

Book Club!
Edgar Allan Poe
“The Tell-Tale Heart”
Grades: 6-8

Description:

Join us for our *Book Club!* series featuring **Edgar Allan Poe: Master of Madness!** Poe is the inventor of the detective story, father of the psychological thriller and a master American poet. Our session will discuss the life and times of the author and the grisly short story “The Tell-Tale Heart”. We will focus on literary elements such as imagery and figurative language, as well as the life and times of Edgar Allan Poe.

Lesson Outcomes:

The student will:

- Be able to use, understand and apply new vocabulary related to the story.
- Be able to understand and identify a writer’s sense of style such as figurative language, imagery, and repetition.
- Be able to gain more knowledge about the life and times of the author and his purpose for writing the story “The Tell-Tale Heart”.

Activity # 1: Vocabulary Development

While reading the short story “The Tell-Tale Heart” by Edgar Allan Poe, students will work on developing an understanding of specific vocabulary words by defining each word and writing down the passage in which the word is used in the short story. After completion of the novel, students will complete the “The Tell-Tale Heart” Crossword Puzzle activity.

Activity # 2: Literary Elements: A Writer’s Sense of Style

Style is a writer’s characteristic way of writing, such as his choice of words, sentence structure, imagery, and subject matter. After reading the short story “The Tell-Tale Heart” students will answer questions about the writer’s style and identify various characteristics of Poe’s style.

Activity # 3: Edgar Allan Poe Webquest/Scavenger Hunt

Students will journey to several exciting websites to complete the “Edgar Allan Poe – Master of Madness” webquest/scavenger hunt.

Challenge Questions:

1. Explain what you think the title of “The Tell-Tale Heart” means.
2. Describe a time in your life when your guilty conscience led you to do the right thing.
3. Write an alternate ending to the story “The Tell-Tale Heart”.

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Activity #1:

Vocabulary Words

Students will use the dictionary to define the following words taken from the short story “The Tell-Tale Heart”.

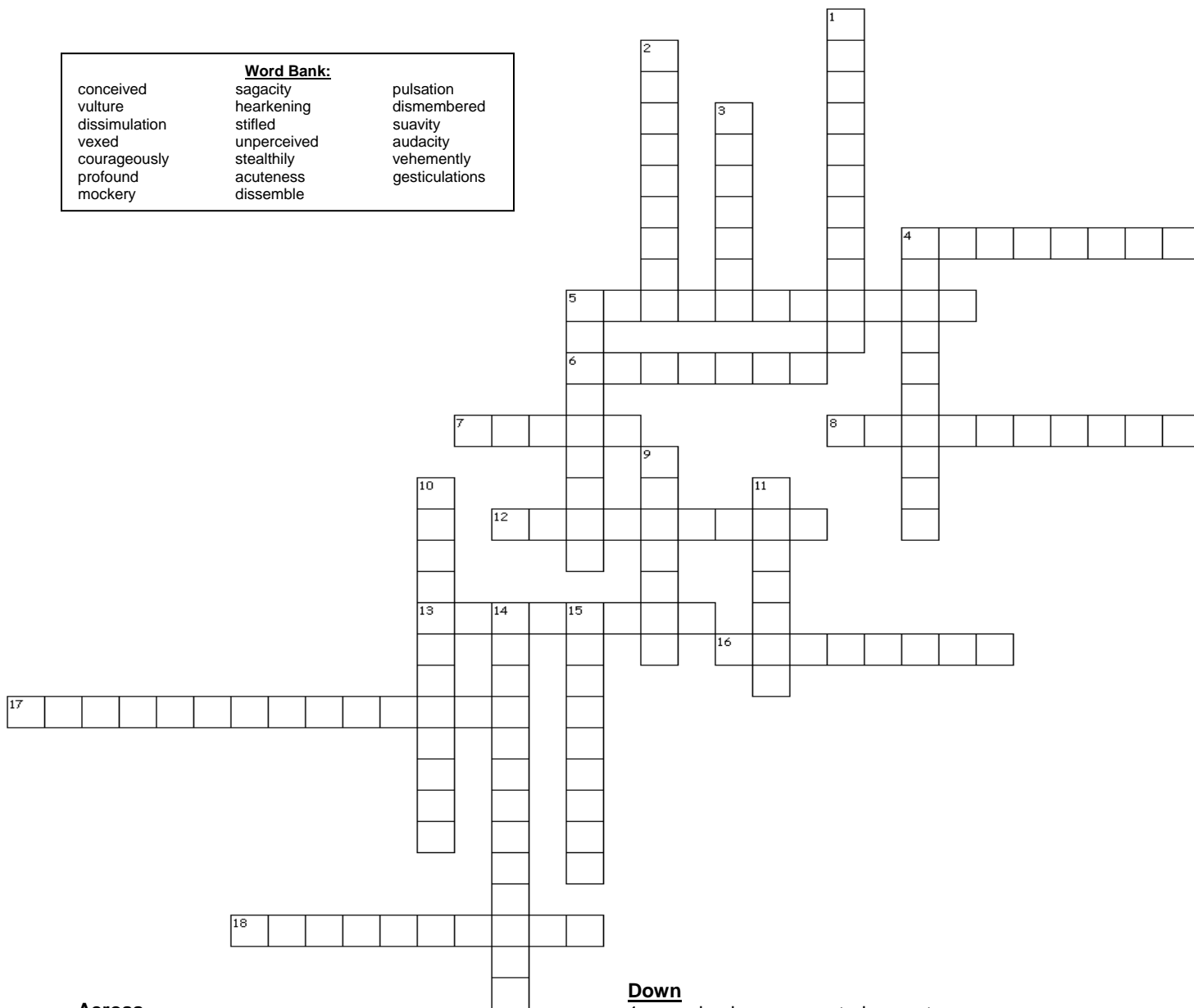
1. **conceived**: to form an idea; think.
2. **vulture**: a person or thing that preys, esp. greedily or unscrupulously.
3. **dissimulation**: to hide under a false appearance; feigning; hypocrisy.
4. **vexed**: irritated; annoyed.
5. **courageously**: possessing or characterized by courage; brave.
6. **profound**: having deep insight or understanding.
7. **sagacity**: acuteness of mental discernment & soundness of judgment; wisdom.
8. **hearkening**: to listen attentively; give heed.
9. **stifled**: to suppress, curb, or withhold; muffled.
10. **unperceived**: not perceived or commented on; not seen.
11. **stealthily**: acting with quiet, caution, and secrecy intended to avoid notice.
12. **acuteness**: sharp or penetrating in intellect, insight, or perception; sensitive.
13. **pulsation**: a beat or throb, as of the pulse.
14. **dismembered**: to cut, tear, or pull off the limbs of; to divide into pieces.
15. **suavity**: smoothly agreeable and courteous; sophistication.
16. **audacity**: boldness or daring, esp. with confident or arrogant disregard for personal safety.
17. **vehemently**: strongly emotional; intense or passionate.
18. **gesticulations**: a deliberate, vigorous motion or gesture with one’s hands.
19. **mockery**: ridicule, contempt, or derision; subject of laughter.
20. **dissemble**: to give a false or misleading appearance to; conceal the truth or real nature of.

