

Name: _____

Period: _____

Date: _____

THE PIT AND THE PENDULUM



- _____ 1. What is the first scene the narrator describes?
- A. He describes his arrest, when he was dragged from his home.
 - B. He describes the courtroom scene when he was sentenced to death.
 - C. He describes his first day of torture.
 - D. He describes being rescued.
- _____ 2. After "swooning" and describing various states of being conscious, where does the narrator come to his senses?
- A. He is in a small bedroom in a monastery.
 - B. He is in the courtroom.
 - C. He is in his own living room.
 - D. He is in a pitch-dark dungeon.
- _____ 3. How did the narrator first explore his surroundings?
- A. He rolled across the floor and counted the number of seconds it took.
 - B. He walked against the wall in a straight line and counted his footsteps, so that he could pace off the size of the room.
 - C. He placed a piece of cloth at a right angle from the wall on the floor to mark his beginning point and followed the wall.
 - D. He crawled on his hands and knees along one wall, but then he got scared and stopped.
- _____ 4. In what way did he venture to explore after his first circuit? What problem did he encounter?
- A. He crossed the room in a direct line. He fell on his face and discovered the pit.
 - B. He crossed the room diagonally and discovered the pendulum.
 - C. He crossed the room in a direct line and discovered that the floor was covered with nails and broken glass.
 - D. He tried climbing one of the walls, but it was too slippery from moss and dampness.
- _____ 5. After they realized he would now cautiously avoid the pit, what fate did the narrator's captors plan for him?
- A. They tied him to the ground, spread honey on him, and released a colony of ants and a hive of bees.
 - B. They used two thin ropes to hang him over a large vat of boiling oil. The more he moved, the faster the ropes lost their strength, and he would fall into the oil.
 - C. They brought in his family and told him he would have to watch them be killed before he died.
 - D. They tied him to a table over which a razor sharp, steel crescent slowly descended. They intended for him to be repeatedly sliced and for him to bleed to death.
- _____ 6. What else was in the room with the narrator?
- A. There were three other persons.
 - B. There were snakes.
 - C. There were rats.
 - D. There were two priests urging him to confess.
- _____ 7. How did the narrator get free from the table under the pendulum?
- A. He pulled at the ropes and stretched them until they were loose enough for him to move out of the way.
 - B. He wiped his food over the parts of the ropes he could reach so the rats would eat through them.
 - C. He rocked from side to side until he manage to tilt the table on its side. Then the pendulum cut through the ropes and he rolled out of the way.
 - D. He pretended to be dead and the captors stopped the pendulum, retracted it, and untied him. When they saw that he was alive they thought of another torture.

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_____ 8. After the narrator became free from the table, he was subjected to yet another means toward death. What was it?

- A. The room was slowly being filled with water, which would eventually drown him.
- B. The walls of the room began to move inward, pushing him toward to the pit.
- C. Poisonous snakes and insects were dropped into the room from above.
- D. The only air vent was covered, so that he would suffocate.

_____ 9. Just as he was about to be forced into the pit, what happened?

- A. He had a heart attack.
- B. His family arrived with enough money to buy his freedom.
- C. He was saved; the Inquisition was over.
- D. He woke up and realized he had been hallucinating due to a high fever.

_____ 10. One of Poe's trademarks is that he uses all of his literary tools to produce a single effect for the reader. What is the effect given by this story?

- A. It is disgust that man could behave so terribly in the name of religion.
- B. The effect is astonishment at the surprise ending.
- C. It is a feeling of an individual's powerlessness over his fate.
- D. The effect is the feeling of terror--the fear of inevitable death.

_____ 11. What effect does the ending (the narrator's being saved) have on us as readers?

- A. It is one of belief in the ultimate goodness of mankind.
- B. It is one of surprise and relief.
- C. It is one of thankfulness at not being alive during the time of the Inquisition.
- D. It is one of disbelief that such a story could have a happy ending.

_____ 12. One of Poe's favorite conflicts is that of madness vs. reason. How is that conflict resolved in this story?

- A. Reason wins.
- B. Conflict wins.
- C. Reason and conflict balance each other equally.
- D. Poe never settles the conflict.

_____ 13. There are many references to "hope" in this story. According to Poe, is there hope?

- A. No. Some situations are hopeless.
- B. Yes, there is always hope.

_____ 14. Where is the climax of the story?

- A. The climax is when he frees himself from the ropes.
- B. The climax is at the very end as he is about to finally be pushed into the pit.
- C. The climax is when he first discovers the pit.
- D. The climax is when he is rescued.

_____ 15. The story has a dark chamber (dungeon) presumably in some larger castle-like building, grotesque torture, struggle between life/consciousness and death/unconsciousness, and a feeling of terror and fear. What genre does this describe?

- A. It describes science fiction.
- B. It describes historical fiction.
- C. It describes existentialism.
- D. It describes a gothic tale.