

The Pit and the Pendulum: some useful quotations

Remembering PEA or PEE look through the following quotations, each with three choices of analysis (or explanation) and decide which is the most appropriate for each one.

1.

I was sick – sick unto death with that long agony ...

This shows:

- a) the narrator is sick.
- b) how desperately unwell the man is; it is the first line of the story which immediately draws attention to his torture.
- c) the man is impatient for something to happen because it suggests he has been waiting a long time.

2.

I saw them writhe with a deadly locution.

When the man writes about the judges' lips in this way it sounds:

- a) disgusting because he uses the word 'writhe'.
- b) silly and doesn't make sense.
- c) revolting, because the word 'writhe' sounds like snakes or maggots, moving quickly and without sight or sense.

3.

These shadows of memory tell, indistinctly, of tall figures that lifted and bore me in silence down – down – still down – till a hideous dizziness oppressed me at the mere idea of the interminableness of the descent.

The man's memory of being carried down to his cell is:

- a) not very good. He knows the people were tall and he went 'down' until he felt dizzy.
- b) that he went a long way and it seemed as if it went on forever.
- c) only half remembered, the memory like a 'shadow' over him still. The distance he travels is shown through repetition of the word 'down'.

4.

My worst thoughts, then, were confirmed. The blackness of eternal night encompassed me. I struggled for breath. The intensity of the darkness seemed to oppress and stifle me. The atmosphere was intolerably close.

The man's horror at his situation is:

- a) shown because he seems panicky.
- b) is reflected in the short sentences which make him seem panicky and desperate. Repeated use of 'I', 'me' and 'my' show how overwhelmed the man is at what has happened to him.
- c) revealed because his 'worst thoughts' have come true. It is dark and he feels claustrophobic.