Catch-22 Study Guide

Catch-22 by Joseph Heller

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Introduction

Set toward the end of World War II in 1944, on an island off the coast of Italy, Joseph Heller's *Catch* 22 is a satirical antiwar novel. It features black humor, an unusual narrative structure, surrealism (a genre which features strange imagery and events), and a not-so-heroic protagonist who struggles to deal with the insanity of war and concludes that the only sane response to it is not to participate in it. Heller began writing *Catch-22* in 1953, and a chapter from the still-in-progress novel was published in an anthology in 1955. The completed novel was published in 1961.

American army pilot John Yossarian is an antihero, that is, a protagonist lacking some traditionally heroic qualities. He is obsessed with being rotated out of active flight duty His commander, Colonel Cathcart, keeps raising the number of missions the men in the squadron must fly before they can be rotated out. Consequently, Yossarian is desperate to find another way out of his dilemma. He asks the squadron's doctor, Doc Daneeka, to declare him unfit for duty by reason of insanity. Doc refuses, citing the mysterious Catch-22. if Yossarian asks to be let out of his duties, he must be sane. Only a crazy man would want to continue to fly missions, but the only way Daneeka can ground him, according to Catch-22, is if he asks to be grounded-which would indicate his sanity. The circular reasoning of this "catch" is the central metaphor for the absurdity of war and the military bureaucracy.

Yossarian's questions and responses to his situation show that he is indeed a sane man in an insane situation. Heller uses black humor, absurd and even surreal events, and a nonlinear narrative structure in which events are arranged by theme rather than by chronology, to drive home his point that institutions such as the military, big business, government, and religion are corrupt and individuals must find their own responses to this corruption. Heller's questioning of these respected institutions, and of war in general, foreshadowed the social protests and antiwar movements of the late 1960s, and made it one of the most popular and enduring novels of its time.

Overview

Catch-22 is a product of intense private and public concerns. Heller based the novel's plot on his memories of World War II bombing missions; he derived its ironic tone and thematic substance from such sources as his father's early death, the grotesque Coney Island neighborhood of his youth, the fastpaced, disjointed world of advertising, and his anxiety over the Korean War and Cold War tensions with China and Russia. Heller translated the intergroup antagonism that prevailed in the United States after the Second World War—the Communist witch hunts led by Senator Joseph McCarthy and the racial hatred that surfaced when southern schools began to be integrated—into the conflict between the common soldiers and the officers of Catch-22.

There was only one catch, and that was Catch-22...

In Heller's novel, the military's Catch22 states that if a man is crazy, he must be grounded—but a man cannot be grounded if he asks to be, since anyone who wants to avoid combat duty is not really crazy. Catch-22 abounds with paradoxes and inversions, as Heller depicts a topsy-turvy society in which sanity and insanity, order and chaos have become confused. Colonel Korn permits only those people who never ask questions to ask questions; Major Major orders Sergeant Tower to allow men to see him only when he is out; the Air Force denies the death of Mudd, who was killed before officially checking in with the squadron but declares Doc Daneeka officially dead despite Doc's fervent protests; Aarfy commits murder, but the police choose instead to arrest Yossarian for going AWOL. Heller presents a world that seems to lack rationality, justice, or humanity, in which the individual becomes alienated, frustrated, and desperate.

Author Biography

Joseph Heller was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1923 and grew up in Coney Island. This oceanside town had a large population of Russian Jewish immigrants, including Heller's parents, and was known for its amusement park. Heller's biting sense of humor may have been influenced by growing up in this somewhat surrealistic, carnival-like neighborhood.

After his 1941 high school graduation, Heller worked in an insurance office for a short time. The next year, 1942, he enlisted in the Army Air Corps, and in 1944, the year in which *Catch-22* is set, Heller was stationed on the island of Corsica (located in the Mediterranean Sea, off the coasts of France and Italy). There he was a bombardier who flew sixty combat missions, earning an Air Medal and a Presidential Unit citation. After the war ended in 1945, Heller married Shirley Held and went to college, eventually earning a B.A. in English from New York University and an M.A from Columbia University. He then attended Oxford University in England as a Fulbright Scholar for a year, then moved to Pennsylvania, where he taught English at Pennsylvania State University for two years. Heller then changed careers, working as an advertising copywriter from 1952 to 1961 at such popular magazines as Time, *Look,* and *McCall's.* These jobs influenced his 1974 novel *Something Happened.* While working as a copywriter, Heller wrote short stories and television and film screenplays, and began writing *Catch-22.*

The first chapter of *Catch-22* was originally published in an anthology in 1955, and the entire work was published in 1961. After the novel's great success, Heller quit his copywriting job and concentrated on writing. In December 1981, he contracted a rare disease of the nervous system, which he wrote about in his book *No Laughing Matter* (1986) with his friend Speed Vogel Heller has written other novels, many of which employ the plot of an individual battling against a powerful institution such as the military, government, or a corporation. These works capture Heller's basic pessimism about the power of the individual to fight society's corruption. Heller has also written a play, We *Bombed* in *New Haven,* about a group of actors who are supposed to play an Air Force squadron in an unnamed war, but who question their roles in the play. Heller also adapted *Catch* 22 for the stage, but critics consider the book much better than the play. To date, none of the author's writings have achieved the acclaim or success of *Catch-22,* which is still considered a modern classic for its black humor and absurd portrayal of war. Heller continues to write, and lives in New York.

About the Author

Joseph Heller was born on May 1, 1923, in New York City, and grew up near the Coney Island amusement park.

His parents, recent Russian immigrants, spoke little English, and his father died when Joseph was only five years old. After graduating from high school, Heller joined the Army Air Corps in 1942, was stationed on Corsica, Italy, and flew sixty bombing missions in a B-25 before being discharged in 1945.

Heller entered college after the war, earning a bachelor's degree from New York University followed by a master's degree from Columbia University, and studied for a year at Oxford on a Fulbright scholarship. He returned from England in 1950 and taught English at Pennsylvania State University but left to work in magazine advertising because he felt uncomfortable in the academic world.

In 1945 Heller began publishing short stories in magazines such as Story, Esquire, and the Atlantic Monthly, but it was not until 1955 that he began work on Catch-22. Although the completed manuscript passed from publisher to publisher before Simon and Schuster agreed to take a chance on it, the novel became an instant success upon its publication in 1961. Before the 1960s were over, Catch-22 was recognized as one of the decade's most representative works of art. Translated into a dozen languages, the book has sold ten million copies. Heller's four subsequent novels, Something Happened (1974), Good as Gold (1979), God Knows (1984), and Picture This (1988), received neither the critical acclaim nor the popularity of Catch-22.

Plot Summary

Life in the Squadron

The novel begins with Yossarian in a military hospital faking a liver ailment. He spends his time censoring letters until a talkative Texan drives him from the safety of the hospital Upon Yossarian's return to active duty, we learn about the various men in his unit. We meet Orr, Yossarian's short, mechanically-gifted tent-mate who keeps being shot down during bombing runs but wants to keep flying; McWatt, who likes to fly low and buzz Yossarian's tent in order to terrify him; Nately, a naive boy in love with a prostitute in Rome (who is only referred to as "Nately's whore") who barely notices him; Doc Daneeka, a depressed doctor continuously lamenting the loss of his lucrative practice in America; Yossarian's navigator, Aarfy, who calmly smokes a pipe and talks while Yossarian yells hysterically during bombing runs; Major Major Major Major, the pitiable squadron commander who resembles Henry Fonda and who avoids contact With everyone, leaping through his office window when people try to see him, Colonel Cathcart, a man so obsessed With promotion that he keeps increasing the men's bombing missions so that he might impress his commander, General Dreedle, and Milo Minderbinder, the unit's morally blind mess officer, a financial genius who believes only in unrestricted capitalism and who forms the M & M Enterprises syndicate, which eventually controls almost all black market commerce in the hemisphere.

