

American Stories

“The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” Part Three

by Edgar Allan Poe

Lesson Plan

This lesson plan is to accompany Part Three of the American Stories series episode “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” by Jack London.

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.

And now for today's lesson:

Prepare

Begin, "Today, we will read Part Three of 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue,' by Edgar Allan Poe. As you may remember, in Part Two of the story, Dupin and the narrator read a few newspaper reports about the murders. At the end of Part Two, Dupin wants to do something. Do you remember what it is?" Ask a volunteer or two to answer the question. (Answer: go to the house on the Rue Morgue to see if he can solve the murders.)

Continue, "In Part Three of the story, Dupin imagines possibilities about how the murders took place. And, he carefully examines the evidence. Have you ever needed to solve a small mystery? For example, have you ever arrived home to find that something was different, missing, or broken and could not understand how it happened? Imagine that, this morning, you left your home completely clean. But then, when you get home, you see a broken cup on the floor in the kitchen. You know that no people were in the home, so how might this have happened?"

Ask students to discuss the possibilities with someone they don't speak to every day. Each pair should come up with three possibilities. (In a large class, one reason per pair will suffice.) Encourage students to use their imagination: "Put yourself in Dupin's place: he would think of unusual possibilities." They should feel comfortable getting creative, and having fun with their ideas, but encourage them to make them believable.

Then, ask volunteers from each group to share their responses with the class. There may be many answers, but some possibilities include: an earthquake occurred; your pet jumped up on the table; a pest (mouse)

knocked over the cup; you left a window open and a breeze knocked the cup down; you forgot that you drank some water [or other liquid] this morning and left the cup on the table; a relative or landlord has an extra set of keys and entered your home; the table (or cabinet or counter) is broken/uneven and the cup fell off; the cup broke while you were at home this morning but you did not hear/notice it because you had headphones on; the washing machine near the table/counter was vibrating and knocked over the glass; and there was liquid on the table beneath the glass and it slid off after you left this morning.

After students have shared their responses, say, "Thinking about possibilities for the broken cup required you to direct your attention to important details about your morning and the kitchen. For today's story, we will practice the strategy **focus** as we listen for important details. I will show you how to do this. But first, let's learn the new vocabulary."

Hand out copies of the vocabulary and teach the new words for the lesson. The vocabulary can be found on a separate page after the transcript. Use images, classroom items and physical gestures to aid student comprehension. (Images of nails and a ghost appear on the pages after the vocabulary.)

Present

Now, hand out copies of the story transcript and introduce the task to students: "As we read the story today, we will use the strategy *focus* to help us pay attention to select details about the murders. When we focus, we listen for specific information. Let's listen to the first part of the story for the following information."

Write the following question on the board or a shared screen: What do they do when they arrive at the house on Rue Morgue? Then say, "Let's listen to find out."

Play or read aloud to the note that reads: **[STOP AUDIO 1]**.

Say, "In this part of the story, the narrator describes what he and Dupin do when they get to the house. First, they walk around the outside of the house. Then, Dupin carefully examines the house and nearby houses."

Practice

Continue, "Now, it's your turn. As we listen to the rest of the story, we will focus on specific information about the murders." Put students into groups of two or three (depending on class size) and ask them to work with their group to find the answers. Then, hand out the student copies of the worksheet called Learning Strategy: Focus.

Say, "In the next part of the story, we will listen for the answers to the following questions: What do they see when they enter the room? What evidence do they discuss when they leave? Say, "Let's listen."

Play or read aloud to the note that reads: **[STOP AUDIO 2]**.

Give students time to work with their groups. Then, ask several volunteers to share their answers with the class. (Possible answers are listed on the teacher's copy of the worksheet.)

Tell the class that, for the next section, they will listen for answers to this question: What clues does Dupin give about the old woman that makes him think she did not kill her daughter?

Play or read aloud to the note that reads: **[STOP AUDIO 3]**".

Again, give students time to work with their groups. Then, ask several volunteers to share their answers with the class. (Possible answers are listed on the teacher's copy of the worksheet.) Next, ask the class to listen for answers to this question: What words and phrases do the narrator and Dupin use to describe the two voices heard in the room after the killings?

Play or read aloud to the note that reads: **[STOP AUDIO 4]**.

Again, give students time to work with their groups. Then, ask several volunteers to share their answers with the class. (Possible answers are listed on the teacher's copy of the worksheet.) Next, ask the class to listen for answers to this question: What details does Dupin discuss about the two windows in the room?

Play or read aloud to the end of the story.

