

# The tell-tale heart and stone cold



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

In both *The Tell-tale heart* and *Stone Cold* the rules of murder mystery are not applied. In a murder mystery you would expect to find out who the murderer is at the end of the book and you also expect a detective to be carrying out an investigation. Murder mysteries also normally use a 'Red Herring': this is when you are given false clues. Although *The Tell-tale heart* and *Stone Cold* don't involve either of these things and yet they are still murder mysteries. The way in which this is undermined is that you know whom the murderer and the victim is from the start. So the mystery is actually produced by other things.

The plot builds up mystery in *The Tell-tale heart* as you are never sure if the heart is his own that he hears or someone else's. An example of when he is hearing the heart is –

“ It grew louder-louder-louder!”

Personally I believe it is his own heart because it looks as if the author has written it in such a way so when he gets more nervous the noise gets louder. This builds up the tension in *The Tell-tale heart*.

The plot builds up mystery in both *The Tell-Tale heart* and *Stone Cold* in the same way due to the madness of both characters; by this I mean Shelter and the narrator from *The Tell-tale heart*. One reason why I believe that the narrator from *The Tell-tale heart* is mad is because he keeps on telling the reader he is not mad:

“ If you think me mad...”

This seems a little peculiar to me, and unlike the behaviour of a sane person.

We know for a fact that Shelter is mad because he said:

“ Discharged on medical grounds.”

This gives us the impression that Shelter must be mad, as he is such a surreal character anyway the reader practically assumes he is mad anyway.

The character builds up mystery in The Tell-tale heart, as you don't know who the narrator is. I immediately assumed it was a he because he is very boastful:

“ Oh, you would have laughed to see how cunningly I opened the door.”

From my opinion I believe that women are more modest than boastful-which is one reason why I don't believe it is a man. Another reassuring point, which makes me believe the narrator is a man, is that I think that not very many women are violent or do horrific things like the narrator of this story:

“ I cut off the head and the arms and the legs.”

The character builds up the mystery in Stone Cold by using Gail. Gail is a character, which we do seem to feel slightly suspicious of right from after she met Link. For instance: when Link and Gail went begging and then Link couldn't find Gail-when he did she said she was phoning her sister:

“ My sister in Glasgow. She made me promise to keep in touch.”

I somehow get the feeling that Gail is lying about phoning her sister. That wasn't the only thing that made me suspicious of Gail-the way in which she wouldn't let Link leave her, seems unnaturally clingy:

“ Don't go.”

Gail in a way makes the plot more like a murder mystery, as in a murder mystery you don't find out the truth of who the murder is until the end; which is similar to Gail as you don't find out the truth about her as well until the end.

The Language in both The Tell-tale heart and Stone Cold builds up a lot of mystery. Repetition of words, or sentences are used in both The Tell-tale heart and Stone Cold. The use of repetition produces tension and also makes the story more intimidating. This is an example of repetition in Stone Cold:

“ Oh dear, oh dear.”

The Tell-tale heart uses a similar method of repetition to get readers hooked to the story:

“ louder! louder! louder! louder!”

Both Robert Swindells and Edgar Allen Poe use what you call ejaculation; an example of this from Stone Cold is when Shelter says;

“ Ha, ha, ha, Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!”

The narrator of The Tell-tale heart also says:

“ Ha!”

This allows the reader to build up suspense, and you can almost feel that something bad has just happened or is about to happen. For instance, in Shelter's daily routines order 13, just after Shelter laughed we found out that the police had met Shelter and hadn't suspected a thing. Another good use of language is short sentences using monosyllables in The Tell-tale heart:

“ He was stone dead.”

The thing I notice about short sentences in The Tell-tale heart is that they get shorter towards the end. This is to do with the fact that as he gets more nervous, the sentences are made shorter to create the tension and atmosphere. Stone Cold also uses short sentences-especially Shelter. For example when Shelter says:

“ By golly I will.”

By using short sentences and repetition in both Stone Cold and The Tell-tale heart more suspense is added to the story.

One thing I notice about the language is that both protagonists talk directly to the reader. For example when Shelter says:

“ And d'you know something?”

In The Tell-tale heart the narrator also talks to the reader:

“ And have I not told you...”

By talking to the reader directly it is almost as if the characters have stepped out of the book-and perhaps adding a little more potential to the book. The similes used in The Tell-tale heart are also proven very effective:

“...like the thread of the spider.”

By using similes more feeling is produced in the story and a lot more suspense-everything seems more real and like its actually happening . You actually feel like you have stepped into the book. Another way of doing this is by using Onomatopoeia. The Tell-tale heart also uses Onomatopoeia to produce an atmosphere:

“...with it’s dreadful echo.”

I feel that when he says that I can actually here the echoing (with ‘ echo’ being onomatopoeia). I think this is extremely effective.

Punctuation also produces suspense as well as Language. The use of hyphens prove very effective, and make the reader slow down-creating a little more feeling to The Tell-tale heart:

“ Now-again! -hark!”

Stone cold also uses hyphens to stimulate the reader:

“ His face was-well...”

The use of commas also makes the reader slow down and creates suspense. For example in The Tell-tale heart he says:

“...Slowly-very, very slowly.”

This produces an eerie feeling, which is efficient in making the reader create a tense atmosphere. The use of personification highlights words-and makes them appear of more importance:

“...because Death.” (using capital D for death)

The use of Italics in The Tell-tale heart also makes the reader say the words differently:

“ It was a low, dull, quick, sound-much such a sound...”

If the reader reads the Italics with more spirit, you feel a lot more tension and so much more suspense than an ordinary speaking voice. Semi colons also have a surprising effect on the way in which The Tell-tale heart is read:

“...my bones; but I could not see nothing else of the old man’s face or person; for I had...”

By using semi-colons a similar effect is produced to hyphens-the reader pauses when there are semi-colons, which creates tension and suspense.

The viewpoint of the narrators builds up mystery because both protagonists talk to the reader and themselves. An example of when Shelter does this is:

“ Good morning, Shelter.”

An example of when the narrator of The Tell-tale heart does this is when he says:

“...I must scream or die.”

When the narrators do this I get the feeling that they are slightly mad.

Another similarity between both Stone Cold and The Tell-tale heart is that both Shelter and the narrator of The Tell-tale heart is that they both believe that they have good, appropriate reasons for killing-when we know that they are not. For instance, the narrator of The Tell-tale heart believes that the old man has an evil eye-but all he really has an illness which causes a layer of film on top of the eye. Shelter also believes that he has good reasons for killing-to get the beggars of the streets. Both protagonists boast a lot about themselves. This is an example of when Shelter boasts:

“ I was magnificent.”

The protagonist in The Tell-tale heart boasts as well-I think both Shelter's and his personality are altogether quite similar:

“...wild audacity of my perfect triumph.”

Another similarity between them is they are both quite interested in numbers, for instance when Shelter says:

“ Three cheers. The three musketeers. If I had three wishes.”

This is very similar to The Tell-tale heart:

“ And I did this for seven long nights-every night just at midnight...”

This is very effective in its own way as it is getting the reader to think.



Both authors are very successful at producing mystery. Overall, I prefer Stone Cold. This is because it uses a lot of 'black humour.' A good example of this is when Shelter says:

“...and I let him have it with the kit-E-Kat tin.”

I think The Tell-tale heart would've been slightly better if it had involved some humour of some kind-although it is not a bad thing to not involve humour, but in my opinion I prefer books with a little than without. Another thing I prefer about Stone Cold is the fact that there are two narrators. By having two narrators you get two totally different versions of what is happening-I think this makes the book more interesting- as both characters coincide and eventually meet up at the end.