

Text in practice: An extract from the end of *The Fall of the House of Usher* by Edgar Allan Poe.

Analyze this excerpt by first focusing on the development of the scene (the what? what is the text about?) Which you write on your rough paper only, and then concentrate on the how by studying the elements of foregrounding: their nature and effect in contributing to the total meaning of the passage. Do not forget to write the introduction after your analysis and to summarize your discoveries in a conclusion. Thank you.

No sooner had these syllables passed my lips, than—as if a shield of brass had indeed, at the moment, fallen heavily upon a floor of silver I became aware of a distinct, hollow, metallic, and clangorous, yet apparently muffled reverberation. Completely unnerved, I leaped to my feet; but the measured rocking movement of Usher was undisturbed. I rushed to the chair in which he sat. His eyes were bent fixedly before him, and throughout his whole countenance there reigned a stony rigidity. But, as I placed my hand upon his shoulder, there came a strong shudder over his whole person; a sickly smile quivered about his lips; and I saw that he spoke in a low, hurried, and gibbering murmur, as if unconscious of my presence. Bending closely over him, I at length drank in the hideous import of his words.

“Not hear it?—yes, I hear it, and *have* heard it. Long—long—long—many minutes, many hours, many days, have I heard it—yet I dared not—oh, pity me, miserable wretch that I am!—I dared not—I *dared* not speak! *We have put her living in the tomb!* Said I not that my senses were acute? I *now* tell you that I heard her first feeble movements in the hollow coffin. I heard them—many, many days ago—yet I dared not—I *dared not speak!* And now—to-night—Ethelred—ha! ha!—the breaking of the hermit's door, and the death-cry of the dragon, and the clangour of the shield!—say, rather, the rending of her coffin, and the grating of the iron hinges of her prison, and her struggles within the coppered archway of the vault! Oh whither shall I fly? Will she not be here anon? Is she not hurrying to upbraid me for my haste? Have I not heard her footstep on the stair? Do I not distinguish that heavy and horrible beating of her heart? Madman!” here he sprang furiously to his feet, and shrieked out his syllables, as if in the effort he were giving up his soul—“*Madman! I tell you that she now stands without the door!*”

Note: the passage from.;;Ethelred-ha!...to ...the clangour of the shield!... relates to a story the narrator is telling Usher in which the sounds in the story are the same Usher is actually listening to!

Vocabulary: a **shield:** a large piece of metal carried by soldiers in the past to protect the body when fighting; **brass:** yellow metal made by mixing copper and zinc; **clangorous:** a continuous crashing or ringing sound; **muffled:** not heard clearly; **reverberation:** a loud noise that continues for some time after it has been produced because of the surfaces around it; **To leap to:** to jump high or a long way. **Countenance:** a person's face or expression (literary); **shudder:** tremble, quiver; **gibber:** to speak quickly in a way that is difficult to understand, often because of fear. **Acute:** (of the senses): very sensitive and well developed; **rend:** to tear something apart with force and violence (literary); **grate:** when two hard surfaces grate as they rub together, they make a sharp unpleasant sound; **hinge:** a piece of metal, on which a door, lid or gate moves freely as it opens or closes; **Archway:** a structure with a curved top as at an entrance or built as a monument; **vault:** a room under a church or in a cemetery for burying people; **anon:** soon ; **to upbraid:** to reprimand, scold; **haste:** speed in doing something.

Notes of advice: On your rough paper, write the development of the scene as in Walter Nash's approach with the lines of the text, the mode and the content, namely 'the what'; next look at the 'how': are there any foregroundings in each divided part, say what the purpose of these foregroundings is; then, look at the purpose of the content words: modifiers, qualifiers, adjuncts or adverbs; look also at how the author goes from one idea to the next through the transitional words, conjunctions of subordination and coordination; build each paragraph with what you think is a key idea about Roderick Usher. Do not write the development of the scene on your exam sheet, just your essay.