

Narrative text: Item #1

Assignment for the short story “The Oblong Box” by Edgar Allan Poe

Pre-reading activity (*Before you read the story*)

1. The story refers to a famous painting called *The Last Supper*. Who painted this picture? When was it painted? How big is the painting? Where would you go to see it?
2. Have you ever heard of Edgar Allan Poe? Do a quick search on the Internet to find out who he was. In four sentences explain who he was.

During reading (*Answer the questions. Use the numbers in the margin of the story to help you with the answers.*)

3. Where is the narrator going? How is he getting there?
4. The narrator is happy to find out that one of his friends will be making the same trip.
 - a) What is the friend’s name?
 - b) How does the narrator know him?
 - c) What five qualities does the narrator say his friend has?

6. The narrator hopes to meet Mr. Wyatt's new bride. At an earlier time, Mr. Wyatt had described her to the narrator. How had Mr. Wyatt described his new bride?
7. Does the trip start on the day it is supposed to? Find a quotation that supports your answer.
8. a) What does the narrator think is in the box? What does the narrator think of himself for figuring this out?
- b) What do *you* think is in the box? What two pieces of evidence from the story support your opinion?

9. a) What complaint does the author have about the behaviour of Wyatt and his sisters?
- b) Is Mrs. Wyatt's behaviour different from that of her husband and sisters? If so, explain how it is different.
10. When the narrator finally meets Mrs. Wyatt, he is surprised. Why?
11. What does the narrator think that Mr. Wyatt still has in the oblong box? How do you know?
12. When the narrator starts firing questions at Mr. Wyatt, the narrator compares his own questioning to a "home thrust" and a "masked battery." It is as though the narrator is comparing his own questioning techniques to what?
13. a) How does Mr. Wyatt respond to the narrator's questioning?
- b) Why, on earth, would they have "bled" Mr. Wyatt?
- c) Why do you think Mr. Wyatt responded the way he did?
14. a) What does the narrator believe that he hears at night? Explain.
- b) What do *you* think he is really hearing?

15. The ship runs into some trouble with the weather. Explain.

16. Explain Mr. Wyatt's behaviour in the lifeboat. What does he say? What does he do?
Why does he do it?

Post-reading questions

17. Why does the author put some words in capital letters? Provide an explanation and then use one example from the story to defend your explanation.

18. Did you like the ending? If you could change it, how would you change it?