

THE EXISTENCE OF THE MAIN CHARACTER'S CRIME SHORT STORY BERENICE AND THE TELL-TALE HEART BY EDGAR ALLAN POE

Ai Nurelah, Erik Chandra Pertala, Siska Hestiana

Fakultas Ilmu Administrasi dan Humaniora,
Universitas Muhammadiyah Sukabumi, Jawa Barat, Indonesia
Email: ainurelah012@ummi.ac.id, erikcandrapertala@ummi.ac.id,
siskahestiana@ummi.ac.id

Abstract

This research is related to the existence of crimes committed by the two main characters in Edgar Allan Poe's short story Berenice and The Tell-Tale Heart. Both of his works reveal a picture of how the crime was committed. In explaining all the descriptions of these crimes, it makes researchers feel interested in carrying out their analysis by showing how the existence of terrible crimes is in it. In addition, the crime committed by a character is one of the events that are often displayed in a literary work. Tells about the second child of David and Eliza Poe. Poe and his adoptive father fell out over gambling debts and a failed military career after Frances Allan died. The data sources used are short stories, books and websites. In this research, the data is analyzed by classifying one sub-chapter. In Berenice's short story, there is an action taken by the main character which shows that he had just buried his cousin named Berenice alive. In this study, researchers used descriptive qualitative research methods. The research was carried out by explaining the data that the researcher obtained descriptively in the short stories Berenice and The Tell-Tale Heart by Edgar Allan Poe. The two stories show some of the actions that have been carried out by the main character, namely burying people close to him because of the desire that prompted him to do so.

Keywords: Crime; Short Story; Existence.

Introduction

A short story is a brief work of prose fiction, and most of the terms for analyzing the component elements, the types, and the narrative techniques of the novel are applicable to the short story as well. The short story differs from the novel in the dimension that Aristotle called "magnitude," and this limitation of length imposes differences both in the effects that the story can achieve and in the choice and elaboration of the elements to achieve those effects (Abrams & Harpham, 2013). A fictional prose tale of no specified length, but too short to be published as a volume on its own (Kushner, Rosenthal, & Warrach, 2010).

How to cite:	Ai Nurelah, Erik Chandra Pertala, Siska Hestiana, (2023) The Existence of The Main Character's Crime Short Story Berenice and The Tell-Tale Heart By Edgar Allan Poe, (5)1, <i>Equivalent: Jurnal Ilmiah Sosial Teknik</i> . https://doi.org/10.46799/jequi.v5i1.130
E-ISSN:	2775-0833
Published by:	Ridwan Institute

Edgar Allan Poe was born on January 19, 1809 in Boston, Massachusetts. He is the second child of David and Eliza Poe, both of whom are actors. Poe's father left the family shortly after Poe's birth, and Poe's mother died the following year. Poe was raised by John and Frances Allan, who raised him and sent him to high school and helped support him as a young adult. Poe and his adoptive father fell out over gambling debts and a failed military career after Frances Allan died, after which they became estranged from each other. Determined to become a writer, Poe initially found fame as a literary critic whose opinions were universally respected.

His poetry and short stories were also popular, but it was the panic of 1837 that saw him not always paid for his work and often found himself living in abject poverty. Arthur Gordon Pym's narration, published. Poe was married until Virginia's death in 1847, after which Poe never remarried. Poe's life was marred by an ongoing battle with alcoholism which played a significant role in his inability to hold long-term jobs in literary magazines and newspapers and his subsequent struggle with poverty. In 1849, Poe arrived in Philadelphia ill and in dire need of money to secure a train ticket to Virginia. His friend George Lippard helped raise funds for his train tickets and food. Some time later, Poe is found delirious and terminally ill on the streets of Baltimore, but is unable to explain why he was there or what happened to him. He was taken to a hospital but died a few days later on October 7, 1849.

