

Tell-tale heart: reliability of the narrator



While reading Edgar Allan Poe's, *The Tell-Tale Heart*, I found myself instantly questioning the credibility of the narrator and whether the events he was explaining were really happening or just a vivid descriptions of his imagination. Throughout the story, the narrator spoke with defensiveness and panic which ultimately made me question the validity and truth in what was being told. Upon completion of the story, I was completely convinced that the narrator was insane; Thus, concluding that he is not reliable.

From the start of the story, the narrator begins by pleading a case of his sanity to try and create credibility in the story he was going to tell. In order to support his case, he explains how he loved the old man and that the old man had never wronged him. The narrator was trying to clarify his reasoning of murdering the old man by stating for it was not the old man, that vexed him, but his Evil Eye. He felt that by detaching the connection of the old man and the eye, the murder was justifiable in his mind, but in reality it ultimately contradicted state of his mind. How can you murder someone you claim to love?

Not only did his apparent dissociation of what was really bothering him undermine his credibility, but the narrator's constant mischievous behavior contradicted his trustworthiness. I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. Despite his plans to kill the old man, the narrator started each day calling him by name in a hearty tone as if everything were ok. He treated the old man one way to his face, but carried a vendetta towards him in the night. On the night of the murder, the narrator admits to feeling pity of the old man's fear, but chuckled at heart.

The narrator further proceeds to show obvious signs of deception and mental instability on the day that the police come to question him. He led the police at length, to his chamber and proceeded to bring chairs to sit in the room where he murdered the old man. Then, again, his mental stability came into question as he began hallucinating. He began to hear a low, dull, quick sound he perceived to be the old man's heart beat. The calm manner he initially had, when allowing the police in, began to diminish. It grew louder" louder" louder! the narrator stated ultimately causing him to confess.

In conclusion, the narrator failed to demonstrate behavior to support his claim of sanity. Every claim he made as to why he was not crazy, he contradicting with his behavior. There was a clear disconnect between reality and what the narrator perceived to be reality which resulted in the murder of the old man.