

WRITER'S REPORT: WEEK 2

By Timothy Chilezi

The story that we had to analyse for this week's writer's report is titled, "*2BR02B*" (Pronounced To Be Or Naught to Be) by Kurt Vonnegut Jr. The following analysis will cover the structure of the entire story, highlighting my experience with it as a reader and aspiring writer all while expanding thoroughly as to the factors that enhanced the narrative and tainted the narrative.

With a story that is structured in a manner like this, you are bound to have a thought provoking yet capturing experience where you have more questions than answers. When I first saw the title (which I will further expand on), it was quite intriguing to see not only how its message was formatted, but also the way that the writer decided to layout the words and numbers. The beginning line of "Everything was perfectly swell," followed by "There were no poisons, no slums, no insane asylums..." creates the idea in our head that we are about to enter a perfect world, a utopia of sorts. But then we learn that death in the story was "an adventure for volunteers" and this immediately scratches out the idea that we are entering a utopia. Coming along these first lines in the story gave me the idea immediately that we are in a so-called perfect world and that the story covers population control. The story does well in making sure that the reader isn't left stranded in confusion for a long time and communicates the main idea to us well via the introduction of characters and expressions.

The title hints at a famous line from the play "Hamlet" by William Shakespeare. This line is the famous "to be or not to be" where the line is a contemplation on whether it is better to live or die. Through the title alone, we get the idea that the story might be about choosing between life and death and that this is the driving factor of the narrative. This fits well within the context of the story as we see that choosing between living and dying is a crucial theme in the story via the fact that Edward wants to keep his triplets alive but then would have to sacrifice three other lives to be killed for them to be replaced.

The story follows the conventional linear pattern where we are first introduced to the scene of the story, and we are further brought into the world by being introduced to the characters in the story. This linear structure I believe was not experimental enough for the story that we had at hand, but I believe that it worked well with how we get introduced to the characters and how we can understand where the story is meant to go. The structure results in a lack of confusion for the reader but at the same time, I believe that it makes the story less exciting.

The moment that serves as a turning point in the narrative for me is when we are introduced to the male figure in white on the mural on the wall who goes by the name of Dr Benjamin Hitz. Apart from the lines which tell that we are entering a new part of the story, the introduction of Dr Benjamin Hitz to the story introduces to the man central to the idea of the population control and we therefore understand that the mural is meant to immortalize him. "He was referring to one of the male figures in white, whose head was a portrait of Dr Benjamin Hitz..." not only shows who the main character is but shows us his importance to the proceedings of the narrative from this point onwards. The climax comes in during the part where we see a change of heart and character in Edward, from someone who seems to have a don't care attitude and was willing to sacrifice his grandfather, to fighting for both the life of his triplets and grandfather, showing a change of heart and resilience to the population control system. "I want those kids... I want all three of them," shows us his change of heart and his realisation of how he can get all three of his kids and grandfather to survive.

What communicated to us that Dr. Hitz was an important character to the story was the fact that Leora Duncan refers to him 'omnipotent Zeus' practically comparing his presence to a god and even "worshipping the portrait of Hitz" gives us a metaphorical instance of which Dr Hitz is compared to a god. This shows us that he could be some sort of dictator that has a lot of power over the people.

What stood out to me was the fact that Leora Duncan remained so calm about the fact that she kills people and even to an extent to which she made the people feel comfortable while she killed them. "That's kind of like what I do," displays to us Leora's emotion towards killing people and how she has come desensitized to the entire idea, that it is just a norm to her now.

The protagonist in this story seems to be the painter, as we see him take part in the entire story and interacting with each of the characters present. The painter comes across as very sassy, while also being very sarcastic with his tone, displaying a non-caring attitude towards both the hospital orderly and Leora Duncan. This shows us just how much he is against glorifying the people responsible for this population control and how much he hates the job that he must do. He gives us sort of an idea that he no longer wants to live and that he is tired of life.

The line "You think this is my idea of what life really looks like," makes us aware that he is not with the whole population control and that he is also tired of this system of life while the line, "When I decide it's time to go... it won't be at the Sheepdip," gives us a hint and foreshadows his eventual decision to kill himself.

What I picked up from the story is that it is a modern take or idea of Adolf Hitler and the Concentration Camps, and the writer makes use of references such as Dr. Hitz (Hitler) and even the garden which is also part of the history of Hitler. I feel like there was a lack of literal devices that could enhance the story but all the while, this contributes to us exploring the plot more and forming imagery of what the scene was. The structure of the story makes the story seem serious and focus on following the story which leads us to the tragic ending where Edward kills Dr. Hitz, Leora and himself to save his grandfather and triplets. Deciding to end the story with the painter wanting to die was effective to us understanding that the world was so miserable to the extent that there was no one that wanted to live in it.