

Study Guide

Slaughterhouse-Five

Chapter One

1. What does Vonnegut use as the epigraph to his novel?

2. Who is the "I" of the first chapter? Is this Kurt Vonnegut? A fictional creation Vonnegut modeled on himself?

3. Why does Vonnegut include this section as Chapter One of his novel?

4. What does Vonnegut say about the construction of his narrative?

5. What was Vonnegut taught in the Anthropology Department?

6. What is Mary O'Hare's view of war? Do you agree with her?

7. What is the Children's Crusade?

8. What does Vonnegut inform us about Dresden's history?

9. What does Vonnegut conclude about the people of Sodom and Gomorrah? Is this meant to be ironic?

10. Why does he call his war book a failure?

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Chapter Two

1. How is Billy's life presented in the beginning of Chapter Two?

2. Early on, what appears to be Vonnegut's attitude toward Billy (tone, point of view, etc.)?

3. What was “the most important thing” Billy learned from the Tralfamadorians?

4. When did Billy first become "unstuck" in time?

5. What was his position in the Army? How is Billy described as a soldier?

6. Describe Roland Weary. What was his father's hobby?

7. Why does Vonnegut include the anecdote about Weary's photograph?

8. From the forest in Europe, where does Billy "jump" in time? How does Vonnegut present these "travels"?

9. What happens to Billy and Weary, and how does Weary react?

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Chapter Three

1. How are the German soldiers described at the beginning of the chapter?

2. Billy flashes back and forth between 1944 and 1967.
What scenes from 1967 are described and how do they relate to his experience in Luxembourg?

3. Vonnegut tells the reader "I was there" (referring to the colonel's home of Cody, Wyoming). Why?

4. How are the conditions inside the boxcar described?

Chapter Four

1. What echoes from earlier scenes can you find in the beginning of Chapter Four?

2. How does Billy "kill time" before the arrival of the Tralfamadorians?

3. How is their arrival described? Why do you think Vonnegut has situated it at this point in the novel?

4. How are the conditions at the POW camp described?

5. How are Derby and Lazzaro presented?

6. What do the Tralfamadorians note about Earthlings at the end of Chapter Four?
What are we Earthlings to make of this philosophy?

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Chapter Five

1. What are Tralfamadorian books like?
How does this relate to the flashback to the Grand Canyon and Carlsbad Caverns?

2. How are the English POWs described? Are we supposed to be sympathetic toward them?

3. What do Eliot Rosewater and Billy have in common?

4. If Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov* has everything there is to know about life, according to Rosewater, why is that not enough any more? What role might science fiction play?

5. Why do the psychiatrists need to come up with a lot of wonderful new lies?

6. What is the premise of Trout's *Maniacs in the Fourth Dimension*?

7. How does Billy view his relationship with Valencia?

8. What revision to the Bible does *The Gospel from Outer Space* make?

9. What is Rosewater's view of Trout?

10. Describe the conditions in the Tralfamadorian zoo.

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11. What is the Tralfamadorian attitude toward Earth and its wars? To the end of universe?
Do you think Vonnegut means us to take this seriously?

12. How does Billy respond to his wife's questions about the war?

13. What scenes are juxtaposed following the epitaph page?
Why does Vonnegut choose to insert himself as author in one of these scenes?

14. Summarize the main ideas from Campbell's monograph.

15. Of what does Montana Wildhack's body remind Billy?

Chapter Six

1. Why does Vonnegut open Chapter Six (as with Chapter Two) with the words, "Listen: Billy Pilgrim ..."?

2. What did Lazzaro do to a dog one time? What, for him, is the sweetest thing in life?

3. How and when does Billy Pilgrim die? What is the significance of this date?

4. How is the arrival in Dresden described? What metaphor is used to describe the situation?

5. Why do you think Vonnegut takes two-thirds of the book before we arrive at Slaughterhouse-Five?

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Chapter Seven

1. Why does Vonnegut include the anecdote about the barbershop quartet on the plane?

2. How are 1945 and 1968 interwoven in this chapter?

3. What are some of the "true" things Billy sees in Dresden while unconscious in Vermont?
Why does Vonnegut include these details?

Chapter Eight

1. How does Vonnegut preface Derby's response to Campbell's attempted recruitment of the Americans?

2. How does Billy meet and befriend Kilgore Trout?

3. Why do you think Vonnegut includes the scene with Trout and Maggie White?

4. Why does Billy become upset by the barbershop quartet's song?

5. Why does Billy not travel in time back to the Dresden firebombing, but remembers "normally"?

6. What "story" does Billy tell to Montana? Why do you think that Vonnegut uses this method?

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Chapter Nine

1. How does Billy's wife, Valencia, die? What does this add to the text?

2. For what purpose does Vonnegut include the character of Bertram Copeland Rumfoord?

3. What is the significance of the wagon scene in Dresden?

4. How does Billy respond to Rumfoord's view that the bombing of Dresden had to be done?

5. What are some of the books Billy comes across on his trip to New York City?

Chapter Ten

1. Why does Vonnegut reintroduce himself into the narrative at the beginning of Chapter Ten?

2. How does Vonnegut appear to feel about Tralfamadorian philosophy?

3. What happens to Billy and Vonnegut's stories on page 289?

4. How is the supposed climax of the novel, Derby's execution, presented?

5. Describe the ending of the novel.