Yossarian has been promoted to Captain to cover up the disaster at Ferrara, where six days passed without the squadron destroying abridge; on the seventh day, Yossarian led a mission on a dangerous second bombing run which destroyed the target but resulted in the deaths of several men. During another incident before Yossarian's stay in the hospital, the men become panicked when they learn they must bomb Bologna, Italy, which they believe is heavily fortified. When they finally fly the Bologna mission, Yossarian pretends his plane is malfunctioning and turns back to Pianosa. Yossarian finds upon the squadron's return, however, that Bologna was a "milk run," an easy mission that involved no enemy resistance. Yossarian is the lead bombardier on the next Bologna mission. To everyone's astonishment, they encounter heavy enemy fire, which Yossarian frantically tries to avoid. Many planes are shot down. After the mission, Yossarian packs and flees to Rome on leave, where he spends his time in a brothel

On a trip with Milo Minderbinder, Yossarian and Orr fly between countries on various trading missions of Milo's devising. They discover that Milo makes enormous profits buying and selling goods, often to and from himself. Milo reasons that the more he earns, the more the syndicate earns, and every soldier owns a share of the syndicate, though they themselves never see any money from it Soon, Milo's fleet of planes fly everywhere, including enemy territory. For Milo, no country is an enemy because they all belong to the syndicate (except communist Russia). Milo even begins contracting with both sides to simultaneously attack and defend target sites, which leads to the death of many men. Milo does not blame himself for these deaths because he is merely a middleman, someone making a fair profit off inevitable attacks. Milo's main worry is

unloading stockpiles of Egyptian cotton that he bought and now cannot sell. To alleviate his financial straits, Milo contracts with the Germans to bomb his own unit, wreaking great destruction. Milo escapes punishment when he opens the books to his military superiors and reveals the tremendous profit the syndicate realized on this deal,

Casualties of War

Soon, a series of tragedies hits the unit McWatt, while jokingly flying low over the beach, accidentally kills a member of the squad, Kid Sampson, with a propeller. McWatt flies the plane into a mountain rather than land. Colonel Cathcart responds to these deaths by raising the missions to sixty-five. Yossarian returns to Rome. Also in Rome, Nately finds the prostitute with whom he is in love and, instead of sleeping with her, allows her to sleep for eighteen hours. When she awakes, she suddenly discovers she loves him. Nately volunteers to fly more missions so he can stay near Rome. On one of these, Nately dies when another plane collides with his. When Yossarian tells Nately's whore of Nately's death, she tries to kill him. Yossarian escapes, but he must keep watch because she continually attempts to ambush him.

In response to Nately's death, Yossarian vows to fly no more missions. The men in his unit secretly tell him they hope he succeeds. Then Yossarian learns that Nately's whore and her younger sister have disappeared after the police cleared out the brothel. Yossarian goes AWOL (absent without leave) and flies to Rome, feeling remorse and guilt over his lost friends, including Orr, whose plane went down after the Bologna mission.

Yossarian begins looking for Nately's whore and her kid sister. In a passage reminiscent of a descent into the Underworld, Yossarian walks the Streets and witnesses scenes of horrific brutality. He returns to his room, only to find that Aarfy bas raped a woman and then thrown her out the window, killing her. Aarfy's indifference appalls Yossarian. Yet when the police arrive, they arrest Yossarian for being A WOL and apologize to Aarfy for the intrusion.

The Final Catch

On Pianosa, Colonel Korn, Cathcart's assistant, informs Yossarian that they are sending him home. Yossarian is a danger to his superiors because he has given the men hope that they, too, can stop flying missions. Yossarian's release comes with one condition: he must become his superiors' "pal" and never criticize them. Yossarian agrees to this "odious" deal. On his way out, Nately's whore attacks him, stabbing him in the side.

While sitting in the hospital, Yossarian recalls in full Snowden's death. During a mission, Snowden is wounded and Yossarian tries to treat him, discovering a large wound In Snowden's upper leg. Snowden keeps complaining that he is cold, even after Yossarian bandages the wound. Yossarian cautiously looks for another wound and removes Snowden's flak suit. Snowden's insides pour out. This moment traumatizes Yossarian, causing him to watch Snowden's funeral from a distance while sitting nude in a tree.

Snowden's death has taught Yossarian a secret: "Man was matter... The Spirit gone, man is garbage Ripeness was all."

Major Danby from Yossarian's unit comes to see him. Yossarian tells him that he is refusing the "odious" deal, but Danby informs him that if he refuses to cooperate, Korn and Cathcart will court-martial him on a variety of charges, some real, most invented. Still, if he takes the deal, Yossarian would violate the memory of his friends and would hate himself. The squad's Chaplain Tappman rushes in and informs them that Orr was not killed when his plane crashed, but rowed to Sweden In a life boat. Yossarian realizes that all of Orr's crash landings were practice runs for this escape. Yossarian decides to escape as well, first to Rome to save Nately's whore's kid sister, then to Sweden. He is afraid but feels very good. As he leaves the hospital, Nately's whore jumps out, misses him with a knife, and he runs.

Chapter 1 "The Texan"

Chapter 1 "The Texan" Summary

Catch-22 begins in a World War II military hospital, where an American bombardier, Yossarian, feigns illness to escape combat duty. As an officer, he is expected to censor the outgoing letters of enlisted male patients. Yossarian instead arbitrarily strikes out select parts of speech, fraudulently signing his work as either "Washington Irving" or "Irving Washington," a simple subterfuge which proves adequate enough to foil the efforts of a C.I.D. investigator planted in the ward. Yossarian blacks out the entire content of one letter and writes at the bottom "I yearn for you tragically. R.O. Shipman, Chaplain, U.S. Army" (Heller, 8).

Yossarian shares the ward with a chess-playing artillery Captain, a mustached fighter pilot, a soldier in white, wrapped up in a full body cast, an obnoxiously affable Texan, who feels that "decent folk" should get more votes, and Yossarian's friend Dunbar, who believes it is possible to extend one's lifespan by enduring boredom. Ignored by the other patients, the Texan constantly talks to the soldier in white, never minding the lack of reply. When the soldier finally succumbs to his injuries, Yossarian and Dunbar both accuse the Texan of murder, presumably by means of talking the soldier to death. Yossarian meets and develops an instant fondness for visiting Chaplain A. T. Tappman. The Texan eventually proves so obnoxious that he inspires the miraculous recoveries of everyone in the ward.

Chapter 1 "The Texan" Analysis

The soldier in white symbolizes a lack of identity. Unable to move or speak, even his name is unknowable. He is a non-person. The man within being indiscernable, readers are left to objectify the shell itself, transforming the soldier into a stark monument of absence. He exists where a person should exist, as a placeholder. Like a blank tombstone, he symbolizies both death and oblivion, the annihilation of the individual. The soldier in white evokes Catch-22's theme of dehumanization, demonstrating how the military sees soldiers as replaceable cogs in a bureaucratic machine. The name Washington Irving and variations thereof become a motif through the narrative, representing the difficulty of assessing accountability from within a bureaucratic system.

Chapter 2 "Clevinger"

Chapter 2 "Clevinger" Summary

Yossarian argues with fellow officer Clevinger just prior to his stay in the hospital. In a fit of paranoia, Yossarian believes that everyone is out to kill him. He says as much to Clevinger, who dismisses the notion as crazy and explains that the war isn't personal, everyone is a target. Yossarian fails to see Clevinger's point, since everyone includes Yossarian, as well. Finally frustrated, Clevinger silently quivers with indignation. Yossarian is convinced that he has the right of it "because strangers he didn't know shot at him with cannons every time he flew up in the air to drop bombs on them, and it wasn't funny at all" (17). After a momentary pleasant distraction in Milo's mess hall, a newly distressed Yossarian begs Doc Daneeka to remove him from active combat duty. The Doctor refuses, insisting that the Colonel requires fifty missions. Yossarian only has forty-four. Yossarian has no choice but to fly more missions.

