

About kurt vonnegut's slaughterhouse-five novel

[Experience](#), [Laughter](#)



Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* novel has an extremely dark, tragic story line. But, in Vonnegut's melancholic autobiography, he incorporates a fair amount of irony and black humor into the novel. As a result of including black humor and irony into the story, the novel enables the reader to comprehend the terrors of war - and contributing to the anti-war sentiment - while simultaneously finding humor in some of the laughable situations in the book.

Mainly, Vonnegut included black humor and irony into the novel because he wants the audience to acknowledge the reality - that we have to accept things as they are, no matter how awful they may be.

Black humor is a comical style of writing that makes light of a subject matter that is normally considered serious or hard to talk about. Kurt Vonnegut uses this writing technique throughout the entire book to contribute to the novel's anti-war message to the readers. There are multiple moments where the readers are almost forced to find humor in his words. On one occasion, an exceptionally drunk Billy Pilgrim is searching for the steering wheel of his car: " He was in the backseat of his car, which is why he couldn't find the steering wheel" (Vonnegut, 60). Drunk driving isn't something people usually joke around about, but Vonnegut finds a little bit of humor in it by making fun of the fact that he was so drunk to the point where he couldn't find his steering wheel. A second instance where Vonnegut uses black humor by comparing humans to machines was when he said: Tralfamadorians, of course, say that every creature and plant in the Universe is a machine. It amuses them that so many Earthlings are offended by the idea of being machines (197). By comparing humans to machines, their death are

basically a malfunction', making their death less mournful or unprincipled, and humanity is basically overlooked. Another moment in the book where Vonnegut compares humans to machines was when Billy was talking about his memories of Dresden and the war: I think of how useless the Dresden part of my memory has been, and yet how tempting Dresden has been to write about, and I am reminded of the famous limerick:

There was a young man from Stamboul,

Who soliloquized thus to his tool:

" You took all my wealth

And you ruined my health,

And now you won't pee, you old fool." (Vonnegut, 3)

In this excerpt, a young man's private area is related to a tool, as regular human body parts in the novel simply become part of a machine. The limerick that Billy used references a tool that does not work very well, and will not perform its purpose. Vonnegut uses this specific limerick to manifest the idea of how people just treat soldiers as robots or machinery, therefore the humans become tools of war. The dehumanization of humans through black humor also relates to the moments of the animalization' of the soldiers in the novel. The way that Vonnegut describes the prisoners of war makes them basically equated to working animals. The sleeping place of the prisoners in Dresden is satirically named Schlachthof-Fif? nf. Schlachtof' actually means slaughterhouse in German. During the war in Dresden, the

animals in the slaughterhouse had been killed and eaten and exerted by human beings, mostly soldiers (Vonnegut, 194). And now the slaughterhouse in Dresden was going to serve as a home away from home for one hundred American prisoners of war (Vonnegut, 194). By telling the readers that the slaughterhouse once housed animals, then those animals got eaten by the soldiers, and now the slaughterhouse was going to hold imprisoned humans, it is exemplifying the fact that humans are being dehumanized down to the level of animals in war to be killed and imprisoned. The animalization of human beings shows how war will just treat humans as objects used for work or just something to get rid of or kill, which also adds to the anti-war sentiment of the novel.

One more important issue in the novel is the so it goes' moments. Vonnegut adds a sci-fi element to the novel by adding these aliens to the novel, called Tralfamadorians. The Tralfamadorians are able to see any moment in time, and they innately know what will happen in the past, present, and future - so everyone's fate is already known by the Tralfamadorians. Fate is a big part of the novel with Billy and the Tralfamadorians, even at the very beginning of the book, as Vonnegut writes, I've finished my war book now It begins like this: Listen: Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time. It ends like this: Poo-tee-weet? (Vonnegut, 28). Because of that, the novel is already decided before the reader even starts it, producing an idea of fate all throughout the novel. Since Billy is in contact with the Tralfamadorians, he talks about their views on death: When a Tralfamadorian sees a corpse, all he thinks is that the dead person is in bad condition in that particular moment Now when I myself hear that somebody is dead, I simply shrug and say that the Tralfamadorians

say about dead people, whiz is So it goes (Vonnegut, 34). The phrase 'So it goes' certainly adds a less depressed feel on death in the novel, adding to the black humor. This small phrase becomes continuous remark in the novel after any death that is brought up. This phrase also becomes satirized in the book, when the death of a person is compared to champagne. The extreme amount of overstating the phrase makes death less emotional to the reader. With Vonnegut incorporating lots of black humor into this novel, it adds some laughable moments to such a dark and depressing story.

