
The Tell-Tale Heart: The Guilt Of Insanity Character

Insane, by definition, means in a state of mind which prohibits usual perception, behavior, or social interactions (Oxford). The narrator of "Tell Tale Heart" killed an old man he loved because of the man's eye. When the police came, the narrator could "hear" the old man's heartbeat, which drove the narrator into confessing that he killed the old man. The narrator is not guilty by reason of insanity and should be put into a mental hospital because had no true motive, showed signs of insanity, and heard things that were never really there.

First off, the narrator had no valid motive to kill the old man. "I think it was his eye! yes, it was this! He had the eye 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" (Poe). The narrator wanted to kill the old man all because of his eye, with no other reasoning. The old man had done nothing to upset the narrator, but his eye bothered him so much that he had to kill the man. The poor old fellow probably had cataracts, arcus senilis corneae, pterygium, or some other kind of eye disease. The old man could not help what was going on with his eye, but the narrator found such a small thing so bothersome that he felt the only way to fix his problem was to kill the man.

Secondly, the narrator exhibited habits of an insane person, such as sleep watching. "So you see he would have had to be a very profound old man, kindeed, to suspect that every night, just at twelve, I looked in upon him while he slept" (Poe). The narrator watched the old man each night for a week as he slept. He looked for the night that the "vulture eye" was open as the old man slept so he could attack it. But alas, the night never came; for on the eighth night, the old man was startled awake, and the deed had to be done. However, each of the nights before, the narrator would just wait at the doorway and peer in very slowly. He did this for at least an hour every night.

After the narrator killed the old bloke, he could hear the dead man's heartbeat. The sound in his head started as a ringing, low and vague. But as time went on, the ringing got louder, and more distinct. The sound of the dead man's living heartbeat agonized the narrator. It drove him out of his mind, into confessing. "'Villians!' I shrieked, 'dissemble no more! I admit the deed! - tear up the planks! - here, here! - it is the beating of his hideous heart!'" (Poe). The old man was dead, yet the narrator continued to hear his heart beating. He could not possibly be hearing the heartbeat, for the man was dead. This leads to the conclusion that the narrator's mind fabricated the sounds, and he couldn't make it go away, which is a sign of psychosis.

On the other hand, people may say that the narrator is guilty of the crimes he committed because he tried to cover up the evidence. Although the narrator did try to cover his tracks, he is still insane/psychotic and cannot be tried as if he is not. In addition, some insane people, depending on the type of insanity they have, are still able to think for themselves. Take schizophrenia for example; they can still use their minds, but their minds create a reality in which things happen that are not occurring in the real world.

The narrator is not guilty by reason of insanity and should be put in a mental institute. The narrator had no reasoning, other than his bothersome eye, to kill the old man; he watched the

old man as he slept; and he heard the sound of a dead heart. All this leads to the conclusion that the narrator is insane. Shall he be put in prison, he will not get the help he needs.

So, what will happen: let an insane man live in prison without treatment, or put him in a ministration where he can get said treatments?