Chapter 2 "Clevinger" Analysis

This chapter reveals the extent of Yossarian's derangement. He can't accept that enemy combatants are just firing at a man in uniform. They must be firing at him, specifically. What's more, Yossarian's ego appears to be such that he can't even accept that people might want to kill him in their own defense, perhaps demonstrating a sort of empathic disconnect between himself, his own actions, and the lives of those around him. In quite another sense, however, Yossarian is eerily sane. He understands the nature of the risk. If he's killed, it won't be the uniform that dies. Since there's no more personal act than the killing of another human being, Clevinger's insistence that Yossarian not take his own death personally is the height of irony. This chapter deals with the theme of insanity, questioning what it means to be and whether the system itself is crazy, as well as what qualifies as sane.

The ever-increasing mission requirement is a motif, as well as a device. Catch-22 makes extensive use of non-linear time, jumping backward and forward without warning. The number of missions required to complete a tour is one of the few ways for the reader to ascertain Catch-22's chronology.

Chapter 3 "Havermeyer"

Chapter 3 "Havermeyer" Summary

Colonel Cargill, a man who takes great pride in his own incompetence, orders Yossarian's low-morale group to attend a U.S.O. show. The anxious men make frequent trips to Sergeant Towser's tent to see if they've received orders to ship home. The pilots, having completed the required fifty missions, are worried that Colonel Cathcart will again raise the requirement before they have a chance to go home. Yossarian complains of illness to Doc Daneeka, who proves unsympathetic, advising Yossarian to adopt an attitude more in line with bombardier golden-boy, Havermeyer, whose suicidal bombing runs endanger men's lives but never miss the mark. At this point in his career, Yossarian no longer cares about hitting the target. He'd much rather come home alive. Several of the other pilots resent Havermeyer, sometimes resorting to violence. One night, Hungry Joe fires a pistol at Havermeyer's tent. Seeming a further example of his neurosis, Yossarian complains to Sergeant Towser about the "dead man" in his tent. The sergeant refuses to admit that there is a dead man, nor that he ever lived.

Chapter 3 "Havermeyer" Analysis

Here again, the story returns to the theme of insanity. According to Doc Daneeka, the rule of Catch-22 states "that a concern for one's own safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind" (55). By this definition, golden-boy Havermeyer, who takes pride in never taking evasive action, is insane. When Doc Daneeka offers up Havermeyer as a model, ironically, what he's actually doing is suggesting that Yossarian become insane. Havermeyer's suicidal success sets the bar dangerously high for the other pilots, a fact which the sane among them clearly seem to resent. Expecting soldiers to act against their own self-interest contributes to the theme of dehumanization. Yossarian, who isn't interested in taking the risks required to do his job well, demonstrates the theme of apathy.

Chapter 4 "Doc Daneeka"

Chapter 4 "Doc Daneeka" Summary

Doc Daneeka and Yossarian briefly discuss the troubles of Hungry Joe, which, as usual, Doc uses as a segue to his own complaints. Daneeka bemoans being drafted for the war, confessing to Yossarian that he became a doctor solely to make money. Doc, meanwhile, has turned his practice over to two enlisted personnel from the motor pool, who run the medical tent in a peculiar, unprofessional fashion. Yossarian has been altering flight logs so that Daneeka , who is supposedly a flight surgeon, can earn flight pay without having to actually board a plane. Yossarian and Dunbar join General Dreedle in shooting skeet. Yossarian is awful at the sport, but Dunbar, who can't stand it, appreciates the life-extending boredom that comes with it. Surprisingly, Dunbar manages to convince Clevinger that a life must be filled with unpleasantness in order to seem long.

Chapter 4 "Doc Daneeka" Analysis

Doc Daneeka is barely even there. He doesn't practice in his practice. He doesn't board his flights. Doc is unwilling to lift a finger or stick his neck out, instead preferring to sit around and sulk. He isn't trying, he isn't even living, and yet he's still on the military payroll, and is still paid for everything he isn't doing. Doc Daneeka's thematic apathy, much like Yossarian's, is born of fear. Unlike Yossarian, however, who can overcome his fear, Doc Daneeka is virtually paralyzed. His non-participation becomes especially ironic later in the novel, when he "dies." The same dysfunctional bureaucracy that faciltates his apathy, eventually becomes apathetic toward him.

Dunbar's philosophy is a direct corollary of the old adage "Time flies when you're having fun." If time flies when you have fun, Dunbar reasons, then it must move more slowly when you're bored. Dunbar seeks out boredom and unpleasantness as a means to extending his life. Oddly, in Dunbar's speech to Clevinger, he shows a strong awareness of life's value. Yet, by actively avoiding "fun," Dunbar is denying himself the very things which make his own life worth living. Dunbar, perhaps, fears death more than he appreciates life. This mindset is directly linked to themes insanity and apathy, as it is undoubtedly the war which has brought about Dunbar's neurotic desire to remain in a perpetual state of boredom.

Chapter 5 "Chief White Halfoat"

Chapter 5 "Chief White Halfoat" Summary

Yossarian visits Doc Daneeka and his despised tentmate, Chief White Halfoat. Doc tells Yossarian about his practice back home, but departs once Chief returns. Chief relates to Yossarian the tale of how his family's penchant for finding oil results in numerous oil companies following his family around, repeatedly buying up whatever land they try to settle. Once again, Yossarian asks Doc Daneeka to ground him, this time confessing to being "crazy." Doc refuses, citing that Catch-22 forbids it. By asking to be grounded, Yossarian demonstrates that he is concerned for his own well being, and thus "proves" his own sanity. Yossarian continues to fly combat missions with Aarfy, McWatt and Dobbs, where his cowardice serves him well in performing skillful evasive actions.

Chapter 5 "Chief White Halfoat" Analysis

The concept of Catch-22 is a recurring theme throughout the novel, usually presenting a "chicken and egg" bureaucratic paradox, whereby A must have been preceded by B, and B must have been preceded by A. The sane cannot be excused from combat duty, and yet, one is automatically considered sane if one requests to be excused. This one-size-fits-all definition effectively annihilates the full spectrum of mental deficiency, leaving those who are truly in crisis, like Yossarian, little or no recourse. Catch-22, used this way, is a sophistic tool of tyranny, a means of denying freedom. As this demonstrates how the military can rhetotically define away a very real medical condition, this relates to the theme of bureaucracy.

Chapter 6 "Hungry Joe"

Chapter 6 "Hungry Joe" Summary

Hungry Joe, a former photojournalist for Life magazine, has horrible nightmares after the completion of each tour. His nightly screams disturb everyone in the camp. Whenever the Colonel increases the mission requirement, Hungry Joe is relieved, and the nightmares cease. Yossarian tries to convince Hungry Joe to go see Doc Daneeka, but Joe refuses. Yossarian concludes that Joe's nightmares make sense in light of the horrors that they've all seen. Yossarian learns from ex-P.F.C. Wintergreen that Twenty-seventh Air Force Headquarters only requires forty combat missions. Unfortunately, the same authority demands that soldiers obey the orders of their commanding officers, even if the officer in question is himself disobeying orders. Yossarian hears from Doc Daneeka that the Colonel's mission requirement has been increased to fifty-five, putting him now seven missions away from the target.

Chapter 6 "Hungry Joe" Analysis

Each time Joe completes what is presently the required number of missions, he falls apart, and the nightmares begin. Paradoxically, whenever this requirement is again raised, Joe settles "into a normal state of terror with a smile of relief" (55) and resumes flying missions. In the purgatorial time after the "completion" of a tour, Joe dares to hope that he might be allowed to go home. While he realizes that, more than likely, Colonel Cathcart will raise the mission requirement before he is allowed to ship out, Joe is nevertheless tortured by the hope that this time might be different. Once the missions are finally raised, however, Joe's hopes are dashed, and he is resigned. Joe returns to his "normal" state of terror. Hungry Joe demonstrates how Colonel Cathcart's arbitrary leadership only serves to create frustration and anxiety for those under his command. With the mission requirement constantly increasing, relief seems always just out of reach. This dynamic contributes to the insanity and bureaucracy themes, as it demonstrates how a crazy system creates crazy people.

