

The clue for 75-Across gave the game away: [Part of each of this puzzle's theme entries that tells a tale]. Ok, well what are the theme entries? The four longest entries in the grid (by quite a wide margin) are:

STRIKE A BALANCE  
REVEREND AL SHARPTON  
FORSAKING ALL OTHERS  
PENNE ALLA VODKA

Looking at the HEART of those entries (i.e. the middle words) reveals something interesting: each middle word builds on the last, as suggested by the title. A, AL, ALL, and ALLA. Therefore, if the answer to the meta is an author who could be the next theme entry, we're looking for an author whose name fits the pattern: [first name] ALLA? [last name]. Of course, **EDGAR ALLAN POE** fits the bill, and is our meta answer.

One of Poe's famous short stories is called "The Tell-Tale Heart", which was the inspiration for this puzzle.

1	Z	A	L	E	S		6	D	A	T		9	G	A	G		12	A	B	C	S
16	E	V	O	K	E		17	O	L	A		18	R	H	O		19	T	A	R	O
20	S	E	V	E	N	21	S	E	A	S		22	E	A	T	23	S	C	R	O	W
24	T	R	E		25	S	T	R	I	K	26	E	A	B	A	L	A	N	C	E	
			27	J	O	Y			28	B	E	T		29	T	U	M				
30	R	E	V	E	R	E	33	D	A	L	S	35	H	A	R	P	T	O	N		
39	O	X	E	N			40	O	E	R		41	E	O	N	S		42	I	D	A
43	O	P	E		44	C	U	T	A		46	C	A	W			47	C	L	O	T
48	F	O	R	49	S	A	K	I	N	50	G	A	L	L	O	51	T	H	E	R	S
			53	E	R	R		54	S	O	N			55	A	H	I				
56	P	E	N	N	E	59	A	L	L	A	V	60	O	D	K	A		62	A	T	E
65	A	T	L	A	S	I	I	I		66	A	N	A	S	T	67	A	S	I	A	
68	T	A	C	T		69	N	A	S		70	S	T	Y		71	C	R	I	E	S
72	E	L	S	E		73	E	M	T		74	S	O	S		75	H	E	A	R	T
							<b>E</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>G</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>R</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>E</b>		

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