

## 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,” Part Two, 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 Three of 'The Fall of the House of Usher' by Edgar Allan Poe. As you'll recall from last week, it is a story about a man whose childhood friend has demanded a visit after not seeing him for many years."

Ask students, "Have you ever had a really good experience or bad experience and then told the story to a friend or family member? For instance, maybe you visited a city or a country that changed your life in the best way possible. Or, maybe you went to an event or a place that was frightening or unpleasant and you don't want to go back. Think of a place or event you went to that was a wonderful experience – so good that it changed your life in some important way. Maybe you went to a life-changing music concert or a school that you loved. Or, you traveled and saw things that opened your mind to a new world."

Now, have students sit in groups of three. Say, "In the next two minutes, you will tell the people in your group about your experience. Try to use as much descriptive and visual language as possible. Everyone in the group should listen carefully to each story being told."

Give students a two minutes to discuss their stories. Set a timer, then stop the storytelling when the timer goes off.

Then say, "Now Student B, retell one of the stories you heard in the next 2 minutes. When you listen, don't correct them or give them clues about what to say. Wait until they are finished. Then, Student C, compare the retelling. Was the retold story as long as the original story? Did it have all the details? What were some differences? Write down a few examples."

Elicit a few samples of the differences.

"When we use our own words to tell or write about someone else's experience or thoughts, we call it *paraphrasing*. Paraphrasing helps us to know whether we have fully understood what we are hearing or reading."

Say, "Today, we will learn how to use the strategy **Paraphrase** to help us understand Part Three of this story. First, let's review some of last week's vocabulary and learn a few new words."

Review the Review Words below. (These are words that appear in both Part Two and Part Three.) Then, teach the new words for the lesson (also below). Use images or items for visual aids. The vocabulary also appears on the last page of the transcript for printing and handing out to students.

### Review Words

**grave** - *n.* a hole in the ground for burying a dead body

**doubtful** - *adj.* uncertain or unsure about something

**tremble** - *v.* to shake slightly because you are afraid, nervous, or excited

**ghastly** - *adj.* very shocking or horrible

**palace** - *n.* the official home of a king, queen, president, or other official

**vault** - *n.* a locked room where money or valuable things are kept

**horror** - *n.* a very strong feeling of fear, dread, and shock

### New Words

**likeness** - *n.* the quality or state of being alike or similar especially in appearance

**certain** - *adj.* not having any doubt about something : convinced or sure

**figure** - *n.* a person or animal that can be seen only as a shape or outline

**rush** - *v.* to move or do something very quickly or in a way that shows you are in a hurry

## Present

Hand out the transcript of the story.

Introduce the task to students: "As we hear the story today, we will practice the strategy *Paraphrase* to help us understand what we are reading."

Say, "Listening to how people retell stories that we tell them is a good way to test whether they are mentally processing the experience the way we experienced it. It is also a way to examine how we communicate stories, thoughts, and ideas to others."

Continue, "The narrator uses highly visual language to describe his surroundings and the events in the story. He wants readers to experience the terror and gloom around him. He pulls readers into his world; In other words, he tries to get readers to see the sights, feel the fears, and hear the sounds he hears. As we listen to the first part of the story, think about these details you are hearing. Some details may be challenging to understand at first, but think about what their meaning might be in the context of what is happening."

Play the first section of the story up to, "He hurried to one of the windows and opened it to the storm."

Model the strategy: "Let's look at an example. In paragraph three, the narrator says, 'His face was, if possible, whiter and more ghastly than before, and the light in his eyes had gone.' The narrator is describing his friend Usher. Remember that, in Part Two from last week, the narrator already described his friend's face as being very white and looking like it had little life in it. This time, his friend looks whiter than before. By telling us this, the narrator is trying to communicate how bad his friend's health getting. When I paraphrase, I want to try to communicate the intensity of

what the narrator is seeing. So, I chose to paraphrase the sentence this way."

(It will help students to see the modeled example on the board or overhead projector.)

<b>What the narrator writes</b>	<b>How I paraphrased it</b>
"His face was, if possible, whiter and more ghastly than before, and the light in his eyes had gone."	"His face was paler than all of the previous days of my visit, and almost too pale to believe. He seemed to be turning into a ghost in front of me. His eyes looked dead."

If necessary, define the word "pale" for the students.

Continue, "Notice that I used my own creative style to rewrite, or paraphrase the narrator's words. But, I also tried to stay as close as possible to the narrator's intended meaning. You can have fun doing this. Writing is a creative exercise and it is good to practice developing your own visual language."

### **Practice**

Prepare students for the next part. Be sure they have one or two pieces of paper, their transcript, and a pen or pencil. Have students change seats to sit with one classmate before you say the next part. This will be pairs.

