

“Tell-Tale Heart” Discussion Preparation

Take notes in your English notebook on your choice of the following questions. You’ll use your notes to contribute to a Socratic circle discussion.

Set up your notes in this 2-column format:

Answer
paraphrase

Evidence (Cite words/phrases or
with paragraph numbers)

Point of view: The story is told by an unreliable narrator. When is the narrator’s interpretation of events unreliable? Who do you think he is speaking to?

Title: How do you interpret the meaning of the title?

Symbols: What might certain images/objects represent? Think about the eye, watch, bed, or heart.

Character Motives: Why does the narrator commit his crime? Why not just leave the house rather than committing murder? Why does he wait eight days before murdering the man? Why does he confess in the end?

Suspense: How do these elements create suspense? Pace of events, repetition, word choice, imagery.

Tone: There is a major shift in tone in the story. How would you describe the tone at first? Give evidence. How would you describe the tone toward the end of the story? Give evidence.

Themes: What central ideas does the story develop about guilt/innocence, time, sanity/insanity?

Compare: How is the experience of watching the story different from reading it?

Evaluation: "The Tell-Tale Heart" was written more than 150 years ago. Why do you think it is still widely read today? What are some elements of the story which make it timeless or classic?