Character Analysis

Name: _____

Date: _____

Active characters move the story along by consciously and deliberately making changes to their surroundings. Passive characters do the opposite: they are simply affected by the changes going on around them. Some characters are active in some ways and passive in others, or change from one to the other as the story progresses.

1. Fill in the table for each character. Tick **Active**, **Passive** or both, and give evidence from the story.



NARRATOR

☐ Active
☐ Passive

Relationship to other characters

Physical description

Personality

Evidence from the story



WIFE

☐ Active
☐ Passive

Relationship to other characters

Physical description

Personality

Evidence from the story



PLUTO

☐ Active
☐ Passive

Relationship to other characters

Physical description

Personality

Evidence from the story



THE NEW CAT

☐ Active
☐ Passive

Relationship to other characters

Physical description

Personality

Evidence from the story

Matching exercise

Name: _____

Date: _____

1. Match each phrase from the story with an image. Draw a line to join them.

1 *I alone fed him, and he attended me wherever I went about the house. It was even with difficulty that I could prevent him from following me through the streets.*

2 *My original soul seemed, at once, to take its flight from my body; and a more than fiendish malevolence, gin-nurtured, thrilled every fibre of my frame.*

3 *– hung it because I knew that it had loved me, and because I felt it had given me no reason of offence; – hung it because I knew that in doing so I was committing a sin.*

4 *my attention was suddenly drawn to some black object, reposing upon the head of one of the immense hogsheads of Gin, or of Rum, which constituted the chief furniture of the apartment.*

5 *When it reached the house it domesticated itself at once, and became immediately a great favorite with my wife.*

6 *Uplifting an axe, and forgetting, in my wrath, the childish dread which had hitherto stayed my hand, I aimed a blow at the animal which, of course, would have proved instantly fatal had it descended as I wished.*

7 *I had walled the monster up within the tomb!*

A 

B 

C 

D 

E 

F 

G 

Glossary

Name: _____

Date: _____

Baroque: (adj) bizarre, extravagant, ornate

Sagacious: (adj) wise or shrewd

Paltry: (adj) petty or trivial

Gossamer: (n) a thin, delicate material or substance

Fidelity: (n) faithfulness

Tinctured: (adj) containing a small amount of

Fiend: (n) evil spirit or demon

Intemperance: (n) lack of moderation or restraint

Peevish: (adj) irritating

Malevolence: (n) hostility

Debauch: (n) the act of excessive indulgence

Equivocal: (adj) ambiguous, open to interpretation

Perpetual: (adj) constant, never-ending

Consummate: (v) to bring to completion

Conflagration: (n) an extensive fire

Thenceforward: (adv) from that point onwards

Ammonia: (n) a colourless gas

Haunts: (n) a place where someone goes regularly

Hogshead: (n) a large barrel

Evince: (v) indicate

Odious: (adj) extremely unpleasant

Pestilence: (n) a fatal epidemic disease

Endear: (v) to make someone loved or liked

Pertinacity: (n) stubborn persistence

Felon: (n) a person who has committed a serious crime

Chimera: (n) something illusory or impossible

Gallows: (n) a structure used to hang criminals

Incarnate: (adj) embodied in human form

Forthwith: (adv) immediately

Expedient: (n) convenient and practical

Forebore: (v) restrained oneself

Felicity: (n) happiness

Inscrutability: (n) the quality of being impossible to understand

Phrenzy: (n) a period of uncontrolled excitement

Bravado: (n) a bold manner

Anomalous: (adj) abnormal or unexpected

Exult: (v) to display triumphant happiness

BEFORE YOU READ

When people do terrible things, they often blame something else: anger, drink, bad luck. Where does responsibility begin? What do you think?

Can animals sense when a person is unhappy or afraid? Describe an example you know.

Quiz

Name: _____

Date: _____

Please choose the best option for each of the following questions.

1. What does the narrator say he was noted for as a child? Choose all that apply.

- [a] Docility
- [b] Fragility
- [c] Wild temperament
- [d] Humanity
- [e] Tenderness of heart
- [f] Fear of the future

2. From which peculiarity of character does the narrator draw one of his principal sources of pleasure?

- (a) His fear of the future
- (b) His love of animals
- (c) His inability to feel romantic love
- (d) His love of reading

3. Who was the narrator's favourite pet?

- (a) His cat, Pluto
- (b) His sagacious dog
- (c) His clever little monkey, Apollo
- (d) His two goldfish, Demeter and Ares

4. How did the narrator's disposition change during the period of his and Pluto's close friendship?

- (a) He became happier than he had ever been
- (b) He became moody, irritable and abusive
- (c) He began to have long periods of blank memory
- (d) He became terrified of leaving the house

