

American Stories

“The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” Part Four

by Edgar Allan Poe

**Lesson Plan**

This lesson plan is to accompany Part Four 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:***

*Note: Today's lesson will use cooperative learning cards. Printable copies of these cards can be found on pages following the transcript. The cards will need to be folded/taped into tent cards prior to class (unless you'd like students to do this during class). A picture of a folded learning card can also be found following transcript.*

**Prepare**

Begin, "Today, we will read Part Four of 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue,' by Edgar Allan Poe. As you may remember from Part Three, Dupin and the narrator visited the scene of the crime to examine the evidence. In Part Four, the men look more closely at the evidence and imagine the *how*, *who* and *why* of the crime."

Continue, "When someone gives you a lot of information, how do you keep the most important details clear in your mind? For example, imagine that you are in a new country and you ask a stranger for directions. You are tired, your mobile phone battery is dead, and can't find your way back to the house. What strategy would you use to remember directions? Or, imagine that you want to make a special meal for a favorite family member who is coming to visit in a few hours. A friend is giving you the recipe by phone. What strategies can help you remember how to make the dish? Tell the person sitting next to (or in front of or behind) you. Think about all of the possible ways you can keep the information clear in your mind."

Give students a couple of minutes to discuss this. Then, ask several volunteers to share their answers with the class.

Some answers may be: take notes, repeat important details out loud,

visualize the person's words, draw a picture, make a list, and focus only on the details you think are most important.

Continue, "When we receive a lot of information at one time, we often need a way to make sure we can remember and use what we heard or read. Today, as Dupin and the narrator look more closely at evidence from this crime mystery, we will use the learning strategy **summarize** to help us remember the most important details. When we summarize, we use our own words to retell or rewrite the most important parts of something. I will show you how to do this. But first, let's learn the vocabulary."

Hand out copies of and teach the vocabulary 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. (An image of a lightning rod follows the vocabulary page.)

### **Present**

Now, put students into groups of four. Then, introduce the task to students: "Let's listen to the first part of the story. Then, I will summarize; I will retell the story using my own words. This strategy can help us check our understanding and remember things better. When you summarize, you don't need to retell everything. So, I am going to make a summary with only the parts I think are the most important."

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

Then, share your summary with the class. Write the summary on the board or display it on a shared screen. Then, say: "Here is my summary." (Your summary might read something like the following paragraph.)

"Dupin and the narrator think the person who killed the woman and her daughter has superhuman strength. But, they still don't know who it is. And, there are many other things they don't yet understand

about the crime. The old woman's body is outside, but they don't know how it got there. The room door and windows are locked firmly. And, there were no suspects in the room when the police arrived."

## Practice

Note that, today, the class will use cooperative learning cards to do the group activity. The printable cards can be found on the pages following the transcript. The four roles are: leader, writer, checker and speaker. Giving students cooperative roles helps ensure that everyone does an equal part in group work.

Hand out copies of the four role cards to each group. (Each group member gets one of the four roles.) If cooperative learning is new to your students, ask one volunteer each to read a role card aloud. Then, confirm the class's understanding of the roles.

Continue, "OK, let's listen to some more of the story."

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

Say, "Now, talk about what you just heard and work together to write your summary. Be sure that the summary is two short paragraphs and that each person does their part to help complete the task."

Give students a set amount of time to work on this – maybe 15-20 minutes.

Then, ask the "speaker" from each group to read their summaries aloud.

Naturally, there will be some similarities between the summaries but parts will also be different.

If you have a large class, you can have only one or two groups to share their summaries aloud and then, for the next part of the story, choose a different one or two groups.

Before moving to the next part, be sure to discuss any inaccuracies from the summaries.

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

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

Proceed with the activity in the same way as you did previously. Then, say, "Let's listen to the rest of the story."

Play or read aloud to the end of the story.

Proceed with the activity in the same way as you did previously.

Afterward, ask the class: "Does anyone have an idea about who the killer might be?" Give several volunteers a chance to respond, then continue: "In Part Five of the story, we will find out who committed the murders and how they did it."

### **Self-Evaluate**

Say to the class, "Notice that each one of us retells stories in different ways. To some of us, some details will be more obvious or important than others. So, what do you think about using this strategy, *summarize*, when you read? Did it help you follow the events and details in the story? Write two or three sentences about this on a piece of paper to turn in at the end of class."

