

The tell-tale heart: character analysis argumentative essay examples

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' The Tell-Tale Heart' is one of Edgar Allan Poe's most famous short stories. The story goes on to describe the murder of an old man by a man driven by his extreme insanity. Poe's characters stand out and leave an ever-lasting mark on the minds of the innumerable readers.

The narrator of the short story, ' The Tell-Tale Heart', recalls how he had killed an old man. He goes on to describe the story in first person narrative. How much of his description is true cannot be said and that makes him an unreliable narrator. He goes on chanting several times proclaiming his own sanity, a behavior bizarre enough. An engaged reader is bound to reason differently on account of this man's behavior, logic and speech. From the very first sentence of the story, this man seems to be afraid. The jolting depiction of his state of mind very soon gets transformed into utter madness. He ardently goes on to claim of his fondness for the old man and that there can be no motive for killing him, except for his surmounting dislike of a cloudy film over one of his eyes.

It actually seems that the narrator is unaware of the ' real' and ' unreal', living in his world of twisted perceived notions. The anonymity of this character symbolizes the universality of the weirdness. It looms over the mind like a specter and the reader is immersed much more into the intriguing narrative of the story.

The narrator is emotionally unstable and hence this counters his claims of being a good judge of matters. His reactions are odd and do not comply with the standard expectations of the readers. His botheration about the vulture-like eye transcends his love for this old man and he finally murders him with premeditation. The act of killing brings a sense of accomplishment in this

man. The policemen's lack of suspicion signifies that the narrator himself had become unaware of his own mannerisms and surroundings. Being unable to maintain the distinction between the real and his inner thoughts, he misconstrues the mental disturbance for a physical one and the innocuous blabbering of the policemen seems to be malicious to him.

However, all this while the narrator imagines that he has rightly translated all the events. Edgar Allan Poe, thus, suggests that irrationality of the mind roots from the belief in a person's rational self.

Ironically, he makes elevated proclamations describing him as too calm for being insane. But, it gets refuted by a noise that could be his heart beat. His unreliable nature makes it impossible for the reader to be certain if it is an actual sound, his imagination or something occult. The most reliable explanation can be that it was the sound of his own heart which he misconstrues as the heartbeat of the old man he had assassinated. The inability of distinguishing between parallels his lack of consciousness of his activities and he talks with the policemen. All these things expose his lapses in argument and thwart his claims of being sane.

The character of the old man is much more mysterious than that of the narrator of the story. It might be due to the fact that the readers only get to see him through the perspective of the narrator. The man had a blue eye that the narrator was scared of.

In the words of the narrator, the old man had no idea that he was going to be assassinated by the narrator for the fact that the narrator had treated him very cordially the week before. Though this claim cannot be substantiated with concrete proof, the old man's leaving the bedroom door unlocked

seems to point that only. He was not a naturally trusting man, as is evident from his fear of robbers. He, however, had a lot of trust on the narrator. It can be so that this man was extremely poor in judging characters as he had wrongly judged the narrator.

It is evident from the narration that the old man's senses had become dull with age. It was on the eighth night that he heard the narrator, apart from having almost no idea of the on-goings events around him. He is seriously incapable of showing any defense. It might be so that the narrator is craftily saying that he took the man as someone " mad". This might have risen from the helplessly senile nature of the old man. Even thinking that the narrator could kill a man so tender with his ripe age makes the avid readers cringe. The alienation of the old man on account of his eye can be symbolic of the prevalent prejudices that bind the society in the shackles of evil and discriminate human beings on the parameter of physical " difference".

Poe is successful in stirring the minds of his avid readers with the bizarre and uncanny. The abnormality of the narrator meshes with the other characters and the readers are left flabbergasted at the end. Indeed, the character of the narrator in a plunge into the deep dark corners of human nature.

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