

## American Stories

### “The Fall of the House of Usher” by Edgar Allan Poe

#### Lesson Plan

This lesson plan is to accompany the American Stories series episode “The Fall of the House of Usher” 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.

American Stories lesson plans are based on the CALLA approach. See the end of each lesson for more information and resources on teaching with the CALLA approach.

CALLA has five lesson elements:

**Prepare:** Engage students in the topic and identify objectives for the lesson. Find out what students already know about it and motivate them to learn more. Teach new vocabulary.

**Present:** Present new information. Explain the target learning strategy for the lesson. Model what the students are asked to do. Discuss connections to students’ prior knowledge.

**Practice:** Give students an authentic, active task that they can do in a small group or in pairs. Remind students to use the target learning strategy.

**Self-Evaluate:** Question students so they will reflect on their own learning. Ask students to evaluate their own learning rather than wait for the teacher to assess them. Find out if using the learning strategy helped students' understanding.

**Expand:** Guide students on how to apply what they learned to their own lives. Point out other contexts where the learning strategy may help. Make connections between content and language or to the student's first language. When appropriate, request that parents contribute to learning.

Now for this week's lesson.

## **Prepare**

Introduce the story: "Today, we will read Part One of 'The Fall of the House of Usher' by Edgar Allan Poe. It is a story about a man whose childhood friend demanded an immediate visit after not seeing him for many years. Think about a good friend from your childhood. Write that person's name on a piece of paper. Now look away from the paper. Now, look at the paper again. What things come to mind when you see the person's name? Write down three words that come to your mind about the person.

Give students an example about your own childhood friend, such as the example below.

For example, when I think of my childhood friend, the words 'athlete' 'singing' and 'Christmas' come to mind. Like me, my friend was a runner on the school track team. She also loved to sing. We used to sing pop songs together at her house, using her father's microphone. One year, I also spent Christmas with her family."

Allow students time to share their association words with the person sitting next to them and to describe why they associate those words with their childhood friend.

Say, "In the story we will read today, the narrator's friend is not the same as he was when they were children. How about your friend – is your friend mostly the same or have they changed?"

Allow students time to respond by telling the person sitting next to them.

Now say, "Now, think of a thing in your home that you connect good memories with. Write down the name of the thing. Think of two words you connect to that thing and write those words down. Now, tell the person sitting next to you why you chose those words."

Allow students time to talk to the person sitting next to them.

Continue: "When you think about a person that you've known or a place that you've spent time at, your mind naturally jumps to specific thoughts, and connects images, words, feelings, or even senses, with those thoughts. Your mind **makes associations** based on this prior experience. Making associations builds strong memories in our brains. We want to have those strong memories for the new things we are learning in English.

Today, we're going to learn to apply this strategy to reading. First, let's learn some new vocabulary."

Teach the new vocabulary for the lesson (below). Use images or classroom items for visual aids. The vocabulary also appears on a separate page at the end of the lesson for printing and handing out to students.

**the heavens** - *n.* the sky

**on horseback** - *n.* sitting on a horse

**reflect** - *v.* to show the image of something on a surface

**several** - *adj.* more than two but not very many

**illness** - *n.* a condition of being unhealthy in your body or mind

**gloom** - *n.* a feeling of sadness

**branch** - *n.* a part of a tree that grows out from the trunk

**decay** - *n.* the process or result of being slowly destroyed by natural processes

**lip** - *n.* either one of the two soft parts that surround the mouth

## Present

Hand out the transcript of the story.

Introduce the task to students: "As we read the story today, we will practice the strategy *make associations* to help us understand the story better. I'm going to begin reading and, as I do, I will try to identify where in the story the narrator is *making associations*. Then, I will put his associations into a chart. I'll show you how to do this."

Play or read aloud to the end of the second paragraph. The second paragraph ends with, "This was a question to which I could find no answer."

