

**“The Tell-Tale Heart” Questions and Answers**

1. What does the story's title mean?

**Answer**: The story's title refers to the beating heart that eventually drives the narrator to confess his crime. The reader is led to believe it is the beating of the old man's heart he hears, which is impossible, considering the old man has been murdered and is dismembered (cut up), leaving only three possibilities: (1) the narrator is insane; (2) the narrator feels guilt over the crime and hears his own heart; (3) both.

Quite literally, the reader can see that it is the **heart that is telling the tale of the murder**

1. The narrator claims he is not mad (crazy). What evidence do we have that he is?

**Answer**: (1) He murders an old man he loves just because the old man has a "vulture eye" (probably glaucoma); (2) He hears sounds from Heaven and Hell; (3) He dismembers (cuts off all the limbs of) the dead man's corpse; (4) He hears the **beating of a dead man's heart**; (5) He is paranoid; (6) He is "nervous--very, very dreadfully nervous." (7) He always say’s “I’m not mad” (overcompensating)

1. What does the narrator do with the dead man's body?

**Answer**: The narrator dismembers the body and carefully places it under a few floor boards in the old man's room. He's confident that his crime will not be discovered, even inviting the investigator to sit on a chair directly above the dead body.

1. Why does the narrator want to kill the old man?

**Answer**: I'll let him tell you: "Object there was none. Passion there was none. I loved the old man. He had never wronged me. He had never given me insult. For his gold I had no desire. I think it was his eye! yes, it was this!" (172).

\*He is afraid of the old man’s eye because he thinks it looks evil

1. The narrator visits the old man's bedroom every night for seven nights before killing him on the eighth night. What finally causes him to commit the act?

**Answer**: 2 reasons:

(1) **on the eighth night the light shines on the old man’s eye,** the other nights he was sleeping and the narrator could not see his eye

(2) **He hears the old man's heart**. The narrator says, "It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into rage...the hellish tattoo of the heart increased. It grew quicker and quicker, and louder and louder every instant...I thought the heart must burst. And now a new anxiety seized me--the sound would be heard by a neighbor! The old man's hour had come!"

1. The two controlling symbols in the story are the **eye** and the **heart**. What might these two symbols represent?

**Answer**: The old man's eye is **"pale blue**, with a film over it," indicating **a lack of visual clarity and reliability**. In **this sense the eye symbolizes the narrator insomuch that all the information we receive** comes through his distorted mind, much in the same way everything the old man sees is filtered through his distorted eye. Furthermore, the story is told through the narrator's perspective, who claims his actions are on account of the distorted eye, which suggests the point of view is literally and symbolically filtered through the old man's eye. Traditionally the heart symbolizes the emotional center of the individual. In "The Tell-Tale Heart," it symbolizes the narrator's guilt.

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| **EYES:**  **Think of the old saying “*The eyes are the window to the soul*”, if someone has evil looking eyes they must therefore have an evil soul too**  **HEART:**  **Could represent passion/fear/guilt** | https://i.pinimg.com/originals/e2/6f/62/e26f6230025219482835af3afbbd43bb.jpg  ***I swear I’m actually very Kind! Love me!!!*** |

1. Give examples of how Poe creates suspense in the story?

**Answer**:

(1) Foreshadowing - "I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him."

(2) Pacing - the narrator describes the murder over several pages; the scene where the narrator enters the old man’s room and watches him is very slow and make the reader want to see more action

(3) Dangerous Action - the narrator invites the police officer to sit directly above the dead body.