



## A Guide for Fiendishly Clever Teachers



### PET'S REVENGE

By Charles Ogden  
Illustrations by  
Rick Carton

[www.edgarandellen.com](http://www.edgarandellen.com)

The antics of Edgar and Ellen are so outlandish and impractical, readers will look forward to how their impossible plans crash around them. That's why this book is marvelous classroom material; an irresistible story can become a teachable one, too. We hope these guides make the lessons as unforgettable as the characters.

### Plot Synopsis

Edgar and Ellen have been tormenting their pet, Pet, forever, but when Ellen changes from a mischievous trickster to an apple-polishing ninny overnight, no one suspects Pet is behind the whole thing. Now Edgar must wage the war of a lifetime by himself: Mayor Knightleigh's wife Judith wants to remodel the twins' dank house on live TV, and she has recruited an army of helpers to get the job done, including her daughter, Stephanie, the transformed Ellen, and an array of handymen from gardening policemen to a cage-cleaning zookeeper. Edgar's plans to stop this

house metamorphosis are stymied at every turn by his turncoat sister—but he loses all hope for her when he witnesses her going to archenemy Stephanie's for a sleepover. He finds a cure for her—and a way to repel the invading army—but not before learning that Pet's tears have the power to transform people into human gumdrops like his super-sweet sister. The twins are left with the unsettling realization that Pet has motives of its own, as well as a possible alliance with their creepy caretaker, Heimertz.

### Vocabulary

abyss  
ample  
amputate  
antagonism  
bedevil  
botanist  
deplorable  
discontent  
dumbwaiter  
encased  
errant

frond  
gullet  
implement  
inability  
ingenious  
initiative  
intensify  
methodical  
meticulous  
misconstrue  
molasses

newel  
nobleman  
odiferous  
paradox  
proclamation  
quizzical  
retaliation  
reverberate  
sabotage  
salvage  
sculpted

spittoon  
synchronize  
tinnabulation  
transformation  
treachery  
undaunted  
urn  
validation  
wholesomeness  
writhe  
zealous

## Prediction Questions

*Ask the following questions at appropriate times during the course of **Pet's Revenge**:*

1. How will Pet get its revenge?
2. Why has Ellen changed?
3. Will Ellen and Stephanie become friends?
4. Can the Knightleights fix up Edgar and Ellen's house?
5. Will the Knightleights discover the secret basement?
6. Why is Pet helping the rats?



## Discussion

*Ask students the following questions:*

1. Why would the mayor want to knock down Edgar and Ellen's house? Is he right to knock down a house he thinks is ugly? What would you do if you were the neighbor of such a run-down house?
2. Are Edgar and Ellen doing the right thing defending their house? Is there a better way for them to try and save their home?
3. Ellen is usually pretty mean, and now she's rather sweet. Does she change for the better? How do you choose between acting the way others want you to and acting the way you want to?
4. If Edgar and Ellen are always fighting then why is he so mad when she changes? Are they friends or enemies?
5. Who are the good guys in this book? Are there good guys? Who do you root for?
6. Do the Knightleights really want to make Nod's Limbs better or do they have other reasons for what they're doing?

## Major Themes

*For deeper discussion of the text.*

- **Being Creative:** Edgar and Ellen always think of the least obvious solutions to their problems; their schemes are always complicated and utterly original.
- **Family Loyalty:** Edgar and Ellen are bickering siblings— until something drives Ellen away from Edgar. Once he doesn't have his twin, Edgar realizes how much he misses her, and he doesn't give up on winning her back.
- **Working Together:** The twins are a team; when they split up, they're aren't nearly as effective as when they're together.
- **Friends:** Stephanie reluctantly befriends Ellen, snidely telling her she is low on the totem pole of importance. How we treat our friends is a true reflection on ourselves.

