

THE BLACK CAT

1. What is the name of the cat? How is this significant?
2. How is the cat described? What is the effect of this description?
3. List the words and phrases the narrator uses to show his change in attitude once he starts drinking.
4. Why does he mistreat the cat?
5. How does he feel after abusing the cat? Why is this significant?
6. How does the narrator define “perverseness”? Do you agree?
7. Why did he hang the cat?
8. What is the significance of the fire? What does he discover after the fire and what does this symbolize?
9. What is the significance of the “new cat” and his markings? What does the cat symbolize?
10. Why is it significant that the cat doesn’t leave him alone?
11. How does the killing of the wife add to the meaning of the story?
12. “I made no doubt that I could readily displace the bricks at this point, insert the corpse, and wall the whole thing up as before, so that no eye could detect anything suspicious.” What is significant about this quote?
13. Why is able to sleep well after he conceals the body? Why did he “once again .. breathed as a free man”?
14. Why does he feel triumphant when the police arrive?
15. Discuss the syntax and punctuation in the following:

“No sooner had the reverberation of my blows sunk into silence, than I was answered by a voice from within the tomb! – by a cry, at first muffled and broken, like the sobbing of a child, and then quickly swelling into one long, loud, and continuous scream, utterly anomalous and inhuman – a howl – a wailing shriek, half of horror and half of triumph, such as might have arisen only out of hell, conjointly from the throats of the damned in their agony and of the demons that exult in the damnation!”
16. Explain the ending of the story and its symbolism.

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