

Close Reading Questions: “The Tell-Tale Heart”

1. Focusing on the first paragraph, explain who you think the “you” in line 1 is (who is the **antecedent** to the pronoun “you”?). Provide examples with explanations from throughout the text to support your claim.
2. In the second paragraph (lines 6-11) Poe purposefully repeats very **simple sentence structure**. Why? What does Poe accomplish by doing this? He does this elsewhere, so feel free to focus on another example where he repeats several simple sentences if you would like.
3. **Dramatic irony** creates a situation where the significance of a character’s words or actions are clear to the audience but not to the character themselves. Using both details from the text and details from the above definition, explain how lines 12-15 represent an example of **dramatic irony**.
4. In the two paragraphs between lines 39 and 54, the narrator expresses two conflicting thoughts in regards to the old man, representing an **internal conflict** within the narrator that he may not even recognise. What conflicting feelings does he express and what do you think it says about the narrator’s state of mind?
5. The **tone** and thus the **mood** of the paragraph covering lines 67 to 81 could be described as being wave-like. Imagine the shape and movement of a wave.
 - How does this paragraph’s **tone** follow this wave-like structure?
 - How does the unique structure and tone of this paragraph contribute to the story as a whole?
6. The two paragraphs between lines 82 and 88 express a particular **tone** which intentionally contrasts with the subject matter. Explain how this **contrast** between the content of the narrator’s words and how he says those words helps to create an impact on the reader.
7. Both lines 64 and 65 and 108 and 109 are nearly identical. Why do you think Poe has his narrator repeat himself in this manner? What is the author trying to express about this character? Consider the context in which both these lines are written.
8. Throughout Poe’s short story, he deliberately uses **punctuation** to further control the reader, creating his single effect. Provide examples where he uses this unique style of **punctuation** and explain its impact on the story.
9. Poe’s narrator repeats words and phrases throughout this short story. Provide examples and explain what his use of **repetition** accomplishes.
10. “The Tell-Tale Heart” is purposefully told using a **first person narrator**. What effect does this choice have on his reader, especially when a person reads the story aloud? Consider the **plot, sentence structure, repetition, tone, dramatic irony, contrast** and use of **punctuation** when answering this question. (What’s he trying to do to you as you read?)