

Name: _____

Date: _____

Current Unit

Team: _____

E. A. Poe

*The Tell-Tale Heart***Keeping Tense Consistent**

Compare the following sentences:

When I saw that horrible eye, I know the old man is awake.

When I saw that horrible eye, I knew the old man was awake.

How are these sentences different from one another? The first sentence is confusing because it begins in the past tense (*saw*), then switches to the present tense (*know, is*). The reader can't be sure whether the events happened in the past or are happening now. The second sentence clears up this problem because all of the action occurs in the past tense: *saw, knew, was*.

If you are writing about events that occurred in the past, use verbs in the past tense. If you are writing about events that take place in the present, use verbs in the present tense. Do not confuse your reader by changing needlessly from one tense to another.

EXERCISE A Revising to Make Tense Consistent

Read each item and decide whether it should be written in the present or past tense. Then, rewrite the sentence or sentences to make the verb tense consistent.

EXAMPLE: Clearly, you doubted my sanity. You think that I am mad.Clearly, you doubt my sanity. You think that I am mad.
_____**OR**Clearly, you doubted my sanity. You thought that I was mad.
_____1. He liked the old man, but he decides to kill him anyway.
_____2. He carefully opened the door and pokes his head into the room. Then he held very still.
_____3. Did he hear the intruder? Does he gasp with terror? The intruder knew he is lying awake, listening.
_____4. He watched the old man for eight nights. He looks at the vulture eye.
_____5. He shines the light on the sleeping old man. He found the eye open!