Chapter 7 "McWatt"

Chapter 7 "McWatt" Summary

Doc Daneeka gives Yossarian a note entitling him to all the fruit and juice that he wants, something which capitalist Milo Minderbinder, who fears being undersold by Yossarian and his abundant fruit supply, finds distressing. Yossarian routinely takes advantage of Doc's letter to commandeer a large quantity of the incoming fruit, which he then gives away to whomever. Milo borrows a box of dates from Yossarian to trick a thief into returning one quarter of McWatt's stolen bed sheet.

Chapter 7 "McWatt" Analysis

This chapter is satirical of capitalism. Yossarian's note demonstrates how easily the system is manipulated. Milo, meanwhile, who claims to follow a strict code of capitalist ethics, has no problem swindling someone by taking advantage of their inability to speak English. This foreshadows the many ethical violations that Milo will make later in the novel, all the while claiming the moral high ground. Seeing Milo in action for the first time, this chapter introduces the greed and ambition theme.

Chapter 8 "Lieutenant Scheisskopf"

Chapter 8 "Lieutenant Scheisskopf" Summary

Yossarian recalls his days as a cadet, when he and Clevinger served under a parade-loving, Lieutenant Scheisskopf. Clevinger suggests something to the Lieutenant, which would later prove instrumental to winning a parade competition, inadvertently embarrassing the officer for not having thought of the idea himself. To avenge Scheisskopf's newfound hatred of Clevinger, Yossarian takes to sleeping with the Lieutenant's wife. Clevinger is brought up on charges for attempting to undermine Lieutenant Scheisskopf's authority. The mockery of a trial finds Scheisskopf wearing three hats, acting as prosecutor, judge and defense. A loud, abusive Colonel presides over the case, allowing the accused to neither ask nor answer questions. Popinjay, the court recorder, runs afoul of the Colonel's wrath, inciting the Colonel to ask the young man whether or not his father is someone important in the government or administration. When Popinjay responds in the negative, the Colonel announces "then you're up shit creek" (81). Clevinger, who is found guilty and sentenced to punishment tours, is bewildered by the unfounded hatred the men hold for him. Popinjay, meanwhile, is locked up.

Chapter 8 "Lieutenant Scheisskopf" Analysis

This is an oligarchy. The power is held by a small group of like-minded people, all of whom hate Clevinger for his competence. Like Popinjay, Clevinger has no connections higher in the government, and so is subject to the arbitrary will of an unjust court. This system prizes parentage, rank and connections over and above individual achievement. Clevinger deserves praise and recognition for his suggestion, but instead is punished. One can easily see how this dynamic might cultivate the apathy and resentment pervading most of narrative. What's the point of playing a game where the odds are stacked against you? This chapter demonstrates the theme of bureaucracy, as Clevinger's actual guilt or innocence has no bearing on the trial's outcome.

Chapter 9 "Major Major Major Major"

Chapter 9 "Major Major Major Major" Summary

Major Major Major is mislead by his father into believing that his name is Caleb Major. Not until he enrolls in kindergarten does he learn that his father, as a practical joke, legally named him with first and middle names to match his last, making him Major Major Major. This fact, coupled with his resemblance to Henry Fonda, destroys Major's self-esteem and undermines his identity. In the military, a computer error promotes Major Major to the rank of Major, giving him the even more ridiculous address, Major Major Major Major. Shunned most of his life, Major eventually finds an anonymous sort of acceptance playing basketball with the other soldiers, where his tall, lanky frame proves advantageous, and where his resemblance to Henry Fonda is less of an issue.

This camaraderie ends, however, when Major is suddenly promoted to Squadron Commander, whereupon the other soldiers begin treating him with envy, deference or scorn. Completely unprepared for another sudden promotion, Major hasn't the slightest idea what is expected of him, nor what it means to be a "Squadron Commander." Hearing of the C.I.D. investigation at the hospital, Major Major begins signing the many documents that come across his desk with variations of the name "Washington Irving." After attempting unsuccessfully to infiltrate a basketball game while wearing a disguise, Major becomes a hermit, ordering Sergeant Towser to deny admittance to anyone looking to speak to the Major. Despite this, Yossarian, who still seeks relief from combat duty, manages to corner and tackle the reluctant Major. Yossarian makes a reasoned, lucid appeal, but the Major replies that there isn't anything he can do.

The "dead man" in Yossarian's tent is revealed as being the lingering personal effects of Lieutenant Mudd, a soldier who died in combat before officially reporting for duty. Since Mudd was never officially in the system, command will not acknowledge that he ever existed.

Chapter 9 "Major Major Major Major" Analysis

Major Major Major Major is a man without context. He has neither name nor face of his own, lending himself to the theme of dehumanization. His premature promotion finds him unprepared to serve as Squadron Commander, yet still shatters his anonymous acceptance on the basketball court. For reasons beyond his control, Major is estranged from his fellow soldiers, his rank and his responsibility. Finally defeated, Major, like Doc Daneeka, embraces apathy. With his surrender comes another broken link in an already tattered chain. This relates directly to the themes of apathy and, because Major Major is still recognized as an authority figure despite incompetence, bureaucracy.

The vanishing of Lieutenant Mudd underscores the rigidity of the military bureaucracy. Since Mudd never existed within the system, Sergeant Towser refuses to acknowledge

the "dead man" in Yossarian's tent. In remembering Mudd and acknowledging that he existed, Yossarian deviates from established "truth," thus seeming insane. Mudd is a corollary to Doc Daneeka, who, though very much alive and present, is later declared dead by the same bureaucracy. While the system dehumanizes us and limits our freedoms, it obliterates everything that falls outside of its context. The utter and complete loss of Lieutenant Mudd relates to the themes of dehumanization and bureaucracy. Yossarian's seeming craziness when contradicting the agreed upon bureaucracy, relates to the theme of insanity.

Chapter 10 "Wintergreen"

Chapter 10 "Wintergreen" Summary

Clevinger's plane, crew and all, disappears without a trace somewhere off the coast of Elba, an event which Yossarian elatedly interprets as a mass desertion. Wintergreen evades combat duty by staying in trouble, perpetually serving a sentence to dig and refill holes. Applby tries to report Yossarian for the Lieutenant's unwillingness to take his atarbine tables, but discovers that Major Major won't be seen while he's actually in his office. Sergeant Towser, a man without interest in war or advancement, unhappily runs the Squadron, convinced that the officers are all crazy.

Since the men are dreading the mission to Bologna, Colonel Korn orders the medical tent closed to keep anyone from reporting sick. Dr. Stubbs, who Dunbar finds sitting alone in his medical tent, expresses disillusionment at the military's attempt to order sickness out of existence. He announces that, despite orders, he will ground the first sick person that comes into his tent. Dr. Stubbs laments to Dunbar that he sees no point in saving men's' lives, if they're just going to die, anyway.

Chapter 10 "Wintergreen" Analysis

Clevinger's sudden and complete disappearance parallels the disappearance of Lieutenant Mudd, as well as the fate of any downed pilot. Some men desert, others are lost at sea or behind enemy lines. Until confirmed one way or the other, alive or dead, a downed pilot exists in a limbo of uncertainty. It is this very ambiguity that makes it so easy to ignore Mudd's death. Without a corpse, one lacks the merest physical proof of Mudd having existed. Since Clevinger's death is never addressed as such, instead characterized as a vanishment, this is a sort of dehumanization, as they've turned his loss into a fairy tale.

Dr. Stubbs opinions represent a rational, conscientious mind reacting to an irrational situation. As a doctor, Stubbs understands both his function and duty. He realizes that to obey Colonel Korn's order is to betray the Hippocratic Oath, as well as the soldiers who depend on him. The doctor's decision to be a doctor, in this case, amounts to insubordination, a paradox which reveals the madness of the system itself. By trying to order sickness out of existence, this chapter demonstrates the theme of bureaucracy.

