A Tell-Tale Heart Questions Aaron Su December 6th 2020

EN9

1. At the beginning of the story, the narrator claims that he will prove to the reader that he isn't mad by telling his story calmly and accurately. As the story progresses, the narrator provides several reasons to the reader to “prove” his sanity. What are they? Include 3 reasons to your answer.

In the story, A Tell-Tale Heart by Edgar Allan Poe, the narrator tried to convince the reader that he is sane by providing several reasons. The first piece of evidence is when the narrator stated “You fancy me mad. Madmen know nothing…...I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him.” This quote states that he was so patient at killing the man that he should not be the killer. Another piece of evidence of the narrator proving his saness is when he stated “Why would a madman have been so wise at this? (Paragraph 2).” In this quote, he was trying to convey that a madman would not be so patient in killing the old man. The final example is when the narrator stated “If you think me mad, you will think so long when I describe the wise precautions I took on concealing the body.” The narrator stated that an insane killer would just leave the body there and not do anything about it. He then stated that he did hide the body; thus, thinking he was a sane person.

1. The story is told in a first-person point of view, which creates a problem of reliability. What evidence do we have that the narrator can not be completely trusted to give the truth? Provide specific evidence.

The narrator in A Tell-Tale Heart by Edgar Allan Poe should not be trusted to give the truth for many reasons. In the first paragraph, the narrator states that he could hear heaven and earth. This is quite weird to me since it is exactly what a mentality ill person would say. During the course of the story, he stated many times that he is not insane. To me, it feels quite ironic for someone to say that because it is out of the blue. In the second paragraph, he states that he only wanted to kill the old man because of his pale blue eye. A normal person would just ignore it and continue with their lives, but the narrator decided to make a huge deal to the person.

1. \*There are two main symbols of the story: the man’s eye and the heart. Discuss what each symbol represents in the story. Include direct quotations with page numbers in your answer.

I think that Man’s eye represents the view that the old man possesses on the narrator. The eye physically allows the viewing of someone. I can support my theory when the narrator stated “I think it was his eye! yes , - it was this! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture”. Vultures are birds that have excellent eye-sight. This could also explain why the narrator was proving his sanness in the first paragraph. The old man had reminded the narrator about the people who were critizing him about his actions.

I think the Man’s heart represents the guilt of the narrator after killing the man. In the last paragraph, he stated “it is the beating of his hideous heart!”. Since the narrator said that he was already dead, it should not be the man’s heartbeat; but, instead the guilt in his mind. This is also a common occurrence in people who are suffering from a mental illness.

1. Edgar Allan Poe uses imagery to convey the feelings of horror and create an eerie mood throughout the story. He employs both visual imagery and sound imagery. Provide an example of each type of imagery from the story.

Edgar Allan Poe uses a lot of descriptive words in the Tell-Tale Heart. One such example is “It was a low, dull, quick sound - much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton (Paragraph 17)”. Mr. Poe has provided clear examples on which type of sound that the narrator was hearing. An example of visual imagery from the story is when the narrator said “I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye - not even his - could have detected anything wrong.”. This detailed sentence provided a clear image to the reader that he hid the body in a very secretive place under the floorboards.

1. It is said that “The Tell-Tale Heart” provides a remarkably detailed insight into the workings of the human mind and our imagination. In your opinion, what is the story saying about the mind and our imagination?

I think that “The Tell-Tale Heart” is saying that our minds are very complex and something small can influence our minds greatly. For example, the heart and the eye. The narrator was spooked after he killed the person because he felt the old man’s heart beat a few minutes ago.