Say, "Now it's your turn. Let's listen to some more of the story. As we listen, think about the imagery the narrator uses to describe his surroundings and the events of the story. Underline descriptive sentences that catch your attention or cause you to be curious about their meaning."

Play or read aloud to, "His head had dropped forward, but I knew he was not asleep, for his eyes were open and he was moving his body from side to side."

Ask students to (individually) underline descriptions that catch their attention as they listen.

Now, allow the pairs time to discuss the details that they underlined. It is ok if they do not underline the same sentences. Ask them to agree on two or three sentences that they wish to creatively paraphrase *together*. (They should feel free to use artistic license to decide how to reword the narrator's language.)

As they work, go around to the pairs and monitor their work. See if they need help understanding any lines from this part of the story. Provide creative encouragement as needed.

For a small or medium class, after they have had time to work together, ask one person from each pair to tell the class one sentence they chose to work on together. They can point to it in the text and read the original wording aloud. Then, ask them to read aloud their paraphrased version

For a large class, after they've had time to work together, instead of having them read their examples aloud, the pairs can then get into groups of four and then each pair can share some of their examples with their group.

After this, ask students if there were any descriptions from the story that were difficult to understand. Then, ask if any of the pairs chose to paraphrase those difficult sentences. If so, take a few examples. Give positive feedback to the students for their attempts. If they misunderstood any lines, clarify them briefly.

Next, if you have a small or medium class, the students can remain in their pairs and they will carry out the final activity the same as the previous one.

For larger classes, they will remain in their groups of four as they listen to the last part of the story. Be sure that students continue to underline sentences that interest them.

Say, "Let's listen to the rest of the story."

Play or read aloud until the end of the story.

(For the final activity, in the groups of four, the students will work together on paraphrasing some of the sentences. This should be fun, creative, and collaborative.)

Once again, as they work, go around to the pairs/groups and monitor their work. See if they need help understanding any lines from this part of the story.

As before, elicit examples from the students. Make sure each pair has had a chance to share at least one example.

### **Self-Evaluate**

Explain, "The language we choose to paraphrase something can show us whether we fully understand what we are hearing or reading. Paraphrasing forces us to examine meaning and to reshape it into something new, while keeping the original meaning."

Ask, "What do you think about using the strategy *Paraphrase* when you read? Did it help you think more deeply about the meaning of the narrator's language? Write a few sentences on your paper to turn in about how paraphrasing helped you today."

## **Expand**

Ask students, "Aside from studying literature, are there other times or situations when paraphrasing is a useful or important skill?"

Elicit examples from students.

Continue, "This strategy is helpful in many situations. You can use it at work, in your social life, and at school. For example, non-fiction authors and journalists reword quotes from people they interview, while being careful not to change the meaning. When your friend tells you a really exciting story and you want to tell it to another friend, you use different words but you try to keep the true meaning of their story. When you are writing an essay or research paper, you often have to paraphrase information from academic sources. We must paraphrase to avoid plagiarism. However, when you paraphrase, again, you must keep the original meaning of the information. Try using this strategy tonight when you do your homework, or in your next class, or even when you listen to music. Let me know how it goes!"

## **"The Fall of the House of Usher," Part Three**

### **By Edgar Allan Poe**

I was visiting an old friend of mine, Roderick Usher, in his old stone house, his palace, where a feeling of death hung on the air. I saw how fear was pressing on his heart and mind. Now his only sister, the lady Madeline, had died and we had put her body in its resting place, in a room inside the cold walls of the palace, a damp, dark vault, a fearful place. As we looked down upon her face, I saw that there was a strong likeness between the two. "Indeed," said Usher, "we were born on the same day, and the tie between us has always been strong."

We did not long look down at her, for fear and wonder filled our hearts. There was still a little color in her face and there seemed to be a smile on her lips. We closed the heavy iron door and returned to the rooms above, which were hardly less gloomy than the vault.

And now a change came in the sickness of my friend's mind. He went from room to room with a hurried step. His face was, if possible, whiter and more ghastly than before, and the light in his eyes had gone. The trembling in his voice seemed to show the greatest fear. At times he sat looking at nothing for hours, as if listening to some sound I could not hear. I felt his condition, slowly but certainly, gaining power over me; I felt that his wild ideas were becoming fixed in my own mind.

As I was going to bed late in the night of the seventh or eighth day after we placed the lady Madeline within the vault, I experienced the full power of such feelings. Sleep did not come — while the hours passed. My mind fought against the nervousness. I tried to believe that much, if not all, of what I felt was due to the gloomy room, to the dark wall coverings, which in a rising wind moved on the walls. But my efforts were useless. A trembling I could

not stop filled my body, and fear without reason caught my heart. I sat up, looking into the darkness of my room, listening — I do not know why — to certain low sounds which came when the storm was quiet. A feeling of horror lay upon me like a heavy weight. I put on my clothes and began walking nervously around the room.