Model the strategy: "The first part of the story describes the narrator riding on horseback through the countryside. He finally arrives at the House of Usher. He notices the stone walls of the building and the dead trees. The sight of the house fills him with sadness. When we hear how the narrator describes the scene, we can identify the associations he is making with this scene. Make a chart on the board like the one below.

Note that the chart below contains sample associations from *all* of Part One of this story. The chart is simply a reference for the teacher. You may use the quotes and associations in the chart or choose others, if you prefer.

Tell students that the story provides vivid imagery that helps us recognize what the narrator associates with what he is seeing so far. Doing this helps us to understand the strong emotions the narrator is talking about.

Tell students, "For example, in the second paragraph, the narrator says, "a sense of heavy sadness filled my spirit." He also says that "a complete sadness of soul" came upon him as he looked at the scene around him. The narrator is making an association about what he is looking at – he is connecting the House of Usher and the surrounding scene with a deep feeling of sadness. He also makes a few other associations in the second paragraph. Can you find them?" Elicit a few responses from students. Then write them (if accurate) into the second column.

What the narrator describes	The associations he makes
The narrator describes the House of Usher, which is his friend's house. The house is made of "cold" stone and surrounded by dead trees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Sadness</li> <li>-Unpleasant, heavy feeling</li> <li>-Fear, fright</li> </ul>
He calls the house's windows "empty eye-like windows"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Emptiness, desolation</li> <li>-Human-like quality</li> </ul>

Tell students, "I am going to give you blank charts so that you can write down what the narrator describes and you can identify the associations he makes about those things."

### Practice

Prepare students for the next part: "Now it's your turn. Let's listen to some more of the story. As we listen, think about how the narrator describes the imagery around him and talks about his friend. And think about the associations he makes – the images, symbols, words, thoughts, and feelings he associates with what he sees and hears.

"Use the information you learn by reading or listening. On the left side of the chart, write down quotes or a brief summary of what the narrator sees or hears and then, on the right side, write the symbols, words, or feelings, he associates with those things. Note that sometimes an author may not directly describe the association that a character makes but may instead want the reader to identify the association is himself/herself."

Explain to students: "As we will read the story in three sections, you only need to identify a few associations per section."

Play or read aloud to: "Perhaps the careful eye would have discovered the beginning of a break in the front of the building, a crack making its ways from the top down the wall until it became lost in the dark waters of the lake."

Have students sit with a classmate to share their notes and associations. The classmate should not be the same as the previous partner they sat next to. Point out that "it doesn't matter whether your associations are the same as mine or as your partner's. What's important is thinking about what the characters of the story are experiencing and how they associate specific experiences with specific feelings and ideas."

Give students time to discuss their associations.

Ask students to share their associations with their partner. Elicit this information from a few students and then write their associations on the board or screen as on the chart below.

Ask students to listen again.

Play or read aloud to "I could not, even with an effort, see in my friend the appearance of a simple human being."

Ask students (in pairs again) to make associations for the story up to that part and share them with their partner. Now, have the students make groups: Ask two pairs of students sit together to make four students per group. Direct students to discuss their associations from this part of the story. In their groups, have students select one association of the ones they came up with and choose one person in their group as their representative for whole-class feedback.

Elicit the selected association from the representative of each group. Ask the student to read the quote, quotes, or descriptive details aloud that support their association.

Have students remain in groups of four.

Play or read aloud until the end of the story.

Ask students to work together to discuss and agree on one association and then one student can write it down on their chart. Elicit the selected association from each group, as before, and then continue to write on a chart as shown on the chart below.

