

Plan a circle: “The Tell-Tale Heart”

Edgar Allan Poe (1843) · public-domain short story · grades 8–11 · ~1 week / two meetings. Rights: Public domain.
Kit section 5 (group agreement & calendar) filled in for one text — a finished plan students see before writing their own. **Tinted italic** = sample answers.

Text, group, and target

Text / author / edition	<i>“The Tell-Tale Heart” — Edgar Allan Poe (1843). Public-domain short story.</i>
Group / period / dates	<i>Omar’s group · Period __ · Meetings __ & __</i>
Grade / TEKS target (p. 3)	Grade 8 · §110.24 — 7(A): theme through characters/events; 6(C,D): support inferences; 1(D): student-led discussion.
Learning intention	We are learning to explain how the narrator’s unreliable voice reveals a theme about guilt and the mind.
Success criteria	I bring one open question, cite two details with locations, respond to a peer, and name how my thinking changed.

Reading map & calendar

Chunk	Read through	Meeting date · leader
1	<i>The plan, the seven nights of watching, and the killing.</i>	<i>Tue · Leader: Omar</i>
2	<i>The police visit and the confession.</i>	<i>Thu · Leader: Bea</i>

Members & first-meeting jobs (p. 7 roles)

Member	First job	Rotates to (next meeting)
<i>Omar</i>	<i>Questioner</i>	<i>Summarizer</i>
<i>Bea</i>	<i>Summarizer</i>	<i>Clarifier</i>
<i>Kai</i>	<i>Clarifier</i>	<i>Evidence tracker</i>
<i>Zoe</i>	<i>Predictor</i>	<i>Questioner</i>

Text-specific discussion questions (open — more than one answer)

- **Predict:** The narrator insists he is sane — what will his behavior reveal instead? What clue hints at it?
- **Question:** Why might Poe let the narrator tell his own story? How does that shape our trust?
- **Clarify:** What is the “beating” the narrator hears at the end — literal or guilt?
- **Summarize:** Order the events of the night of the murder, without opinion.
- **Interpret the theme:** How does the narrator’s voice reveal a theme about guilt or madness? Use two details.

Optional Jigsaw lenses (p. 4): *Character* (the narrator) · *Point of view* (unreliable first person) · *Language* (repetition, dashes, exclamation) · *Plot* (control unraveling) · *Theme* (guilt and conscience).

Sample 3–2–1 notes: Kai, point of view lens

Name: Kai · Home group: Omar's group · Period ___ · Meetings ___ & ___ · Section: "The Tell-Tale Heart," Chunk 2 · Expert lens: Point of view

What a finished prep looks like. Kit section 6 / Organizer A completed for one reader, so students can compare their notes to a strong model.

Questions <i>Is the narrator mad, or only guilty?</i> <i>Why confess when he had gotten away with it?</i>	3 · Important ideas <i>1. The narrator claims sanity while describing obsession.</i> <i>2. He stalks the old man for seven nights before acting.</i> <i>3. He confesses under an imagined heartbeat.</i>
Vocabulary <i>acute = sharp, heightened.</i> <i>dissimulation = hiding true feelings.</i>	2 · Supporting details <i>1. His repeated "nervous — very, dreadfully nervous" (opening) undercuts the sanity claim.</i> <i>2. His shriek to the police (ending) shows guilt breaking through his control.</i>

1 · Summary in my own words

A narrator kills an old man over his "eye," hides the body, then confesses when he thinks he hears the heart.

Bring to the circle

My interpretation: *The mind cannot escape its own guilt, no matter how it insists it is calm.*

Synthesis (two lenses): *The unreliable narrator (point of view) proves the theme: his own telling exposes the guilt he denies. Text points: the sanity claim (Chunk 1) and the confession (Chunk 2).*

After discussion: *My thinking became clearer once the group compared evidence.*

TEKS evidence: 6(C,D) supported inference; 7(A) theme through characters/events; 1(D) response to a peer. · Pair with the PlotPoint "The Tell-Tale Heart" room.