SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE
by Kurt Vonnegut

Style of the Novel
Character List
Theme Tracker
Chapter Assignments

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Style of the Novel

• The short sentences, and truncated dialogue help create the jumpy feel of the book, break up the flow, create the “spastic” effect.

• The novel uses “clumps of images” or scenes as its main structure. The scenes can range from a few paragraphs to a few pages. The images at first appear random, but they aren’t. Most scenes have subtle associations with other scenes. Themes begin to develop through these associations, but the themes are not clear cut; Vonnegut wants readers to co-author the book.

• The book lacks conventional structural elements such as exposition, rising action, climax and resolution. Early on, the novel gives away what might have served as a climax—the bombing of Dresden—and sacrifices any normal suspense. It does, however, have some sense of beginning, middle, and end. The first and last chapters are autobiographical frames to the middle chapters of fiction.

• The book is a satire. It ridicules much of modern society. The author also satirizes himself. Generally, the novel is an example of “indirect” satire; readers must draw their own conclusions from the actions of the characters.

• The novel has many elements of science fiction — clipped sentences and dialogue; motifs of time travel, aliens and space ships, etc.

• The novel uses cinematic techniques such as hard cuts, associative fades, and artful montage to help create associations between scenes.

• Character development is minimal, with the exception perhaps of Billy.

• The novel is told from the first person perspective in the first chapter, the third-person perspective in the middle chapters (with occasional and brief first-person interruptions), returning to mostly first-person in the last chapter.
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<td>Dehumanization of man at the hands of society</td>
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<td>Illusion of institutional religion</td>
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Character List: As you read, take notes on who these characters are, why they are significant, and how they connect to Billy or the narrator.

Bernard O’Hare

Mary O’Hare

Billy Pilgrim

Valencia Merble

Edgar Derby

Roland Weary

Paul Lazzaro

Montana Wildhack

Howard Campbell

Kilgore Trout

Eliot Rosewater

Barbara & Robert Pilgrim

Bertrum Copeland Rumfoord
Reader Response

☐ Each journal must **directly reference the text** (this means you must include at least 1-2 direct citations with page numbers and correct MLA formatting)

What to write (a.k.a. inspiration):

☐ **Choose a significant quotation** from the reading and explain its significance. Or respond to the quotation. Discuss more than just the one paragraph where you found the quotation. How does it RELATE?

☐ **Respond to a discussion we have had in class.** Please reference the discussion. (Date). Perhaps note a line or a statement that sparked your response. Agree with a point, disagree but connect your response back to your own interpretation of the text.

☐ **Respond to the text** by completing one or a few of the following statements:
  - I am surprised by...
  - I do not understand why...
  - This character seems...
  - I anticipate...
  - I expected...but...

☐ **Respond to themes/ essential questions**
  - Negative effects of war
  - Desire to return to innocence/ loss of innocence
  - Man’s acceptance of fate (or fate v. free will)
  - How can literature serve as a vehicle for social change?
  - What is reality?
  - Can we disconnect from our morals and ideals without suffering?
  - **Are we masters of our destiny, or are we simply pawns of fate?**
Chapter 1: p. 1-22

1. **Reader Response: 2 paragraphs: Select 1 and respond using one reference to the text.**
   
   A. After reading this chapter, what views on war have you seen? Do you align yourself with Vonnegut in anyway? Why or why not?
   
   B. How did war affect people in the novel (include the speaker). Does this surprise you? Why or why not?

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**Study Guide**

**Directions:** Answer all questions on separate paper. Reference page numbers.
(Advice- as some questions cover “big” ideas, you should read the questions first, jot down pg. references on this sheet, and then respond to all questions once you have finished the chapter.)

To receive FULL CREDIT, each response to each question MUST have accurate PAGE NUMBER references. (If a pg. number is given in the question, no reference is required.)

**Title Page**

1. How does the title page of *Slaughterhouse-Five* differ from that of a conventional book?
2. What is suggested by the subtitle of the book: *The Children’s Crusade, a Duty-Dance with Death*?