### LANGUAGE ARTS

When Judith Stainsworth Knightleigh rings the doorbell of the twins' house, the sound is deafening: "In a delirious cacophony, hundreds of hidden bells chimed, clanged, dinged, and gonged from the uppermost cavities of the house to the depths of the subbasement." The imagery of the scene is borrowed from the Edgar Allen Poe poem "The Bells," which is included at the back of this guide as a reproducible handout.

"The Bells" is an excellent example of how words can evoke sound and movement. Read the poem aloud in class with your students and have them experiment with vocal emotion, volume, and pace. How does each stanza sound in relation to what it's describing? Possible discussion questions include:

- Poe talks about four distinct types of bells. What makes them different? What does each bell signify? How do these differences in syntax and meaning affect the tone of each stanza?
- Repetition of words and phrases figures prominently in "The Bells." What does this accomplish?

### SOCIAL STUDIES

In *Pet's Revenge* Edgar and Ellen discover some surprising history of their creepy house. Now it's your students' turn to discover the history of their own houses. By asking questions of their parents, students can uncover such details as:

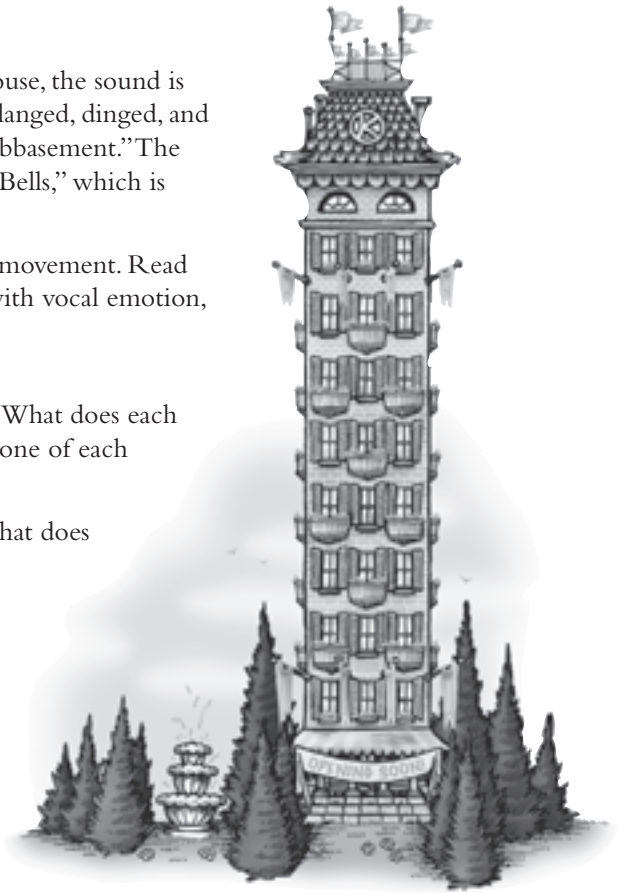
- When it was built
- How it was built (what materials, what style)
- What additions or improvements may have been made over the years
- How many previous owners the house has had

Teach your kids certain signs that an addition may have been made on the house, such as different material of siding, shapes of floorplans (Does the house get narrower or wider in some sections? Do porches, bay windows, dormers, or whole rooms jut out from flat walls?), different building materials visible on a basement ceiling, a step up or down between rooms, etc. Researching a house's ownership history is also possible with an excursion to a municipal hall of records, a town hall or county building; a Register of Deeds or a County Recorder can shed light on who owned a property and for how long.

### ART

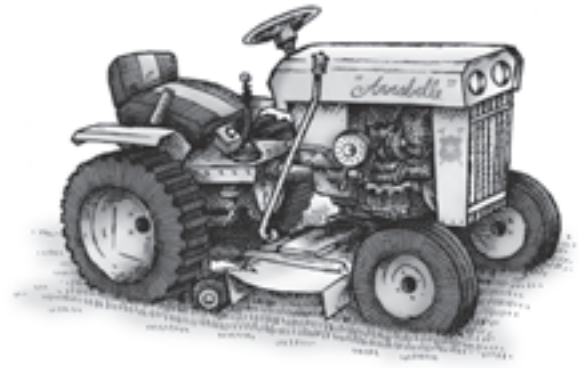
Judith Stainsworth-Knightleigh calls the twins' house "atrocious" and plans to redecorate it. If you could design or redesign a room in your house, how would you do it? Would you make a room that was dark and creepy? Take out windows? Knock holes in ceilings? Add fountains? Have your students make a floorplan of their bedrooms or a room in their house that could use a makeover. Have them measure the space and transfer those measurements to graph paper; then they're ready to draw in furniture and architectural elements. Encourage them to think big: What would happen if they took out a wall? Built a balcony? Added stairs?