Chapter 11 "Captain Black"

Chapter 11 "Captain Black" Summary

Captain Black, the Squadron Intelligence Officer, takes sadistic delight in announcing to everyone that the next mission will be Bologna, news of which sows fear and alarm throughout the squad. Savoring the moment, Captain Black thinks back to a time when, as he sees it, Major Major stole the Squad Leader promotion, which was his by right. To avenge this perceived wrong, Captain Black declares Major Major a communist and, further, demands that everyone entering his Intelligence tent sign a "loyalty oath;" everyone, that is, save for Major Major, who, as a "communist," is forbidden to sign. Afraid of being labeled as traitors, the other tents and their commanders follow suit, until everyone and everything requires either the signing of an oath or some display of patriotism, bogging the camp down in needless bureaucracy. The practice is brought to an end, when a recently returned Major de Coverley is asked to sign a loyalty oath for his dinner. He responds with righteous belligerence, ordering that food immediately be served to everyone.

Chapter 11 "Captain Black" Analysis

This is Demagogy. By using the fears and passions of his fellow soldiers, Captain Black creates policy which forwards his own agenda at everyone else's expense. In the end, it is not reason which wins the day, but a different cult of personality in the form of Major - de Coverley. Particularly in a culture where people are conditioned to follow orders, authority, even perceived reality can be altered merely by convincing others that they should listen to us. In this light, the system is something fluid, changeable. What works one way today, might work differently tomorrow. Nothing is stable. This is all constructed reality, and thus, speaks to the theme of bureaucracy.

Chapter 12 "Bologna"

Chapter 12 "Bologna" Summary

The men, hoping for a delay of the Bologna mission, sullenly pray for continued rain. Secretly, Yossarian alters the intelligence map by moving the bomb line up to Bologna, suggesting that the allies have taken the city. Corporal Kolodny, seeing this, wakes Captain Black, the Intelligence Officer, to alert him that Bologna has been taken. Captain Black calls and wakes Colonel Korn to inform him of the development and to ask if the mission should be canceled. The Colonel, who assumes the intelligence accurate, responds in the affirmative. Yossarian has separate conversations with Ex-PFC Wintergreen and Clevinger (who has yet to vanish at this point.) Both men suggest, in their own way, that it is Yossarian's duty to die for his country, and that he has no right to question this fact. Chief White Halfoat, Yossarian, Dunbar, Nately and McWatt go for a drunken joyride in Captain Black's jeep. Yossarian returns to camp, just in time to referee a fight between Hungry Joe and Huple's cat.

Chapter 12 "Bologna" Analysis

By changing the position of the bomb line, Yossarian miraculously inverts cause and effect. This suggests that everyone in the chain of command is conditioned to react to stimulus, rather than to think as individuals. They do what is expected of them when the expected seems to occur. They act like relays, transmitting unprocessed information. Similarly, Yossarian is told that he has no right to decide his own fate, indicating that the military would rather he not think for or of himself. This chapter demonstrates one of the few instances where Yossarian's uses the bureaucracy against itself. The idea that Yossarian has no say in his own fate lends itself to the theme of dehumanization.

Chapter 13 "Major - De Coverely"

Chapter 13 "Major - De Coverely" Summary

Thinking that Florence, as well as Bologna, had fallen to the Allies, Major de Coverely, a man possessing a fearless and mysterious reputation, flies to that city to rent two apartments for the officers and the enlisted men. De Coverely's duties as squadron executive often take him to newly conquered cities to secure accommodations, where he is often seen and photographed. Due to his awesome presence, observers assume that he is someone of distinction, rather than just a squadron executive officer.

Yossarian recalls the luxurious apartments that Major de Coverely provided in Rome, where the men on leave now live in comfort and with no shortage of female companionship. That initial trip to Rome is cut short for Major de Coverely, when a smelly old man jabs him in the eye with an American Beauty rose. Back in Pianosa, Major de Coverely is approached by a courageous Milo Minderbinder, who, appealing to the Major's love of fresh eggs and butter, convinces the Major to provide him with a plane for the express purpose of shipping in fresh eggs from Malta. From eggs, Milo expands to other foodstuffs and, before long, he becomes the primary food distributor for most of General Dreedle's combat wing.

After the Ferrara mission, Colonel Cathcart is forced to award Yossarian a medal and a promotion to assist a cover-up. After nine missions and seven days, the bridge that Cathcart volunteered his men to destroy, is still standing. Only on the tenth mission, when Yossarian bravely leads his flight of six planes for a second pass, is the target destroyed. Sadly, Kraft and his crew are killed as a result of Yossarian's command decision, creating a public relations nightmare for Cathcart. Rather than admit fault, Colonels Cathcart and Korn decide to spin the tragedy by making Yossarian into a hero.

Chapter 13 "Major - De Coverely" Analysis

Major de Coverely does little more than rent apartments and pitch horseshoes, and yet, the men of both sides hold him in awe. As he looks fearsome, and because he is often photographed near the front line, he is falsely perceived as instrumental in the war effort. Yossarian, meanwhile, who acts heroically in the face of danger, is awarded a medal only to distract from the embarrassing loss of Kraft. Here again, the military fails to recognize the right man for the right reason. Milo lays the foundation for his syndicate on Major de Coverley's desire for fresh eggs, demonstrating that capitalism will first appeal to men of means. All of this characterizes the theme of bureaucracy, demonstrating that how and why things get done often has little to do with regulation. As Milo lays the groundwork for his syndicate, the greed and ambition theme is further developed.

Chapter 14 "Kid Sampson"

Chapter 14 "Kid Sampson" Summary

His plane bound for Bologna, Yossarian sabotages his intercom as an excuse to beg out of the mission. He orders his crew to turn the plane around and head home. On the ground once again, Yossarian is exhausted and shaken. After a short swim, he falls asleep on a sandy beach. Some time later, he awakes to the sound of the returning bombers. All the planes are accounted for, save his own. Seeing this, Yossarian assumes that clouds had covered the target and that the mission is still to be flown. In truth, Bologna was bombed, but there hadn't been any flak.

Chapter 14 "Kid Sampson" Analysis

The latter half of this chapter, rich in fluid imagery, is dreamlike. As Yossarian makes his way to his tent, walking through the vacant camp, there is a sense of eerie calm. Doc Daneeka sits alone, shivering in the meager sunlight. Chief White Halfoat and Captain Black, meanwhile, embezzle whiskey rations. Yossarian ignores them, even failing to respond when Captain Black addresses him directly. He is disconnected from the world, as if sleepwalking. Yossarian's shell-shocked state suggests the insanity theme.

Chapter 15 "Piltchard and Wren"

Chapter 15 "Piltchard and Wren" Summary

Captain Piltchard gives Yossarian a mild rebuke for abandoning the mission. Captain Wren says that even though Bologna was a milk run, everyone was too nervous to finish the job. Colonel Cathcart, therefore, got permission for everyone to go back there tomorrow. To prove to Yossarian that they bear him no ill will, the joint squad operations officers assign him to fly as lead bombardier in the first formation. The next day, Yossarian leads his men through a nightmare of flak and fire. Fighting panic, Yossarian successfully bombs his target. As he shouts evasion orders to pilot McWatt, Yossarian finds himself antagonized by the eerily cheerful navigator Aarfy, who teasingly pretends not to hear Yossarian's repeatedly demands that he leave the nose compartment. A minor brawl erupts between the two men, but Yossarian is unable to force Aarfy out of the nose. Even as the craft is penetrated by shrapnel, shredding a jumble of Aarfy's maps, the navigator is merely amused. Yossarian, suddenly concerned for the welfare of Orr, uses the bombsight to search for any sign of his tent-mate. He spots Orr's craft moments later, damaged but intact. In a mixture of resentment and relief, Yossarian launches a series of insults in Orr's direction. Orr safely performs an emergency landing.

Chapter 15 "Piltchard and Wren" Analysis

Despite his best efforts, Yossarian is unable to avoid this mission. In the end, not only does he fly to Bologna, but he also leads the formation, as if this mission were somehow fated. A bomber, being a large craft with poor maneuverability once in the air, is beyond Yossarian's control. Should luck fail him, the only decision left is to bail out. Yossarian is concerned, however, that Aarfy's rotund body could easily plug the nose's narrow escape hatch, trapping him inside. Nevertheless, Yossarian is unable to keep Aarfy out of the nose. Yossarian is trying to manage risk, but there are too many people and things for which he cannot account, chief among them being himself. If Yossarian were truly governing himself, he wouldn't even be on the aircraft. Being forced into the role of bombardier invokes the theme of dehumanization. Yossarian's panic calls up the theme of insanity. In his concern for Orr, we're introduced to the theme of compassion.