Again, give students time to work with their groups. Then, ask several volunteers to share their answers with the class. (Possible answers are listed on the teacher's copy of the worksheet.)

Ask students to move back to their original seats. Then, ask the class: Based on the evidence, what do you think they will discover about the killings?

Ask the students to discuss their answers with the person sitting next to them. (By now, they may have some imaginative ideas because they have just focused on important details from the story.)

Self-Evaluate

Ask, "What do you think about using the strategy *focus* when you read? Did it help you pay closer attention to important details in the story? Write a few sentences on your paper to turn in today about how classifying helped you."

Expand

Wrap up the lesson by asking students to think of other times they can use the learning strategy *focus*. Give students a chance to respond. Then say, "This strategy is helpful in any school subject. It helps you to pick out the important details like names, places, or dates. And, when we are studying, it helps us to decide what information to pay attention to. Try using this strategy tonight when you do your homework, or in your next class. Let me know how it goes!"

"The Murders in the Rue Morgue," Part Three by Edgar Allan Poe

My **housemate** in Paris, August Dupin, was an interesting young man with a busy, forceful mind. This mind could, it seemed, look right through a man's body into his deepest soul.

After reading in the newspaper about the terrible murder of a woman and her daughter, Dupin was **consumed** with the mystery. He questioned the ability of the Paris police to solve the crime. I told Dupin that it seemed to me that it was not possible to explain the strange details surrounding the killings.

"No, no. I think you are wrong. A mystery it is, yes. But there must be an answer. There must! Let us go to the house where it happened and see what we can see. I know the head of the police, and he will permit our visit. It will be interesting and give us some pleasure."

I thought it strange that Dupin thought the activity would give us pleasure. But I said nothing.

It was late in the afternoon when we reached the house on the Rue Morgue. It was easily found, for there were still many persons — in fact, a crowd, standing there looking at it. Before going in, we walked all around it, and Dupin carefully looked at the **neighboring** houses as well. I could not understand the reason for such great care. **[STOP AUDIO 1]**

Finally, we entered the house. We went up the stairs to the room where the daughter's body was found. Both bodies were in the room now. The police had left the room as they had found it in every other way. I saw nothing beyond what the newspaper had told us.

Dupin looked with great care at everything, at the bodies, the walls, the fireplace, the windows. Then we went home. Dupin said nothing. I could see the cold look in his eyes, which told me that his mind was working, working busily, quickly.

Dupin said nothing about our exploration until the next morning when he suddenly asked me a question.

"Did you not notice something especially strange about what we saw at the house on the Rue Morgue?"

"Nothing more than we both read in the newspaper, which was unusual indeed. How shall we explain the horrible force, the unusual strength used in these murders? And whose were the voices that were heard? No one was found except the dead women; yet there was no way for anyone to escape. And the wild condition of the room; the body which was found head-down in

the chimney; the terrible broken appearance of the body of the old lady, with its head cut off-- these are all so far from what might be expected that the police are standing still; they don't know where to begin."

"These things are unusual, indeed, but they are not deep mysteries. We should not ask, 'What has happened?' but 'What has happened that has never happened before?' In fact, the very things that the police think cannot possibly be explained are the things which will lead me to the answer. Indeed, I believe they have already led me to the answer."

I was so surprised that I could not say a word. Dupin looked quickly at the door. **[STOP AUDIO 2]**

"I am now waiting for a person who will know something about these murders, these wild killings. I do not think he did them himself. But I think he will know the killer. I hope I am right about this. If I am, then I expect to find the whole answer, today. I expect the man here — in this room — at any **moment**. It is true that he may not come, but he probably will."

"But who is this person? How did you find him?"

"I'll tell you. While we wait for this man we do not know — for I have never met him — while we wait, I will tell you how my thoughts went."

Dupin began to talk. But it did not seem that he was trying to explain to me what he had thought. It seemed that he was talking to himself. He looked not at me, but at the wall.

"It has been fully proved that the voices heard by the neighbors were not the voices of the women who were killed. Someone else was in the room. It is therefore **certain** that the old woman did not first kill her daughter and then kill herself. She would not have been strong enough to put her daughter's body where it was found. And the manner of the old lady's death shows that she could not have caused it herself. A person can kill himself with a knife, yes. But he surely cannot cut his own head almost off, then drop the knife on the floor and jump out the window. It was murder, then, done by some third person — or persons. And the voices heard were the voices of these persons. Let us now think carefully about the things people said about those voices. Did you **notice** anything especially strange in what was told about them?" **[STOP AUDIO 3]**

"Well, yes. Everybody agreed that the low voice was the voice of a Frenchman, but they could not agree about the high voice."

