Charcters Of Slaughterhouse Five Essay, Research Paper

Characters

Kurt Vonnegut – Plays the role of himself in the first chapter, as he tries to get a grip on the Dresden book he feels the need to write. Appears occasionally in Billy Pilgrim’s story as a reminder that he was indeed there. Also appears again at the end, when he returns to Dresden as a tourist.

Billy Pilgrim – Pacifistic, wimpy, and passive-natured main character in Vonnegut’s Dresden story. Generally seen as a pilgrim in his own haunted past, from which he returns with a message of goodness for all to hear. The firebombing of Dresden has a severe affect on him, for he is plagued with the question – In what kind of world is such a thing possible? Through Billy’s struggles and through his disillusionment, we are forced to witness along with him the brutalities of war.

Roland Weary – As his name suggests, Weary is tired of war. He is a typical hardcore soldier, always on duty. He isn’t well liked by anyone, especially his scouts, who are constantly trying to ditch him. Because of this, he is always fantasizing about heroic war stories and great friendships (i.e. the Three Musketeers), and he also needs a sense of security in case he is ditched. This is why he picks up Billy Pilgrim, so that he will have someone to ditch too. He dies with only one wish – that Paul Lazarro kill Billy Pilgrim.

Paul Lazarro – A nasty character with a taste for blood. Roland Weary’s only true friend, with whom he shares the role of disgusting outcast. Lazarro is thought to be a gangster outside of the war and always has his mind on revenge. Therefore, when Roland Weary dies, Paul Lazarro focuses his attentions on killing Billy Pilgrim.

Edgar Derby – An older soldier, who is probably too old to be fighting. We know from the beginning that he is doomed to die before a firing squad for stealing a teapot, so his kindness throughout the book is bittersweet. When the nazis try to get the American prisoners to switch sides, Derby delivers a moving speech on American ideals and freedom.

Valencia Pilgrim – Billy’s unattractive and insensitive wife, who he married for the sole reason that there was no reason not to. He checks into a mental hospital after proposing to her, for he sees her as a “symptom of his disease”. However, she adores Billy, and in the end she dies in a car wreck while frantically trying to visit Billy in the hospital.

Barbara Pilgrim – Billy’s daughter, who is irritated by her life’s circumstances, which she blames on her father. She hardly had time to set up a family of her own when Billy almost dies in a plane crash and Valencia dies in a car wreck. Not only that, but when Billy comes home, he’s senile and makes a laughing stock of himself and of Barbara.

Tralfmadorians – Science fiction aliens who can see in four dimensions. This allows them to see all of time at once, so they have no fear of the future or of death. Their objective view towards human behavior gives Vonnegut an outlet for his own opinions on human nature. They give Billy peace of mind and introduce him to Montana Wildhack.

Montana Wildhack – Billy Pilgrim’s fantasy woman and symbolic Eve. On the planet Tralfmadore, he wants to reinvent the human race by serving as Adam to her Eve, so he behaves as he believes Adam and Eve should.

Eliot Rosewater – Another disillusioned American who lost all faith in American righteousness when he discovered that he had killed a German firefighter who was putting out a fire started by an American bomber. After putting himself in a mental institution, he meets Billy Pilgrim and introduces him to his sole consolation in life : the science fiction novels of Kilgore Trout.

Kilgore Trout – A science fiction novelist with good ideas and terrible writing style. His novels, however, provide Billy Pilgrim with fantasy worlds to dream in and also allow Vonnegut to make fun of many values that Americans hold so dear.

Howard W. Campbell, Jr. – American Nazi propagandist who tries to recruit Americans from Billy’s POW camp to his own Free American Corps. Edgar Derby puts him in his place with an inspirational and moving speech.

Mary O’Hare – Real woman and wife of Vonnegut’s war buddy Bernard O’Hare. Harbors a great hatred toward war, and reminds Vonnegut that wars are not fought by mature, grown men, but by “babies”. Serves as his inspiration for writing the book.

Bernard O’Hare – Vonnegut’s only real war buddy. Vonnegut returns to him to reminisce about the war, but finds Bernard is a henpecked husband who hates the war too much to want to talk about it. Vonnegut returns to Dresden with O’Hare in 1967.

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