American Stories

“The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” Part Five

by Edgar Allan Poe

**Lesson Plan**

This lesson plan is to accompany Part Five 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**

For this lesson, make sure that students do not take out their electronic devices. Use of the internet is not permitted.

Begin, "Today, we will read Part Five of 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue,' by Edgar Allan Poe. As you may remember from Part Four, Dupin and the narrator were studying evidence at the crime scene and trying to guess who could have murdered the women and why. Today, we will finally get the answer!"

Say, "When you are in a place and someone is speaking to you or your group, and you only hear part of what the person said, how can you find out the rest? For example, you might be in a restaurant, at school, on the bus or even on the phone or internet. Tell the person next to you all of the different ways you can find out what the person said."

Give students a few minutes to discuss this. Then, ask several volunteers to share their responses (one response per student). Responses may include: guess what the missing words were by understanding the words around them; guess what the words were from the situation or the person's gestures; ask the person to repeat themselves; ask them to speak louder or more clearly; ask someone near you to tell you what the person said; turn up the volume on the phone or computer; and try to read the person's lips.

Continue, "When we are listening to someone speak and we can't hear some part of what they said, one of the things we can do is guess the meaning of the words that we didn't hear. The words before and after the missing words give us clues, or evidence, of what the speaker's meaning is. For example, if you are at a restaurant, and you tell the server that you need more time to look at the menu, the server might say, 'OK, I'll come back in a few minutes.' But, maybe you only heard the words 'OK' and 'minutes' because the person was speaking too fast. You could probably guess the rest of the sentence. This is also very helpful in learning another language. There will be many words that you are not familiar with or don't remember the meanings for or don't hear clearly because the speaker is speaking too fast. When this happens, you can use a strategy called ***guess the meaning from context*** to help you understand.

"And, when you are reading or listening to a story, understanding the words before and after the unknown words can help you guess their meanings. In addition, knowing something about the events in the story and the characters can help you guess better.

"Today, we will practice guessing the meaning of words from context as we listen to the final part of 'The Murders in the Rue Morgue.' You will do this in small groups. You will receive a list of words and you and your group members will try to guess their meanings by understanding other words and sentences around them. But first, I will demonstrate."

**Present**

Put students into groups of three. Make sure the groups are made up of students with a good mixture of English skill levels. Then, hand out the transcript to the story and introduce the task:

"As we listen to the story today, we will practice the strategy ***guess the meaning from context***. I will show you how to do this. As we listen to the first two paragraphs, follow along with your transcript. While following along, draw a line under any words you don't recognize or can't remember the meanings to."

Play or read the first two paragraphs aloud. Then, ask one volunteer (or more, depending on class size) from each group to share a word they do not understand. Write those words on the board or a shared screen. Some of the words may be:

Stunned; extraordinarily; sharp; uncover; and horrifying

Then, demonstrate how students can guess the meanings of those words. You can use "sharp" and "extraordinarily" as an example:

"Ok, let's look at the word 'sharp' in the second sentence. We know that the narrator believes Dupin has a powerful intellect and a special talent for making sense of clues. And we know what the noun 'mind' means. So, I can guess that 'sharp' is an adjective that describes Dupin's mind. I am going to guess that 'sharp' means 'smart.' And, the word 'extraordinarily' is an adverb because it ends in 'ly' like most adverbs and comes before the adjective. I know that adverbs can modify adjectives. So, I will guess that 'extraordinarily' means 'very.' So, I think 'extraordinarily sharp mind' means 'very smart mind' and that makes sense in this story."

**Practice**

Hand out copies of the vocabulary list without the definitions on it.

(Alternately, give only *one* of these sheets to each group. This will encourage group members to come to a consensus about what each word means.)

Say, "Ok, now, it's your turn. Let's listen to some more of the story. As we listen, notice the words in bold letters. After we listen, you will have a chance to guess the meanings of those words with your group."

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

Then say, "Now, think about meanings for the words in bold ending with the word 'twig.' Then, tell your group what you think the meanings are. After you have discussed this, write down the meanings that you decided on."

(Alternately: "After you've discussed this, your group must come to a final agreement about the meaning of each word.")

Give students time to work on this. Then, have groups share with the whole class: ask one representative from each group to read their definitions. Ask other students from that group if they came up with a different answer. If their answer is very different, ask them to share it with the class.

If you get very different definitions for one word, ask the class if they agree with that meaning.

*(Game option: If you'd like to make it into a game for points, you can give a point to whichever group comes the closest to the definition. This would mean each group would have to come to an agreement about the meaning of each word. For larger classes, you can choose only five or ten words for the game. If two teams come very close to the meaning of a word, they can both get a point. If there is a tie, you can ask students to guess who the killer is before going to the next section, as that section reveals the answer. The team closest to the answer gets the tiebreaker point.)*

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

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

Proceed with the activity as before. After students have shared with the class, you may show the images of the orangutan and sailor (found on the pages following the vocabulary).