"Ah! That was what they said, yes, but that was not what was so strange about what they said. You say you have noticed nothing that makes their stories very different from what might have been expected. Yet there was something. All these persons, as you say, agreed about the low voice, but not about the high hard voice. The strange thing here is that when an

Italian, an Englishman, a Spaniard, and a Frenchman tried to tell what the voice was like, each one said it sounded like the voice of a foreigner. How strangely unusual that voice really must have been! Here are four men from four big countries, and not one of them could understand what the voice said; each one gave it a different name.

"Now, I know that there are other countries in the world. You will say that **perhaps** it was the voice of someone from one of those other lands — Russia, perhaps. But remember, not one of these people heard anything that sounded like a separate word.

Here, Dupin turned and looked into my eyes.

"This is what we have learned from the newspaper. I don't know what I have led you to think. But I believe that in this much of the story there are enough facts to lead us in the one and only direction to the right answer. What this answer is, I will not say...not yet. But I want you to keep in mind that this much was enough to tell me what I must look for when we were in that house on the Rue Morgue. And I found it! **[STOP AUDIO 4]**

"What did I first look for? The path of escape, of course. I mean, we agree the killers were not **ghosts**; they could not move through walls. So, how did they escape?

"At first I saw no way out. It had been necessary for the neighbors to break down the door in order to enter the room. There was no other door. The opening above the fireplace is too narrow for even a child to go through. That leaves only the windows. We must make that exit somehow possible.

"Remember, there are two windows in the room. Both of them, you will remember, are made of two parts; to open the window one must lift up the bottom half. One of these windows is easily seen; the lower part of the other is out of sight behind the big bed. I looked carefully at the first of these windows. It was firmly closed, **fastened**, like the door, on the inside. To keep the window closed, to fasten it, someone had put a strong iron **nail** into the wood at the side of the window in such a way that the window could not be raised. At least it seemed that the nail held the window closed. The nail was easy to see. There it was. And the people who discovered the killings used their greatest strength and could not raise the window. I, too, tried to raise the window and could not.

"I went to the second window and looked behind the bed at the lower half of the window. There was a nail here, too, which held the window closed. Without moving the bed, I tried to open this window also, and again I could not do so. But I did not stop looking for an answer there."

Vocabulary

housemate – *n.* a person who lives in the same house with another person but is not a part of that person's family

consume – *v.* to take all of a person's attention, energy or time

neighboring – *adj.* near or next to something or someone

moment – *n.* a very short period of time

certain – *adj.* used with *it* to say that something is known to be true or correct

notice – *v.* to become aware of something or someone by seeing or hearing it

perhaps – *adv.* possibly but not certainly

ghost – *n.* the soul of a dead person thought of as living in an unseen world or as appearing to living people

fasten – *v.* to attach something or join two things or two parts of something especially by using a pin, nail or something else

nail – *n.* a long, thin piece of metal that is sharp at one end and flat at the other end and that is used chiefly to attach things to wood

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Figure 1: an image that tries to capture what a ghost might look like

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Figure 2: nails

Learning Strategy: Focus

Teacher Copy

What do they see when they enter the room?

What evidence do they discuss when they leave?

both bodies were in the room

a fireplace and windows

unusual strength of the murders

only the dead women in room

no way for murderer to escape

wild condition of the room

head is (nearly) cut off of old woman's body

What evidence does Dupin offer

that the old woman is not the killer?

voices were not those of the women

old woman was not strong enough to kill daughter

old woman's head was cut almost completely off

manner of old woman's death suggests not suicide

voices heard were those of other people

<i>How do the narrator and Dupin describe the two voices heard in the room after the killings?</i>	
First Voice	Second Voice
low Frenchman	high hard loud foreign / voice of foreigner strangely unusual no separate words heard

<i>What details does Dupin give about the two windows in the room?</i>	
First Window	Second Window
made of two parts easy to see firmly closed, like the door an iron nail holds it closed nail is easy to see nail is holding window shut window is very difficult to open / Dupin and the people who found the killings cannot open the window	made of two parts partly behind the bed / Behind the bed nail holds it closed

Learning Strategy: Focus

Student Copy

What things do they see when they enter the room?

What evidence do they discuss when they leave?

***What evidence does Dupin offer
that the old woman is not the killer?***

<i>How do the narrator and Dupin describe the two voices heard in the room after the killings?</i>	
First Voice	Second Voice

<i>What details does Dupin give about the two windows in the room?</i>	
First Window	Second Window

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.