5. What does Pluto do when the narrator returns drunk and grabs him?

- (a) He goes limp in his arms
- (b) He turns into a witch
- (c) He disappears in a cloud of smoke
- (d) He bites him out of fright

6. What does the narrator do soon after waking up in the morning?

- (a) Decides to give up alcohol for life
- (b) Takes his dog for a long walk
- (c) Begins to drink again
- (d) Cries to his wife that he doesn't know what he's done

7. What is the spirit of perverseness?

- (a) An evil ghost that manufactures disaster
- (b) The desire to do wrong for wrong's sake
- (c) An intoxicating elixir
- (d) A demonic presence

8. How does the narrator consummate Pluto's injury?

- (a) He drowns Pluto
- (b) He hangs Pluto from a tree
- (c) He gives Pluto a glass eye
- (d) He turns Pluto loose into the wild

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Quiz

Name: _____

Date: _____

9. How does the narrator lose his worldly wealth?

(a) It is destroyed in a fire

(b) He sells it to fund his alcohol addiction

(c) His wife kicks him out of the house

(d) He is arrested and his assets confiscated

10. What does the narrator find many people examining in the ruins of his house?

(a) The dead bodies of all the narrator's varied pets

(b) A warning message burnt into the floor

(c) A section of wall engraved with the figure of a cat

(d) Pluto, alive and well, with both eyes intact

11. What does the narrator see on top of a hogshead?

(a) A completely black cat

(b) A black cat with a white breast patch

(c) A brilliantly white cat

(d) An ungainly grey hound

12. What shape does the new pet's markings gradually take?

(a) That of the gallows

(b) That of a dead cat

(c) That of a skull

(d) That of a flower

13. What stops the narrator from hitting the cat with the axe?

(a) His own feelings of remorse

(b) The cat throws itself claws-first at his face

(c) The hand of his wife

(d) A ghostly apparition

14. Who does the narrator kill in the basement under his house?

(a) The cat

(b) His wife

(c) Himself

(d) His dog

15. How does the narrator decide to dispose of the corpse of his victim?

(a) Burning it

(b) Sending it off in the post

(c) Walling it up in the cellar

(d) Burying it in the garden

16. What materials does the narrator make his plaster out of? Select all that apply.

[a] Cement

[b] Mortar

[c] Eggs

[d] Sand

[e] Gravel

[f] Hair

[g] Skin

[h] Bird droppings

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Quiz

Name: _____

Date: _____

17. How does the narrator feel in the aftermath of the murder in the basement?

(a) He feels the heavy burden of guilt weighing down his soul

(b) He feels furious with the world and descends into a dark rage

(c) He feels nothing ever again

(d) He sleeps tranquilly and feels free and happy

18. What does the narrator do as the police begin to ascend the stairs of the basement?

(a) He smiles secretly and doesn't say a word

(b) He suddenly screams a hysterical confession and runs up the stairs

(c) He sees the cat at the top of the stairs and breaks into maniacal tears

(d) He boasts about how well constructed the house is and raps on the wall with his cane

19. What causes the police to start tearing down the wall?

(a) A long, inhuman scream

(b) The narrator's screamed confession

(c) The black cat pointing with its paw

(d) Nothing – they leave the house none the wiser

20. What do the police find behind the wall?

(a) The corpse of the narrator's wife, alone

(b) The corpse of the narrator's wife and the cat

(c) Nothing!

(d) The burned outlines of all the creatures the narrator has ever harmed

If you read it in the iClassics app

Answer these extra questions about what you discover as you read:

1. What can you see through the small window of the narrator's cell on page 1?

2. How many rabbits can you see in the narrator's photographs of his animals?

3. What happens when you tap Pluto as he hides behind the pile of books?

4. What can you see behind the narrator's wife as she holds their new pet?

Think like a detective

Name: _____

Date: _____

Answer in full sentences. Support your ideas with evidence from the text.

1. The narrator blames drink, and then "the spirit of perverseness", for what he does. How far does he accept responsibility for his actions? Can we trust him as a narrator?

2. Compare Pluto and the second cat. What do they have in common, and how do they differ? Why might Poe let the white mark on the new cat's breast slowly change shape?

3. The narrator tells his story calmly from his prison cell. How does his calm voice contrast with the horror of what he describes, and what effect does that have on the reader?

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Writing

Name: _____

Date: _____

Imagine you are the head jailer at the prison where the narrator is awaiting his execution. You are about to retire, and you have to write descriptions of all your inmates to give to the person taking over from you. Write a description of the narrator of The Black Cat. Make sure you:

a. Explain the crime he committed and how he was found out.

b. Describe his personality in detail. You will have read various testimonies of his friends and neighbours describing him before the murder, so make sure to include how his personality may have changed over time and what may have caused this.



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