## Making Associations Chart

What the narrator describes	The associations he makes
"There, I could see reflected in the water a clear picture of dead trees"	-Dead things -Illness, lack of health
He calls the house a "house of sadness, house of gloom"	-Gloom, sadness
He recalls that Usher's family had been known for their love of the arts and for "many quiet acts of kindness to the poor."	He associates Usher's family with art and an unpretentious charity toward the poor
<p>"I really believed that around the whole house, and the ground around it, the air itself was different. It was not the air of heaven."</p> <p>"It was sickly, unhealthy air that I could see, slow-moving, heavy, and gray."</p>	-To the narrator, the air around the house appears to take on a life of its own; to hi, the air seems to be some kind of strange and sickly being
Although the house was old, he sees no real sign of decay in the house. Still, he feels a sense of decay.	-Decay -Maybe he associates his friend with decay
"...the wall coverings, the blackness of the floors, and the things brought home from long forgotten wars – while these things I had known since I was a baby...I was still surprised at the strange ideas which grew in my mind from these simple things"	- Maybe the darkness symbolizes death

<p>The room was dark, with only a small bit of red light. There were books, but they did not make the room lively. It was difficult to see into the high corners of the room. The chairs were old.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Sadness</li> <li>-Gloom; a sense that one cannot escape from the gloom</li> <li>-Lack of life</li> </ul>
<p>Usher seemed to be a different person. He had become strange: "the horrible whiteness of his skin" "strange light in his eyes" the unusual style of his hair</p>	<p>-He associates Usher with strangeness</p>
<p>As a boy, Usher's actions "were first too quick and then too quiet" and the way he spoke would fluctuate from slow and fearful to strong and heavy without notice</p>	<p>He associates the child version of Usher as being highly changeable and unpredictable; his friend is speaking in this manner now, as well.</p>
<p>Usher suffers from a "sickly increase in the feeling of all the senses" – taste, smell, sight, hearing – "and there were few sounds which did not fill him with horror." "A certain kind of sick fear was his master"</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The narrator associates Usher's illness with a "sick fear"</li> <li>-It's possible that he associates this sickness with mental illness</li> </ul>
<p>In the last paragraph, Usher is the one speaking. At this point, he is convinced that his death is forthcoming.</p>	<p>Usher associates his illness with death</p>

## Self-Evaluate

Explain that "Making associations helps you to connect a memory, image or feeling with words or ideas. That connection is very strong so when you want to pull up the memory from the past, it comes more easily. When reading a story, identifying what associations the author or characters make helps us to understand what the characters are thinking or experiencing. We can understand their feelings because we have had the same experiences or emotions."

Ask students, "What do you think Edgar Allan Poe wants us to understand about the narrator's experience at his friend's house? Does understanding that help us to be better readers? What's more, does it make you want to read more of this story?"

Give the students time to talk about the end of the story.

Ask, "What do you think about using the strategy *make associations* when you read? Did it help you understand the story better? Write a few sentences on your paper to turn in about how making associations helped you today."

## Expand

Ask students, "Are there other times when you can make associations about things based on what you know?"

Listen to students' responses.

Continue, "This strategy is helpful in both reading and listening. It can be very useful in learning a new language. For example, when you associate a word or words with an image, or even a sound, it helps you to learn new vocabulary. And, making associations can help you to remember new sentence structures. This strategy is also useful in other subjects, such as history and science, and even math. For example, you might associate the number four with the color pink or you might associate a specific math step

with a specific image in your mind. Try using this strategy tonight when you do your homework, or in your next class. Let me know how it goes!"

## **"The Fall of the House of Usher"** **By Edgar Allan Poe**

It was a dark and soundless day near the end of the year, and clouds were hanging low in the heavens. All day I had been riding on horseback through country with little life or beauty; and in the early evening I came within view of the House of Usher.

I do not know how it was — but, with my first sight of the building, a sense of heavy sadness filled my spirit. I looked at the scene before me — at the house itself — at the ground around it — at the cold stone walls of the building — at its empty eye-like windows — and at a few dead trees — I looked at this scene, I say, with a complete sadness of soul which was no healthy, earthly feeling. There was a coldness, a sickening of the heart, in which I could discover nothing to lighten the weight I felt. What was it, I asked myself, what was it that was so fearful, so frightening in my view of the House of Usher? This was a question to which I could find no answer.

