

The Pit and the Pendulum (p. 263)

At the beginning of the story, it is revealed that the narrator has been sentenced during the Spanish Inquisition. This was a period of mercilessness and brutality, so when the narrator realizes that he has been sentenced, he knows that his death is eminent.

1. At the beginning of the story, what specifically does the narrator fear?
2. Describe the narrator's surroundings at the beginning of the story.
3. How did the narrator know what fate his captors had for him?
4. The narrator says: "The mode and the hour were all that occupied or distracted me." The mode and the hour of what?
5. How does the narrator describe the wall?
6. What two things does the narrator realize have changed about his garment?
7. How does the narrator decide to ascertain the size of the "room" in which he is being held?
8. What does the mysterious appearance of bread and water while the narrator was asleep tell the audience?
9. What happened when the narrator tried to walk across the room?
10. When the rock hits bottom, what do we learn about the room in which he is held?
11. When the narrator recalls the bad stories he has heard about the tortures of the Spanish Inquisition, he realized that the "*sudden* extinction of life formed no part of their most horrible plan." Why does he emphasize the word "sudden"?
12. When the narrator wakes up a second time, how is he able to see the objects around him?
13. What are the walls actually made of?
14. What does he see on the walls?
15. When the narrator wakes again, what has changed about his condition?
16. What caused the narrator to "regard [the pendulum] more attentively"?
17. Why could the narrator not keep the rats away?
18. What crucial detail does the narrator realize about the pendulum?
19. Where will the pendulum strike the narrator when it comes in contact with him?
20. To what does the narrator compare his imaginary attempt to stop the pendulum?
21. The narrator decides that at the last second when the pendulum cuts his bindings free, he will try to escape. Why is this impossible?
22. Explain how the narrator uses the rats to his advantage.

