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PORTRAYAL OF MENTAL ILLNESS IN EDGAR ALLAN POE'S "THE TELL-TALE HEART"

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Portrayal of Mental Illness in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart"

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ABSTRACT

Edgar Allan Poe's "The-Tell Tale Heart" delves into the human psyche as it entails the story of an unnamed narrator who tells the tale of the murder he commits. Undergoing an emotional rollercoaster of pleasure and guilt, Poe's protagonist maintains his claim to sanity and a sense of reality. Poe articulates many tone and rhythm changes to create a sense of tension, representing the narrator's mental condition. Throughout the narrative, the narrator struggles to reassure that there is nothing wrong and that he is completely normal. Exploring the themes of madness, guilt, and a false sense of reality, Poe's narrator suffers from a sense of false narrative, a trait characteristic of schizophrenia. In addition, the narrator demonstrates episodes of delusions, auditory hallucinations, diminished emotional responses, and significant disturbances to his normal routine which all allude to schizophrenia. I will utilize the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual 5* (DSM-5) criteria, literary criticisms, and other publications to show the audience the schizophrenic nature of Poe's narrator. I will discuss the DSM-5 criteria for schizophrenia and demonstrate how the narrator meets those criteria in several circumstances. Utilizing vivid imagery and a scattered style, Poe explores the mental depths of a man suffering from schizophrenia.

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