In addition to the black humor, Kurt Vonnegut also includes some irony into the novel. The main character, Billy Pilgrim, is an isolated person who doesn't have a lot of close friends or family. His father believed in the sink or swim method, and his father actually throws him into the deep end of a pool when he was five years old. From that time on, Billy becomes afraid of a lot of things. At 21 years old, he is drafted to be a soldier in World War Two. Billy becomes a chaplain's assistant, which is apparently a figure of fun in the American Army (Vonnegut, 38). So, Billy Pilgrim is basically a mockery of what a real soldier usually is, who is strong and courageous - which is very ironic for an anti-war novel. But, In chapter one, Vonnegut mentions that those who are most against the war are those who fight in it. Another example of irony in Slaughterhouse Five is when the four soldiers are walking behind enemy lines after the Battle of the Bulge, and Billy is the least likely to survive, but he is the only one who actually survives. Billy Pilgrim also survives the horrible bombing of Dresden, and he was also the only survivor of an airplane crash, which is ironic because he seems like the most unfit

man to be a soldier, and the last person that the audience would expect to survive such horrific things.

Other random moments of irony in the novel is when Edgar Derby is tried and killed for after stealing a teapot from the rubble in Dresden after the entire city is destroyed, when Billy uses an insignificant Science Fiction book as his guide for life, when Billy isn't able to sleep at night but cannot stay awake at work, and when Billy's happiest moment in his entire life is when he sits on a coffin shaped carriage carried by two horses. Then, his happy moment is interjected when he sees the horribly sick horses, and it causes him to cry for the first time ever throughout the entire war. Irony adds a touching aspect to this novel. When Billy is training to be a soldier, his father is shot to death while he is hunting. When Billy is in the hospital after being in a plane crash, his wife Valencia speeds to the hospital, and she hits a car, tears off her exhaust, and then dies from carbon monoxide poisoning. After the Dresden bombing, Edgar Derby is tried and killed in Dresden for trying to steal a teapot. These ironies are all ended by the same small phrase: So it goes. This simple phrase serves as a reason for the readers to find humor at the ironies of Billy's life.

Kurt Vonnegut utilizes black humor and ironies to reveal the darkness and cruelty of the war, and to make his own commentary on the effects of war, specifically a war he fought in himself, which has a huge impact on him and his mental health. Vonnegut discusses the tough subject of war, and his use of the black humor and irony enables him to talk about such a difficult subject. Vonnegut wants the audience to understand the terrible struggles

he went through in the war, while also laughing along with him so the story won't be so melancholic. If the novel was just depressing and simply told the audience a lot of facts about the war, no one would see the bigger picture or take anything good away from the book. But since Vonnegut added in the black humor and irony, the audience can understand the terrors of war, but also find the humor in some of the laughable situations in the book, which makes it a lot more interesting to read.

In Kurts Vonnegut's melancholic autobiography, Slaughterhouse Five, he incorporates a great amount of irony and black humor into the novel.

As a result of including black humor and irony into the story, the novel enables the reader to comprehend the terrors of war – and contributing to the anti-war sentiment – while simultaneously finding humor in some of the laughable situations that the main character, Billy Pilgrim, encounters in the book. If the novel just simply told the audience multiple facts about the war, no one would see the bigger picture or take anything good away from the book. But since Vonnegut added in the black humor and irony, the audience can understand the terrors of war, but also find the humor in some of the laughable situations in the book, which makes it a lot more interesting to read. Mainly, Vonnegut included black humor and irony into the novel because he wants the audience to acknowledge the reality – that we have to accept things as they are, no matter how awful they may be.