

The hitchhikers guide to the galaxy philosophy essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy can be classified as an absurdist novel. An absurdist novel is a story in which the main personality looks to find a meaning of life. This character's journey, however, has many obstacles, which are absurd events. Absurd events are events that defy all logic and reason. These events surpass all human understanding, and that is why they are considered obstacles. Douglas Adams chose Arthur Dent to be the hero of this story. Arthur Dent has had many bad experiences that he could not understand, such as the demolition of his house and the destruction of his home planet - the Earth. Of course, Arthur could not understand why these actions took place, and that is also why they are considered absurd. And if a person can find a meaning and explanation for these events, it will be easy for him/her to find out the meaning of life. Throughout this novel, the reader could notice that the protagonist, Arthur Dent, has had many "processes" and various steps. These all happened to him whenever he faced absurd moments. First, there is an attempt; Arthur would try to comprehend these situations, then there is the conflict and failure; this means that he will fail and thus this would lead him to conflict with the universe, and finally, there is the realization; Arthur would realize what is happening and would reach a conclusion. In absurdist fiction, there are two conclusions - one of them is realizing that the universe is irrational and all that exists is the "here and now", and there is the filling of the void by saying that the universe is governed by a high power which controls all of its events.

When Arthur is faced with absurd events, he would normally attempt to reconcile them; that means trying to attempt to understand what they are about, what they mean, and why they happened. The attempt is basically

him stating the obvious whenever he doesn't understand something. That thing he can't understand is absurd, and thus not safe. The obvious is certain, and thus safe; and that is why he would state it. Another way of attempting to understand the absurd is trying to link the event to something simpler, so the person can wrap his/her head around it: " He wished there was something simple and recognizable he could grasp hold of" (57). The provided quote means that people can't explain complicated things, and that is why they try to break them up into simpler things so they could reconcile them. Another way of saying this can be saying that people will also try to loom for other things to put the blame on and declare them responsible for what had happened, just like when Arthur blamed the destruction of the Earth on the fact that the day was a Thursday: " This must be Thursday... I never could get the hang of Thursdays" (25). Also, a clear event which is probably the best one to represent Arthur's attempt was when he could not believe the Earth was gone; he did not cry as he didn't understand it. This made him think of other things related to the Earth, like McDonald's - he thought that he could no longer eat McDonald's Cheeseburgers. And that is when he cried.

After attempting to reconcile the absurd situations, there are two possibilities; one of them is explaining the obvious and moving on, thus ignoring what is happening, and the other is failure to find a meaning in these absurd moments, so this leads to conflict with the universe. The sort of conflict seen in this novel was through Arthur's panic and puzzled facial expressions. First of all, it began with just facial expressions showing confusion when he was introduced to the Dentrassi race who are the best

cooks around: " A pained expression crossed Arthur's face. 'But who are the Dentrassi?' he said" (55). This shows that he could not come up with an explanation (a reasonable one); therefore he naturally showed signs of confusion and fear. Another sign was when Arthur was told that the whole planet Earth was gone, just in an instant. He could not come up with anything to explain it, as there wasn't enough time, so he panicked: "'Don't Panic.' 'I'm not panicking!' 'Yes, you are.' 'All right, so I'm panicking, what else is there to do?'" (57). This quote tells the reader that when a person does not know what is going on around him and cannot explain it, he/she would usually panic. Because panic shows fear and confusion, and what is absurd is not safe. Arthur had failed to reconcile the various absurd events, and this eventually led him into mental conflict with his own mind which was seen through Arthur's reaction which was basically him panicking.

After attempting to wrap his head around the events, and after failure and conflict on multiple occasions, Arthur finally reached a conclusion, and realized what he should be doing. An absurd hero would either give up and admit that the universe is irrational or fill in the void by thinking that there is a higher power governing the whole universe. Arthur eventually just decided to give up on trying and thus it is implied that he admitted that the universe is irrational and that no such meaning exists; he just admitted to the here and now. He said: " Look... would it save you a lot of time if I just gave up and went mad now?" (165). This clearly tells the reader that Arthur is beginning to realize that he was just wasting his time and should just give up. Even Zaphod Beeblebrox told them to stop trying: " You see... if they're just sitting there in the studio looking very relaxed and, you know,

mentioning that they happen to know the Answer to Life, the Universe and Everything, and then eventually have to admit that in fact it's Forty-two..." (201). This means that people just should stop trying because all they do is a waste of time as he believes the answer has already been computed - it is forty-two.

To conclude the thoughts, one can say that the protagonist in absurdist fiction usually goes through the attempt to reconcile absurd events; he/she will usually fail to reconstruct meaning which would lead them to conflict/panic; and finally, there is the realization and reaching one of two common conclusions seen in absurdist novels. Arthur Dent just eventually gave up and decided not to waste any more time, therefore he admits to the here and now and realizes that the universe is indeed irrational and has no meaning. Personally, I believe that the universe is controlled by God, because all of these planets and objects must have been created by someone, therefore I believe it is God who controls the absurd events and determines when and where they are to take place; in other words, everything is controlled by God. But what if the universe is indeed irrational? And what if aliens really exist? One cannot understand and thinks that what he doesn't know won't hurt him. On the contrary; you mostly get attacked and/or hit by something or something that you do not know.