

READING ACTIVITY

1/4

AMERICAN HORROR

Read the excerpt taken from the short story *THE OVAL PORTRAIT*, and do the activities below.



The girl in the portrait was extremely beautiful and extremely joyous. But it was an evil hour when she married the painter. He was passionate, austere and studious; and he already had a “wife”: his Art.

The girl in the portrait was as happy as a fawn, and she loved and cherished all things: she only hated the Art which was her rival. She was only afraid of the palette, easel and brushes that took her husband away.

It was therefore a terrible thing for her when her husband asked her to pose for a painting. But she was very humble and obedient, and she agreed to pose.

She posed for this portrait in a cold, unhealthy room of a turret of the castle. The only light in the room came from a small window in the ceiling.

The artist worked with energy and only thought of his work. He became obsessed with capturing every shade and color of life on his young wife’s face.

Since the room where she was sitting was cold and damp, she got more and more ill. Still, her husband did not notice. All he noticed was his painting. He was a wild and moody man, and he was often lost in his own private dream world. Everybody else saw that his wife was getting weaker and weaker. Still, she continued smiling and never complained because she saw that he took such great interest in this painting: he worked day and night to paint the woman who loved him and who was becoming more and more ill for this love.

Some of the people who saw him working said, “This painting is truly marvelous. It is proof of both his power as a painter and of his love for his wife.”

When the painter was finishing the portrait, nobody was allowed in the turret because the painter had become so passionate about his work: he rarely took his eyes from the canvas to look at his wife’s face.

In fact, he had become so obsessed with his work that he did not notice that as he put red and pink on the canvas, red and pink left his young wife’s cheeks.

(from Chapter Two)

1 **cherished** : loved and considered important.

2 **canvas** : the strong, tight piece of cloth on which a painter paints.



READING ACTIVITY

2/4

ACTIVITIES

1 Choose the correct answer – a, b, or c.

1. How was the girl in the portrait?

- a. passionate and austere
- b. quiet and plain
- c. beautiful and joyous

2. What was she afraid of?

- a. her husband
- b. the palette, the easel and the brushes
- c. a room in the turret of the castle

3. What didn't the painter notice?

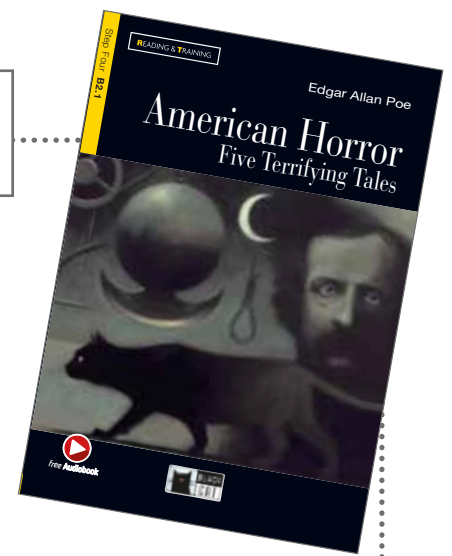
- a. that his wife was getting ill and weak
- b. that his wife didn't love him anymore
- c. that the painting was quite ugly

4. When did the painter work on the portrait?

- a. in the early morning
- b. in the afternoon
- c. day and night

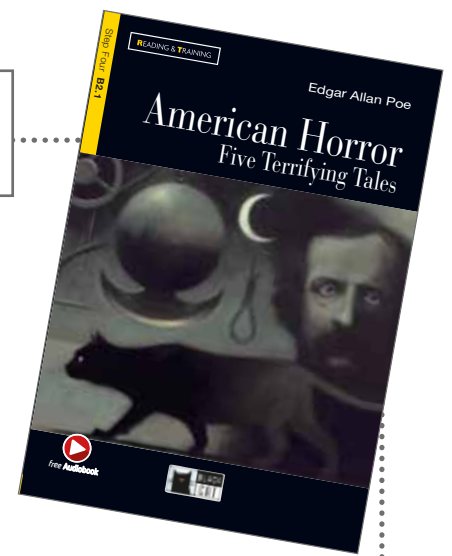
5. Who was allowed in the turret when the painter was finishing the portrait?

- a. only the painter's close friends
- b. only the painter's family
- c. no one



READING ACTIVITY

3/4



2 Are these sentences true (T) or false (F)?

1. The painter's real wife was his Art. T F
2. The painter and his wife argued a lot because she didn't obey him. T F
3. The only light in the dark room was from a big candle. T F
4. The painter's wife became ill because the room was cold and damp. T F
5. The painter's wife never smiled because she was sad. T F
6. People who saw the painter working on the portrait praised him. T F