Berenice is one of the literary works created by Edgar Allan Poe, an American writer. Berenice is a short story with the horror genre first published in the Southern Literary Messenger in 1835. The short story tells of the main character named Egeus who is a man who really wants to marry his own cousin. However, her cousin named Berenice had to lie down because of her illness. The mysterious disease forced Berenice to be buried. At night, the maid of the residence where Egeus and his relatives lived, that's when he heard a scream from someone who then came to him and gave the news that Berenice's meal had just been messy and it looked like someone had dug it up. Egeus, who unknowingly saw the shovel and teeth contained in the box and then fell from the top of his table and scattered with fresh blood.

The Tell-Tale Heart is a short story written by an American writer named Edgar Allan Poe. This short story was first published in 1843. The main character, who is none other than the narrator, tries to convince the reader about his own sanity while at the same time describing the murder he committed himself. The victim in the murders is an elderly man with the pale blue nickname "vulture's eye" as described by the narrator. The narrator emphasizes careful calculation of the murders, committing the perfect crime, by dismembering the body in the bath and hiding it under the floorboards. Ultimately, the narrator's actions create a pounding sound, which the narrator interprets as the deceased's heartbeat.

This research deals with the existence of crimes committed by the two main characters in short stories with different titles and reveals the description of how the crimes were committed. In explaining all the descriptions of these crimes, it makes researchers feel interested in carrying out their analysis by showing how the existence

of terrible crimes is in it ([Susanti & Rahardjo, 2018](#)). In addition, the crime committed by a character is one of the events that are often displayed in a literary work. Therefore, the researcher decided to examine the existence of crimes committed by the main characters in the two short stories by Edgar Allan Poe.

Research methods

In this study, researchers used descriptive qualitative research methods. The research was carried out by explaining the data that the researcher obtained descriptively in the short stories Berenice and The Tell-Tale Heart by Edgar Allan Poe. Qualitative research is a type of research in which the discovery procedure is carried out without using statistical or quantification procedures ([Saleh et al., 2019](#)).

Actions that harm other people or the general public, more simply, crime is an act that violates norms ([Widodo, 2015](#)) and ([Mangkeprijanto, 2019](#)). This opinion explains that crime is nothing but an act that violates and has a very bad impact on everyone. In addition, crime is human behavior that violates norms, is detrimental, annoying, causes victims, so it cannot be tolerated ([Simatupang & Faisal, 2017](#)). Human actions that tend to be detrimental do not deserve to be tolerated because it is better to be punished.

This research focuses more on the description of data regarding the study of the existence of crime contained in the two short stories of Edgar Allan Poe. It must be realized that the use of various methods or triangulation reflects an effort to gain an in-depth understanding of a phenomenon being studied ([Kusumastuti & Khoiron, 2019](#)). The following are the stages carried out in research by researchers, including:

1. Researchers look for the short stories Berenice and The Tell-Tale Heart by Edgar Allan Poe and then read them until they understand them.
2. Conduct data analysis by collecting some of the data contained in the two short stories about the existence of the main character's crime.
3. Summarize the research results that have been obtained.

Results and Discussion

In Berenice's short story, there is an action taken by the main character which shows that he had just buried his cousin named Berenice alive. However, he was completely unaware of this and instead felt confused. It was as if he heard a whisper trying to tell him the truth ([Martha, 2020](#)) and ([Rukmini, 2006](#)).

He told of a wild cry disturbing the silence of the night - of the gathering together of the household - of a search in the direction of the sound; and then his tones grew thrillingly distinct as he whispered me of a violated grave - of a disfigured body enshrouded, yet still breathing - still palpitating - still alive ([Poe, 1919:11](#)).

Apart from that, he also found evidence of having committed the act as soon as someone entered his room and tried to inquire about everything that happened. Some evidence was right before his eyes and absolutely could not avoid it.

But I could not force it open; and in my tremor, it slipped from my hands, and fell heavily, and burst into pieces; and from it, with a rattling sound, there rolled out some

instruments of dental surgery, intermingled with thirty-two small, white and ivory-looking substances that were scattered to and fro about the floor ([Poe, 1919:11](#)).

The quote shows behind the box, the teeth are evidence of a crime that he had committed unconsciously beforehand and then slowly opened his mind to what he had done and he didn't regret it at all and thought it was part of affection ([Setyono, 2017](#)).