Chapter 16 "Lucina"

Chapter 16 "Lucina" Summary

While on leave in Rome, looking for a one-night-stand, Yossarian meets a pushy, young woman named, Lucina. She refuses to sleep with Yossarian, but will allow him to do a number of things that he never asks to do, such as dance with her and buy her dinner. Yossarian is taken by her belligerence. After playing by her rules for awhile, Lucina makes a date to sleep with him. Yossarian thinks he's been brushed off, but Lucina proves true to her word, arriving at his hotel room that very morning. In a fit of pillow talk, Yossarian propose marriage to Lucina. She refuses, citing that she can't marry him because he's crazy and that he's crazy, because he wants to marry someone who isn't a virgin. Hungry Joe walks in on the two of them together, forcing the couple to flee in laughter under threat of being filmed. After bidding Lucina farewell, Yossarian tears up her number, as she predicted, only to regret having done so mere hours later. After a futile attempt to find Lucina, Yossarian returns to his hotel, depressed and lonely, only to learn from Hungry Joe that the Colonel has raised the mission requirement yet again, from thirty-five to forty. Yossarian immediately checks himself into the hospital, rather than fly any more missions.

Chapter 16 "Lucina" Analysis

With Lucina, Yossarian dares to seek more than sex. He talks to her, listens to her, and sympathizes with her. When Hungry Joe tries to film Lucina, Yossarian moves to protect her privacy. Lucina's refusal of his proposal is yet another manifestation of Catch-22. She won't marry someone who's insane, and yet you'd have to be insane to want to marry her. In giving her number to Yossarian, Lucina seeks a sort of permanence. Yossarian's destruction of Lucina's number suggests that he is unwilling to accept someone, who is willing to accept him, which is itself another Catch-22. Both invocations necessarily point to theme of bureaucracy, suggesting that bureaucratic qualities can exist within the individual.

Chapter 17 "The Soldier in White"

Chapter 17 "The Soldier in White" Summary

Yossarian enters and exits the hospital, only to return once more when Colonel Cathcart again raises the missions. Whenever he needs to escape, Yossarian claims to have a pain in his liver. Death comes to the hospital, as it does over Bologna. However, in Yossarian's mind, death is cleaner here, more humane. The narrative flashes back to the ward of the ill-fated soldier in white. Yossarian and Dunbar question the nurses about the identity of the mysterious soldier, theorizing that the cast could be empty, or that it might contain someone else entirely. The Texan prattles on to the soldier, insisting to everyone else that the chalky statue is truly a nice guy. The patients discuss the injustice of their various illnesses. In the grip of hypochondria, Yossarian ponders the many things that can go wrong in a human body. Once more in the present, Yossarian again asks Doc Daneeka to ground him. Doc promises to maybe help Yossarian, if he can convince McWatt to put Doc's name on the flight logs, ensuring that Doc can collect flight pay without flying. Yossarian must also agree to reach the current tour minimum of fifty-five missions.

Chapter 17 "The Soldier in White" Analysis

Yossarian and Dunbar both acknowledge and question the soldier's lack of identity, as is reasonable. The Texan, however, assigns the soldier an identity. In effect, he succeeds in both objectifying and personifying the cast, denying the individual assumed to lie within. Like the dead man in Yossarian's tent, the soldier in white is a source of tangible absence. This relates to the theme of dehumanization.

Chapter 18 "The Soldier Who Saw Everything Twice"

Chapter 18 "The Soldier Who Saw Everything Twice" Summary

Yossarian recalls his first stay in a military hospital, back when he was a private. He complains of a pain in his side, first suggesting to the hospital that it might be his appendix. Yossarian switches his self-diagnosis to liver pain at the recommendation of an intern, who suggests that a liver problem would be far more difficult to disprove. Unwilling to risk liability, the doctors admit him to the hospital. Days later, Yossarian is deemed healthy and about to be discharged, when another patient frantically claims to be seeing everything twice, causing the entire ward to be placed under quarantine. Yossarian enjoys Thanksgiving Day in the hospital and vows to spend all future Thanksgiving Days cloistered in medical care. When the quarantine ends, Yossarian also frantically claims to see everything twice, starting the whole quarantine process over from the beginning. Alone in the room with the soldier who saw everything twice, Yossarian can't help but admire his masterful fakery. The next day, the soldier dies, prompting Yossarian to see everything once. One of the doctors, who realizes that Yossarian has been faking, cajoles Yossarian into playing the role of the recently departed soldier who saw everything twice, for the sake of visiting family members who'd hoped to see the young man before he'd passed on. Yossarian agrees to the performance, and the family is none the wiser. Even when Yossarian tells them that his name is Yossarian, and not Giuseppe, the family still assumes that he is their own dying son and brother.

A year later, Yossarian doesn't spend Thanksgiving in the hospital, but rather, in bed with Lieutenant Scheisskopf's wife, where the two disagree as to what they have to be thankful for. Both take offense at conceptions of a God that neither of them believes in.

Chapter 18 "The Soldier Who Saw Everything Twice" Analysis

The fact that Yossarian can so easily stand in for the dead soldier suggests that, like the soldier in white, Yossarian isn't a person in this context so much as a representation of a person. Had the man survived another day, would the scene have played out any differently? Does it matter who lies there in the bed? The family, like the Texan, creates identity through objectification and despite the inherent identity of the individual. This suggests that identity is assigned, rather than chosen. This directly refers to theme of dehumanization.

Chapter 19 "Colonel Cathcart"

Chapter 19 "Colonel Cathcart" Summary

Colonel Cathcart measures his own success in relation to the success of others, disdaining those below himself and sucking up to those above. His first concern lay with becoming a General. Seeing an article in the Saturday Evening Post about a bomber group whose chaplain says prayers in the briefing room before each mission, Cathcart wonders if playing the religion card might earn him some publicity. The Colonel summons the chaplain to discuss the possibility. Colonel Cathcart insists that he doesn't want the service to be too religious, suggesting that the men pray for tighter bomb patterns. The idea is ultimately scrapped when the Colonel learns, to his disgust, that such meetings would necessarily have to accommodate for atheists and enlisted men. The chaplain tries to speak to the Colonel on behalf of the disgruntled men, who are upset with the new tour requirement of sixty missions, but is dismissed out of hand. When the chaplain tells the Colonel of Yossarian's increasing desperation, Cathcart insists that the chaplain take a plum tomato and advises that he tell Yossarian to put his trust in God.

Chapter 19 "Colonel Cathcart" Analysis

Colonel Cathcart has little regard for the men under his command, considering everyone on the basis of whether or not they can help or hurt his career. He's constantly worrying about the opinions of Generals Dweedle and Peckem. However, he couldn't care less about the powerless, enlisted men. Even the chaplain is little more than a tool to be manipulated. Indeed the degree of villainy perpetrated by this character has the effect of making him seem like more of a caricature, rather than an actual person. Colonel Cathcart drives much of Catch-22's bureaucracy, greed and ambition themes.

Chapter 20 "Corporal Whitcomb"

Chapter 20 "Corporal Whitcomb" Summary

The chaplain, ashamed that he lacked the courage stand up to Colonel Cathcart, returns to the relative solitude of his wooded clearing. There, outside his tent, he spots his high strung assistant, Corporal Whitcomb, speaking to a mysterious man wearing a hospital robe. Moments later, Whitcomb explains that the robed man is a C.I.D. investigator who suspects that the chaplain has been intercepting Major Major's letters and that, further, he's been signing off on said letters with the forged name "Washington Irving."

