The Tell-Tale Heart

Use this key to check answers and read the explanations.

1. From which point of view is The Tell-Tale Heart told?
   - A. First person
   - B. Second person throughout
   - C. Third-person objective
   - D. Third-person omniscient

   Correct answer: A. First person
   The narrator tells their own account using I and describes events from that perspective.

2. How does the narrator make the account sound as though it is directed at a listener?
   - A. By inserting a signed letter from the police
   - B. By naming the reader in a chapter heading
   - C. By repeatedly addressing a you
   - D. By citing a password shared with the old man

   Correct answer: C. By repeatedly addressing a you
   Directly addressing you makes the account sound like an argument or explanation offered to someone.

3. Which sense does the narrator claim has become especially acute?
   - A. Smell
   - B. Hearing
   - C. Taste
   - D. Touch

   Correct answer: B. Hearing
   The narrator begins by claiming extraordinary hearing and later describes an increasingly troubling sound.

4. Which feature of the old man does the narrator say causes unease?
   - A. His watch
   - B. His shoes
   - C. His handwriting
   - D. One of his eyes

   Correct answer: D. One of his eyes
   The narrator fixates on the eye even while claiming affection for the old man.

5. Which motive does the narrator explicitly reject near the beginning?
   A. Being disturbed by his eye
   B. Wanting the old man’s money
   C. Wanting the reader to believe the account
   D. Feeling unsettled by what was heard
   Correct answer: B. Wanting the old man’s money
   The narrator says the old man’s gold was of no interest.

6. How does the narrator’s manner during the officers’ visit change?
   A. Initial confidence gives way to agitation.
   B. Initial panic gives way to complete calm.
   C. The narrator falls silent and stays silent.
   D. The narrator leaves before engaging with the visitors.
   Correct answer: A. Initial confidence gives way to agitation.
   The conversation begins with confidence. As the sound grows more troubling, the narrator speaks more forcefully and becomes agitated.

7. How do the officers behave while the narrator is becoming distressed?
   A. They hand over a witness’s written statement.
   B. They immediately say they hear a heartbeat.
   C. They make the old man tell his story.
   D. They continue to talk and smile.
   Correct answer: D. They continue to talk and smile.
   The officers’ calm behavior contrasts with the narrator’s distress. Their thoughts are available only through the narrator’s guesses.

8. What breaks the conversation at the end of the story?
   A. The officers silently leave.
   B. A neighbor arrives with a letter.
   C. The narrator confesses.
   D. The narrator wakes up from a dream.
   Correct answer: C. The narrator confesses.
   The narrator can no longer bear the sound and admits what happened.

9. What effect does the first-person narration have on the reader’s knowledge of the officers?

A. The reader gets the narrator’s interpretation and has no direct access to their thoughts.
B. The reader hears each officer give a separate account.
C. The reader is told which officer first detects the sound.
D. An outside narrator explains why the officers are smiling.

Correct answer: A. The reader gets the narrator’s interpretation and has no direct access to their thoughts.
All details are filtered through the central narrator. The story supplies no independent description of the officers’ thoughts.

10. What does the repeated emphasis on the increasing loudness of the sound do near the ending?

A. It changes the story into a new narrator’s account.
B. It establishes a calm, even rhythm after the confession.
C. It shows that the officers agree on what they hear.
D. It intensifies the narrator’s distress and accelerates the scene.

Correct answer: D. It intensifies the narrator’s distress and accelerates the scene.
Repetition and increasingly urgent language heighten the pressure leading to the confession.

11. Which contradiction most strongly invites readers to question the narrator’s reliability?

A. The narrator speaks in the past tense about earlier events.
B. The narrator introduces the old man before the police arrive.
C. The narrator insists on calm judgment while describing fear and extreme perceptions.
D. The narrator mentions a house with more than one room.

Correct answer: C. The narrator insists on calm judgment while describing fear and extreme perceptions.
The effort to appear controlled clashes with the account’s disturbed perceptions and urgent delivery.

12. The narrator compares a low beating sound to a muffled watch. What does the comparison primarily emphasize?

A. The exact hour of the visit
B. The beat’s soft, regular quality
C. The high value of the watch
D. A melody played by the officers

Correct answer: B. The beat’s soft, regular quality
The comparison helps a reader imagine a rhythmic sound whose force grows in the narrator’s perception.

13. Which statement describes an inference the narrator makes, rather than an action readers see the officers perform?

A. The officers smile.
B. The officers sit down.
C. The officers talk.
D. The officers know what happened and are mocking the narrator.

Correct answer: D. The officers know what happened and are mocking the narrator.
The officers' knowledge and intent are the narrator's interpretation. Sitting, talking, and smiling are reported actions.

14. Which interpretation connects the title to the plot most directly?

A. The sound the narrator identifies as a heart leads to disclosure of the secret.
B. The old man writes a note explaining the narrator's motive.
C. The officers hear the story from a witness outside the house.
D. The narrator warns the old man by making a loud noise.

Correct answer: A. The sound the narrator identifies as a heart leads to disclosure of the secret.
The beating is crucial because the narrator's response to it leads to the confession.

15. Which conclusion best fits what the story establishes about the sound in the final scene?

A. The story identifies a particular clock as its verified source.
B. Every officer locates the source before the confession.
C. The narrator experiences it, but the other characters never confirm its source.
D. The old man and the officers agree on what caused it.

Correct answer: C. The narrator experiences it, but the other characters never confirm its source.
Readers know the narrator's perception and reaction. They have no independent confirmation of the source.