Marcus Sedgwick’s ‘The Heart of Another’ refers in detail to Edgar Allan Poe’s famous story ‘The Tell-Tale Heart’, which the narrator is studying. Although superficially different, the stories are very similar.

The students at Pearson Academy have begun to make notes in preparation for an essay comparing the stories. Pick out what you think are the correct and relevant details below, add your own insights and then use them to fill in the comparison grid.

### ‘The Heart of Another’

- **Weird opening** – wrong punctuation (not proper sentences). Why? Effect?
- **Closing sentences** – punctuation like opening, set out in lines like poem, proper order broken down? Shows dazed emotion?
- **Repetition of words and phrases**?

### ‘The Tell-Tale Heart’

- ‘what had I to fear?’ etc.
- ‘slowly – very, very slowly’ – to heighten fear and anticipation, like scary music in film?
- **‘The Heart of Another’** – ‘working hard’, ‘dream’, ‘stronger’

*Are the stories really that similar?*

What is the writer’s purpose with each story – similar or different?

### Openings

- Both take us directly into story - have to work out back-story
- Confusion of narrator?
- Writing style? Broken sentences

### Similarities

- Cyclic structure – both endings link to start – effect?
- Focused on revenge? Bring reader back to problem of narrator madness?
- Repetition of words?

### 1st person narrative – narrator speaks to reader – ‘why will you say that I am mad?’

(p24)

‘Remember that story?’ (p22)

Narrator seems sane, claims not to be mad, but does mad thing – what is madness?

### Narrators

- Killers: liked victim!
- Claim not to be mad

### Themes

- Murder,
- being in the grip of a greater force
- hearts seek revenge
- the dead ‘rise’ through the living;
- evil is not allowed to triumph – or is it perpetuated?

‘Remember that story – the one with the mad narrator? My heart had told a tale. My heart had found its murderer.’ (p22)

- Hearts find murderer – vengeance or justice?
- Reader has to decide if narrators are mad – they deny it – protesting too much?
- Something ‘unreal’ causes them to behave as they do, something unexplained, spooky.

‘The story features a wild narrator, obsessive, and yet his narration displays an apparent logic.’ (p14)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Point about:</th>
<th>Explain evidence from ‘The Heart of Another’</th>
<th>Explain evidence from ‘The Tell-Tale Heart’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The openings</strong></td>
<td>Broken sentences and unusual, almost poetic use of punctuation draws the reader’s attention to the narrator’s situation.</td>
<td>Both openings begin in the ‘middle’ of the story and use ‘memory’ to explain how the narrator came to be in the situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The ending</strong></td>
<td>The ending of the story seems to return to just before the beginning of the narrative - it ends with the narrator confessing, ‘I admit the deed’, whereas it begins with a response to someone else’s comment on what he has confessed to and his insistence that he is not mad. The word ‘shrieked’ shows that he is desperate, has lost control, driven to admitting his guilt by the beating heart only he hears.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The narrator</strong></td>
<td>In each case the 1st person narrator insists they are not mad, but ...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### The theme

The narrator is studying ‘The Tell-Tale Heart’, making a clear link with the other story. She claims her new heart wants to avenge the murder of the man it belonged to and leads her to find evidence to prove it is her tutor, John, who has killed the man whose heart it is. The story explores the power of a heart – is it the essence of a person, can it commit a murder?

### The style of writing

The structure of each story is:

This is reinforced by the repetition of many words which emphasise ...

In both stories these stylistic features result in the narrative being focused on the dominant issue ...