

# [Slaughterhouse five](https://assignbuster.com/slaughterhouse-five/)

[Experience](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/experience/), [Laughter](https://assignbuster.com/essay-subjects/experience/laughter/)

Billy Pilgrim is unstuck in time, and so is Slaughterhouse Five. Novel follows Billy’s “ unhinged” life. If I write every hop, skip, and jump, the summary would be as complicated as the book. These are the basic facts of Pilgrim’s life; they are shown in chronological order (but are definitely not in the book): Billy Pilgrim is born in 1922 and grows up in Ilium, New York. He is a funny-looking youth, he does reasonably well in high school, enrolls in night classes at the Ilium School of Optometry, and is soon drafted into the army and the Second World War.

He serves as a chaplain’s assistant, then is thrown into the Battle of the Bulge, and almost immediately gets taken prisoner behind German lines. Just before being captured, though, he becomes unstuck in time for the first time. He sees all of his life in one sweep. Billy is transported with other privates to the city of Dresden. There, the prisoners are made to work for their stay. They are kept in a former slaughterhouse. Allied forces bomb the city, then drop gasoline to create a firestorm that sucks most of the oxygen into the blaze, suffocating or burning 130, 000 people.

Billy and his fellow POWs survive in an airtight meat locker. They emerge to find, “ a moonscape of destruction”. Several days later, Russian forces capture the city and Billy’s help in the war is over. He returns to Ilium and finishes optometry school. He gets engaged to the daughter of the founder of the school. After a nervous breakdown, for which he given shock treatment at a veterans’ hospital (where he is also introduced to the science fiction of Kilgore Trout by a fellow patient), Billy gets married.

His rich father-in-law sets him up in the optometry business. Billy and his wife raise two children. One day in 1967, as he later claims on a radio talk show and in a letter to the editor, Billy is kidnapped by two-foot high aliens whose body shape looks like an upside down toilet plunger. These are the Tralfamadorians. They take him to Tralfamadore where they mate him with the actress Montana Wildhack and keep both earthlings in a zoo.

They also explain to him their perception of time, they explain that all time exists for them simultaneously in the fourth dimension. When someone dies he is simply dead at a particular time. Somewhere else and at a different time he is alive and well. Tralfamadorians prefer to look at the nice moments in time. When Billy is returned to earth, he first says nothing. However, after he suffers a head injury in a plane crash and after his wife dies on her way to see him in the hospital, Billy tells the world what he has learned.

He goes on a radio talk show and writes a letter to the newspaper. His daughter doesn’t know what to do with him. Billy makes a tape recording of his account of his death, which will occur in 1976 after Chicago has been hydrogen bombed by the Chinese. He knows exactly how it will happen: a man he knew in the war will hire someone to shoot him. Billy will experience, “ The violet hum of death,” then will skip back to some other point in his life. He’s seen it all many times and is not worried.