I had been walking for a very short time when I heard a light step coming toward my door. I knew it was Usher. In a moment I saw him at my door, as usual very white, but there was a wild laugh in his eyes. Even so, I was glad to have his company. "And have you not seen it?" he said. He hurried to one of the windows and opened it to the storm.

The force of the entering wind nearly lifted us from our feet. It was, indeed, a stormy but beautiful night, and wildly strange. The heavy, low-hanging clouds which seemed to press down upon the house, flew from all directions against each other, always returning and never passing away in the distance. With their great thickness they cut off all light from the moon and the stars. But we could see them because they were lighted from below by the air itself, which we could see, rising from the dark lake and from the stones of the house itself.

"You must not — you shall not look out at this!" I said to Usher, as I led him from the window to a seat. "This appearance which surprises you so has been seen in other places, too. Perhaps the lake is the cause. Let us close this window; the air is cold. Here is one of the stories you like best. I will read and you shall listen and thus we will live through this fearful night together."

The old book which I had picked up was one written by a fool for fools to read, and it was not, in truth, one that Usher liked. It was, however, the only one within easy reach. He seemed to listen quietly. Then I came to a part of the story in which a man, a strong man full of wine, begins to break

down a door, and the sound of the dry wood as it breaks can be heard through all the forest around him.

Here I stopped, for it seemed to me that from some very distant part of the house sounds came to my ears like those of which I had been reading. It must have been this likeness that had made me notice them, for the sounds themselves, with the storm still increasing, were nothing to stop or interest me.

I continued the story, and read how the man, now entering through the broken door, discovers a strange and terrible animal of the kind so often found in these old stories. He strikes it and it falls, with such a cry that he has to close his ears with his hands. Here again I stopped.

There could be no doubt. This time I did hear a distant sound, very much like the cry of the animal in the story. I tried to control myself so that my friend would see nothing of what I felt. I was not certain that he had heard the sound, although he had clearly changed in some way. He had slowly moved his chair so that I could not see him well. I did see that his lips were moving as if he were speaking to himself. His head had dropped forward, but I knew he was not asleep, for his eyes were open and he was moving his body from side to side.

I began reading again, and quickly came to a part of the story where a heavy piece of iron falls on a stone floor with a ringing sound. These words had just passed my lips when I heard clearly, but from far away, a loud ringing sound — as if something of iron had indeed fallen heavily upon a stone floor, or as if an iron door had closed.

I lost control of myself completely, and jumped up from my chair. Usher still sat, moving a little from side to side. His eyes were turned to the floor. I rushed to his chair. As I placed my hand on his shoulder, I felt that his whole

body was trembling; a sickly smile touched his lips; he spoke in a low, quick, and nervous voice as if he did not know I was there.

"Yes!" he said. "I heard it! Many minutes, many hours, many days have I heard it — but I did not dare to speak! We have put her living in the vault! Did I not say that my senses were too strong? I heard her first movements many days ago — yet I did not dare to speak! And now, that story — but the sounds were hers! Oh, where shall I run?! She is coming — coming to ask why I put her there too soon. I hear her footsteps on the stairs. I hear the heavy beating of her heart." Here he jumped up and cried as if he were giving up his soul: "I tell you, she now stands at the door!!"

The great door to which he was pointing now slowly opened. It was the work of the rushing wind, perhaps — but no — outside that door a shape did stand, the tall figure, in its grave-clothes, of the lady Madeline of Usher. There was blood upon her white dress, and the signs of her terrible efforts to escape were upon every part of her thin form. For a moment she remained trembling at the door; then, with a low cry, she fell heavily in upon her brother; in her pain, as she died at last, she carried him down with her, down to the floor. He too was dead, killed by his own fear.

I rushed from the room; I rushed from the house. I ran. The storm was around me in all its strength as I crossed the bridge. Suddenly a wild light moved along the ground at my feet, and I turned to see where it could have come from, for only the great house and its darkness were behind me. The light was that of the full moon, of a bloodred moon, which was now shining through that break in the front wall, that crack which I thought I had seen when I first saw the palace. Then only a little crack, it now widened as I watched. A strong wind came rushing over me — the whole face of the moon appeared. I saw the great walls falling apart. There was a long and stormy

shouting sound — and the deep black lake closed darkly over all that remained of the House of Usher.

### Review Words

**grave** – n. a hole in the ground for burying a dead body

**doubtful** – adj. uncertain or unsure about something

**tremble** – v. to shake slightly because you are afraid, nervous, or excited

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**rush** – v. to move or do something very quickly or in a way that shows you are in a hurry

## **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.