

# SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE

## Close Reading Response

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# Introduction

Billy Pilgrim is a man who has a secret. After being captured by extraterrestrials, and returned to earth, he has been able to live a life of time travel and reliving moments, as well as learning the idea of the circular nature of time. But Billy is not living a linear, expected human life. Jumping around from moment to moment, from trudging through the snow in World War II, to being in the hospital after a plane crash decades later, to his marriage day, to his death day, and back to the war again, Billy is never in time of his life for long. Life for him is not one long “journey” as we sometimes put it. He does not struggle through hard times, enjoy better ones, and learn from mistakes and develop as an individual. He is able to escape bad moments and visit better ones. He is almost not even human. From Billy we can see a way to look at life, what that involves an ambivalence towards life as a whole. Billy Pilgrim is the backbone of this book. This character is the spine on which a great message can be supported.

# Conclusion

No one, at least no one we are told of, can time travel like Billy. Except the Tralfamadorians, the freakish alien extra-terrestrials from a million light years away that speak with thought, are shaped like an arm, and have an eye in the middle of their palm. Beings who have 5 different sexes, all imperative to reproduction. They laugh at the idea of free choice, and believe every moment of time, that has happened, is happening, and ever will happen is structured and we cannot change that. They are the least human an organism could be. And Billy Pilgrim is their closest human comparison. He is hardly human, because he lacks the values of caring, of doing, of action. He does not act of his accord, rather, lets things happen as they happen. It is a passive approach to live, and results in nothing being done. We can learn from Billy Pilgrim. We can learn how NOT to live. Because of his ability to see all, he can't work towards goals and dreams because in his mind, everything that will happen to him has already happened. Trying to differentiate ourselves from him gives us the opportunity to learn how to live. Billy Pilgrim, though stupid, mindless, and ridiculous he may be, gives us the ability to find meaning in our own lives. **In this modern world, it is hard to decide how to live your life. Throughout Slaughter House-Five, Billy is "standing on thin air" or saying "everything is always alright." Everything is not always alright; my goal is to change that. I can live my life not caring what might come to be, trying to fix things that are not "alright". I can help people, set goals, and find ways to make my life not 'hardly human'-not tralfamadorian. Though time may be circular, and ever-present, I can still do try to do my best in all that I do.**