Name\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Lit. Notes

**“The Tell-Tale Heart” by Edgar Allan Poe**

**Common Core Lesson on MOOD and TONE and WORD CHOICE**

**Mood** is the feeling or atmosphere the writer creates for the reader. The events and setting, and the ways these things are described, contribute to the creation of mood. Poe creates a mood of **horror**.

Part I: Close Reading of Text

I had my head in, and was about to open the lantern, when my thumb slipped upon the tin fastening, and the old man sprang up in bed, crying out --"Who's there?"

I kept quite still and said nothing. For a whole hour I did not move a muscle, and in the meantime I did not hear him lie down. He was still sitting up in the bed listening; --just as I have done, night after night, hearkening to the death watches in the wall.

Presently I heard a slight groan, and I knew it was the groan of mortal terror. It was not a groan of pain or of grief --oh, no! --it was the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul when overcharged with awe. I knew the sound well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me. I say I knew it well. I knew what the old man felt, and pitied him, although I chuckled at heart. I knew that he had been lying awake ever since the first slight noise, when he had turned in the bed. His fears had been ever since growing upon him. He had been trying to fancy them causeless, but could not. He had been saying to himself --"It is nothing but the wind in the chimney --it is only a mouse crossing the floor," or "It is merely a cricket which has made a single chirp." Yes, he had been trying to comfort himself with these suppositions: but he had found all in vain. *All in vain*; because Death, in approaching him had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim. And it was the mournful influence of the unperceived shadow that caused him to feel --although he neither saw nor heard --to *feel* the presence of my head within the room.

1. Discuss what is happening in the passage.
2. Are the narrator’s intentions good or bad? Provide textual evidence that supports your answer.
3. Use the chart below to draw some conclusions about the narrator.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Something the narrator does or says** | **What does this suggest about the narrator? *That he…*** | **Explain your assertion** |
| “For a whole hour I did not move a muscle.” | Does not want to get caught | Only someone with a great deal of fear that he could be heard could stand perfectly still for an hour. |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |

1. What is the setting of the passage and how does it add to the mood of horror?
2. What sounds help to create the mood of horror?
3. **Tone** is the writer’s or speaker’s attitude toward a subject, character or audience. It is conveyed primarily through the authors’ **word choice**, imagery, details, figures of speech and syntax. One word to describe the tone of this passage is **menacing**.

Place a check mark when you complete each of the following tasks.

* 1. Reread the passage and ***circle the nouns*** in the passage that seem particularly vivid that help establish a menacing tone. \_\_\_\_
  2. Put a ***box around the verbs*** that create a sense of menace. \_\_\_\_\_
  3. ***Underline examples of imagery*** and detail that help create the tone. \_\_\_\_

1. What pattern do you see in Poe’s use of specific nouns? How does this pattern create a sense of menacing?
2. What pattern do you see in Poe’s use of vivid verbs? How does this pattern create a sense of menacing?
3. What pattern do you see in Poe’s use of imagery? How could you categorize the imagery (which sense… visual, auditory, tactile, etc.?)How does this pattern create a sense of menacing?

Part II: Literary Devices in Text

1. "*All in vain*; because Death, in approaching him had stalked with his black shadow before him, and enveloped the victim.”
   1. What kind of figurative language (figure of speech) does the author use?
   2. The author compares death to a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ in order to increase the feeling of menace by suggesting that …
2. “I knew what the old man felt, and I pitied him, although I chuckled at heart."
   1. What is contrasted in this sentence?
   2. What literary technique is used to highlight this contrast?
   3. The author reveals that the narrator feels both \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ at the same time.

* 1. How does this contrast increase the menacing tone?

1. *“*I knew the sound [of the groan] well. Many a night, just at midnight, when all the world slept, it has welled up from my own bosom, deepening, with its dreadful echo, the terrors that distracted me.

*\*well-to* rise or flow to the surface from inside the ground or the body

* 1. What other things might be described as "welling"?
  2. The author uses the verb "welled" in order to compare the way the groan comes out of the man to

\_

* 1. This type of comparison is called a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

because it is not a directly stated comparison, but

implied.

The comparison contributes to the sense of menace because…