

## **“An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge”**

### **Response to Literature**

Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper. Follow the response to literature guidelines given by your teacher.

1. In Section I, Bierce includes few details about the condemned man and does not reveal the reason why he is being hanged. How does this help create suspense?
2. In what ways are the condemned man's perceptions of time and motion distorted as he is waiting to be hanged? Why are his distorted perceptions important?
3. Consider Bierce's descriptions of the sentinels on the bridge. How does their indifference / inaction toward the events taking place present Bierce's views on the military?
4. What is the significance of the man's perception of his ticking watch?
5. In Section II, Bierce finally introduces Peyton Farquhar. Why place this information in the middle of the story, and in a flashback? How does this authorial decision contribute to suspense and our sympathies toward Farquhar?
6. Why was Farquhar captured? Why did the Federal scout lie?
7. As the reader, when do you begin to sympathize with Farquhar – before or after his introduction in Section II? Why?
8. What details in Part III suggest that Farquhar's journey occurs in his mind? How is the journey connected with the plan of escape that occurs to him moments before he is hanged?
9. Explain whether you think the portrayal of Farquhar's escape and final thoughts is realistic. Consider the following: Farquhar's heightened, hyper-realistic senses, his ability to dodge gunfire, his family, etc.
10. What is the ultimate fate of Peyton Farquhar? About how long did it truly take for the events of the story to unfold?
11. Why is the limited third-person point of view appropriate for this story? How might the story be different if Bierce had used an omniscient third-person narrator?
12. How does Bierce's use of flashback contribute to the effectiveness of the story?

13. Considering the outcome of the story, what is ironic or surprising about Farquhar's longing for the "larger life of a soldier?" What is ironic about the fact that Farquhar agrees with the saying that, "all is fair in love and war?"

**Extended Response:**

Write a multi-paragraph essay responding to the following prompt. Your essay must be typed, using MLA format.

Imagine yourself facing a frightening life or death situation involving, for example, an automobile accident or a natural disaster. What thoughts do you think might flash through your mind at such time?

You may write your narrative in third person or first person point of view. Use some of Bierce's techniques in your story such as distorted perception, foreshadowing, and a surprise ending.