### **Expand**

Ask students, "Are there other times when summarizing can help you in school or outside of school?" Give students a chance to respond. Then say, "We use this strategy every day! For example, you use it when you're listening to a lecture or reading a school book. When you hear or read these things, you don't write down every word – you summarize! And, when go to an event, or watch a film, and tell someone about what you saw or did, you usually tell them just the most important parts. Tonight, give your parent or friend a summary about what you learned in today's class. Think about making the summary clear to someone who has not read the story about the murders in the Rue Morgue."

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

Murder had come to the old house on the street called Rue Morgue! Murder had come and gone and left behind the dead bodies of an old woman and her daughter.

It was a perplexing crime scene. The damage to the daughter's body suggested a killer of **superhuman** strength. The knife that had killed the old woman, almost separating head from body, was in the room. But the old woman's body was outside, behind the house. The door and windows to the house all firmly closed, locked on the inside. Voices had been heard. One voice was speaking in French; the other voice had not spoken even one word that anyone could understand. And yet, there was no one in the room when police arrived moments after the attack. **[STOP AUDIO 1]**

My friend Dupin was now explaining to me what he had learned when we visited the scene of the crime.

"I knew that what seemed impossible must be proved possible. The killer, and I believe there was just one, escaped through one of these windows. After the murderer had left he could have closed the window from the outside; but he could not have fastened the nail. Yet anyone could see the nails which held the windows tightly closed. This was the fact that stopped the police. How could the murderer put the nail back in its place?"

"That's the problem, Dupin! Perhaps — perhaps if you pulled out the nail..."

"Yes! That is just what I thought. Two things seemed clear: first, there had to be something wrong with the idea that the nails were holding the windows closed. Second, if it was not the nails which were holding the windows closed, then something else was holding them closed, something hard to see, something hidden. So, I checked the first window again. I removed the nail. Then I again tried to raise the window. It was still firmly closed. There had to be a hidden lock, I thought, inside the window. I searched the window frame. Indeed, I found a **button** which, when I pressed it, opened an inner lock. I raised the window with ease.

"Now I knew that the killer could close the window from outside and the window would lock itself. But there was still the nail. So, I returned the nail, pressed the button and again tried to raise the window. The nail held the window closed!"

"Then...the window could not have been the means of escape!"

"That window, no. The killer did not escape through it. But I went again to the other window. The nail there looked the same as the one I had just

seen. I moved the bed so that I could look closely. Yes. There was a button here, too. I was so sure I was right that without touching the nail I pressed the button and tried to raise the window. And guess what happened?"

**[STOP AUDIO 2]**

I knew the answer but I let Dupin have the satisfaction of reporting. The window went up, he told me.

"As the window went up, it carried with it the top part of the nail, the head. When I closed the window, the head of the nail was again in its place. It looked just as it had looked before. The nail was broken but looked whole. And, what is impossible is proved otherwise."

"So the murderer went out that window. Did he arrive in the room by that path as well?"

Dupin answered, although it seemed he was speaking more to himself than me.

"It was a hot summer night. Would the victim have opened the window to get some fresh night air? Most likely."

"So, the killer found it open and entered, I said." Dupin nodded.

"And, as he came, the window locked when it closed. The lock held the window closed not the nail, as it appeared to investigators. Again that which seemed impossible was actually possible."

Dupin's eyes were shining with the satisfaction discovery brings. He was analyzing evidence and his unusual reasoning ability had found a great purpose. I suddenly understood: This is why going to the house on the Rue Morgue seemed "pleasing" to Dupin. The use of his sharp mental abilities made him happy.

And, I had more work to provide that great brain.

"Dupin — the windows are on the fourth floor, far above the ground. Even an open window..."

Dupin shook his head up and down slowly.

"Yes...yes. That is an interesting question: how did the murderer go from the window down to the ground and vice-versa? But I had looked around carefully outside you recall. And I knew a way. And the answer to this question told me still more about the identity of the killer. Do you remember, friend, the **lightning rod** attached to the house?"

I paused. "Yyy...yes. A metal **pole**, and quite narrow. It protects the building from **lightning** strikes. But it is so tall and thin."

"True. It would take great strength and agility to get up the pole. Some kinds of animals might climb it easily, yes? But surely not every man could.

In fact, maybe very few men. Those of very special strength and special training.

"This helped create a better picture of the murderer. But still not sharp enough to recognize. I still had the question: who?"

"We know the killer climbed the pole, entered the room through the window, murdered and destroyed all order in the room. He managed to push one body up the chimney. He threw the other, almost headless, out the window. Then he left the way he came. We can answer the *how* of the crime. But who? Such unspeakable viciousness...what human could do this to another?"

**[STOP AUDIO 3]**

Dupin continued, **trancelike** again, seeming to speak to himself as much as to me.

"Perhaps we can come closer to answering the question of *who* by exploring the question of *why*."

