

CHILLING, THRILLING WITH THE TELLTALE HEART

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Katie Latimer, an 18-year-old storyteller from Hope Valley, mesmerized visitors to the Robert H. Champlin Memorial Library last night.

She selected Edgar Allen Poe's "The Tell- Tale Heart," because the author is so often associated with Halloween. Attendees were warned upon entering the Nash Community Meeting Room that the story of murder and madness was not recommended for youngsters.

"I decided to choose a story for older children and adults," said Latimer. "Most people think storytelling is for little kids. This is a real good story, not so much a scary story. I thought of this exquisite tale. I was home-schooled and read a lot. It took me six months to learn this. One thing I wanted to do is maintain the language of the story. I enjoy performing it and I hope you enjoy hearing."

With dimmed lighting and complete stillness from the audience, she began, "True -nervous, very, very dreadfully nervous I had been and am, but why will you say that I am mad?"

With vivid expressions and body language, she told the classic tale that was first published in the Boston Pioneer in 1843. The work was revised into its current form for the 1845 edition of the Broadway Journal.

Typical of Poe, the narrator is the killer himself. But rather than decide to confess to the murder he instead wishes prove his sanity.

"It is impossible to say how first the idea entered my brain," recited Latimer in a soft voice. "One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture. A pale blue eye with a film over it...It took me a whole hour to place my head in the hole to see the old man...This I did for seven long nights, every night just at midnight."

At this point a mother took the hands of her two children and left the room.

Latimer's thin silhouette was all that was visible. Not one prop – only a chair was needed. "And so I knew he could not see the opening of the door," she continued in a loud voice with exaggerated gestures. "I had my head in a was about to undo the latern and the old man sprand up in his bed crying out, 'Who's there?' For a whole hour I did not move a muscle."

Another cluster of children left the room upon hearing "I knew it was the groan of mortal terror...the low stifled sound that arises from the bottom of the soul...I knew what the old man felt and I pitied him...I dismembered the corpse – cut of the head and arms and the legs."

Latimer, the 1998 gold medal winner at the National Youth Storytelling Olympics in Tennessee, explained that much of the memorization process includes reading pieces out loud. "It's verbatim," she said. "When I hear voices in movies, I can repeat them

"She's so incredible," added Annette Coutu who attended the performance with daughters Danielle, 12, and Kimberly, 11. "She brings you to where the story is. Being right there and being with her."

Donna Miller added that she and her two daughters also look for Latimer's name in the library programming each month.