The chaplain frantically denies all charges. Corporal Whitcomb is dubious, but explains to the chaplain that he has taken steps to assist him. It seems that the C.I.D. man has been trying to report the chaplain to his superiors, but someone at the hospital keeps censoring out the details. Greatly overstepping his authority, Corporal Whitcomb signed off on the C.I.D. man's letters on the chaplain's behalf, marking them as already censored. Since neither he nor the chaplain have the authority to censor anything, the Whitcomb signed them as "Washington Irving." The Corporal relates all of this to the chaplain, who, failing to see how this is supposed to be helpful, is very alarmed. Right before storming out of the tent, disgusted with the chaplain's apparent lack of appreciation, the Corporal explains that the C.I.D. man is currently writing a report on the "stolen" plum tomato that the chaplain arrived with, the one freely given to him by the Colonel. Now quite depressed, the chaplain binges on candy bars.

Chapter 20 "Corporal Whitcomb" Analysis

The chaplain, who is thoughtful, gentle and compassionate, exists as a literary foil to the selfish Colonel Cathcart. The chaplain doesn't seem to belong in this war. His is a quiet, conscientious voice lost in the midst of a thundering madness. The other officers, too, realize that the chaplain is different, which is why they insist that he take quarters out in the forest, miles from camp. The fact that the chaplain is so marginalized, while the monstrous Colonel Cathcart is exalted, says volumes as to the nature of this bureaucracy. The chaplain's lack of greed and ambition puts him in stark contrast to those who exemplify the theme, and his compassionate nature lends itself to the compassion theme.

Chapter 21 "General Dreedle"

Chapter 21 "General Dreedle" Summary

Colonel Cathcart is disturbed by the Chaplain's mention of Yossarian, finally realizing that the name has been coming up again and again in association with the Colonel's many "black eyes." Colonel Cathcart, brooding over how he might better distinguish himself to Generals Dreedle and Peckem, considers raising the mission requirement exponentially. The narrative shifts to General Dreedle and the award ceremony following Avignon, where Yossarian waits to receive his medal, standing in the nude. Colonel Cathcart is mortified, but the no-nonsense General is only mildly surprised. Captain Wren explains to Colonel Korn that Yossarian has sworn off wearing a uniform ever since a soldier bled to death in his arms over Avignon. Yossarian moans at the beauty of Dreedle's personal assistant, triggering an epidemic of moans up and down the ranks. Immediately after a perplexed General Dreedle puts a stop to this behavior, Major Danby, the group operations officer, moans, because all the moaning has foiled his attempt to synchronize everyone's watches. General Dreedle, thoroughly outraged by Danby's apparent insolence, immediately orders him shot. Colonel Moodus, Dreedle's hated son-in-law, intervenes, explaining to the disappointed General that he lacks the authority to make any such order. With Danby taken away, Colonel Korn skillfully takes charge of the ceremony. Observing Colonel Korn in action, General Dreedle whispers to Cathcart that Korn makes him sick. Colonel Cathcart is, of course, elated to hear this.

Chapter 21 "General Dreedle" Analysis

Yossarian's dress and behavior, in sharp contrast to the decorum around him, marks him as a natural man. He's less concerned with signs of rank and station, such as medals and uniforms, and more concerned with principles. What good is a uniform if it makes you a target? What good is a medal if your uniformed friends are still dying? Nudity has separated Yossarian from the civilized madness of war, reducing him to the simpler, more fundamental principles of the human animal: love and lust. Yossarian's abandonment of military trapings works against the thematic trend of dehumanization and, since he is mourning the loss of Snowden, with the theme of compassion.

Chapter 22 "Milo the Mayor"

Chapter 22 "Milo the Mayor" Summary

The mission to Avignon is when Yossarian loses his nerve. Co-pilot Dobbs, lacking faith in the underaged pilot, Huple, wrests the controls away without warning, sending the plane into a steep dive. For one terrifying moment, Yossarian panics, as he is pinned to the roof of the nose, his headphones unplugged. Huple regains the controls and levels out, but not before the plane drops back into the antiaircraft fire from which they'd just almost escaped. By the time Yossarian jacks his headphones back in, Dobbs is weeping. After some momentary confusion, Yossarian, realizing that the radio-gunner is in distress, makes his way to the rear of the plane, where he finds an injured Snowden sprawled out on the floor.

Earlier, some time before Avignon, Dobbs, who is a nervous wreck from endlessly flying missions, asks for Yossarian's blessing to murder Colonel Cathcart. Yossarian expresses his dislike for the Colonel, but figures that he has a right to live. Dobbs reveals, at the top of his lungs, that he also plans to kill Colonel Korn, Appleby, Havermeyer, and McWatt. Yossarian is appalled. Dobbs compromises to just killing Colonel Cathcart, but Yossarian still won't give his consent. Dobbs stomps off to, once again, beg Doc Daneeka to ground him.

Yossarian joins Milo and Orr on a trip to Cairo to buy eggs. As a favor to Milo, Yossarian is along to distract Orr from the specifics of his operations. Milo winds up dragging the men to several unscheduled stops where, surprisingly, Milo seems to occupy a number of political offices, including a number of mayorships. At each city, he buys one product and sells another, making profit as he goes. When Yossarian asks, Milo details his operation, which smacks of an epic capitalist shell-game involving market manipulation, re-trading and working under assumed names. "The syndicate benefits when I benefit," Milo explains, "because everybody has a share" (238). Milo buys up the entire harvest of Egyptian cotton, and they all fly back to Pianosa.

Chapter 22 "Milo the Mayor" Analysis

Snowden, while alluded to in earlier chapters, never appears in the story. Whenever he is mentioned, it is in relation to the event of his death, as detailed much later in chapter 41. He lived. He was likely friends with some of the other characters. Yet, the only time he manifests prior to this chapter is when Yossarian stumbles over his duffel bag in chapter 16. Like the dead man in Yossarian's tent and the soldier in white, Snowden is defined by his absence. He is a gaping, traumatic wound in the narrative body. Yossarian doesn't know how to deal with the tragedy, and so Yossarian's storyavoids the topic for as long as possible, making compassion an ever present theme.

Dobbs isn't fit to serve, and he knows it, but the military insists that he continue to perform his function. The mishap over Avignon, Snowden's tragedy, Yossarian losing his nerve, it all could have been prevented if Doc Daneeka had only grounded Dobbs. Instead, Dobbs kills Snowden and eventually causes the deaths of Nately and himself, making the flight over Avignon a foreshadow of things to come. Yossarian's lost nerve and Dobbs' spastic flying are both part of the insanity theme.

Milo's wheeling and dealing, bewildering as it is, clearly demonstrates the challenges faced in governing capitalism. The behavior of money often isn't apparent to layman. Since most people lack the savvy to follow Milo's tangled schemes, they can't really tell if he's false or fair to all involved. They have only his word that what's good for him is also good for them. This invokes the bureacracy, greed and ambition themes.

Chapter 23 "Nately's Old Man"

Chapter 23 "Nately's Old Man" Summary

Nately's obsession with a prostitute leads them to an Italian brothel, where he is tormented by an old man's disparaging comments about America. Though Nately tries to rebut, he succeeds only in spouting clichys. Nately is shocked to learn that this is the same, old man who injured Major de Coverley, by poking the esteemed officer in the eye with an American Beauty rose.

Chapter 23 "Nately's Old Man" Analysis

Nately's patriotic naivety is no match for the old man's refined pragmatism. By attacking the young man's patriotism, by insisting that America will one day share the ruinous fate of all empires, the old man is exposing Nately to his own mortality. Nately doesn't want to believe that he might die for his country, only to have his country one day perish, as well. America is Nately's immortality. This conversation foreshadows Nately's death later in the novel and, by extension, calls into question the survival of America itself.

Chapter 24 "Milo"

Chapter 24 "Milo" Summary

The story races to a climax as Milo's trade syndicate grows beyond national boundaries, even into Germany itself. The syndicate now controls a large collection of pursuit planes, bombers and cargo ships assembled from both sides of the war, each with its national marking replaced with the stenciled words M & M ENTERPRISES, FINE FRUITS AND PRODUCE. Since Milo's planes are allowed free passage everywhere, he contracts with the American military to bomb the bridge at Orvieto, which Milo, playing both sides of the war, already contracted with the German military to defend against his own attack. Lieutenant Mudd, the dead man in Yossarian's tent, dies during this attack. When Yossarian accuses Milo of dealing with the enemy, the mess officer explains that the Germans are good customers, and that he has a responsibility to protect their rights as shareholders. Unfortunately, Milo's syndicate is soon on the verge of collapse, due to a glut in Egyptian cotton. To get out of the red, Milo contracts with the Germany military to bomb his own outfit, a feat which he carries out with little hesitation. Milo is condemned for this act until he opens his books to the public, disclosing his tremendous profit he's made. At this point, all is forgiven.