"But Dupin, the police said the motive must have been **robbery**."

"But my friend, what was taken? The police said they could not answer the question. They said they did not know what the women had. Maybe clothes and jewelry, the investigators proposed. But neighbors described the women as nearly **hermits**, rarely if ever, leaving the house. Of what use would fine clothes and costly jewelry be to them?"

Dupin's eyes were **glistening**, his **brows** pointing sharply down, as he circled me, thinking aloud.

"But, what is more telling than what the killer might have taken is what he left behind...conveniently in bags in the center of the room..."

"Of course, the money. You are right, Dupin. It makes no sense. All the money delivered from the bank to the old woman. Right there on the floor. Why would the attacker have passed on the riches? A **thief** certainly would not."

"So, I want you to forget the investigators' claim that the killer acted out of a desire for money. They thought this only because they knew the money had arrived just three days before the killings. But that was just chance. If gold was the reason for the murders, the killer must have been quite a fool to forget and leave it there.

"No. I think that there was no reason for these killings...except, perhaps, fear. The wild nature of the attack leads me to a motive of fear."

"Hmm, an interesting theory, Dupin. Fear can bring out the crazed beast in a person..."

"In any living thing. Now let us look at the murders themselves. A girl is killed by powerful hands around her neck, then the body is placed in the



opening over the fireplace, head down. Unusual, even by the standards of the most terrible criminals. Think, also, of the great strength needed to put the body where it was found. It took several men to pull it out! Also the hair pulled from the head of the old woman. You saw it on the floor yourself, and you saw the blood and skin still attached. It takes great force to pull out even twenty or thirty hairs at a time. But this was hair AND **scalp**! And there was no reason to almost take off the woman's head just to kill her."

"It is extremely odd, I agree. Especially since there is no evidence that the killer knew the victims. No one could hate a stranger enough to carry out such torture."

Dupin's eyes **narrowed**.

"Exactly."

## Vocabulary

**superhuman** – *adj.* greater than normal human power, size or ability

**button** – *n.* a small, usually round piece of plastic, glass, metal, etc., that is sewn to a piece of clothing and used for fastening one part of the clothing to another part

**lightning rod** – *n.* a metal pole that was often attached to homes or buildings and used for attracting lightning

**pole** – *n.* a long, straight piece of wood, metal or some other material, that is often placed in the ground so that it stands straight up

**lightning** – *n.* the flashes of light that are produced in the sky during a storm

**trancelike** – *adj.* to be (or seem to be) in a state where you are not aware of what is happening around you because you are thinking of something else

**robbery** – *n.* the crime of stealing money or property : the crime of robbing a person or place

**hermit** – *n.* a person who lives in a simple way apart from others especially for religious reasons

**glistening** – *gerund.* shining with light, as if reflected off a wet surface

**brow** – *n.* the line of hair that grows over your eye

**thief** – *n.* a person who steals something

**scalp** – *n.* the skin on the top of your head where hair grows

**narrow** – *v.* to become less wide

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*Figure 1: lightning rod*



Example of a tent card folded to sit on a table



**WRITER**

**MY ROLE IS TO:**  
WRITE DOWN IMPORTANT INFORMATION  
FROM OUR TASK  
WRITE THE IDEAS FOR THE SPEAKER TO PRESENT

**USEFUL PHRASES**  
"CAN YOU SAY THAT AGAIN, PLEASE?"  
"HOW SHALL I WRITE THIS?"  
"HAVE I WRITTEN THIS SO IT MAKES SENSE?"



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**CHECKER**

**MY ROLE IS TO:**  
 BE AWARE OF THE TIME REMAINING  
 FOR THE ACTIVITY  
 MAKE SURE OUR WORK USES  
 THE RIGHT LANGUAGE  
 CHECK THAT INFORMATION  
 IS CORRECT

**USEFUL PHRASES**  
 "IS THIS WHAT THE TEACHER WANTS?"  
 "LET ME CHECK THE SPELLING."  
 "WE HAVE FIVE MINUTES LEFT."



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**LEADER**

**MY ROLE IS TO:**  
START THE GROUP OFF AND MAKE SURE  
EVERYONE UNDERSTANDS THE ACTIVITY  
MAKE SURE THAT THE GROUP IS FOCUSED AND  
THAT EVERYONE IS ACTIVELY DOING THEIR ROLE

**USEFUL PHRASES**  
"DOES EVERYONE UNDERSTAND WHAT TO DO?"  
"LET'S START BY ..."  
"LET'S KEEP TO THE TASK WE HAVE TO COMPLETE."

**LEADER**

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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.