**Chapter One**

1. From what point of view is Chapter One told?
2. What are Vonnegut’s initial motivations in writing *Slaughterhouse-Five* (as he informs us in this chapter) and what happens to change that motivation?
3. Why wasn’t Vonnegut able to write about his experiences in Dresden for so many years?
4. What does Chapter 1 reveal about Dresden?
5. What are some similarities between Vonnegut and O’Hare, and what do these similarities imply?
6. Vonnegut tells O’Hare he has an idea for the climax of his novel: “the execution of poor old Edgar Derby” and asks for his opinion. (Pg. 5) What is the importance of this segment?
7. Why does Vonnegut love Lot’s wife? What do Vonnegut and Lot’s wife have in common?

**Discussion/Analysis Questions:** We will approach these topics during class. You are not required to answer them ahead of time, but if you have some ideas, jot them down to help with discussion. These are also topics that are fair game for the discussion board and open-ended questions on quizzes after we discuss them.
Chapter 1 Analysis Questions:

A1. The author begins to clarify his own ideas by comparing and linking them to a rather strange assortment of high and low art: a ribald limerick, a nonsense song, the poetry of Roethke, the Bible, and social histories. Why?

A2. In what ways does Vonnegut use or refer to machines in Chapter 1? What can we infer from these references?

A3. Chapter 1 is interwoven with subtle references to sleeping and waking. What are some of these references and what do they signify?

A4. What is the meaning of “poo-tee-weet?” Why does it end with a question mark? Does this add meaning at all?

Chapter 2:

Both the reader response and study guide must be completed before class.

Reader Response: Post to Discussion Board on WikiSpace!

Topics to consider (if an only if you are stuck and need an idea)

- The Tralfamadorians & their philosophies- what do they believe? What is your response to these?
- The phrase So it Goes. What do you think of this?
- How war is portrayed in this chapter.
- Any of the analysis questions.

Study Guide:

1. How does the structure of the second chapter resemble that of the first?

2. What is implied by the opening line in Chapter 2: “Listen: Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time?”

3. Slaughterhouse-Five presents a satiric view of organized religion. Where in the second chapter does that view begin to emerge? What can you say about this view at this point in the novel?

4. After Billy becomes unstuck in time while leaning against the tree, what events of his past and future flash into his mind?

5. One of the soldiers Billy is wandering with in the forest is called Roland Weary. Weary is the opposite of Billy and provides contrast to Billy. How is Weary different from Billy?

6. What do you make of the character, Roland Weary?
7. On page 49, Vonnegut tells us that what had happened to Billy “wasn’t time travel. It had never happened, never would happen. It was the craziness of a dying young man with his shoes full of snow.” Why is this passage important?

Chapter 2 discussion/analysis questions:

1. Why would Vonnegut choose the name Billy Pilgrim for his protagonist?
2. What is the significance of “So it goes”?
3. Roland Weary: Why is he so named? In a satire such as Slaughterhouse-Five, who or what might Vonnegut be making fun of in the person of Weary?

Chapter 3:

Both the open response and study guide must be completed before class.

Open Response: Two paragraphs with two embedded quotations on any topic. (print and bring to class)

Study Guide:

1. Why are the deaths of the two American Scouts ironic?
2. How do the German soldiers treat Billy and Weary?
3. Analyze Billy’s time travel to his optometry office and the significance of this section (beginning on page 56). What do you learn about him on a deeper level?
4. What is Billy’s life like in Illium? What does this section reveal about him? (61-63)
5. This chapter is written in third person, but it jumps to first person very briefly. What is said?
6. How does the prayer (pg 60) seem to fit Billy

Chapter 3: Analysis:

A. Examine page 53 where Vonnegut uses the scene of Billy’s capture by German soldiers and to develop another aspect of the protagonist’s character—and another recurrent theme in Slaughterhouse-Five. Where are Adam and Eve mentioned again in the chapter?
B. Vonnegut wrote Slaughterhouse-Five during the height of the Vietnam War. Is there a thematic link between that conflict and World War II? Where is that apparent in this chapter?
C. In Chapter 2, you are told the creatures on Tralfamadore “can look at all different moments just the way we can look at a stretch of the Rocky Mountains. They can see how permanent all moments are, and they can look at any moment that interests them. It is just an illusion we have here on Earth that one moment follows another one, like beads on a string, and that once a moment is gone it is gone forever.” How is Billy like the Tralfamadoreans? Do you think other people think the way Billy does? If so, in what way?
Chapter 4:

**HW #1: Open Response:** Post to Discussion Board on WikiSpace! Reply to a buddy OR write a new post based on your new understanding of the text after further reading.

