

EXERCISES ON ANALYSING ‘THE
TELL-TALE HEART’ BY EDGAR ALLAN
POE

BY

M.A. TOLENTINO

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EXTRACT

The Tell-Tale Heart (1843)

EDGAR ALLAN POE

It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain; but once conceived, it haunted me day and night. 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! One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture — a pale blue eye, with a film over it. Whenever it fell upon me, my blood ran cold; and so by degrees — very gradually — I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever.



Philippe de Champaigne, *Saint Augustine*, c. 1645-1650, oil on canvas.
Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

EXERCISE 1

Please read the extract from *The Tell-Tale Heart* (1843) on Page 3 and answer the following questions in full sentences.

1. In the first sentence of the extract, the speaker says that an “idea” entered their brain. In your view what was this ‘idea’? Please provide at least two pieces of evidence from the extract to support your argument.

2. ‘Repetition’ is a literary technique in which an author repeats a word or phrase two or more times within the same sentence or within sentences located close to each other.

Can you provide a quote from the extract in which Poe uses repetition? Why would you say that this is repetition?

3. **Challenge**

‘Characterization’ refers to the way in which an author uses language in their text to describe the personality of a character to the reader. Authors will often make use of literary techniques in order to characterize their characters.

Consider the following techniques used by Poe in the extract:

- “**For his gold I had no desire**” is *symbolism* – the word ‘gold’ symbolises wealth.
- “**One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture**” is a *simile*, as ‘resembled that of’ has the same meaning as ‘was like’.
- “**My blood ran cold**” is *tactile imagery*, as it causes the reader to imagine the feeling of having ‘cold blood’ or shivering. The word ‘tactile’ refers to the sense of touch.

How does Poe use the three techniques above to *characterize* the old man? (i.e. how are they used to describe the old man’s personality to the reader?). Please analyse each technique separately.