

"An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge" by Ambrose Bierce

P. 580

Define:

Point of View -

First Person -

Third person -

Omniscient-

Limited -

Part I –

7. Soldiers on a bridge about to hang a man
8. Guarding each end of the bridge
9. Very quiet –sign of respect
10. 35 year old civilian planter stands with his hands and feet tied upon the bridge
11. Hears the ticking of his watch
12. Sergeant steps off the plank . . .

Part II-

1. Soldier dressed in gray rides up.
2. Mrs. Farquhar gives him a glass of water.
3. Soldier tells him about the order to hang anyone who disturbs the bridge.
4. Farquhar asks if the bridge is guarded.
5. The bridge would be easy to burn.
6. The man they thought was a Confederate soldier is really a Union scout (spy).

Part III – after the sergeant steps aside –

13. Feels pain and sense of suffocation
14. The rope breaks and he hits the water.
15. Frees himself from the ropes –feels a lot of pain
16. Swims to the surface
17. Feels a heightened sense of awareness
18. The soldiers are shooting at him
19. Hears the soldier's voice say "Ready, Aim, Fire"
20. Dove down but could still hear and feel the firing
21. The soldiers are shooting the cannon.
22. He gets caught in a whirlpool (vortex) and spun around and flung out of the stream.
23. Sees the plants and trees, hears heavenly music
24. Follows a wide straight road – headed home
25. His neck hurt, tongue swollen, the grass felt soft
26. Couldn't feel the road beneath his feet
27. At the gate of his home
28. Reaches for his wife
29. Blinding flash of light
30. Peyton Farquhar swings back and forth on the bridge

Questions 2 and 6, page 591.

2. The ending of "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge," by Ambrose Bierce changed the way I viewed previous events in the story. First of all, there were several events in part III that seemed surreal or like they could not have happened. For example, . . . (Preternatural/ hyper-awareness, see everything, roseate light, heavenly references) Next, there were also examples of foreshadowing that indicated how the story would end, such as . . .
  
6. Ambrose Bierce has a very cynical and negative view of war. In fact, he views war as an exercise in ironic futility (pointlessness). First, he says "all is fair in love and war," which means. . . The character of Peyton Farquhar dies for no real reason (explain)

"In some situations any type of behavior is acceptable to get what you want", i.e. you can be as deceitful, dishonest and false as you want in war and love.

The concept behind the phrase is that some areas of life are so important and overwhelming that you cannot blame someone for acting in their own best interest. For war, this implies that spies, torture, lying, backstabbing, making deals with enemies, selling out allies, bombing civilians, wounding instead of killing, and so on are "fair game" in the sense that by taking these options off of the table you are only hurting yourself: Your opponent has no reason to comply to *your* moral standards. (This entire concept is mostly void with regards to the current political atmosphere of Earth. Countries *have* actually declared certain things taboo with regards to war — with mixed success.)

The point of adding *love* to the list is likely to compare it to war. There are two main subtexts here. The first and most relevant is the idea that you can wreak all the havoc you want during the pursuit of true love. This includes sabotaging the third side in a love triangle or using deceit and trickery to woo the object of your affection (including hiding past lovers from them).

The second is the viewpoint that ongoing love between two people is akin to a battle that results in a dominant winner. The stereotypical gender wars are similar to this. A man and woman are in love, but certain unease comes with the territory, and pulling one over on your spouse is fair game because, in the end, all is fair in love and war. For what it is worth, this last point is probably more of a causality (i.e., an unintended, natural consequence) of the individual words in the phrase than any original intended meaning. Most people probably don't immediately think of this type of behavior as matching up with the phrase until *after* they need an excuse for their actions.