

GOthic FICTION
a dark and disturbing story,
often with supernatural
elements



EDGAR ALLAN POE'S CREEPY CLASSIC STORY OF
MADNESS AND MURDER

THE TELL-TALE HEART

ADAPTED FOR SCOPE
BY MACK LEWIS

ILLUSTRATIONS
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CHARACTERS

* **RAVENS 1, 2, AND 3:**
narrators

ALL RAVENS: all the
ravens in unison

* **VILLAIN:** the main
teller of the tale

OLD MAN

HEART: the old man's
beating heart

OFFICER

SERGEANT

CONSTABLE

* *Starred characters
are major roles.*



TURN THE PAGE to read 
this frightening story.



AS YOU READ, THINK ABOUT:
MOOD

The mood of a story is the feeling or feelings experienced by the reader. For example, the mood might be joyful, hopeless, or tense. What word or words would you use to describe the mood of this play?

SCENE 1

ALL RAVENS (*flying in*): Caw, caw, caw . . .

RAVEN 1: Long before zombie movies and vampires on TV . . .

RAVEN 2: Back in the days of carriages and candlelight . . .

RAVEN 3: The master of **blood-curdling** stories was a man named Edgar Allan Poe.

RAVEN 1: Poe wrote about murder and morgues . . .

RAVEN 2: About **gargoyles** and graveyards . . .

RAVEN 3: And this tale, about a man who has lost his mind . . .

VILLAIN (*interrupting*): WHAT? I AM not CRAZY! You MAY THINK I am, but I am NOT!

ALL RAVENS: And thus the tale begins.

RAVEN 1: It starts with the old man, who shares an apartment with our villain.

VILLAIN (*calmer*): Yes, that's right, the old man.

OLD MAN (*weakly*): Would you kindly bring me some tea?

VILLAIN (*cheerfully*): Of course. I'll be right there—with the morning paper too.

OLD MAN (*kindly*): Thank you very much. You do not look well today. Didn't you get any sleep last night?

VILLAIN: I am fine, Old Man. If anything, my senses are especially **keen**.

OLD MAN: You seem to have a headache. Let me get up and fix you something.