I stopped my horse beside the building, on the edge of a dark and quiet lake. There, I could see reflected in the water a clear picture of the dead trees, and of the house and its empty eye-like windows. I was now going to spend several weeks in this house of sadness — this house of gloom. Its owner was named Roderick Usher. We had been friends when we were boys; but many years had passed since our last meeting. A letter from him had reached me, a wild letter which demanded that I reply by coming to see him. He wrote of an illness of the body — of a sickness of the mind — and of a desire to see me — his best and indeed his only friend. It was the manner in which all this was said — it was the heart in it — which did not allow me to say no.

Although as boys we had been together, I really knew little about my friend. I knew, however, that his family, a very old one, had long been famous for its understanding of all the arts and for many quiet acts of kindness to the poor. I had learned too that the family had never been a large one, with many branches. The name had passed always from father to son, and when people spoke of the "House of Usher," they included both the family and the family home.

I again looked up from the picture of the house reflected in the lake to the house itself. A strange idea grew in my mind — an idea so strange that I tell it only to show the force of the feelings which laid their weight on me. I really believed that around the whole house, and the ground around it, the air itself was different. It was not the air of heaven. It rose from the dead, decaying trees, from the gray walls, and the quiet lake. It was a sickly, unhealthy air that I could see, slow-moving, heavy, and gray.

Shaking off from my spirit what must have been a dream, I looked more carefully at the building itself. The most noticeable thing about it seemed to be its great age. None of the walls had fallen, yet the stones appeared to be in a condition of advanced decay. Perhaps the careful eye would have discovered the beginning of a break in the front of the building, a crack making its way from the top down the wall until it became lost in the dark waters of the lake.

I rode over a short bridge to the house. A man who worked in the house — a servant — took my horse, and I entered. Another servant, of quiet step, led me without a word through many dark turnings to the room of his master. Much that I met on the way added, I do not know how, to the strangeness of which I have already spoken. While the objects around me — the dark wall coverings, the blackness of the floors, and the things brought home from long forgotten wars — while these things were like the things I had known

since I was a baby — while I admitted that all this was only what I had expected — I was still surprised at the strange ideas which grew in my mind from these simple things.

The room I came into was very large and high. The windows were high, and pointed at the top, and so far above the black floor that they were quite out of reach. Only a little light, red in color, made its way through the glass, and served to lighten the nearer and larger objects. My eyes, however, tried and failed to see into the far, high corners of the room. Dark coverings hung upon the walls. The many chairs and tables had been used for a long, long time. Books lay around the room, but could give it no sense of life. I felt sadness hanging over everything. No escape from this deep cold gloom seemed possible.

As I entered the room, Usher stood up from where he had been lying and met me with a warmth which at first I could not believe was real. A look, however, at his face told me that every word he spoke was true.

We sat down; and for some moments, while he said nothing, I looked at him with a feeling of sad surprise. Surely, no man had ever before changed as Roderick Usher had! Could this be the friend of my early years? It is true that his face had always been unusual. He had gray-white skin; eyes large and full of light; lips not bright in color, but of a beautiful shape; a well-shaped nose; hair of great softness — a face that was not easy to forget. And now the increase in this strangeness of his face had caused so great a change that I almost did not know him. The horrible white of his skin, and the strange light in his eyes, surprised me and even made me afraid. His hair had been allowed to grow, and in its softness it did not fall around his face but seemed to lie upon the air. I could not, even with an effort, see in my friend the appearance of a simple human being.