In the short story *The Tell-Tale Heart*, there are actions committed by the main character which are considered very immoral. This act was done on the basis of self-awareness and was also accompanied by mounting anger. The anger that controlled him caused him to do the deed. As in the following quote. I made up my mind to take the life of the old man, and thus rid myself of the eye forever ([Poe, 1919:2](#)).

Based on the quote, it shows that his confession that he has a strong desire to kill other people's lives is getting stronger and then brings heinous behavior that is driven by deep revenge.

I was never kinder to the old man than during the whole week before I killed him. And every night, about midnight, I turned the latch of his door and opened it--oh, so gently! And then, when I had made a sufficient opening for my head, I put in a dark lantern, all closed, closed, so that no light shone out, and then I thrust it into my head ([Poe, 1919:2](#)).

The quote explains how the main character has a grudge and intends to take his life quickly. He seems to come to the victim with a terror of fear that makes the victim feel the darkness coming over him like the angel of death.

When I had waited a long time, very patiently, without hearing him lie down, I resolved to open a little--a very, very little crevice in the lantern. So I opened it--you cannot imagine how stealthily, stealthily--until, at length, a single dim ray, like the thread of the spider, shot from out the crevice and full upon the vulture eye ([Poe, 1919:4](#)).

And now--have I not told you that what you mistake for madness is but over-acuteness of the senses? now, I say, there came to my ears a low, dull, quick sound, such as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I knew that sound well too. It was the beating of the old man's heart. It increased my fury, as the beating of a drum stimulates the soldier into courage ([Poe, 1919:5](#)).

The two quotes show the main character trying to commit heinous acts to the victim without the victim realizing it. The patience he had in contemplating how to take his life perfectly demonstrated the extraordinary persistence of one who would bring about death. However, it seems that he still feels the pulse of life which makes him almost instantly overcome his desire.

He shrieked once--once only. In an instant I dragged him to the floor, and pulled the heavy bed over him. I then smiled gaily, to find the deed so far done. But, for many

The Existence of The Main Character's Crime Short Story *Berenice* and The Tell-Tale Heart By Edgar Allan Poe

minutes, the heart beat on with a muffled sound. This, however, did not vex me; it would not be heard through the wall. At length it ceased. The old man was dead. I removed the bed and examined the corpse. Yes, he was stone, stone dead. I placed my hand upon the heart and held it there many minutes. There was no pulsation. He was stone dead. His eye would trouble me no more ([Ruba'i, 2021](#)).

His success in doing the deed was really unexpected to him. After that he felt extraordinary happiness and could not be separated from him. The victim's body as proof that he had eliminated that person and returned with the joy he deserved. The joy was obvious. He was released from what made him feel the previous suffering and now all of that has disappeared along with the lives of the victims in front of his eyes and will no longer bring nightmares to himself. The terrible desire could not be controlled in that mind.

In the short story *The Tell-Tale Heart* there is also a part where the main character who is the perpetrator tries to erase the traces of his crime by cutting the victim's body. As in the following quote:

The night waned, and I worked hastily, but in silence. First of all I dismembered the corpse. I cut off the head and the arms and the legs ([Poe, 1919:6](#)). I then took up three planks from the flooring of the chamber, and deposited all between the scantlings. I then replaced the boards so cleverly, so cunningly, that no human eye not even his could have detected anything wrong. There was nothing to wash out--no stain of any kind no blood-spot whatever. I had been too wary for that. A tub had caught all--ha! Ha! ([Poe, 1919:6](#)).

The two data excerpts show the actions committed by the main character who had killed his victim, in order to cover up his crime he deliberately dismembered the victim's body and stored it in a different place. This case shows the fear that the main character experiences after committing all his crimes and is eager to get rid of all of them without anyone knowing what he has done. Behind it all, it is very clear that the pleasure he is experiencing is as if he really enjoys it. Tear up the planks!--here, here!--it is the beating of his hideous heart! ([Harkrisnowo, 2003](#)).

