AMERICAN HORROR - Five Terrifying Tales

The Pit and the Pendulum

PART 1

A. Comprehension check: Match the phrases in column A with those in column B. There are two phrases in column B that you do not need to use.

A	Phrase	B	
1	The narrator knew he was not in a dungeon of Toledo	A	because he held a pendulum.
2	The narrator moved his arms about	B	because his chin was higher than his forehead.
3	The narrator tore off a piece of his shirt	C	because he wanted to know how deep it was.
4	The narrator first realized there was a pit	D	because he wanted to know if they had buried him alive.
5	The narrator pulled off a piece of stone from the wall of the pit	E	because it was cold and damp.
6	When there was finally light in the dungeon, the narrator still found it difficult to observe his prison	F	because he was tied down.
7	The picture of Father Time was unusual	G	because it was completely dark.
		H	because he wanted to measure the dungeon.
		I	because he heard something fall and hit its sides and then the bottom.

Answers: 1. ____ 2. ____ 3. ____ 4. ____ 5. ____ 6. ____ 7. ____

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B. The Spanish Inquisition: For questions 1–10, read the text below. Use the word given in CAPITALS at the end of some of the lines to form a word that fits in the space in the same line. There is an example at the beginning (0).

The Inquisition was a tribunal, or court, set up by the Catholic Church in 1231.

The main activity of this tribunal was the (0) **investigation** (**INVESTIGATE**) of heretics – people who did not accept the doctrines and ideas of the Church.

The Inquisition had two Inquisitors, (1) _____ (**ASSIST**) and police. The Inquisition was allowed to use torture to obtain (2) _____ (**CONFESS**) from those accused of heresy.

This first Inquisition became increasingly (3) _____ (**IMPORTANT**) in the two centuries that followed until it disappeared. Then in Spain another Inquisition was established by King Ferdinand in 1478. Its main object was to investigate the (4) _____ (**RELIGION**) beliefs of Jews and Muslims who had (5) _____ (**RECENT**) converted to Catholicism.

Its head or Grand Inquisitor was the infamous Tomàs de Torquemada.

Historians estimated that Torquemada had about 2,000 heretics burned. The Spanish Inquisition continued until 1834. Spanish monarchs supported it (6) _____ (**COMPLETE**).

This was (7) _____ (**PARTICULAR**) true of Philip II, who tried to invade England in 1588. This is why the Spanish Inquisition became part of English and Protestant propaganda against Catholic Spain. (8) _____ (**LATE**) in the late 1700s and early 1800s, English writers of Gothic novels often gave horrifying but (9) _____ (**FICTION**) descriptions of the tortures and (10) _____ (**SUFFER**) of the Inquisition. Poe's pit and pendulum follow in this tradition.

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PART 2:

C. Comprehension check: Say whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F), and then correct the false ones.

	Statement	T	F	Corrections for false statements
1	The narrator did not have much trouble protecting his food from the rats.			
2	The narrator pushed himself up in order to break the belt.			
3	The narrator imagined the pendulum cutting through his skin and muscles until it killed him.			
4	The narrator tried to block the pendulum with his hand.			
5	For a moment, the narrator thought that maybe the pendulum would cut the belt and free him.			
6	The rats liberated the narrator.			
7	The narrator was certain that the monks observed his actions.			
8	The narrator thought that monsters and devils were actually looking at him.			
9	When he realized the walls were hot, the narrator decided to jump into the pit.			
10	The narrator was saved by a French general.			

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D. Summary: Number the paragraphs in the right order to make a summary of the story.

..... He tried to think of some ways to escape. First he thought that the pendulum itself would cut the belt. Then he decided to rub the belt with some meat, and let the rats eat the belt.

..... This idea worked and he escaped from the platform. But then he noticed that the walls were heated, and that they were moving towards him.

..... His only choice was to jump into the cool pit. Fortunately, just as he was about to fall, he was saved by a French general.

..... He then decided to investigate his dark prison. He walked around the prison in the dark. Then he tried to cross the prison but he fell down.

..... Then he also noticed a giant pendulum directly above him, and this pendulum was moving. The pendulum continued to descend slowly for days.

..... When he awoke he could finally see his prison. He also discovered that he was tied to a wooden platform by a single long belt.

..... It was then that he realized that there was a circular pit in the center of the dungeon. He went back to the walls.

..... The narrator was condemned to death by the Spanish Inquisition. He was carried deep down to a dark dungeon. He lost consciousness.

..... Later he found some water and bread. There was probably a drug in the water because he slept for a long time.

..... When he awoke, he reasoned about his situation: Was he buried alive? Was he going to be a victim of the auto-da-fes?

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