cigarette, pipe, etc., in and out of the lungs

**sigh** - *v.* to take in and let out a long, loud breath in a way that shows you are bored, disappointed, relieved, etc.

**check** - *n.* a piece of paper that is used to make a payment to someone using the money in a bank account

**checkbook** - *n.* a book containing checks for use with a checking account

**franc** - *n.* a basic unit of money that is used in some countries where French is spoken

# Present

Introduce the task to students: “As we read the story today, we will practice the strategy *focus*. When we focus on parts of a story, we look for information that helps us understand the story. Today, we will try to focus on the details of the story. Then we will be like a detective and guess, or *predict*, how these details relate to the story. I’ll show you how to do this.”

Play or read aloud to “Germont moved forward in his chair.”

Tell students, “I am looking for the important details to help me make some guesses about the story. First, I notice the setting: it’s Paris in 1845. There are three people talking together. One is the head of the police force. He needs help. I guess that Mr. Dupin will help him.”

Continue to model the strategy: “When I read this part, I also notice that the writer uses one word four times. That is the word, ‘simple.’ So I’m going to think about why that word is important. Maybe it is simple, but maybe it is not such a simple case. I predict it will not be easy for the police to solve the case.”

Write these points on the board or display on a screen for the class. Complete the chart as on the next slide. Talk through the points on which you want students to focus.

# Focus and Predict

What I noticed	What it means to me	My guess/prediction about the story
<b>head of police asks for help</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The policeman thinks Dupin can help figure out the crime</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dupin will probably solve the crime</li> </ul>
<b>“simple” is repeated 4 times</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The case seems simple, just a stolen letter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The solution to the mystery might be simple – or maybe it will not be simple</li> </ul>
<b>a letter was stolen from Madame X to be used by a political enemy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Madame X is trying to protect her husband</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Madame X must have written an embarrassing letter. I wonder what is in it?</li> </ul>
<b>the police searched Mr. D’Arcy’s room many times</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The police are not able to find the letter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dupin might tell the police where to look</li> </ul>



# Practice

Tell students, “Now it’s your turn. Make a table on your paper. As we read the next section, focus on the details of the story. Write your ideas and your guesses about the story on your own paper. Then I will ask you to share your guesses with your partner.”

Play or read aloud to ‘When you have signed the check, I will give you the letter.’

“Now, sit with your partner and write in your chart. What did you focus on in this part? Can you make a guess about, or predict, what is going to happen?”

Give students time to work together in their groups. Ask students to tell you what they wrote. Fill in the chart.

# Focus and Predict

What I noticed	What it means to me	My guess/prediction about the story
<b>Mr. Germont describes search</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Police are serious about solving the crime</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I guess Mr. Dupin will find the letter</li> </ul>
<b>Letter described as in white envelope with red stamp</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Police are looking for the letter only in this envelope</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I guess that Dupin knows the letter might look different</li> </ul>
<b>Dupin asks Mr. Germont to search the apartment again</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dupin wants the police officer to be tired of searching</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dupin knows where the letter is</li> </ul>
<b>Dupin asks Mr. Germont about the reward for the letter</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dupin says he can provide the letter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dupin had the letter all the time.</li> </ul>

Allow students to practice the strategy with the story

Instruct students to listen again. “With your partner, listen to the next part of the story. Focus on the details of what Dupin says. Write down your ideas and guesses based on the details.”

Play or read aloud to the end of the story.

Guide students to complete their chart with the details they focused on in this section of the story.

Give students time to discuss their guesses and how the story ended. Show the image of Dupin taking the letter on the following slide.



Dupin and Mr. D'Arcy - Illustration by Frederick Lix



# Self-Evaluate

Ask students, “Do you think you are a good detective, like Mr. Dupin? Did your guesses about the story help you understand what happened?”

Ask, “Now I’d like to ask – what do you think about using this strategy, *focus*, when you read? Did it help you follow the story? How about *predicting*? Write a sentence or two on your paper to turn in about how *focusing and predicting* helped you today.”

# Expand

Ask students, “Are there other times when you can *focus*?”

Listen to students’ responses.

Continue, “This strategy is helpful in both reading and listening. Focusing helps us to pick out the important details when we read or listen. It helps us to understand and remember the people and events in the stories we read or hear. Try using this strategy tonight when you do your homework, or in your next class. Let me know how it goes!”