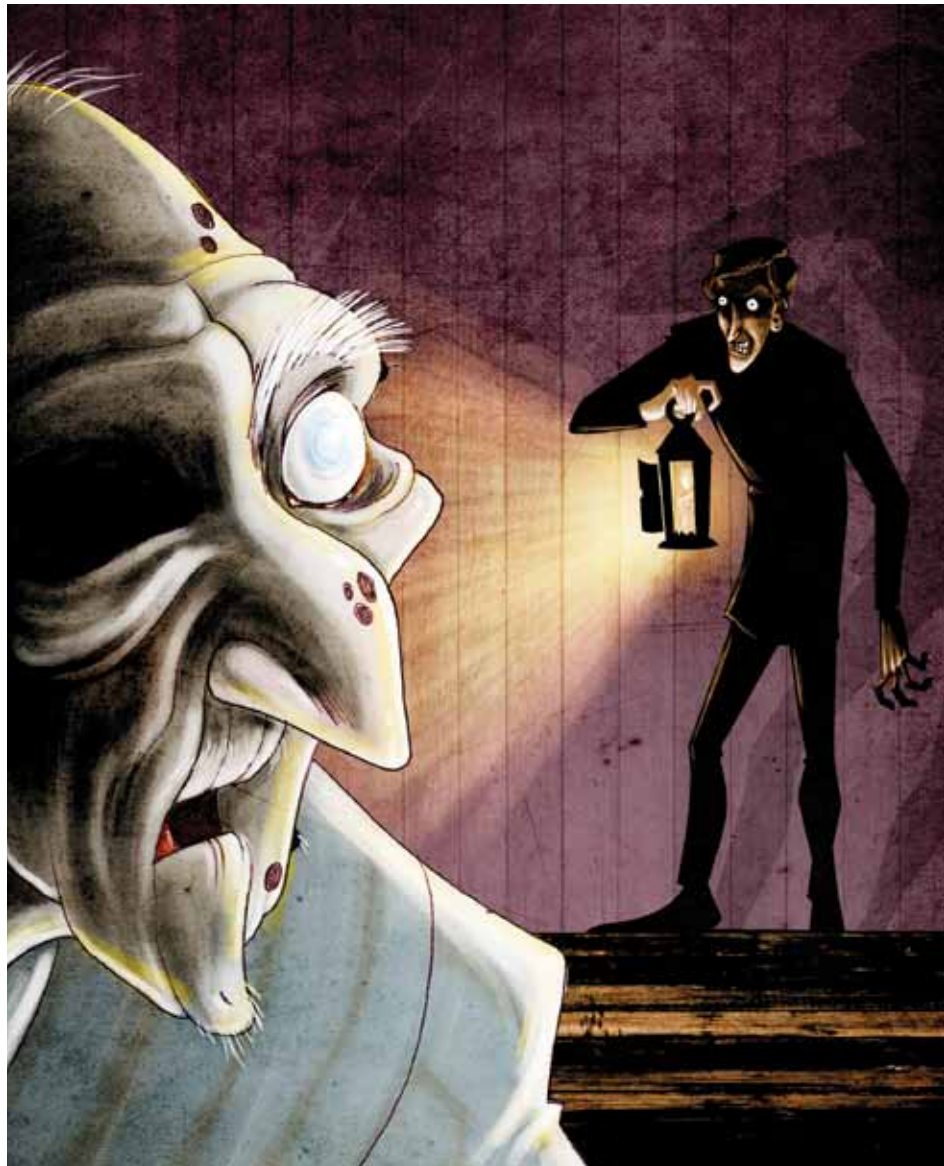
VILLAIN: No, no. You just enjoy your tea.

ALL RAVENS: Such a kind-hearted old man.

VILLAIN: True enough. The old man had never done me harm. But he had this one sickly eye. It was like the eye of a vulture. Whenever it looked at me, my blood ran cold. So slowly, over time, I made up my mind to kill him.

ALL RAVENS: He made up his mind!

VILLAIN (*increasing volume*): I was not crazy. It was his evil eye. It haunted me. It **BELITTLED** me! IT DROVE ME FROM THE ROOM!



I HAD TO RID MYSELF OF THAT EVIL EYE!

SCENE 2

VILLAIN: I set about the task. Night after night, I crept into the old man's room.

ALL RAVENS: He shone a light upon THE EYE.

VILLAIN: But every night THE EYE was closed. So I waited. After all, it was not the old man who **vexed** me, but his eye.

ALL RAVENS: The EVIL EYE!

VILLAIN: On the eighth night, I crept into the old man's room and heard him sit up in bed.

ALL RAVENS: He cried out.

VILLAIN: It was the groan of mortal terror, a low **stifled** sound from the bottom of his soul.

OLD MAN: Who's there?!

VILLAIN: I remained still . . . (*pause*) For hours I stood without moving, barely breathing . . . (*long pause*) And then I shone my light, a single beam, upon THE EYE.

ALL RAVENS: It was open!

VILLAIN: Wide, WIDE OPEN!

And it made me furious to look upon it, dull blue with that hideous, milky film over it.

It chilled the very **MARROW** IN MY BONES!

ALL RAVENS: The vulture's eye!

VILLAIN: And then I heard it.

ALL RAVENS: The beating of the old man's heart.

HEART: Thump-thump, thump-thump, THUMP-THUMP . . .

VILLAIN: FASTER and FASTER and FASTER.

ALL RAVENS: LOUDER and

LOUDER
and LOUDER.

HEART: THUMP, THUMP-THUMP. THUMP-THUMP . . .

VILLAIN: It increased my fury.

I could stand it no longer! I leapt.

ALL RAVENS: Ahhhhhhhhh!

