

Post-war effects in slaughterhouse five by kurt vonnegut

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The Horrifying Effects of War

War is something that humankind has gone through since the Homo sapiens came around. Most of these wars have sacrificed a lot of people who go off and fight for the states involved. This is because of conflict between the two countries in which results in the two countries going into war to decide these matters. In Kurt Vonnegut's novel, *Slaughterhouse—Five*, it talks about Billy Pilgrim and World War II. With this being said, *Slaughterhouse Five* is an anti-war book because of the after-effects of war.

When two or more states go into war, especially a hot war, it requires states to send their own countrymen into battle. The effects of when these soldiers are in the battlefield can be especially damaging to the mental image because of the horrifying effects of war. When Billy was with Roland and the scouts, " Billy stood there politely, giving the marksman another chance. It was his addled understanding that of the rules of warfare that the marksman should be given another chance" (Vonnegut 42). It is obvious that when the opponent tries to shoot Billy, he should dodge it to try and survive. It is not normal for any soldier in war to give their opponents the okay to shoot at them again. Another case of when Billy's mind went haywire was when he was with the surgeon. When the surgeon asked Billy a question, that was when " Billy looked at him vaguely. Billy had lost track momentarily of where he was or how he had gotten there. He had no idea that people thought he was clowning" (Vonnegut 193). This time around, Billy was completely out of it with time and location. He was also oblivious to the fact that, what

probably was his actions, that caused other people to think that he was acting funny.

This goes on to later on in the novel when Billy was involved in a plane crash. After the plane crashed and when Billy had to get surgery for the fractured skull, he “ was unconscious for two days after that, and he dreamed millions of things, some of them true. The true things were time-travel” (Vonnegut 200). In this case, Billy is time-travelling because the mind seems to bring up memories of moments in a situation which was a very depressing and scary moment, such as the war. As a result, and whether this would be Billy’s first war or not, the behavior by which Billy is acting upon is not normal for anyone in war including after the war ended.

On the other hand, though, why this novel does not present itself as an anti-war book goes as the following. At one point during the early part of the war, Ronald Weary was trying to get Billy out of the way of those shots fired. The first time, Billy moved out of the road when Weary cursed at him to get out of the road. Then came the second time Billy was stuck in another situation, Weary had,

‘ saved [his] life again, you dumb bastard,’ Weary said to Billy in the ditch. He had been saving Billy’s life for days, cursing him, kicking him, slapping him, making him move. It was absolutely necessary that cruelty be used, because Billy wouldn’t do anything to save himself (Vonnegut 43).

Obviously, Billy was unaware of what he was doing, and even though Weary had to discipline Billy for the sake of his own safety, Billy already has a pre-

existing condition coming into the war that caused him to be acting and behaving in the way he is even though he already had been in World War II. Even though it is hard to deal with coping through any traumatic experience Billy had gone through, especially post-traumatic stress disorder, it may be even harder to cope with it since he is fighting his war with Weary and the three musketeers.

When Billy is going through to cause him to behave oddly is called Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or shortened to PTSD. PTSD is this psychological shock that typically is associated with after-effects of any traumatic experience. In Billy's case, being in the war and previous wars really had impacted his mindset. PTSD, coming from a war sense, is because there are a lot of cases where soldiers experience a lot of traumatic experiences during the time that they are in war. This can impact their behavior in many ways, each person is different with the severity.

Where was when the surgeon was trying to get Billy to answer him. This was because the surgeon " was demanding some sort of satisfaction. Billy was mystified. Billy wanted to be friendly, to help, if he could, but his resources were meager" (Vonnegut 193). According to what Billy was trying to do, it seemed like he was trying to get out of the situation when obviously, there are horrors like this where Billy had to face during World War II which factored into the post-traumatic stress disorder. Also, being in the slaughterhouse itself, this was a place where " it was going to serve as a home away from home for one hundred American prisoners of war" (Vonnegut 194). Just like any place where prisoners of war were treated,

including slaughterhouse five, it is expected that the prisoners of war would be expected to be treated poorly with the horrors that came along with being a prisoner of war. Sometimes, they can be treated so poorly, especially during the second world war, and that, as a result, is another contribution to post-war behavior because of how they were treated while in custody. Even though it may seem like there are reasons why war is inevitable for these particular reasons, including more, war can cause after-effects which veterans can have that can cause behavior changes for a long time.

The main theme that is drawn out of the novel is that the post-war effects can have a huge impact on veterans. In Billy's case, it was recurrent throughout the work that he was unaware of what he was doing in any given situation and at any given time. It is evident that Billy behaves in a very unusual manner a lot of the time, whether he is at home, war, or even with the Tralfamadorians that he always brings up. Plus, Vonnegut mentions that Billy had time travelled after the surgery. With PTSD, from the war prospective, there can be some flashbacks that can be associated with the dangers of trying to avoid weapons to the passing of some comrades during the war. With all this coming from PTSD that Billy is experiencing, it really comes to show how war can affect veterans coming out of war, hence the reason why Slaughterhouse - Five is an anti-war novel.