Our story today is called "The Purloined Letter." It was written by Edgar Allan Poe. Poe is generally known for his horror stories. This is the third of three stories he wrote about Auguste Dupin and how he solves crimes. The story is about a stolen letter. It first appeared in eighteen forty-four in a yearly magazine. It was reprinted in many publications, newspapers and books. This is one of Poe's stories that influenced the development of the modern detective story.

One evening in Paris, during the autumn of eighteen forty-five, I went to visit a friend, Auguste Dupin. We were smoking our pipes and talking when the door of his apartment opened. Mr. Germont, the head of the Paris police force, came into the room.



Edmund Quinn's sculpture of Edgar Allan Poe

"I came to ask your advice," Germont said to my friend Dupin. "I am trying to solve a very important **case**. It is also a very simple case, so I really need your help. But I thought you would like to hear about it, because it is so strange.

"My men and I have worked on this case for three months," Germont said. "It is a very simple case of **robbery**. But we still cannot solve it."

Dupin took the pipe out of his mouth. "Perhaps the mystery is too simple," he said.

Germont began to laugh. "Too simple?" he said. "Who ever heard of such a thing?"

I looked at Germont. "Why don't you tell us the problem?" I said.

Germont stopped laughing and sat down.

"All right," he said. "But you must never tell anyone I told you this."

"The wife of a very important person needs help. I cannot tell you her name, because her husband is a powerful man in the French government. Let us just call her Madame X. Three months ago, someone stole a letter from Madame X. She is offering a large amount of money to anyone who can return the letter to her.

"We know that her husband's political enemy, Mr. D'Arcy, stole the letter. We also know it is somewhere in his apartment. D'Arcy plans to use the letter to **embarrass** Madame X's husband and destroy his political power.

"As you know, I have keys which can open any lock in Paris. For the last three months, my men and I have spent every evening looking for the letter in his apartment. But we cannot find it."

Dupin stopped smoking. "Tell me how you looked for it," he said. Germont moved forward in his chair.

"We took our time," he said. "First, we examined the furniture in every room. We opened all the drawers. We looked under the rugs. We searched behind all the paintings on the walls.

"We opened every book. We removed the boards of the floor. We even took the tops off the tables to see if he had hidden the letter in the table legs. But we cannot find it. What do you advise me to do?"

Dupin **puffed** on his pipe. "What does the letter look like?" he asked.

"It is in a white envelope with a red stamp," Germont said. "The address is written in large black letters."

Dupin puffed on his pipe again. "I advise you to go back and search the apartment again," he said.

About one month later, Germont came back to see us.

"I followed your advice," he said. "But I still have not found the letter."

Dupin smiled. "I knew you would not find it," he said. Germont became very red in the face. "Then why did you make me search the apartment again?" he shouted.

"My dear Germont," Dupin said. "Let me tell you a little story. Do you remember the famous doctor, Louis Abernathy?"

"No!" Germont shouted. "Get to the point, Dupin!"

"Of course! Of course," Dupin said. "Once, a rich old man met Abernathy at a party. The old man was not feeling very well. He decided he would get a medical opinion from the doctor without paying for it. So he described his problems to Abernathy. 'Now doctor,' the old man said, 'suppose you had a patient like that. What would you tell him to take?'"

"'Oh, that is quite simple,' said Abernathy. 'I would tell him to take my advice.'"

Germont looked embarrassed. "Look here, Dupin. I am perfectly willing to pay for advice."

Dupin smiled at Germont. "How much money did you say the reward was?" he asked. Germont **sighed**. "I do not want to tell you the exact amount. But I would give fifty thousand **francs** to the person who helps me find that letter."

"In that case," Dupin said, "take out your **checkbook** and write me a **check** for fifty thousand francs. When you have signed the check, I will give you the letter."

Germont looked at Dupin with his mouth open. His eyes seemed to jump out of his head. Then he took out his checkbook and pen, and wrote a check for fifty thousand francs. He gave it to Dupin.

My friend examined the check carefully and put it in his pocket. Then he unlocked a drawer of his desk, took out the letter, and gave it to Germont.



The policeman's hands shook as he opened the letter. He read it quickly. Then he put it in his pocket and ran out of the room without saying a word.

