

Take Home Exam

60 pts

Slaughterhouse Five, by Kurt Vonnegut

Due February 22, 2019

Choose **three** of the following nine passages and in **200-500 words each**, explain the significance of the passage in the following three ways:

- 1) Place the passage within the context of the novel. What is happening when this passage occurs? What is the passage responding to directly if anything?
- 2) Identify a larger theme from the novel and explain how the passage develops that theme.
- 3) Provide **two additional, related passages (1-5 sentences)** and explain the significance of considering all three together. **Your additional passages CANNOT BE TAKEN from exam's list of passages.**

Possible themes: violence, senselessness, Christianity / theology, science-fiction / aliens, memory, optometry, history, time, birds, camaraderie, death, futility, absurdity, irony, literature and narrative structure, the USA, sorrow, revenge / vengeance, destruction

Passage One:

...I had outlined the Dresden story many times. The best outline I ever made, or anyway the prettiest one, was on the back of a roll of wallpaper.

I used my daughter's crayons, a different color for each main character. One end of the wallpaper was the beginning of the story, and the other end was the end, and then there was all that middle part, which was the middle. And the blue line met the red line and then the yellow line, and the yellow line stopped because the character represented by the yellow line was dead. And so on. The destruction of Dresden was represented by a vertical band of orange cross-hatching, and all the lines that were still alive passed through it, came out the other side.

Passage Two:

I looked through the Gideon Bible in my motel room for tales of great destruction. *The sun was risen upon the Earth when Lot entered into Zo-ar, I read. Then the Lord rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord out of Heaven; and He overthrew those cities, and all the plain, and all the inhabitants of the cities, and that which grew upon the ground.*

So it goes.

Those were vile people in both those cities, as is well known. The world was better off without them. And Lot's wife, of course, was told not to look back where all those people and their homes had been. But she *did* look back, and I love her for that because it was so human.

So she was turned to a pillar of salt. So it goes.

Passage Three:

"The most important thing I learned on Tralfamadore was that when a person dies he only *appears* to die. He is still very much alive in the past, so it is very silly for people to cry at his funeral. All moments past, present, and future, always have existed, always will exist. ... They can see how permanent all the 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..."

Passage Four:

Billy had a framed prayer on his office wall which expressed his method for keeping going, even though he was unenthusiastic about living. A lot of patients who saw the prayer on Billy's wall told him that it helped them to keep going, too. It went like this:

GOD GRANT ME
THE SERENITY TO ACCEPT
THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE,
COURAGE
TO CHANGE THE THINGS I CAN,
AND WISDOM ALWAYS
TO TELL THE
DIFFERENCE.

Among the things Billy Pilgrim could not change were the past, the present, and the future.

Passage Five:

Another time Billy heard Rosewater say to a psychiatrist, "I think you guys are going to have to come up with a lot of wonderful *new* lies, or people just aren't going to want to go on living."

Passage Six:

Derby described the incredible artificial weather that Earthlings sometimes create for other Earthlings to inhabit Earth any more. Shells were bursting in the treetops with terrific bangs, he said, showering down knives and needles and razorblades. Little lumps of lead in copper jackets were crisscrossing the woods under the shell bursts, zipping along much faster than sound.

Passage Seven:

"How—how *does* the Universe end?" said Billy

"We blow it up, experimenting with new fuels for our flying saucers. A Tralfamadorian test pilot presses a starter button, and the whole Universe disappears." So it goes.

"If you know this," said Billy, "isn't there some way you can prevent it? Can't you keep the pilot from pressing the button?"

“He has *always* pressed it, and he always *will*. We *always* let him and we always *will* let him. The moment is *structured* that way.”

Passage Eight:

“Everything was beautiful, and nothing hurt.”

Passage Nine:

Campbell was an ordinary-looking man, but he was extravagantly costumed in a uniform of his own design. He wore a white ten-gallon hat and black cowboy boots decorated with swastikas and stars. He was sheathed in a blue body stocking which has yellow stripes running from his armpits to his ankles. His shoulder patch was a silhouette of Abraham Lincoln’s profile on a field of pale green. He had a broad armband which was red, with a blue swastika in a circle of white.