

# Satire in slaughterhouse five assignment

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In *Slaughterhouse Five*, Vonnegut uses satire in the topics of war, aliens, fate and the reasons for life itself. In *Slaughterhouse Five* by Kurt Vonnegut, the author uses many literary devices to bring across his point including black humor, irony, wit and sarcasm. He mainly uses satire throughout the book. Satire is a literary device found in works of literature that uses irony and humor to mock social convention, another work of art, or anything its author thinks ridiculous to make a point. Vonnegut is Kilgore Trout in the novel. The first line of the novel is “ Billy Pilgrim has come unstuck in time”(23).

By using the word “ unstuck”, Vonnegut implies that Billy has now become free. Consequently, Vonnegut’s narrative, as well as Billy, has achieved a freedom of sorts. Vonnegut will not be tied down by the conventions of time; now he will be able to place Billy in any time frame he chooses. Vonnegut moves Billy rapidly, having him experience a small fragment of his life before taking him off again. This creates a collage effect in the novel, which is made up of bits and pieces of Billy’s life. By fragmenting Billy’s life like this, Vonnegut is able to bring the events that comprise his life closer together.

One minute Billy is marching through a forest and the next he is waiting at a public pool for his father to teach him how to swim. This constant fragmentation of Billy’s life serves, ironically, to unify Billy’s character for the reader. The aliens are used as satire. Due to the fragmentation of time there is no past, present or future in *Slaughterhouse-Five*. This view of all time existing at once becomes a lesson that Billy learns from a group of aliens called Tralfamadorians. Their way of looking at time is comparable to a human’s way of looking at “ a stretch of the Rocky Mountains”(27).

The Tralfamadorian way of looking at the universe, the acceptance that all things good or bad are destined to happen become what Billy believes. The reader cannot help being drawn into this mind frame because he or she is constantly seeing through Billy's eyes. The reader is with Billy wherever he goes. The Tralfamadorians, who explain this nature of time and existence to Billy, are shown as enlightened creatures while the humans back on earth are seen as backwards — to such an extent that they believe in free will. Billy towards the end of his life becomes a preacher of these virtues of existence taught to him by his zookeepers on Tralfamadore, going around and speaking about his experiences and his acquired knowledge. This is ironic, because he is attempting to reverse the steady path of life, even time itself. War is the third topic that is heavily satirized in Slaughterhouse Five. First, Billy almost gets killed because he is time-traveling. Second of all, Vonnegut always says “ so it goes” (12) whenever someone dies, so it sort of mocks death. Also, he is given a woman's jacket when he becomes a POW and it mocks his position in the war also.

On the nights of February 13-14 in 1944 the city of Dresden, Germany was subjected to one of the worst air attacks in the history of man. By the end of the bombing 135, 000 to 250, 000 people had been killed by the combined forces of the United States and the United Kingdom. Dresden was different than Berlin or many of the other military targets which were attacked during World War II because it was never fortified or used for strategic purposes and, therefore, was not considered a military target. At one point, Billy watches a war movie about WWII. He watches it regularly, showing how reality is.

Then he watches it in reverse. The planes suck the bombs up from the drop points and bring them back to their factories, where they get stripped down and put back in the earth, never to be used again. This is ironic because, sadly, it is the opposite of reality. In any case, the reader encounters much dark humor in the novel. There is a sense of an embittered humor with the Tralfamadorian phrase, " So it goes" which is repeated over 100 times in the novel. At first, the saying can be looked upon as funny in an ironic way. However, as one reads further, the phrase becomes irritating and irreverent.

The reader cannot fathom so many deaths meaning so little. This punctuating phrase forces the reader to look at the novel's deaths one after the other. Without Kurt Vonnegut's use of dark humor and satire, Slaughterhouse-Five would certainly not be considered such a creative accomplishment. It is because of these devices that Vonnegut's objectives are so effectively achieved. Through its dark humor, the novel forces the reader to become nauseated by deaths that are unnecessary. At the end of the novel, the reader despises war just as much as Kurt Vonnegut himself does, if not more.