**HW #2: Study Guide:**
1. What kind of mood does Vonnegut create in the beginning of Chapter 4? What images help to create this mood?
2. What images are you given in this chapter that Vonnegut has used in earlier chapters?
3. What point about time and life is Vonnegut making by having Billy watch a World War II movie backwards?
4. The Tralfamadoreans see time as fixed; they say we are like bugs in amber. Explain this image.
5. Turning your attention to the POW World War II storyline, list three things that have changed for Billy.
6. Describe the circumstances of Weary’s death?
7. Contrast Paul Lazzaro and Edgar Derby.
8. The Tralfamadoreans do not even consider the idea of free will. Free will is the idea that people can control their future by the decisions they make. What do the Tralfamadoreans think in respect to man’s ability to control the future? What advice is given to Billy?

Chapter 5:

The following characters are new in this chapter: Eliot Rosewater, Kilgore Trout, Valencia Merble, Mr. and Mrs. Lance Rumfoord, Howard W. Campbell, Jr., Professor Bertram Copeland Rumfoord

**Open Response:** NONE- SKIP THIS since you will be returning from break!

**Study Guide:**
1. What does the way Tralfamadoreans view the universe and Earthlings tell us about their concept of time?
2. The Tralfamadoreans show Billy some of their unusual novels, and explain how they differ from human novels. How are the Tralfamadorean novels like Slaughterhouse-Five?
3. On pages 88-90, Billy time-travels to his childhood, witnessing a family trip to the Grand Canyon and another to Carlsbad Caverns. What happens there? How could these experiences serve as metaphors?
4. Describe the English POWs that Billy and the Americans encounter.
5. Why do the British POWs send Billy to the hospital shed? What irony do you see in the situation with the POW Englishmen?
6. What is Billy introduced to in the veterans’ hospital?
7. Why does science fiction appeal to Billy and Rosewater?
8. Why is Billy upset by his mother?

9. In his novel, *The Gospel from Outer Space*, what does Kilgore Trout say is the message of the gospels? How do the aliens change that message?

10. Describe Billy’s habitat in the Tralfamadorean zoo.

11. What do the Tralfamadoreans suggest Earthlings should learn to do?

12. What epitaph does Billy think of on his wedding night? How could this be significant?

13. What does Campbell write about American POWs in Germany?

14. Why does the widowed mother think Billy is “going crazy”?

15. Chapter 5 contains many references to bodily functions. What are some of these? What is the point of these references?

16. What is your opinion of Billy’s marriage to Valencia? What might Valencia and the marriage symbolize?

17. What is your opinion of the passage by Howard W. Cambell (p 128-131)?

Analysis Questions:
A1. How is Billy in reality one of the giraffes of his dream while he is in “morphine paradise”?
A2. How is the glass of water on Billy’s bedside table, on page 101, a metaphor?
A3. Vonnegut has Edgar Derby reinforce his two main points about war. What are they? What metaphor for war is used?
A4. How does Billy’s habitat in the Tralfamadorean zoo reflect the Eden motif?
A5. List some references to light and darkness in Chapter 5. Explain how these symbols might connect to themes in the book.
A6. How is the satiric treatment of religion, specifically Christianity, further developed in this chapter? (Select at least one example.)

Chapter 6-7
#1: Post to Discussion Board on WikiSpace! Any topic/ reply to a friend.

#2: Study Guide:
Chapter 6
Key plot development: Billy and the other American POWs are transferred to Dresden as contract labor.