VILLAIN: Ahhhhhhhhh!

OLD MAN: Ahhhhhhhhh!

VILLAIN (*after a lengthy pause*): I smiled when the deed was done, yet for many minutes the old man's heart beat on.

HEART: Bump-bump . . . bump-bump . . . bump-bump . . .

VILLAIN: When it finally **ceased**, I examined the corpse. The old man was dead—stone dead.

RAVEN 2: It was over.

RAVEN 3: The heart was still.

RAVEN 1: THE EYE was closed forever.

VILLAIN: THE EYE would trouble me no more.

SCENE 3

RAVEN 2: An hour later there came a knock at the door.

RAVEN 3: BANG. BANG. BANG.

RAVEN 1: It was the police.

OFFICER: There has been a complaint.

SERGEANT: Your neighbors.

CONSTABLE: They called.

OFFICER: A scream was heard.

SERGEANT: Like this: "Ahhhhhhh!"

CONSTABLE: Yes, "Ahhhhhhh!"

OFFICER: Ahhhhhh!

SERGEANT: Or at least that's what your neighbors were saying.

CONSTABLE: Suspicious, don't you think?

VILLAIN (*to the officers*): Yes,

the shriek.

A shriek of terror.

It was my own . . . during a dream.

ALL RAVENS: Or a nightmare!

OFFICER: May we come in?

SERGEANT: Look around?

CONSTABLE: Investigate?

ALL RAVENS: The villain invited them in.

VILLAIN: Yes, I invited them in.

I wasn't worried, for I had carefully concealed the body of the old man beneath the floorboards. No human eye—not even his—could have detected anything wrong. There was no stain, no blood whatsoever. I had been too clever for that.

OFFICER: Who else lives here with you, sir?

SERGEANT: Yes, with whom do you live?

CONSTABLE: And why isn't he here?

VILLAIN (*to the officers*): Ah, the old man. He is . . . away. You see, there is his room. His bed is made. His belongings are in place.

OFFICER: Is something wrong?

SERGEANT: You seem to have a headache.

CONSTABLE: You should sit down.

VILLAIN: Yes, a fine idea. Perhaps you would join me for a spot of tea?

OFFICER: A spot of tea?

SERGEANT: That would be lovely.

CONSTABLE: Yes, a spot of tea.

ALL RAVENS: He served them tea.



Go online for our showstopping video about Edgar Allan Poe.



VILLAIN: Indeed! For what had I to fear? I served them tea above the very spot where I had hidden the corpse!

OFFICER: Ah, this is fine tea.

SERGEANT: They say green tea is good for you too.

CONSTABLE: But I'd have to say **Darjeeling** is my favorite.

VILLAIN: The officers chatted. I had fooled them well. Could a crazy man have done that?

ALL RAVENS: But soon our villain wished them gone.

VILLAIN: I grew pale. Why wouldn't they leave?

OFFICER: Lots of strange things happening these days.

SERGEANT: People acting oddly.

CONSTABLE: Like there's something in the air.

VILLAIN: Then there came a ringing in my ears.

ALL RAVENS: A muffled buzzing sound.

HEART: Buzz . . . buzz . . . BUZZ . . .

VILLAIN: No doubt I grew very, very pale. I **RAISED MY VOICE**, but still they chatted.

OFFICER: The countryside must be nice this time of year.

SERGEANT: Yes—peaceful, I'd say.

CONSTABLE: What with the fall colors and all.

VILLAIN: The buzzing grew louder until I realized it wasn't buzzing at all, but a ticking sound.

RAVEN 2: Like that of a watch,

RAVEN 3: Or a clock,

RAVEN 1: Or a time bomb.

HEART: TICK TICK TICK . . .

VILLAIN: I paced to and fro!

I clutched my head! But they continued to **blather** on as if nothing was wrong!

OFFICER: A walk in the woods, why, it clears the mind.

SERGEANT: Much like this tea.

