

Discussion Questions and Essay Prompts for *Slaughterhouse-Five* by Kurt Vonnegut

Discussion questions and essay prompts for Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut for use in 11th, 12th, or lower-level college classrooms.

- Kurt Vonnegut's novel, *Slaughterhouse-Five*, explores the ideas of sanity, irrationality and contradiction in a number of ways.
 - Explain/discuss how these ideas are presented in the novel formally (through structure and plot) and how they are presented symbolically (through character, symbolism, and motif).

- The characters of Billy Pilgrim and Kilgore Trout share a number of common traits.
 - Explain/discuss the significance of the similarities shared between these two characters.

- Slaughterhouse-Five* condemns the insanity and irrationality of conventional, group-oriented thinking.
 - Find five examples from the novel where conventional wisdom is depicted with irony and/or directly condemned for its cruelty, stupidity or lack of rationality.

- Discuss how irony is a central element to *Slaughterhouse-Five*, formally, stylistically, and substantially.

- Argue: Who is really the most insane character in the novel and who is the most sane? Who has the greatest understanding of reality?

- Identify and describe one of Billy Pilgrim's relationships that is uplifting and *human* in the novel and one which is unsympathetic and rote.
 - Find support in the text for your interpretation of these relationships.

- Identify two of the novel's themes.
 - Find support in the text to support your reading of these themes.