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**“The Pit and the Pendulum”**

**Directions:** Read the short story and answer the questions as you read. Answer the questions in complete sentences on a separate sheet of paper demonstrating an understanding and deep analysis of the story.

**Imagery:** when an author uses such vivid detail and description that you are able to sense or picture what it is he is describing.

**Symbol:** person, place, thing, object that has meaning in itself and also stands for something more than itself

**Point of view:** the vantage point from which the writer tells a story; **first person POV** is when one of the characters tells the story using pronouns such as I and we; **third person limited POV** is when an unknown narrator tells the story but can zoom in to focus on thoughts and feelings of one character; **omniscient POV** is when an all-knowing narrator tells the story and tells everything about many characters, including thoughts and feelings

**Single Effect:** all words in a text or story are all working together to create one singular mood for the reader

**Hyperbole:** a figure of speech that uses an incredible exaggeration or overstatement for effect

**Irony**: discrepancy between appearances and reality; **verbal irony** occurs when someone says one thing and means something else; **situational irony** occurs when there is a discrepancy between what is expected to happen or would be appropriate to happen and what really does happen; **dramatic irony** occurs most often on stage because it is when a character in the story thinks one thing is true but the audience or the reader knows better

1. The term *in medi res* is a Latin expression for “in the middle of things.” Edgar Allen Poe begins his story *in media res*. What situation is already in progress? What was the last thing the narrator heard? (pg 257)
2. How does Poe use imagery in the first paragraph? (pg 257)
3. What does the author use to symbolize angels in the 1st paragraph? (pg 257)
4. The narrator sees the candles literally and then symbolically. What two different things does he say the candles symbolize for him? (pg 257)
5. What does he mean when he speaks of the, “decent of the soul into Hades”? (pg 258)
6. What is the effect of telling the story in first-person point of view?
7. What does he mean when he says he “swooned”? What are the two stages that one goes through when recovering from a swoon? (pg 258)
8. What does the narrator recall from his time spent unconscious? (pg 259)
9. Re-tell, in your own words, what the narrator was doing after he regained consciousness but didn’t open his eyes. (Paragraph beginning “So far, I had no opened my eyes…” on page 259).
10. Make a list of words and phrases Poe uses that create mystery, suspense, and a sense of foreboding as you read. Write *at least five* examples other that the ones given. Examples: “the blackness of eternal nights encompassed me” (259); “I struggled for breath” (259).
11. What is the name of the place in which the story is set? (pg 260)
12. How did the narrator begin to examine his cell? (pg 260)
13. After the narrator began to move around, he is relieved that “the most hideous of fates” is not for him. What is this fate? How did the narrator figure this out? (pg 261)
14. The narrator repeatedly refers to the darkness and earlier expressed his terror of it. What do you think the darkness might symbolize for him?
15. How does the narrator plan to measure the room? (pg. 261)
16. Re-read the paragraph beginning with “My outstretched hands…” How does Poe create suspense in this passage? (How does he portray the prisoner? What horrific events are foreshadowed?) (pg 261)
17. When the narrator wakes, what does he find beside him? (pg 261)
18. How big did the narrator decide his dungeon to be? (pg 261)
19. Describe the narrator’s encounter with the pit. How does he narrowly escape it? (pg 261)
20. What was in the water they gave him? Why do you think they would have done this? (pg 262)
21. When he wakes up, the prison is illuminated and he is able to see its dimensions. Summarize his reasons for error in computing the distance around the walls the first time. (pg 262)
22. How did the narrator find himself when he awoke this time? (pg 263)
23. How is the narrator being tortured by food and/or drink? (pg 263)
24. What is the painted figure above him? What does the narrator realize? (pg 263)
25. The narrator says, “I knew there were demons who took note of my swoon and who could have arrested the vibration at pleasure.” How does this sentence reinforce the idea that the dungeon symbolizes Hell for the narrator? (pg 264)
26. What “half formed thought of joy” creates in the narrator “hope”? (pg 264)
27. When the pendulum finally descends to its destination, what does the narrator realize it is aimed for? (pg 265)
28. What words and phrases does Poe use to create the effect of horror on pages 264-65? Make a list of 8-10 words or phrases.
29. Explain the hyperbole: “I might as well have attempted to arrest an avalanche!” (pg 265, 1st column)
30. How does the narrator use repetition to create suspense? (pg 265)
31. The narrator asks himself a rhetorical question about what the rats had been eating in the cell. He knows the answer but doesn’t want to think about it. What is the answer? (pg 266)
32. What does the narrator realize about the bandage that ties him down? (pg 266)
33. How does the narrator use the rats in the cell to his advantage? (pg 266)
34. The narrator’s celebration that he is free from the surcingle is short-lived. What does he realize as the pendulum is drawn back up to the ceiling? (pg 266)
35. What is the third method of torture the captors use on the narrator? (pg 268)
36. What is the significance of the progression of the three tortures? Note the different kinds of horrors of the three forms of torture. (pg 268)
37. Is the narrator saved before he falls into the pit? If so, how? (pg 268)
38. Poe distinguishes between moral (psychological) and physical agonies. Give TWO examples of each.
39. Dramatic irony occurs when the audience knows something that a character does not know. Because the narrator is retelling the story, what do we know that (during the time he spent in jail) the narrator was not aware of?
40. List two types of conflict that exist in the story and SUPPORT your answer.
41. There are five types of indirect characterization (what character says, thinks, does, looks, and effects on others). What is the PRIMARY type of indirect characterization that serves to develop the narrator? Find one GOOD example of this type of characterization in the story.
42. Label the following examples of literary devices:
    1. “In their voracity, the vermin frequently fastened their sharp fangs in my fingers.”
    2. “It was appended to a weighty rod of brass, and the whole hissed as it swung through the air.”
    3. “Free! – and in the grasp of the Inquisition.”