# Literary Element (page 250)

**Suspense**

**The Pit and the Pendulum** **EDGAR ALLAN POE**

Suspense is a feeling of curiosity, uncertainty, or dread about what is going to happen next. Authors can create suspense by:

- having a character face a major threat
- describing events that bring the character closer to a major threat of which he or she is unaware
- including details that build the reader’s empathy, or concern, for the character

**ACTIVITY**

**Directions** Complete the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Main Threat:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Events that bring threat closer:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• sees faces of black-robed judges; is carried down, down, down into dungeon</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 2. |
| **Details that build empathy:** |
| • trapped in a chamber of suffocating darkness |

| 3. |

| 4. |
| 5. |

| 6. |
| 7. |

| 8. Moment of greatest suspense: |
Reading Strategy (page 250)

Identifying Sequence

The Pit and the Pendulum  EDGAR ALLAN POE

In a narrative, sequence refers to the order in which events or ideas are described. The events of a story are usually told in time order. Sometimes this time order follows a strict first, next, last pattern. Other times, past or future events are woven into the sequence.

The order an author uses affects the reader’s experience of the story. For example, strict time order, or chronological order, often takes the reader more deeply “into” the action, whereas loose time order can remind the reader that he or she is “outside” the story.

ACTIVITY

Directions  Number the following events 1–9 to show the order in which they are described in the story. Then, decide which kind of order Poe is using: strict chronological order or interrupted time order (with flashbacks and/or flash-forwards).

A. _______ The speaker later tries to remember how he came to be in the dungeon.
B. _______ The speaker regains consciousness and finds himself bound to a platform.
C. _______ The speaker escapes the swinging blade at the last moment.
D. _______ The speaker circumnavigates the vault.
E. _______ The walls begin to collapse and force the speaker into the vault.
F. _______ The speaker is sentenced to death.
G. _______ The speaker watches the descending pendulum in horror.
H. _______ The speaker almost falls into the well—but doesn’t.
I. _______ The speaker is saved by the French army.

Kind of order Poe is using: __________________________________________

Active Reading Graphic Organizer

To test your conclusion about the kind of order Poe uses, you may want to identify more events in the story. First, ask your teacher for a copy of the Sequence Graphic Organizer. Then, divide the narrative into three sections—The Vault, The Pendulum, and The Pit—and write one of these section titles at the top of each box. List five or six events that occur in each section, in the order in which they occur. Finally, survey all of the events. Do you still agree with your conclusion about the kind of order Poe is using?
Selection Vocabulary Practice  (page 250)
The Pit and the Pendulum  EDGAR ALLAN POE

Vocabulary

deduce  v. to draw a conclusion from something known or assumed
impede  v. to slow or block progress or action; obstruct
lethargy  n. sluggish inactivity or drowsiness
proximity  n. closeness in space, time, sequence, or degree; nearness
diffuse  v. to spread widely; to scatter in all directions

EXERCISE A  Practice with Word Origins

Use a dictionary to find and record the origin of each root and its meaning. Explain how the meaning of the root is related to the meaning of the word.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word/Root</th>
<th>Origin/meaning of Root</th>
<th>How Root Relates to Word</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. deduce</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. impede</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. lethargy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. proximity</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. diffuse</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

EXERCISE B  Applying Meanings

Write the vocabulary word that belongs in each blank.

1. Lacking energy, he gave into the feeling of _________ and stayed in bed.
2. She was ahead of all the other runners; not one was in _________ to her.
3. Because I know her habits, I can easily _________ what she would do.
4. If I spill this perfume, its scent will _________ throughout the room.
5. Road construction along the route will _________ travel.

EXERCISE C  Responding to the Selection

Write a character profile of the inquisitors who sentenced the narrator in “The Pit and the Pendulum.” Consider what kind of personalities would devise tortures such as those in the story. Use at least FOUR vocabulary words in your profile.