CONSTABLE: Yes, it's good for the soul.

VILLAIN: The noise grew louder. And then I knew it for what it was!

HEART: THUMP-THUMP.

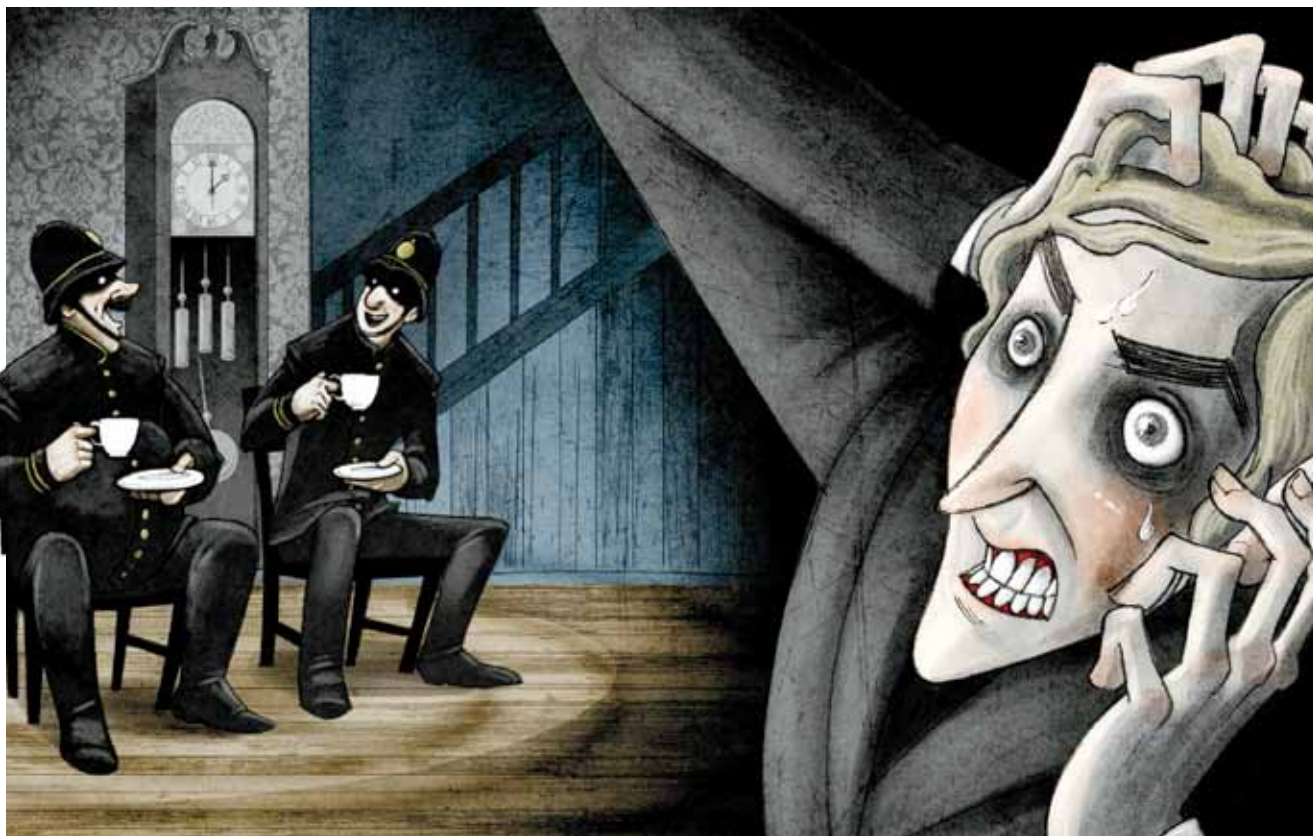
ALL RAVENS: LOUDER, LOUDER, LOUDER.

VILLAIN: Couldn't they hear it? I paced the floor with heavy strides. I hissed! I gestured with my arms!