Next, have them design the whole room as part of a diorama; have them cut up design and architectural magazines for images to represent their ideas. Have students explain their decisions, and defend their reasons for sweeping changes they've made. (Then stack the dioramas to recreate your own Edgar-and-Allen-style tower!)



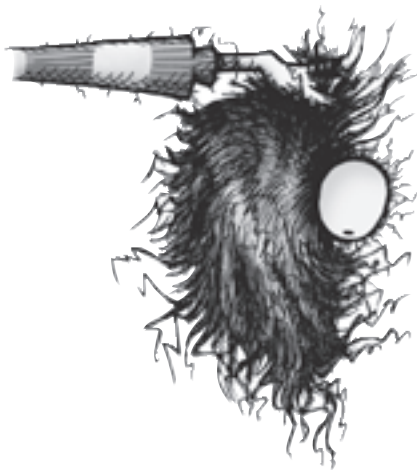
## SCIENCE

1. Ellen's favorite plant, Morella, is a *Nepenthes sinestros*. While *sinestros* is a fictional species, *Nepenthes* is a very real genus of tropical pitcher plant. Have your students research this plant (where it grows, how it kills insects, whether it can survive in your house) and other unusual plants such as the Venus flytrap and the stinging nettle.



2. Morella exhibits some very animated qualities, and Pet displays some very human intelligence. Ask your students: What is the difference between plants and animals? What are the differences between species? What kind of animal is Pet: fish, bird, amphibian, reptile, or mammal? Can you invent an animal that falls into one of those five categories? Are there creatures that don't fall into any of those categories?

## Diabolical Mathematics



1. If it takes 7 pounds to move the dumbwaiter and the average rat weighs 8 ounces, how many average-sized rats will it take to move the dumbwaiter? (Remember there are 16 ounces in a pound.) If it takes 100 pounds to break the dumbwaiter how many rats is too many?

2. If a rat's fur accounts for 25% of its weight, how much will the average hairless rat weigh?

3. If Pet weighs 6 pounds and hair accounts for  $\frac{2}{3}$  of its weight, how much would Pet weigh if you shaved it? If the average female wig weighs  $3\frac{1}{2}$  ounces, (and weight was the only concern of our twisted wig maker) how many complete wigs could you make from Pet?

Answers:

$$1. 7 \times 16 \text{ oz.} = 112 \text{ oz.}; 112 \div 8 = 14 \text{ rats}$$

$$100 \times 16 \text{ oz.} = 1600 \text{ oz.}; 1600 \div 8 = 200 \text{ rats}$$

$$2. 8 \text{ oz.} \times .25 = 2; 8 - 2 = 6 \text{ oz.}$$

$$3. 6 \times \frac{2}{3} = 4; 6 - 4 = 2 \text{ lbs.}$$

$$4 \times 16 \text{ oz.} = 64 \text{ oz.}; 64 \div 3.5 = 18 \text{ wigs}$$



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# THE BELLS

by Edgar Allan Poe

## I

Hear the **sledges** with the bells—  
Silver bells!  
What a world of merriment their melody foretells!  
How they tinkle, tinkle, tinkle,  
In the icy air of night!  
While the stars that oversprinkle  
All the heavens seem to twinkle  
With their **crystalline** delight;  
Keeping time, time, time,  
In a sort of **Runic** rhyme,  
To the **tintinnabulation** that so musically wells  
From the bells, bells, bells, bells,  
Bells, bells, bells—  
From the jingling and the tinkling of the bells.