Then say, "Ok, let's listen to some more of the story."

(Alternately, for variety, you can have students switch groups for each segment.)

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

Proceed with the activity as before. Then say, "Ok, let's listen to the final piece of the story."

Play or read aloud to the end of the story.

Proceed with the activity as before. After students have shared their definitions with the class, hand out copies of the defined vocabulary and allow them a few minutes to compare their written definitions to these.

**Self-Evaluate**

Ask the class, "So, what did you think of the strategy ***guess the meaning from context***? Did it help you to understand the story better? On a blank piece of paper, write a two- or three-sentence response to hand in at the end of class."

**Expand**

Now ask, "What are some other times or situations that you can use this learning strategy in at school or outside of school and what might cause you not to hear or understand what the person is saying? Tell the people in your group."

Give students time to discuss this. Then, ask several students for responses. You can write brief responses on the board or a shared screen. For example:

*Restaurant – the noise is too loud; the person is talking too fast*

*In class – teacher is speaking too softly; other students are making noise*

*Metro – the voice on the announcement is unclear*

*At home – grandmother/grandfather has trouble speaking; young child is still learning to speak*

After they have provided examples, ask them in which of the situations would guessing the meaning be useful.

**"The Murders in the Rue Morgue," Part Five**

**by Edgar Allan Poe**

I was **stunned**. August Dupin, my friend with the extraordinarily sharp mind and observational powers still had surprises for me!

He had uncovered so much about the horrifying Rue Morgue murders that it seemed there was more understanding than mystery left. But still the major question remained: Who?

Dupin had invited someone to our home…someone he believed knew the answer to that question. As we awaited his arrival, my friend began to put together other pieces of evidence from the crime.

“We add for our consideration the condition of the room. So we have: a strength more than human; a wildness less than human; a murder without reason; horror beyond human understanding; and, finally, a voice without a recognizable language.”

A cold feeling went up and down my back. “A **madman**, Dupin! Someone who has lost his mind. Only a madman could have done these murders!”

Dupin smiled a little. “Ah, but madmen come from one country or another, don’t they. Their cries may be terrible, but they are made of words, and some of the words can be understood. Let me help with one more **clue**. Look at this hair. I took it from the **fingers** of the old woman. Is this the hair of a madman?”

Dupin **handed** me the evidence. I could not believe what I was looking at or the feel of it in my hands.

“Dupin, what is this? This hair is…this hair is not from a human at all!!”

“I described it only as hair. But, also look at this picture. It is a picture of the marks on the daughter’s **neck**. The doctors said these marks were made by fingers. Let me spread the paper on the table before us. Try to put your fingers, all at the same time, on the picture, so that your hand and its fingers will fit the picture of the marks on the daughter’s neck.”

The marks left by the killer’s hands were **enormous**. My fingers seemed like **twigs** in comparison.

“Dupin! These marks were made by no human hand!” **[STOP AUDIO 1]**

“No. They were not. I am guessing they are from the hand of an **orangutan**. The size, strength and wildness of these **apes** is well known.

“And the hair and strange sounds would complete the solution of killer animal, as well. Yet, I still do not understand the second voice. We know it was a French speaking man. His only words were ‘Mon Dieu.’ Who spoke, Dupin?”

“Upon those two words I have placed my hopes of finding a full **solution** to the crime. The ‘My God’ was an expression of horror. It seems improbable that the speaker of those words helped the orangutan. Could instead he be its owner? Maybe the animal escaped from him, and he followed it to the house on the Rue Morgue. I assume that the man would not have been able to recapture it.”

“Is that who we are waiting for now, Dupin, the Frenchman? How did you reach him?”

Dupin smiled when he answered.

“I put an ad in the newspaper. Read it yourself.”

I took the newspaper. *Caught — Early in the morning of the seventh of this month: a very large orangutan. The owner, who is known to be a* ***sailor****, may have the animal again if he can prove it is his.*

“But, Dupin. How can you know that the man is a sailor?”

“I do not know it. I simply suspect. A sailor could go up that pole on the side of the house. Sailors travel to faraway lands where one might find an orangutan. And it would be valuable. The sailor would want it back so…”

(KNOCK ON DOOR) **[STOP AUDIO 2]**

“Finally, Dupin, we will learn the whole truth.”

“Come in, my friend! Come in!”

Slowly the door opened, and there, before us, stood a sailor!

He spoke in French. “Bonsoir.”

“Good evening to you too, my friend. I suppose you have come to ask about the orangutan?”

“Yes, is it here?”

“No, no. We have no place for it here. If can prove it is yours…”

“But of course, I can.”

“A shame, I wish I could keep it. It is very valuable, I guess.

“Well, I want it back…of course, I will pay you for your trouble to find it and keep it. What is your price?”