1. What is the source of the animal magnetism Billy feels in the prison hospital shed?
2. What does Lazzaro say is the sweetest thing in life? What story does he tell to prove his point?
3. What advice does Lazzaro give Billy?
5. When/ How does Billy die?
6. What positive attributes of Dresden does the Englishman share with the American POWs?
7. How would you interpret the exchange between the surgeon and Billy in light of your growing understanding of the anti-war theme in the book?
8. How is Edgar Derby elected head American?
9. To what does the author compare his first view of Dresden?
10. Describe the Americans’ arrival in Dresden.
11. Describe the Americans’ “home away from home.”
12. What is the significance of the novel’s title: Slaughterhouse-Five?

Analysis
A1. Vonnegut has made several direct criticisms of American life. What do you notice in this chapter about elections and speeches that can be an indirect mockery of the American system?

Chapter 7:
1. What is Billy expecting to happen? Why doesn’t he tell anyone what he expects? What association is he making with this and the war? Why?
2. Explain the statement “Everything was pretty much all right with Billy.”
Analysis:
A.1. What is symbolized by the syrup on page 160?

Chapter 8-9
Open Response: Post to Discussion Board on WikiSpace!
Study Guide:
Chapter 8
1. What is your opinion of Howard W. Campbell Jr.? Explain
2. Describe the reactions of the other characters to Campbell.
3. What is Kilgore Trout doing when Billy meets him?
4. Describe Billy’s reaction to the barbershop quartet that sings during the party. What is Trout’s opinion of Billy’s reaction?
5. When Billy goes upstairs alone, he realizes what the quartet has reminded him of. Explain.
6. What image does Vonnegut use to describe Dresden after the bombing?

Analysis Questions:
A1. Explain the character of Kilgore Trout in relation to the themes and other characters of the book.

A2. Throughout mythology and literature, caves and other underground vaults have often held the ambiguous symbolic significance of representing wombs and/or tombs. Discuss the underground slaughterhouse “meat locker” and the Americans’ survival of the bombing in light of this symbolism.

A3. Discuss the scene at the inn, with the blind innkeeper and his wife, and the treatment of the Americans, in light of developing motifs and themes in the book.

Chapter 9
1. Why/how does Valencia die?
2. What was Billy’s happiest moment?
3. How had the army improved Robert?
4. What is Professor Rumfoord’s opinion of Billy?
5. What is the only thing Billy cries about in the war?
6. What is Professor Rumfoord’s opinion of the raid on Dresden?
7. How does the Dresden experience come to an end for Billy?
8. After he has been released from the hospital, why does Billy go to New York?
9. Describe how Billy behaves in the bookstore and who he encounters.
10. How do the people in the radio station react to Billy and his information?

Analysis Questions:

A 1. Cite examples of satire in Chapter Nine. (list)
A 2. What does Billy’s fascination with the novels of Kilgore Trout—more so than the smut in the porn shop—tell us about him? What is Vonnegut’s attitude toward this fascination and the stories Billy finds fascinating?
A3. How is the prayer that Montana wears around her neck symbolic? What is the association between the prayer and Billy’s behavior during this chapter?
A4. Why might the epigraph of the book be *Away In A Manger*?
A5. Billy can be interpreted as a Christ figure. Give some evidence of this interpretation. Do you see Billy as a Christ figure?
A6. What do you think the significance of Montana, Billy, and their baby is?

* CHAPTER 10

**NO OPEN RESPONSE!**

Key plot development: *Billy and the other POWs are used by the Germans to exhume corpses after the fire-bombing.*

**Study Guide:**

1. Why does Vonnegut consider his plane ride back from Dresden “one of the nicest [moments]” of his life? (Pg. 211) What is the author suggesting by underscoring this moment?
2. What does the author mean by the term *corpse mine*?
3. How does the Maori POW die?
4. What new technique for disposing of the corpses is devised?
5. Why do the Germans leave?
6. What does the bird say to Billy Pilgrim? Why?
7. Does *Slaughterhouse-Five* end on a “happy note”?

**Chapter 10: Analysis**

A1. From what you know about Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution, is Vonnegut accurate when he writes on page 210, “Charles Darwin, who taught that those who die are meant to die, that corpses are improvements”?

A2. How does the narrative point of view change in the last chapter? What is the effect of this?

A3. What does Edgar Derby’s execution symbolize?