



Developing | Exemplar Essay

## The Tell-Tale Heart

### A Night of Death



#### Plot and Ideas

The storyline establishes a plausible context and is built on an exposition that supports the establishment of the plot ("the clock strikes midnight I have the same dream that someone walks in my room and just stares at me while I sleep"). Very little description is included to establish a conflict or central idea ("I feel a presence in the same room as me"). Plot and ideas are evident but do not fully address the demands of the task.



#### Development and Elaboration

The narrative attempts to establish a setting but would be improved with additional description for clarity ("every night at midnight"). Little character development exists to advance the story beyond what is introduced in Poe's story ("I have aged quite much"). Internal dialogue is present but remains minimal ("Still I knew he was there").



#### Organization and Sequencing

The narrative attempts to incorporate some pacing and to establish a beginning, middle, and end. The narrative includes some transitions ("Suddenly" and "Then") but does not clearly signal shifts in time ("Every night when the clock strikes midnight" and "On the night I am going to tell you about"). The narrative includes a somewhat confusing resolution as the narrator describes his own death and events that follow ("as I lay here in the floorboards, I won't loath the caretaker, but rather, praise him").



#### Language and Style

The narrative uses some descriptive words ("dreary," "coughs and sighs") and figurative language in an attempt to convey character traits ("Fear was building up as tall as a skyscraper" and "My heart was beating very loud like a clock"). The writer works to build the narrator's voice, but the outcome is inconsistent and ineffective. The narrative contains some use of language to suggest suspense/horror ("it was a very gloomy dark and stormy night"), but it is unoriginal.



#### Using Exemplars in Your Lessons

Exemplar essays are tools to take abstract descriptions and make them more concrete for students. One way to use them is to print the clean copies of the essays and allow students to use the rubric to make notes or even find examples of important elements of an essay - thesis statements, introductions, evidence, conclusions, transitions, etc. Teachers can also use exemplars to illustrate what each score point within a trait 'looks like' in an authentic student essay. For additional ideas, please see "25 Ways to Use Exemplar Essays" by visiting the Curriculum Resources page in Help.

## The Tell-Tale Heart



### Notes

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#### A Night of Death

This year has been long and dreary for me as I have aged quite much.

I sleep with my room as black as the night and it makes me feel safe at night. Every night when the clock strikes midnight I have the same dream that someone walks in my room and just stares at me while I sleep. Sometimes I think I see a light shining in the hallway. I know not what the man looks like, however I know it is a man because of the coughs and sighs and laughter he drags never ending throughout the house.

On the night I am going to tell you about it was a very gloomy dark and stormy night. I usually sleep like a rock but, this night was different. I stay silent for more than an hour and I feel a presence in the same room as me. Fear was building up as tall as a skyscraper. My heart was beating very loud like a clock. I think I see a light in the hall but, maybe not because it was gone. It's hard to tell with these old eyes. Still I knew he was there.

Then suddenly I hear a loud shriek along with a yell of my own. Then the air is coming out of my nostrils and my mouth was clogged by a pillow. My death was swift, my pain excruciating, but as I lay here in the floorboards, I won't loath the caretaker, but rather, praise him for his brilliance.