“THE TELL-TALE HEART”
by Edgar Allan Poe

Review Questions

Copy and answer the questions below in complete sentences on your own paper.

1. Describe the narrator in detail. What is your first impression of him?

2. How does the opening paragraph foreshadow the events of the story? How does Poe set the tone for the story in the first paragraph?

3. What was the relationship between the old man and the narrator?

4. What specifically is it about the old man that troubles the narrator? Why does it trouble him?

5. What does the narrator do every night? Why?

6. To whom might the narrator be telling his story? Where do you think he is as he tells it?

7. “I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart.” What did the old man feel, and what does the fact that the narrator “chuckled at heart” tell us about him?

8. What was the narrator’s reaction as he gazed upon the old man’s vulture eye?

9. What finally forced the narrator to leap into the room?

10. How did the narrator actually kill the old man?

11. How does the narrator get rid of the corpse?

12. How does the narrator feel after he commits the murder? Is he worried about being caught?

13. Who came knocking at the door at four o’clock?

14. What was the narrator’s reaction to the police?

15. In his triumph, where did the narrator place his chair while talking to the police?

16. What is your explanation for the “heartbeat” noise that drives the narrator to confess? Draw on evidence from the text to support your opinion.

17. Which is more important to Poe’s purpose: the murder of the old man or the description of the narrator’s mental state?

18. By repeating key words and phrases, Poe controls the pace of his story, increases the tension, and emphasizes the madness of the narrator. Give several examples of Poe’s use of repetition.

19. In your opinion, why is this story called “The Tell-Tale Heart”? Can you think of more than one meaning for the title?

20. Name 3 details, descriptions, or actions that Poe uses to create an eerie and chilling mood.