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Based on the modern, popular conception of the psychopathic killer in entertainment or media, how does “The Tell-Tale Heart” meet and or fail to meet modern expectations?

The modern expectations of a psychopathic killer are much closer to the true medical definition than the mid-19th century concept of psychotic, or mad, behaviour when “The Tell-Tale Heart” was written; this is primarily due to the fact that we now recognise psychotic actions as a psychological issue, as opposed to demonic or evil intent. Despite this, whether they are medically accurate or not, there are certain traits and nature that are tied to psychopaths in the modern conscience. “The Tell-Tale Heart”, despite its age, exhibits a few of these contemporary expectations but there are exceptions throughout.

One of the major attributes of the modern concept of a psychopath is the inherent apathy, or at least lack of empathy, exhibited by the individual; often after performing a heinous or otherwise socially unacceptable act they display no emotional gravitas. The protagonist of “The Tell-Tale Heart” demonstrates a mixture of this indifference but also sporadic bouts of regret and remorse. An example of this is when the eponymous heart begins to beat and the protagonist begins to fear it: “But anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die!”. There are however many examples in which the character does display these behaviours. Firstly is the insensitive reason as to why he commits