## II

Hear the mellow wedding bells,  
Golden bells!  
What a world of happiness their harmony foretells!  
Through the balmy air of night  
How they ring out their delight!  
From the **molten-golden** notes,  
And all in tune,  
What a liquid ditty floats  
To the turtle-dove that listens, while she gloats  
On the moon!  
Oh, from out the sounding cells  
What a gush of **euphony voluminously** wells!  
How it swells!  
How it dwells  
On the Future! how it tells  
Of the rapture that impels  
To the swinging and the ringing

Of the bells, bells, bells,  
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,  
Bells, bells, bells—  
To the rhyming and the chiming of the bells!

## III

Hear the loud **alarum** bells—  
**Brazen** bells!  
What a tale of terror, now, their **turbulency** tells!  
In the startled ear of night  
How they scream out their affright!  
Too much horrified to speak,  
They can only shriek, shriek,  
Out of tune,  
In a **clamorous** appealing to the mercy of the fire,  
In a mad **expostulation** with the deaf and frantic fire,  
Leaping higher, higher, higher,  
With a desperate desire,  
And a resolute endeavor  
Now—now to sit, or never,  
By the side of the pale-faced moon  
Oh, the bells, bells, bells!  
What a tale their terror tells  
Of despair!  
How they clang, and clash, and roar!  
What a horror they outpour  
On the bosom of the **palpitating** air!  
Yet the ear it fully knows,  
By the twanging,  
And the clanging,  
How the danger ebbs and flows;  
Yet the ear distinctly tells,  
In the jangling,  
And the wrangling,  
How the danger sinks and swells,

*sledges*: sleighs

*crystalline*: clear, distinct

*Runic*: a poem of mysterious  
or magical meaning

*tintinnabulation*: the sound  
of ringing bells

*molten-golden*: liquid gold

*euphony*: a pleasant sound

*voluminously*: sounding with  
great volume; loud

*alarum*: warning or alarm

*brazen*: 1. brass 2. harshly loud

*turbulency*: violent  
disturbance

*clamorous*: loud

*expostulation*: exclamation  
of protest

*palpitating*: trembling

By the sinking or the swelling in the anger of the bells—  
Of the bells—  
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells,  
Bells, bells, bells—  
In the clamor and the **clangor** of the bells!

IV

Hear the **tolling** of the bells—  
Iron bells!  
What a world of solemn thought their **monody** compels!  
In the silence of the night,  
How we shiver with affright  
At the melancholy menace of their tone!  
For every sound that floats  
From the rust within their throats  
Is a groan.  
And the people—ah, the people—  
They that dwell up in the steeple,  
All alone,  
And who tolling, tolling, tolling,  
In that muffled **monotone**,  
Feel a glory in so rolling  
On the human heart a stone—  
They are neither man nor woman—  
They are neither brute nor human—  
They are Ghouls:  
And their king it is who tolls;  
And he rolls, rolls, rolls,  
Rolls  
A **pæan** from the bells!  
And his merry bosom swells  
With the pæan of the bells!  
And he dances, and he yells;  
Keeping time, time, time,  
In a sort of Runic rhyme,  
To the pæan of the bells—  
Of the bells:

Keeping time, time, time,  
In a sort of Runic rhyme,  
To the throbbing of the bells—  
Of the bells, bells, bells—  
To the sobbing of the bells;  
Keeping time, time, time,  
As he **knells**, knells, knells,  
In a happy Runic rhyme,  
To the rolling of the bells—  
Of the bells, bells, bells—  
To the tolling of the bells,  
Of the bells, bells, bells, bells—  
Bells, bells, bells—  
To the moaning and the groaning of the bells.

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*clangor*: clanging sound

*tolling*: ringing

*monody*: a poem or song mourning someone's death

*monotone*: a chant in the same, dull tone

*pæan*: a song of joyful praise

*knells*: rings slowly or solemnly