

The Tell-Tale Heart

Edgar Allan Poe

The Tell-Tale Heart is a short story written by Edgar Allan Poe. It is told in the first person point of view. This is very important because it helps illustrate the inside of the character and how it feels. The character's point of view helps us engage with the thoughts and feelings of the character. It also has more credibility since no one would believe such a story unless it is told by the person himself.

The Tell-Tale Heart is a story about a man who killed an old man just because he has not liked the way his eyes look like. The main character speaks about madness as being a gift and not a kind of disability, for instance, he says: **"but why would you say that I am mad? The disease had sharpened my senses- not destroyed- not dulled them"**. The mad man kills the old man, then cuts him up and puts him under the floorboards of the house.

The main character thinks that he has done the right thing by killing the old man and that he gets rid of the evil eye. The main character is very confident about what he has done. He thinks that he has a very good reason for killing the old man which is that he does not like the way his eyes look like. He thinks that his eyes are evil, **"I think it was his eyes! Yes, it was this! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture – very gradually – I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye for ever."** This is no good reason for killing a human being. The murderer is very confident about what he has done and planned the whole murder.

The character in The Tell-Tale Heart has many conversations throughout the story but all the conversations are to himself. The things that the character talks about are very strange. He talks about how every night at midnight for the last week he has come to check on the old man to see the evil eye and to look up on the old man. The character talks about how cautiously he has opened the door so that the old man would not hear him. He would open the door just so much that a single thin ray fell upon the vulture eye.

Moreover, after he has murdered the old man and when he is sitting down in the room where the old man is dead under the floorboards chatting with the police, he suddenly starts to hear a heartbeat. The heartbeat is getting louder, louder and louder. This heartbeat may represent the character's guilty conscience and shows that the character is actually nervous about what he has done. However, it is a fact that mad people do not have a conscience. Hearing a heartbeat that no one else can hear is a little bit strange and points that he might

be mad. Thus, the heartbeat is the key point in answering the question of 'is he mad?'

The main character in the short story is just happy that he has got rid of the evil eye. He treats it like a job, so he is happy that the job is done successfully. Once he has committed the murder, he starts to get rid of the evidence. He makes us think that he is even madder than we think at the beginning of the story. The character kills the old man and then he cuts him off into pieces and puts the body under the floorboards of the room, which in a way is smart but also very sick and insane.

The story revolves round the question of crime and punishment. The theme of this short story is that punishment can begin inside people. Their conscience is the true judge. The remorse felt by the murderer is reflected inside him as a loud ringing that no one except him can hear. **"The officers were satisfied. My manner had convinced them. I was singularly at ease. They sat and while I answered cheerfully, they chatted of familiar things. But, ere long, I felt myself getting pale and wished them gone. My head ached, and I fancied a ringing in my ears."** All this is the kind of words we hear from a mad man.

The writer relates the inside to the outside. He is also more concerned with the character rather than the event. He is known as the one who brought romanticism into the American literature. The writer makes use of many repetitions such as: 'very, very' and 'louder, louder' etc. There are also many dashes so that the sentence is made longer and in a way that makes the readers think that the character is mad. The short sentences are used in the story when the main character is feeling tense especially when he starts to hear the heartbeat of the old man. The other good thing that Edgar Allan Poe did was that he made the madness of the character grow increasingly as the story goes on.