



Quicklet - Kurt Vonnegut's Slaughterhouse Five

Jennifer Gigantino

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Quicklets: Learn More. Read Less. While Slaughterhouse-Five may be found in the fiction section of the library, the major events of its plot are based primarily on the true events of World War II as experienced by its author. Kurt Vonnegut Jr. was really present and tucked away in a meat locker with a hundred other Allied prisoners and four German guards when the city of Dresden was bombed in early 1945, killing 135,000 citizens. He was captured by German forces during the Battle of the Bulge in 1944, while serving as a battalion scout in the 106th Infantry division. The Germans transferred him and hundreds of other Allied POWs to the Czechoslovakian border by boxcar, then to a work camp in Dresden. There, he lived in an old slaughterhouse known as Slaughterhouse-Five. Today, Slaughterhouse-Five is standing and intact, and visitors can take guided tours. Additionally, as stated in Chapter One, many major and minor characters are based on people Vonnegut knew during the real-life war. As the narrator says, one guy I knew really was shot in Dresden for taking a teapot that wasn't his. Another guy I knew really did threaten to have his personal enemies killed by hired gunmen after the war. And so on. I've changed all the names. Though many critics loved Slaughterhouse-Five upon its publication and beyond -- nominating it for two major science-fiction literary awards and placing it on countless greatest-American-novel lists -- it has been criticized for being obscene due to its violent and sexual content as well as its nihilistic outlook. Despite this, it stayed on the best-seller list for more than half the year of its publication and is still popular amongst students and literary types. **BOOK EXCERPT FROM THE KURT VONNEGUT QUICKLET: SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE** We meet Billy Pilgrim, the aforementioned unstuck-in-time protagonist of Slaughterhouse-Five. Billy travels through time at random -- for example, he closes his eyes in 1955 and opens them in 1941. We are given a quick-and-dry biographical outline of Billy's life: he was born in 1922, went off to serve in World War II one month into optometry school, received an honorable discharge, came home, became an optometrist, got married, had children, survived an airplane crash and soon after began speaking publicly (via radio talk shows and newspaper editorials) about a race of aliens called the Tralfamadorians, who had kidnapped him on the day of his daughters wedding and taken him through a time warp (explaining why he hadn't been missed on Earth). While Billy is writing his second newspaper editorial, Billy's daughter Barbara shows up and scolds him for writing the first one, even threatening to put him in the old folks home with his elderly mother. Billy first becomes unstuck in time in 1944, while serving as a chaplain's assistant in the United States Army. His duties include acting as the chaplain's valet and playing hymns on a waterproof organ. He is given furlough because of his father's death, and when he comes back the chaplain he was assisting has been killed. He is sent overseas to Luxembourg, where the regiment he joins is being defeated by Germans in the Battle of the Bulge. ...to be continued! Quicklets: Learn More. Read Less.

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