The excerpt from the short story explains the attitude that occurs to the main character who continues to feel like he is experiencing excessive pleasure and as if he is enjoying a party while screaming and holding the victim's heart. He thought that the

sound of his heartbeat was still felt and it began to hypnotize him, sinking into the terror of a criminal that he would never forget for the rest of his life. His mind filled with darkness made him drown in the emotions of the crime he had committed as continuously as it ceaselessly as the existence of evil itself.

Conclusion

In these two short stories, it explains how the behavior of crimes committed by the main character. The two stories show some of the actions that have been carried out by the main character, namely burying people close to him because of the desire that prompted him to do so. In addition, other acts such as taking other people's lives out of hatred and revenge and then cutting their bodies to remove evidence of the crimes they have committed. All these actions are very inhumane and classified as very heinous crimes. The perpetrator is like a psychopath who without hesitation kills other people's lives and enjoys the pleasure behind everything he does. It is usually concluded that the main characters in the two short stories are insane.

BIBLIOGRAFI

- Abrams, M. H., & Harpham, Geoffrey. (2013). *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Cengage Learning. [Google Scholar](#)
- Harkrisnowo, Harkristuti. (2003). Transnational Organized Crime: Dalam Perspektif Hukum Pidana dan Kriminologi. *Indonesian J. Int'l L.*, 1, 323. [Google Scholar](#)
- Kushner, David Z., Rosenthal, Harold, & Warrach, John. (2010). The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Opera. In *Notes* (Vol. 22). <https://doi.org/10.2307/894957>. [Google Scholar](#)
- Kusumastuti, Adhi, & Khoiron, Mustamil Ahmad. (2019). Metode Penelitian Kualitatif. In *Lembaga Pendidikan Sukarno Pressindo* (Vol. 4). [Google Scholar](#)
- Mangkeprijanto, Extrix. (2019). *Hukum Pidana dan Kriminologi*. Guepedia. [Google Scholar](#)

The Existence of The Main Character's Crime Short Story Berenice and The
Tell-Tale Heart By Edgar Allan Poe

Martha, Elimina Aroma. (2020). Kriminologi Sebuah Pengantar. In *Buku Litera* (Vol. 4). Buku Litera. [Google Scholar](#)

Poe, Edgar Allan. (1919a). Berenice by Edgar Allan Poe. [Google Scholar](#)

Poe, Edgar Allan. (1919b). The Tell-Tale Heart by Edgar Allan Poe. [Google Scholar](#)

Ruba'i, Masruchin. (2021). *Buku Ajar Hukum Pidana*. Media Nusa Creative (MNC Publishing). [Google Scholar](#)

Rukmini, Mien. (2006). *Aspek Hukum Pidana dan Kriminologi (sebuah bunga rampai)*. [Google Scholar](#)

Saleh, Sirajuddin, Pd, S., Pd, M., Helaluddin, Dkk, Raco, Jozef, Syahrums, Salim &., Ahyar, Hardani dkk, & Helaluddin, Dkk. (2019). *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif* (pp. 11–11). pp. 11–11. [Google Scholar](#)

Setyono, Ridha Ari. (2017). Tinjauan Kriminologi Dan Hukum Pidana Mengenai Kejahatan Dalam Kegiatan Asuransi. *Jurnal Hukum Khaira Ummah*, 12(4), 967–974. [Google Scholar](#)

Simatupang, Nursariani, & Faisal. (2017). Kriminologi: Suatu Pengantar. In *CV. Pustaka Prima*. [Google Scholar](#)

Susanti, Emilia, & Rahardjo, Eko. (2018). Buku Hukum dan Kriminology. In *AURA* (Vol. 4). [Google Scholar](#)

Widodo, Wahyu. (2015). *Kriminologi dan Hukum Pidana*. [Google Scholar](#)

Copyright holder:

Ai Nurelah, Erik Chandra Pertala, Siska Hestiana (2023)

First publication right:
Equivalent: Jurnal Ilmiah Sosial Teknik

This article is licensed under:

