

# "an occurrence at owl creek bridge" essay sample



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## **“ An Occurrence at Owl Creak Bridge” Essay Sample**

The most famous of Ambrose Bierce's civil war stories is probably " An Occurrence at Owl Creak Bridge" which tells of a southern civilian who attempts to do his part to aid the Confederate cause by destroying a critical bridge recently seized by Union forces. " No service was too humble for him to perform in aid of the south, no adventure too perilous for him to undertake if consistent with the character of a civilian who was at heart a soldier" we can tell the result of his dream at the story opens, he stands upon Owl Creak Bridge with a noose around his neck thinking of the wife and children he will never see again.

The story continues with a lucky miracle, when the union soldiers try to hang him, the noose slips and he swings off downstream. He fleets across country until he finally reaches home and as he approaches his open armed wife. In the end Bierce revealed that this is merely a fantasy, the rope snaps tight and we realize that he had imagined the whole episode on way down " Peyton Farquhar was dead; his body, with a broken neck, swung gently from side to side beneath the timber of the Owl Creak Bridge. " Another story I read at the same time is " The Egg" by Sherwood Anderson.

It tells a story of families who try to get distinction caused by the ambitious dream of their mother. They first try a chicken farm. Although they almost lose all the money on the chicken and finally give up, Dad still saves all the little monstrous things-four legs, two heads monster that had born on their farm, because he has some sort of notion that if he could but bring into hen hood or rooster hood, his fortune would be made. Then they start to embark

in restaurant where their father has an idea that all the family should try to entertain the people who come to eat in their restaurant.

While father became feverish in his anxiety, I keep mutant chicken and a basket of eggs in mind and place hope on it. But finally it is also the eggs, which is the symbol as the hope ruin the dream of this family. At first glance, "An Occurrence at Owl Creak Bridge" is a tale centering on the civil war; it is a conflict impressing life and death without the bloody war screen. "The Egg" is another story about extremely hard and bitter life in America in 1920's. It seems like the only common between these two stories is the style of writing.

First of all, they both use the flashback, especially in "An Occurrence at Owl Creak Bridge" the jump between part I and Part III is a typical flashback. The introduction of Peyton Faquhar achieves the aim of cheating our eyes.

Because of part II we forget what happen in the end of part I-he close his eyes and begin to dream before his death. We misread whole thing in part III is the fact instead of the dream, this brings us a shock and a disappointment at the end of the story when we see the light.

In "The Egg", the flashback is also used at the last screen where Anderson describes story upstairs and downstairs in the restaurant. When I read "I was awakened by a roar of anger coming from father's throat." My heart was tight firmly and I was so nervous and urgent to know what was happening downstairs. Both flashback in "An Occurrence at Owl Creak Bridge" and "The Egg" serve as contrast. They make the personality stand

out and the story alive. Secondly, the calm and humor atmosphere that two authors try to build in their stories agree with each other.

Although both of them are the stories telling the cruel and merciless fact or even the failure, the language used is artistic and humor, especially in "The Egg", the digressive philosophic thought about "dreadful cycle" between egg and hen really makes me think at the beginning of the story "It's definitely not a story concern about the egg but something else." Similarly, "An Occurrence at Owl Creak Bridge", the story which is supposed to narrate the death moment avoid bloody and cruel language but contain a lot of environmental and fantasy description.

Nevertheless, this writing style makes me think more and feel as if needles were pricking my heart. But the largest common between these two stories which I found after along time of reading is the implied meaning inhabited in them. In both stories, we need to face the failure or even the death. Where is the failure coming from? If Peyton Farquhar stayed at home being a well-to-do planter and the family still worked as a farm hand for Thomas Butterworth, they wouldn't fail at all, at least Peyton wouldn't die.

Farquhar feels it is too humble and too perilous to stay quiet; the families want to rise from poverty to fame and greatness incurably ambitiously. In a word, it was the result they asked for because of the vanity. Vanity plays tricks and exercises evil influence all human's life, it seems like we were born with it. Sometime we are vanity without noting it; but sometime we have to pay a high price for it. Just like Farquhar, he not only failed to

destroy the bridge, but also lost his life; the families not only fail their business, but also lost their dignity to live.

Vanity is always followed by a punishment; we shall get "the double zero"(the rewrite version of "The Egg") if our attempt is vanity. Any way in "The Egg", the egg was not destroyed at the end, for some people it means the hope still exists, but for me it means the real tragic life and the dreadful cycle of vanity are still alive. In American society, no matter it's 1920's or 2000's, lure of money and greatness tempt the hearts of the people, we are on the way of chasing American dream full of vanity. In order not to fall into the cocoon set by ourselves, we do need to learn from stories and make our attempt straight.