In his manner, I saw at once, changes came and went; and I soon found that this resulted from his attempt to quiet a very great nervousness. I had indeed been prepared for something like this, partly by his letter and partly by remembering him as a boy. His actions were first too quick and then too quiet. Sometimes his voice, slow and trembling with fear, quickly changed to a strong, heavy, carefully spaced, too perfectly controlled manner. It was in this manner that he spoke of the purpose of my visit, of his desire to see me, and of the deep delight and strength he expected me to give him. He told me what he believed to be the nature of his illness. It was, he said, a family sickness, and one from which he could not hope to grow better — but it was, he added at once, only a nervous illness which would without doubt soon pass away. It showed itself in a number of strange feelings. Some of these, as he told me of them, interested me but were beyond my understanding; perhaps the way in which he told me of them added to their strangeness. He suffered much from a sickly increase in the feeling of all the senses; he could eat only the most tasteless food; all flowers smelled too strongly for his nose; his eyes were hurt by even a little light; and there were few sounds which did not fill him with horror. A certain kind of sick fear was completely his master.

"I shall die," he said. "I shall die! I must die of this fool's sickness. In this way, this way and no other way, I shall be lost. I fear what will happen in the future, not for what happens, but for the result of what happens. I have, indeed, no fear of pain, but only fear of its result — of terror! I feel that the time will soon arrive when I must lose my life, and my mind, and my soul, together, in some last battle with that horrible enemy: fear!"

## New Words

**the heavens** - *n.* the sky

**on horseback** - *n.* sitting on a horse

**reflect** - *v.* to show the image of something on a surface

**several** - *adj.* more than two but not very many

**illness** - *n.* a condition of being unhealthy in your body or mind

**gloom** - *n.* a feeling of sadness

**branch** - *n.* a part of a tree that grows out from the trunk

**decay** - *n.* the process or result of being slowly destroyed by natural processes

**lip** - *n.* either one of the two soft parts that surround the mouth

### Making Associations Chart

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### **About the CALLA Approach**

This lesson is based on 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.

A list of CALLA learning strategies follows. These strategies were researched by J. Michael O'Malley and Anna Uhl Chamot.

See a list of language learning strategies below.

## **METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES**

### **Plan / Organize**

Before beginning a task:

Set goals.

Plan the task or content sequence.

Plan how to accomplish the task (choose strategies).

Preview a text.

### **Monitor / Identify Problems**

While working on a task:

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**

After completing a task:

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**

Determine how you learn best.

Arrange conditions that help you learn.

Look for Ways to Practice.

Focus your attention on the task.

## **TASK-BASED STRATEGIES - USE WHAT YOU KNOW**

### **Use Background Knowledge**

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 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**

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**

Relate new concepts to your own life, to your experiences, knowledge, beliefs and feelings.

### **Transfer / Use Cognates**

Apply your linguistic knowledge of other languages (including your native language) to the target language.

Recognize cognates.

### **Substitute / Paraphrase**

Use a synonym or descriptive phrase for unknown words or expressions.

## **TASK-BASED STRATEGIES - USE YOUR SENSES**

### **Use Images**

Use or create an actual or mental image to understand and/or represent information.

Use or draw a picture or diagram.

### **Use Sounds**

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.

### **Use Your Kinesthetic Sense**

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.

## **TASK-BASED STRATEGIES - USE YOUR ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS**

### **Find/Apply Patterns**

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**

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.

### **Take Notes**

Write down important words and ideas while listening or reading.

List ideas or words to include in speaking or writing.

### **Use Graphic Organizers**

Use or create visual representations (such as Venn diagrams, time lines, webs, and charts) of important relationships between concepts.

### **Summarize**

Create a mental, oral, or written summary of information.

### **Use Selective Attention**

Focus on specific information, structures, key words, phrases, or ideas.

## **TASK-BASED STRATEGIES - USE A VARIETY OF RESOURCES**

### **Access Information Sources**

Use the dictionary, the internet, and other reference materials.

Seek out and use sources of information.

Follow a model

Ask questions

### **Cooperate**

Work with others to complete tasks, build confidence, and give and receive feedback.

### **Talk Yourself Through It (Self-Talk)**

Use your inner resources. Reduce your anxiety by reminding yourself of your progress, the resources you have available, and your goals.