"Dupin!" I said, as I turned to my friend. "How did you solve the mystery?"

"It was simple, my friend," he said. "Germont and his policemen could not find the letter, because they did not try to understand the mind of the man who stole it. Instead, they looked for the letter where they would have hidden it.

"Mr. D'Arcy is not a policeman. He is, however, very intelligent. He knew the police would search his apartment. He also knew how police think. So, he did not hide the letter where he knew they would look for it.

"Do you remember how Germont laughed when I said the mystery was difficult for him to solve because it was so simple?"

Dupin filled his pipe with tobacco and lit it. "Well, the more I thought about it, the more I realized the police could not find the letter because D'Arcy had not hidden it at all.

"So I went to visit D'Arcy in his apartment. I took a pair of dark green eyeglasses with me. I explained to him that I was having trouble with my eyes and needed to wear the dark glasses at all times. He believed me. The glasses permitted me to look around the apartment while I seemed only to be talking to him.

"I paid special attention to a large desk where there were a lot of papers and books. However, I saw nothing suspicious there. After a few minutes, however, I noticed a small shelf over the fireplace. A few postcards and a letter were lying on the shelf. The letter looked very old and dirty.

"As soon as I saw this letter, I decided it must be the one I was looking for. It must be, even though it was completely different from the one Germont had described.

"This letter had a large green stamp on it. The address was written in small letters in blue ink. I memorized every detail of the letter while I talked to D'Arcy. Then when he was not looking, I dropped one of my gloves on the floor under my chair.

"The next morning, I stopped at his apartment to look for my glove. While we were talking, we heard people shouting in the street. D'Arcy went to the window and looked out. Quickly, I stepped to the shelf and put the letter in my pocket. Then I replaced it with a letter that looked exactly like it, which I had taken with me. I had made it the night before.



Illustration by Frederic Lix

"The trouble in the street was caused by a man who had almost been run over by a horse and carriage. He was not hurt. And soon the crowd of people went away. When it was over, D'Arcy came away from the window. I said good-bye and left.

"The man who almost had an accident was one of my

servants. I had paid him to create the incident."

Dupin stopped talking to light his pipe. I did not understand. "But, Dupin," I said, "why did you go to the trouble of replacing the letter? Why not just take it and leave?"

Dupin smiled. "D'Arcy is a dangerous man," he said. "And he has many loyal servants. If I had taken the letter, I might never have left his apartment alive."

*The Purloined Letter was written by Edgar Allan Poe and adapted by Dona De Sanctis.*

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### **Words in This Story**

**case** - *n.* a situation that is being investigated or managed by someone (such as a police officer or social worker) in an official way

**robbery** - *n.* the crime of stealing money or property

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# 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.

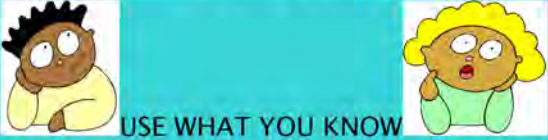




CALLA was developed by Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley, and is being implemented in approximately 30 school districts in the United States as well as in several other countries.

See a list of language learning strategies below.



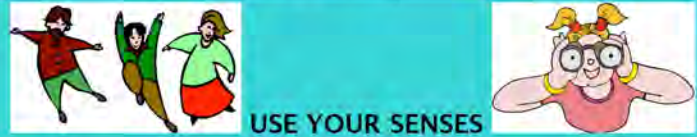


# Metacognitive Strategies

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

# Task-Based Strategies

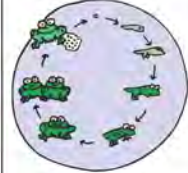
CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
<b>TASK-BASED STRATEGIES</b>		
		
Use Background Knowledge	 I know.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Think about and use what you already know to help you do the task.</li> <li>- Make associations between new information and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

# Task-Based Strategies


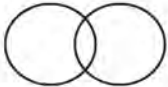


CALLA CONTENT AND LANGUAGE LEARNING STRATEGIES		
STRATEGY	DESCRIPTION	
<b>TASK-BASED STRATEGIES</b>		
Transfer / Use Cognates	 Coffee/Café	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Apply your linguistic knowledge of other languages (including your native language) to the target language.</li> <li>-Recognize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



# Task-Based Strategies






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

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



# Task-Based Strategies

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