

Slaughterhouse-Five or The Children's Crusade
Jumbled and Jangled Study Questions (for Getting Started)

Answer the following questions in your Source Book as you read the novel.

Chapter 1

1. Cite the effects that the metafictional Chapter 1 has on readers. What is Vonnegut attempting to do with this strange beginning to his "famous Dresden novel"?
2. Cite one reference in the first chapter to time, and argue why this reference is important thematically to the novel.
3. At the end of Chapter 1, the narrator confides, "[The book] is so short and jumbled and jangled, Sam, because there is nothing intelligent to say about a massacre. Everybody is supposed to be dead, to never say anything or want anything ever again. Everything is supposed to be very quiet after a massacre, and it always is, except for the birds." As readers, how are we supposed to react to this statement? Will or is the story be about the massacre? What is a possible significance of the birds?

Chapter 2

4. In Billy's second letter to the *Ilium News Leader*, he describes the "most important thing [he] learned on Tralfamadore." What is this thing? How does it relate to Kurt Vonnegut's original "wallpaper" idea for his novel?
5. In the beginning of Chapter 2, the narrator presents the reader with a matter-of-fact rundown of Billy's life story. What is Billy's profession? What is the purpose behind the deaths that the narrator describes that are somehow related to Billy?
6. How does Billy relate his Tralfamadorian idea of death to the maneuvers the soldiers completed in Carolina with "umpires" that "said who was winning or losing the theoretical battle" and determined "who was alive and who was dead"?
7. Describe Roland Weary and his relationship with Billy Pilgrim. What could be the significance behind his fascination with torture devices? What would the Tralfamadoreans think about torture devices?
8. At the end of Chapter 2, the narrator describes how the German soldiers' "eyes were filled with a blear civilian curiosity as to why one American would try to murder another one so far from home, and why the victim should laugh." Why is Billy laughing, and why is Weary attacking him?

Chapter 3

9. In Chapter 3, what is the significance of the framed prayer that Billy had on his office wall? How does it relate to his belief system?
10. Why do you think Billy finds himself weeping at times for no apparent reason? Why does Billy also find himself falling asleep more often, and not able to remember his age?
11. What is Billy's reaction to the speaker at the Lions Club meeting that argues in favor of increased bombing in Vietnam? Why would he react in this way?
12. When describing Billy getting into the boxcar, the narrator states, "I was there. So was my old war buddy, Bernard V. O'Hare." Is this statement a reminder to the reader? If so, of what? Argue whether or not this is an example of a "metafictional aside"