

Activity Sheet:

Sample Think Aloud Response

to Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher”

Note to the Teacher: This sample think aloud response is meant for your use as a teacher resource. From this model, think about how your students will respond to a passage of text. How will you model the think aloud process for them? Consult the Think Aloud Teacher Resource in this guide as you begin to plan your own classroom think aloud activities. Consider interrupting students or pausing after sections of a passage to allow for reactions to the text. Encourage your students to do the same.

Online versions of the text may be accessed at the workshop Web site. Go to the *Conversations in Literature* Web site at www.learner.org/envisioningliterature/ and click on “Workshop 2. Envisioning,” “Extension,” and “Sample Think Aloud Response.”

Passage: “The Fall of the House of Usher” by Edgar Allan Poe

Text	Think Aloud Response
Before Reading:	
Title: “The Fall of the House of Usher” by Edgar Allan Poe	I wonder what an “Usher” is. I have read other stories by E. A. Poe. He always writes with a dark, eerie quality. I especially liked “The Tell-Tale Heart.” The house is falling. I wonder from what?
During Reading:	
“During the whole of a dull, dark, and soundless day in the autumn of the year, when the clouds hung oppressively low in the heavens, I had been passing alone, on horseback, through a singularly dreary tract of country; and at length found myself, as the shades of the evening drew on, within view of the melancholy House of Usher.”	Wow! So many dark images and gloomy words like “dull, dark, soundless, clouds hung oppressively low, dreary, shades, evening, melancholy.” This is going to be a scary story of some kind. I wonder what a “tract” is? The guy is on horseback—I wonder when this takes place?
“I know not how it was—but, with the first glimpse of the building, a sense of insufferable gloom pervaded my spirit.... I looked upon the scene before me—upon the mere house, and the simple landscape features of the domain—upon the bleak walls—upon the vacant eye-like windows—upon a few rank sedges....”	The words “vacant eye-like windows” stand out in my mind. I want to know more about what the house looks like. I am imagining a haunted house. I am curious about why the traveler is approaching the house—what is his business there?
“...and upon a few white trunks of decayed trees—with an utter depression of soul which I can compare to no earthly sensation more properly than to the after-dream of the reveler upon opium—the bitter lapse into everyday life—the hideous dropping off of the veil.”	What does this passage mean? This is some fancy wording! What is a reveler and what does “dropping off of the veil” mean? I know that something good is not going to happen, but what? What could be the story behind this house? Why does the traveler continue to approach it?
Post-Reading Reaction:	
	I still do not understand why the house is called “usher.” I am curious about the house and why it is so dark and gloomy. The house reminds me of Halloween and other haunted houses from scary stories. I predict that this story will be suspenseful and strange. So far, the opening to this story fits what I know about Poe as a writer.