Vocabulary definitions taken from www.Dictionary.com.

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Activity #1 cont.: Vocabulary Cross Word Puzzle

Word Bank:		
conceived	sagacity	pulsation
vulture	hearkening	dismembered
dissimulation	stifled	suavity
vexed	unperceived	audacity
courageously	stealthily	vehemently
profound	acuteness	gesticulations
mockery	dissemble	



Across

4. acuteness of mental discernment; wisdom
5. to cut, tear, or pull off the limbs of; to divide into pieces
6. to suppress, curb, or withhold; muffled
7. irritated; annoyed
8. strongly emotional; intense or passionate
12. a beat or throb, as of the pulse
13. boldness or daring
16. having deep insight or understanding
17. a deliberate, vigorous motion or gesture with one's hands
18. to listen attentively; give heed

Down

1. perceived or commented on; not seen
2. sharp or penetrating in intellect, insight, or perception
3. a person or thing that preys, esp. greedily or unscrupulously
4. acting with quiet, caution, and secrecy intended to avoid notice
5. to give a false or misleading appearance to; conceal the truth
9. smoothly agreeable and courteous; sophistication
10. possessing or characterized by courage; brave
11. ridicule, contempt, or derision; subject of laughter
14. to hide under a false appearance; feigning; hypocrisy
15. to form an idea; think

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Activity #2:

Literary Elements: A Writer’s Sense of Style

Edgar Allan Poe uses the following literary elements to develop his sense of style within his writings. Before reading the short story, discuss these literary elements with your students. While reading, have them identify examples of these elements and discuss them. After reading the story, students will then answer the questions that follow.

IMAGERY: Language that appeals to the senses (sight, sound, taste, touch, smell). Example: “the hinges *creaked*”.

FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE: Whenever you describe something by comparing it with something else, you are using figurative language. The most common figures of speech are simile, metaphor, and alliteration.

- **Simile:** a comparison of two unlike things, typically marked by use of “like” or “as”. Example: “much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton”.
- **Metaphor:** A comparison of two unlike things using the verb “to be” and not using “like” or “as”, like a simile does. **Example:** “He is a pig”.
- **Alliteration:** Repeated consonant sounds occurring at the beginning of words or within words. Alliteration is used to create melody, establish mood, call attention to important words, and point out similarities and contrasts. Example: “hideous heart”.

REPETITION: where words or certain phrases are repeated for a stronger emphasis by the author. Example: “*louder, louder*”.

GRIM HUMOR: topics and events that are usually treated seriously – death, mass murder, sickness, madness, terror, drug abuse, rape, war etc. – are treated in a humorous or satirical manner. Example: “*I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him*”.

SUBJECTS OF HORROR & SUPERNATURAL: intended to scare, unsettle, or horrify the audience. Historically, the cause of the “horror” experience has often been the intrusion of an evil—or, occasionally, misunderstood—supernatural element into everyday human experience. Example: “*Death, in approaching him, had stalked with his black shadow....*”.

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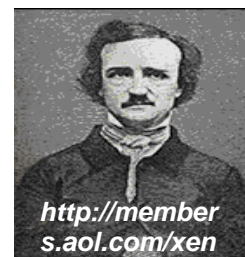
Activity #2, cont:

QUESTIONS:

Style is a writer’s characteristic way of writing, such as his choice of words, sentence structure, imagery, and subject matter. After reading the short story “The Tell-Tale Heart” answer the following questions about the writer’s style and identify various characteristics of Poe’s style.

1. What special words does the author use to help you see, hear, smell, and/or taste things in the story? (imagery)
2. How do these words set the mood for the story?
3. What pictures did the author leave in your mind? (imagery)
4. What did you like/dislike about the way the author has written the story?
5. How did the author describe the character(s) within the story?
6. Give two examples of figurative language used in the story.
7. Locate one example of grim humor and/or horror used in the story.
8. What sort of conclusion is the reader most likely to make after reading these opening lines from the story? ***“You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing. But you should have seen me. You should have seen how wisely I proceeded....”***
9. What sound is being described in the following passage from the story? ***“....now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick, sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton.”***
10. Why do you think the main character “admits the deed” to the police officers?

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Activity #3: Use the following websites to answer the questions that follow.

Edgar Allan Poe - Master of Madness

<http://www.mysterynet.com/poe/>

1. Where was Edgar Allan Poe born and where was he educated?
2. What kind of writing was his first love?
3. What types of jobs did he have?
4. What famous work was published in 1841 and what was significant about it?

http://www.poemuseum.org/selected_works/index.html

CLICK ON EACH OF THE SELECTED WORKS AND READ THE FIRST LINE OF EACH (there are six stories to click on).

5. Read the first sentence in each of the six selected stories. What word choices does Poe use in his opening sentences?
6. How do these words set the mood and tone of the story?

www.dictionary.com

7. What do the words *requiem*, *pendulum*, and *macabre* mean?
 - Requiem:
 - Pendulum:
 - Macabre:

<http://members.tripod.com/~Alien49690/annabel-lee.html>

READ THE POEM “ANNABEL LEE” AND ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS.

8. What was the girl's whole purpose in life?
9. What came out of a cloud?
10. What do you think happened to Annabel Lee?
11. From what you have found in your research today, whom do you think Poe was writing about?

<http://www.columbia.edu/acis/textarchive/rare/76.html>

READ THE PARAGRAPH.

12. What did Poe have to do in order to preserve a copy of his poem?

CLICK ON PAGE 1 AND PAGE 2 TO LOOK AT EDGAR ALLAN POE'S ORIGINAL MANUSCRIPT

<http://www.bokler.com/eapoe.html>

13. What is cryptography?
14. Name a piece of writing where Poe references it.

Scroll down and read the solution for one of the cryptographs.

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Edgar Allen Poe – Master of Madness –
Webquest/Scavenger Hunt
KEY

1. Born in Boston, Educated in England and Virginia.
2. First love was poetry.
3. His careers was as a soldier, writer (author) editor, publisher.
4. 1841 Murder in Rue Morgue – first fictional detective.
5. Words in opening sentences: dark, dreary, oppressive, pestilence, devastated, madness, blood, insult, revenge, threat, nervous, made, weary.
6. The words set the mood for the story by being negative, dark, dreary etc.
7. Definitions:
 - **requiem**: any musical service, hymn, or dirge for the repose of the dead
 - **pendulum**: an apparatus consisting of an object mounted so that it swings freely under the influence of gravity
 - **macabre**: gruesome and horrifying; ghastly; horrible
8. Purpose of Annabel Lee: to love and be loved by me (Poe).
9. The wind blew out of the cloud.
10. This is opinion. Annabel Lee most likely died of a chill, cold, etc.
11. This is opinion, but almost certainly, Virginia, his cousin and wife.
12. Poe wrote out several copies of his last poem, Annabel Lee, and circulated it amongst his friends.
13. **Cryptography**: the science or study of the techniques of secret writing, especially code and cipher systems, methods, and the like.
14. “The Gold Bug”

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Additional Websites and resources:

- **Knowing Poe:** Great site to get an overall taste for Edgar Allan Poe! It has lesson plans, activities and much, much more!
http://knowingpoe.thinkport.org/default_flash.asp
- **Poe Stories:** This site is a fairly extensive exploration of short stories by Edgar Allan Poe.
<http://www.poestories.com>
- **Poe Cryptographic Challenge:** Cryptic Message written by Poe
<http://www.bokler.com/eapoe.html>
- **Teachers First "Interactive Raven":** Take a look at the vocabulary and literary devices in Edgar Allen Poe's famous poem, The Raven.
<http://www.teachersfirst.com/share/raven/start-fl.html>
- **Puzzlemaker:** This site is how the crossword puzzle activity was made. Many other types of puzzles can be made here.
www.puzzlemaker.com