

The tell tale heart essay examples

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Edgar Allen Poe once said, “ Words have no power to impress the mind without the exquisite horror of their reality.” There have been so many breathtaking stories, but none of them has influenced literature the way The Tell Tale Heart did with its insane character. The Tell Tale Heart is a short story published in 1843 and written by Edgar Allen Poe. Edgar Allen Poe was born in Boston in 1809. He was the son of impoverished actors, Elizabeth and David Allen Poe. He became an orphan at the age of three whereby he lost his father by desertion and his mother to tuberculosis. He moved in with the Allan family, John and Frances, but his relationship with his foster father suffered irreparable damage. Edgar Allen Poe became an alcoholic due to depression, unemployment and financial hardships (Meyers 102). He later died in the year 1949 under unclear circumstances. The Tell-Tale Heart by Edgar Allen Poe has several themes, but one obvious theme in the story is insanity.

The Tell Tale Heart is a story about an unnamed narrator who lived with an old man with a blue, pale, filmy eye. The story starts with the narrator stating that he is not mad, yet everything he says show that he is mad. The unknown narrator recounts on the events leading up to his murdering of an old man. The narrator murdered the old man because of his pale blue eye. He late explains the rationale behind his actions and tries to convince the reader that he killed him because he could not stand the sight of a man’s evil eye staring at him.

The theme of insanity is the most important theme in The Tell Tale Heart short story. At the beginning of the story, Poe writes, “ How, then, am I mad? Hearken! And observe how healthily-how calmly I can tell you the whole

story," (Poe 17). In this statement, the narrator attempts to state that he is not insane, yet from this statement, it is very clear to the reader that the narrator is indeed mad. The narrator vehemently denies his madness by rebuking the person questioning him if he is mad. The fact that he denies in a forceful and loud voice that he is not mad, show that the narrator has lost his mind, and he is indeed insane. The narrator was undergoing a psychological breakdown, yet, he did not accept it, instead, he kept telling the audience that he was perfectly sane. The protagonists make several statements that confirm his insanity to the reader.

The Tell Tale Heart story introduces us to a true madman. The main character says, " I loved the old man. He had never wrong me. He had never given me insult. For his gold, I had no desire. I think it was his eye! Yes, it was this," but he kills him in the story. The old man and his pale blue eye obsessed the narrator. His insanity took the best part of him, as he could not stand the old man's eye. He says, " Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold, and so by degrees-very gradually- I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever." (Poe 21). He killed the old man and does horrific things with his body, and this truly shows the narrators madness. He says, " If still you think me mad, you will think so no longer when I describe the wise precautions I took for the concealment of the body" (29). He explains how he dismembered the dead body and cut off the legs and arms. According to Womack, only a mad man could do this to a corpse. The narrator insists that he is too cautious to be mad, and no one should consider him mad for his actions, but all his actions can only come from a madman. The narrator killing the old man is enough evidence of his

insanity. He insists that he loved the old man, but a person murdering another person whom he loves and treasures is a proof of a psychological breakdown.

The Tell Tale Heart revolves around the theme of insanity, which is progressing throughout the entire story. The narrator had an abnormal psychological behavior and emotional instability. After killing the old man, he becomes very cheerful with the feeling that he had accomplished his goal perfectly and will not see the blue eye again. This is insanity because, when one commits such a crime as murder, they feel remorseful and at times regret their deed, but for the protagonist, he feels that it was an accomplishment; an insane person can only feel this. While murder itself is madness, the way that the protagonist planned to kill the old man also displays his insanity. The narrator constantly sneaked into the old man's room to see if the evil eye was open before he tried to kill him. He says, "But I found the eye was always closed, and so it was impossible to do the work; for it was not an old man that vexed me, but his Evil Eye." (Poe 23). The narrator had an obsession with the old man's eye and termed it be evil, because, he frequently sneaked into the room to watch him in order to remove it until his emotions overcame him and he ended up killing the old man.

At the end of the story, the murderer confesses that he can hear sounds of heaven and hell. The confession that he hears sounds clearly indicates that he is insane. He had killed his friend because, he had a scary looking pale blue eye, and this proves that he is insane. The narrator killed his old friend, admits to the murder, only insane people kill other people without any

reason. According to Zimmerman (34), the narrator is insane because he does not realize that he has committed a crime even in the presence of the police.

In conclusion, as one reads the pages of *The Tell Tale Heart*, he/she clearly sees that the narrator was insane. The narrator in the story through his actions presents the theme of insanity. First, his frequent denial that he is not mad clearly shows the reader that he is mad. In addition, he kills an old man because of his appearance of a pale blue eye, which the narrator referred to as "the Evil Eye". He murdered a human being because of his madness. In addition, he mutilated the old man's corpse without any remorse and guilt. and he tells his actions to the police without even feeling that he had committed a murder and its wrong. The way the protagonist comfortably talks of the old man's murder clearly shows his insanity in the story. The narrator started the story by protesting his sanity, but in the end, it is evident that, he is truly insane through his actions. Only an insane person could do what the narrator did, killing an innocent man and even mutilating his body. Edgar Allan Poe uses the narrator to display the theme of insanity in his book, *The Tell Tale Heart*.

Works Cited

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