

$$18/20 + 18/20 + 46/60 \rightarrow 82/100$$

17/12/2012

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Littérature américaine

Contrôle continu

II Terminology

18/20

1. A metonymy is a figure of speech that refers to an object by naming only a part of this object. For instance, in "A Late Encounter with the Enemy" by Flannery O'Connor, the students are designated by their black gown.
2. An allegory is a representation of an abstract meaning through concrete or material forms. In "Collectors" by Raymond Carver, the house is an allegory of the Purgatory where the unnamed narrator is waiting for a sign of damnation or redemption.

III 1. The Great Gatsby: the narrator Nick Carraway comes from the West of the United States.

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2. "The Ballad of the Sad Café": Miss Amelia Evans waited for three years the return of Marvin Macy or Cousin Lymon before closing the café.

I. 1. The excerpt under study is ^{from} Edgar Allan Poe's short story "The Tell-Tale Heart". This ^{is the} story of a murder: the unnamed narrator ^{who} shows a hawk with an old man, tells the reader how he killed him in order to get rid of his evil eye. Although the narrator prides himself on his mental balance and on his superior skills, he actually turns out to be a prey to madness. This mental collapse throws light on the defect of ~~the~~ Reason and consequently on

the victory of Passion, as the old man's heart has the last word.

The passage under study is set in the middle of the short story: the narrator has just thrown his head in the chamber when he makes a slight noise that wakes the old man up with a start. He remains still and waits. But the old man doesn't lie down: he stays awake and starts groaning. During one hour, the narrator focuses on what the old man is thinking and feeling. He relishes knowing how terror is growing upon him. The narrator knows that the old man knows that he is going to die. The passage ends as it has begun with the mention of the narrator's head in the old man's bedroom.

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2. Time plays a major part in the passage. It is mentioned first directly by the temporal references that follow: "night after night" (l. 5), "many a night, just at midnight" (l. 8). These are analepses that refer to the nights when the narrator was awake, overwhelmed by terror, just like the old man now. We know then thanks to the comparison that the scene takes place at night and more precisely at midnight which is a common feature of ~~the~~ Gothic stories. Midnight is the time for transition and transformation; it's also the time for the manifestation of the magic and the occult. Darkness is the perfect setting for an invisible threat and an impending danger of death. The last temporal reference directly expressed refers to a duration: "for a while hour" (l. 3). During this time, the boundaries between the narrator and the old man seem to blur as the first knows exactly what the latter is thinking and feeling.

Time is also conveyed indirectly by the reference to "the death watches" (l. 5) those insects that live in the walls of the houses. A watch is used to count hours and in this solid compound, it's associated with death, that is the end of time, as if to emphasize that time for the old man is over: his last hour has come.

Finally all the references to time leads to the same idea: the old man is going to die.

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3. We can find a lot of repetitions in the last paragraph: for instance, at the end, the repetition of the expression "all in vain" (l. 16) or of the verb "to feel" (l. 18-19) to emphasize the binary rhythm that characterizes the balanced mind of the narrator who intends to bring himself into relief as suggested by the use of italics for the expression or the verb when they are repeated for the second time. But the more relevant repetitions ~~pertain~~ verbs and they appear more than twice. On the one hand, we have "I knew" repeated five times of which three (l. 8, 10 and 11) form an anaphora. By this figure of speech, the narrator ~~is~~ ^{emphasizes} his all-mighty knowledge, his omniscience: he is able to enter the old man's mind and to know his feelings, as if he was God. On the other hand, we have ~~have~~ to deal with another anaphora: the repetition of verbal forms in the past perfect continuous ("he had been lying" l. 11, "he had been ~~trying~~... saying" l. 13). In this case the subject is the old man. So we notice that the two characters oppose ^{each other} ~~themselves~~: I / he, present / past perfect continuous. While the narrator underlines the accuracy of his knowledge the old man is suffering through terror. But the use of the same figure of speech for both and the fact that the narrator knows what the old man is feeling, introduce the theme of the double, ^{which is} recurrent in Poe's fictional works.

✓ The old man stands for the double of the narrator, some kind of rival that has to disappear.

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4. With the reference ^{to} of the narrator's head at the end of the passage, we come back full circle to the beginning where we can find the same reference (l. 1). It indicates that the action, stopped for a moment, is going to restart. During the whole passage, the narrator focused on the old man's mind and feelings, comparing them with his own states of mind and feelings in previous similar circumstances. However, either the head or the mind refer to the same action: reason. The observed rational mind of the narrator try to keep everything under control.

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