

Seminar Self-Reflection  
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1. Did aliens, opposed to him just imagining it, really kidnap Billy Pilgrim?

A point that Jake Pinkney made was very interesting. Jake said the possibility that Billy's whole life story was just in his head could be very possible. The state Billy was in was very scary; he experience a terrifying event which thousands of people died. The moments that Billy travels back in time too, were not in fact just random ones, but ones that really impacted his life. They actually had meaning to him. It may have been random in Billy's head but unconsciously they weren't. So later on in the seminar Marley makes a very good text reference on page 201 about how Kilgore Trout influenced Billy. One of his books was about an Earthling man and women who were kidnaped by extra-terrestrials. They were put on display in a zoo on a planet called Zircom212. Marley says Billy has gone through so much, and seen so much that he is trying to cling on something that makes him unique and individual. And maybe that's why he is so passive about anything else other than the Tralfamadorians. He is taking Kilgore's writing and wants to believe it so much it becomes an alternate reality for him. Then Justin says, what if Billy is going through some sort of posttraumatic stress that causing him travel in time, and get kidnapped by aliens.

From those three points I have developed a perspective on Billy. I think that he really is suffering posttraumatic stress and every moment he travels to, is a result to his posttraumatic stress. So in a way, Billy is traveling through time, and really does get kidnapped by aliens, but in his own alternate reality. What if you or I went through the same thing as Billy? What moments would you travel too? I look at my life and think of the most important memories I can. The ones that stick out to me are the scary ones. For example there is a moment when I was eight, I was on a river trip, and I was in an inflatable kayak with my mom. None of us had any real experience paddling, so when we did end up in a rapid, we got pinned side ways on a rock and flipped. I was only eight years old and terrified. Every wave would shove me under and I would hit rocks on the bottom, then finally I would come up gasping for air. When I was finally out of the river I was very shaken up. The memories that I feel I would travel too would be like the one I just described, scary ones. Scary moments usually are the memories people remember best. In AQotWF it made clear the horrific traumas they go through. Soldiers go to war and come back never to forget those horrible times again. The death, the hunger, and the meaningless struggle for survival never will leave you. Looking at Billy, it would make sense that his time travels go to Dresden. The firebombing would be hell to experience. All in all in my perspective, Billy's whole story of traveling in time and getting kidnapped by aliens, is a result to posttraumatic stress.

2. What is the truth that Vonnegut is trying to communicate about war?

The word Poo-tee-weet Vonnegut used to show that there isn't much to say about war. I think that it conveys in a tragedy like Dresden, the singing of the birds after the event symbolizes that life lives on. People die, and people live. With massive death, the lives of those people that died are over, but they remain living in the course of their past. In the book on page 19 paragraph 2-3 it says "It is so short and jumbled and jangled, Sam, because there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre. Everybody is supposed to be very quiet after a massacre, and always is, except for the birds. And what do the birds say? 'Poo-tee-weet?'" When Vonnegut says everybody is supposed to be quiet after a massacre and everybody is except for the birds, it shows that after a tragedy, like the birds, just accept what happened and move on. Now I did some background on Kurt Vonnegut, and he was actually a soldier in WWII. He was a private in the 423rd infantry regiment, and was captured as a prisoner of war in the Battle of the Bulge, December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1944. He was taken to Dresden, and as a prisoner witnessed the firebombing. So really the theory of "Poo-tee-weet?" symbolizes Vonnegut's way of dealing with that event. I think in the big picture, Slaughterhouse Five's true meaning of war is to look at death in a way that is not as sad. Death is merely the end of one's life at that moment, but all those past moments, the person is very much living. So as we look at a massacre and realize no matter what, life will always go on.

3. Slaughterhouse Five could be related to the matrix. In the matrix everybody lives in a false world and is controlled by weird robot things. The thing I'm capturing is the feeling of waking up to a reality. What would that feel like? What would you do after you realize your whole life is just an alternate reality? You wonder what Billy must of felt like when he first got un-stuck in time and met the aliens. To me I hate the idea of it. I like feeling reassured that the life I'm living is true. But realizing all that you know and believe in is not real; I would feel so bad it would cause me to consider even suicide. But in the Slaughterhouse Five Billy really doesn't seem to care. He just accepts the truth and lives with it. And in Matrix the protagonist does the same thing. To sum up my thoughts, I guess you don't know what it would feel like to live in an alternate reality, and what you would do. But still it's an interesting thought, and could lead to a very profound discussion.

4. How does Slaughterhouse Five and A QotWF relate?

Slaughterhouse Five describes war in a more metaphorical way, as for A QotWF was more to the point. The both convey that war is very hard for the people experiencing it. A QotWF showed what it was like to be a soldier on the losing side of war, and the hardships of their everyday life. Slaughterhouse Five showed the horrific terrors of massacre and conveys Vonnegut's theory of coping with war. If those two authors met and had a talk, they would both share that war is bad, and causes of war is unavoidable in the course of history and the course of the future.