“Well…that is very fair, indeed, but it is not money I want, sir. My price is truth. Tell me everything you know about the murders in the Rue Morgue.”

The sailor’s face **reddened** deeply. He jumped to his feet. For a moment, he stood and **stared**. But then he fell back into his chair, trembling. His face grew **pale**. His eyes closed. And he said not a word.

Dupin then spoke, softly.

“My friend, you must not be afraid. We are not going to hurt you. I know very well that you yourself are not the killer. But it is true that you know something about him — or about it. You’ve done nothing wrong. You didn’t even take any of the money. You have no reason to be afraid to talk and to tell the truth. It is a matter of honor for you to tell all you know.

“So help me God! I…I’ll tell you all I know. About a year ago our ship sailed to the Far East, to the island of Borneo. The forest there, the jungle, was thick with trees and other plants, and hot and wet and dark. My friend and I wanted to explore the strange place. So we did. **[STOP AUDIO 3]**

There we saw the orangutan and caught it. And it returned with us to the ship. My friend died on the passage home. So, the animal became mine alone. I was keeping it in a **cage** in my house, here in Paris. I planned to sell it very soon. One night I came home and it was…it was **loose**. It had got free, I don’t know how. It held a knife in its hands. It did not know of its dangers, of course. It was playing with it. As soon as the animal saw me it jumped up and ran from the house. I followed. It ran several blocks and turned a **corner**. When I made the same turn, the animal was out of sight. I looked far down the street and saw nothing. Then, I heard a noise above me. There was the **beast**, climbing a pole up the side of a house. It was maybe two meters up. I also went up the pole. As I am a sailor it was easy for me. When the animal was close to the top I saw him jump through an open window. I got to the same place but could not make the jump. I could see into the room, however, through another window, which was closed.

“The two women were sitting there, looking at papers from a box on the floor. The animal, knife still in hand made a noise and the old woman turned. That is when I heard the first of those terrible cries. I watched with horror as the animal attacked. Soon the two were dead and the room was a disaster. The orangutan then pushed the young woman’s body up the chimney. It picked up the other victim, then, and moved toward the window. I realized what was coming and I fled. Down the pipe I **scrambled**. At the bottom I heard the old woman’s body hit the ground. I ran. I didn’t look back. I ran! Oh, mon Dieu, mon Dieu!”

The police in Paris could not charge the sailor. His only wrongdoing was silence which is not a criminal offense, the police chief said.

However, the official did have a problem with Dupin. He was angry that Dupin and not a member of his force had solved the mystery. He said people should **mind their own business**.

“Let him **complain**. He’ll feel better for it. And maybe learn something. Perhaps, he will never again say ‘Not possible!’ about that which, somehow, must be possible.”

**Vocabulary**

**stun** – *v*. to surprise or upset someone very much

**extraordinarily** – *adv.* very different from what is normal or ordinary

**madman** – *n*. a man who has severe mental illness

**clue** – *n*. something that helps a person find something, understand something, or solve a mystery or puzzle

**hand** – *v*. to give something to someone using your hands

**neck** – *n.* the part of the body between the head and shoulders

**finger** – *n*. one of the five long parts of the hand that are used for holding things

**enormous** – *adj*. very great in size or amount

**twig** – *n*. a small branch of a tree or bush

**orangutan** – *n*. a large ape that has very long arms and reddish-brown hair

**ape** – *n*. a type of animal (such as a chimpanzee or gorilla) that is closely related to monkeys and humans and that is covered in hair and has no tail or a very short tail

**solution** – *n*. something that is used or done to deal with and end a problem

**sailor** – *n*. a person who works on a boat or ship as part of the crew

**redden** – *v*. to make something red or to become red

**stare** – *v*. to look at someone or something for a long time often with your eyes wide open

**pale** – *adj*. having a skin color that is closer to white than is usual or normal

**cage** – *n*. a box made of wire or metal bars in which people keep animals or birds

**loose** – *adj*. (informal) – having escaped, such as an animal from a cage

**corner** – *n*. the place where two streets or roads meet

**beast** – *n*. a wild animal that is large, dangerous, or unusual

**scramble** – *v*. to move or climb over something quickly especially while also using your hands

**mind their own business** – *expression*. do not be so interested in what other people are doing. (The word "their" can be replaced with other personal pronouns, depending on the situation.)

**complain** – *v*. to say or write that you are unhappy, sick, uncomfortable, or that you do not like something

**Vocabulary**

**stun** –

**extraordinarily** –

**madman** –

**clue** –

**hand** –

**neck** –

**finger** –

**enormous** –

**twig** –

**orangutan** –

**ape** –

**solution** –

**sailor** –

**redden** –

**stare** –

**pale** –

**cage** –

**loose** –

**corner** –

**beast** –

**scramble** –

**mind their own business** –

**complain** –



Figure 1: orangutan



Figure 2: sailors

**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.