OFFICER: Anyway, why do they call it **Darjeeling**?

SERGEANT: I think it has something to do with where it's grown.

CONSTABLE: In India . . . unless



I am mistaken.

HEART: THUMP-THUMP, THUMP-THUMP, THUMP-THUMP.

VILLAIN: Then it came to me.

They KNEW! They were mocking me with their innocent smiles and sips of tea!

ALL RAVENS: Oh, the agony!

HEART: THUMP-THUMP, THUMP-THUMP, THUMP-THUMP.

OFFICER: Well, all seems well here.

SERGEANT: We should be reporting back to the station.

CONSTABLE: Thank you kindly for the tea, young man.

VILLAIN: Louder, LOUDER STILL! I could bear it no longer.

ALL RAVENS: He could bear it no longer!

HEART: THUMP-THUMP, THUMP-THUMP, THUMP . . .

VILLAIN: Villains! Monsters! I did it! I confess! Tear up the floor! Here! Here! It is the BEATING OF THE OLD MAN'S HIDEOUS HEART!

EPILOGUE

VILLAIN: That's RIGHT. I did it! I SHAN'T tell you WHAT HAPPENED next . . . NOR shall I tell you WHAT'S to happen now, if YOU don't stop STARING at me with your VULTURE EYES! ●

GO BACK IN TIME

What If You Lived in 1845?

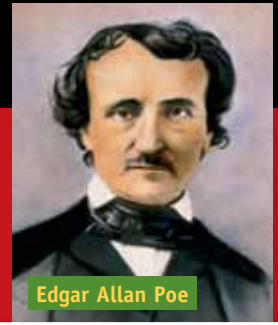
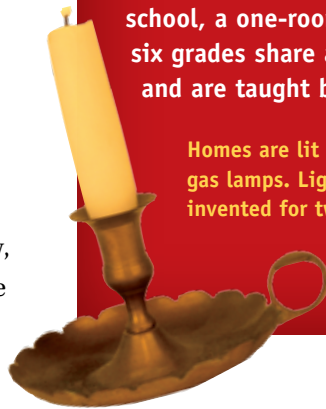
Dirt. Disease. Backbreaking farm work. And no iPods! Life was rough.

The year is 1845. Your mom is reading "The Tell-Tale Heart" by the famous author Edgar Allan Poe to you and your little brother. Reading is the main source of entertainment. After all, there are no video games, cell phones, or movies. Authors like Poe are celebrities—the Lady Gagas of their day.

As your mom reads by candlelight, you glance over at your brother. He has strep throat, and you are worried. Antibiotics have not been discovered, and your brother's condition is very serious. Many kids die of diseases that will one day be easily cured.

Like most Americans, you live in a rural area. Today you stayed home to help out on your family's farm—which is not unusual for kids to do. Tomorrow you will go back to your school, a one-room schoolhouse where six grades share a single classroom and are taught by the same teacher.

Homes are lit by candles and gas lamps. Light bulbs won't be invented for two decades.



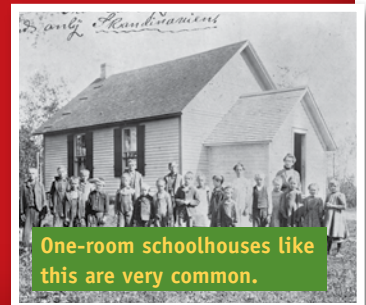
Edgar Allan Poe



Photography has just been invented. Having your portrait "done" is all the rage.



Leeches are thought to cure the sick by sucking out "bad" blood.



One-room schoolhouses like this are very common.

CONTEST

Write About Mood What is the mood of "The Tell-Tale Heart"? How does the writer create that mood? That is, what images, words, ideas, or other details caused you to feel the way you felt? Write a paragraph explaining your answers. Send it to **TELL-TALE CONTEST**. Five winners will get Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Madness* illustrated by Gris Grimly. See page 2 for details.



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