Just after the Avignon mission and before Milo's betrayal, a naked Yossarian watches Snowden's funeral from atop a tree. He is soon joined by Milo, who tries to convince Yossarian to eat a ball of chocolate covered cotton, his latest scheme for ridding himself of his Egyptian cotton surplus. Yossarian spits it out, explaining that people can't digest cotton. Milo mourns his dying syndicate, while Yossarian mourns the death of Snowden.

Chapter 24 "Milo" Analysis

Milo shows his true colors. His loyalty lay neither with his country nor to the members of his supposed syndicate, but to his own interests alone, strongly invoking both the greed, ambition and bureaucracy themes. He laments "I just can't sit here and watch while those mess halls let my syndicate die" (270). Milo's use of the word "my" indicates that he sees the syndicate, not as a cooperation of persons to run a business, but rather as his own personal enterprise. What is good for the syndicate is good for Milo, because Milo is the syndicate. Milo contributes to the dehumanization theme by blaming the mess halls for his own failure, simply because the men are unwilling to consume against their better interest. In light of this, Milo's bombing run could be interpreted as an act of vengeance. Regardless of his motivation, Milo's heartless betrayal works against the compassion theme.

In truth, it is Milo's diversification away from foodstuffs which spells his undoing. As a mess officer, food is his domain. Since he knows nothing of cotton, he attempts to transform the product into a food item. The candy coated cotton, however, is symbolic of

Milo himself, something which seems enticing on the outside, but will ultimately prove bad for your health.

The syndicate, as depicted here, is a quasi-government which is not held responsible by the people of which it is comprised. Worse, the syndicate can't be held accountable by any authority, national or otherwise. It is an autonomous, mercenary entity concerned only with self-gain. When one considers that this syndicate essentially amounts to only Milo himself, it's easy to see how an unfettered corporatist agenda can place a disproportionate amount of power and authority into the hands of single individuals.

Chapter 25 "The Chaplain"

Chapter 25 "The Chaplain" Summary

The chaplain, homesick for his wife and three children, is suffering an existential crisis of faith. While presiding over Snowden's funeral, the chaplain spies Yossarian's nude form sitting in a tree, which he takes for a vision. The chaplain recalls a strong sense of deja vu when he first met Yossarian, sensing that their prior meeting is somehow spiritually significant. The chaplain attempts unsuccessfully to speak to Major Major concerning the recent increase in flights.

En route back to his tent, the chaplain runs into a bedraggled, half-starved Captain Flume, who has been living in the forest to evade Chief White Halfoat's threat to slit his throat as he sleeps. Captain Flume is disappointed to learn that Chief White Halfoat has yet to make good on his promise to die of pneumonia. Back at his quarters, the chaplain discovers that his assistant, Whitcomb, has been promoted to sergeant by Colonel Cathcart for recommending to him the same form condolence letters that the chaplain had already previously vetoed. Cathcart is convinced that these letters will prove successful enough that they will be covered by the Saturday Evening Post, thus earning him publicity. In the interest of getting these letters in the mail as quickly as possible, Cathcart volunteers his men for another dangerous mission to Avignon.

Chapter 25 "The Chaplain" Analysis

Like Major Major, the chaplain is wanting for context. The military has estranged him from the role of father and husband. The other soldiers, meanwhile, officer and enlisted alike, see him only in terms of his function as a spiritual advisor. No one uses his actual name, and everyone continues to refer to him as "father," even though it is, as the Chaplain keeps reminding them, inappropriate. Even the chaplain's faith fails to adequately define him. Much as Doc Danika's hypochondria, the chaplain's practice as chaplain has made him acutely aware of his own spiritual health. He is plagued by questions and uncertainties in a institution that prizes individuals who can make quick, decisive actions at the expense of thoughtfulness. "In a world in which success was the only virtue, he had resigned himself to failure" (274). Cathcart's one size fits all form letters are the ultimate in dehumanization, utterly lacking in compassion, considering their intention as a means to further Cathcart's greed and ambition.

Chapter 26 "Aarfy"

Chapter 26 "Aarfy" Summary

Nately meets and is smitten by a prostitute. Navigator Aarfy ridicules him for his folly, further upsetting an already ashamed Nately, by disparaging the object of his desire. Returning from a mission, Aarfy mistakenly leads the planes over a cluster of antiaircraft, causing Yossarian to take some shrapnel in the thigh. Though he is bleeding profusely, Aarfy pretends not to understand Yossarian's cries for assistance. Yossarian wakes later in the hospital to find Dunbar in the bed across from him, masquerading as Second Lieutenant Anthony F. Fortiori. Dunbar explains that there weren't any beds available in Yossarian's ward, so he pulled rank to exchange beds with Fortiori. Yossarian tests the trick on an enlisted man, stealing the bed of Warrant Officer Homer Lumley for awhile. Nurse Cramer insists that Yossarian return to his bed, implying that he, as the property of the U. S. government, has no right to endanger his own health. Yossarian tries Dunbar's pulling-rank trick with Nurse Cramer, which earns him a slap in the face. Nurse Duckett suddenly appears, breaks up the argument, takes Yossarian by the ear and puts him back in bed.

Chapter 26 "Aarfy" Analysis

As with most hospitals, identity here is not determined by who patients are as individuals. A patient is a chart, a collection of symptoms. In a civilian hospital, such simple regard might allow for a sort of equality, with patients prioritized according to need rather than by race or socioeconomic status. This is a military hospital, however, where each patient also constitutes an investment. Officers, it would stand to reason, are seen as less disposable than the more cheaply trained enlisted men. In this, admittedly fictional, hospital, a low rank can see patients turned right out of their beds. This, of course, lends itself to the theme of dehumanization.

Chapter 27 "Nurse Duckett"

Chapter 27 "Nurse Duckett" Summary

After groping Nurse Duckett, Yossarian is sent to psychiatrist Major Sanders. After a few sessions, it becomes apparent that the therapist believes that Yossarian is Anthony F. Fortiori. When Yossarian denies this, Sanders enumerates Yossarian's many symptoms, pronounces him crazy, and declares that he is to be sent home. Yossarian is overjoyed. True to his word, Major Sanders medically discharges Anthony F. Fortiori. Dobbs begs Yossarian once more to approve his plans of murdering Colonel Cathcart, but Yossarian wants to wait and see, hoping that he'll be discharged for his leg wound. The chaplain makes several fruitless trips to Doc Daneeka, hoping to speak on Yossarian's behalf. When Yossarian, despite his wound, is reactivated for duty, he limps over to Doc Daneeka's tent, where he learns that Germany's front is crumbling. Doc is fearful that the outfit will soon be transferred to the Pacific. Yossarian tells Doc Daneeka of the mix-up with the psychiatrist, explaining that he really is crazy, but the doctor is unmoved.

Chapter 27 "Nurse Duckett" Analysis

Here again, there is a loss of individuation. Yossarian is continually accused of grabbing nurse Duckett's breasts, even though, as he keeps reminding everyone, it is Dunbar, not he, who encroached there. The psychiatrist believes that this "Dunbar" exists only as Yossarian's evil alter-ego, and that Yossarian himself is Anthony F. Fortiori. The bureaucracy is such that one person is easily confused or exchanged for another. This blurs both position and responsibility, making it impossible to assess, account for or even differentiate the actions of single individuals. This once more demonstrates dehumanization.

Chapter 28 "Dobbs"

Chapter 28 "Dobbs" Summary

Hearing a rumor that the outfit will be returning to Bologna, Yossarian gives Dobbs the go ahead to kill Colonel Cathcart. Dobbs, who has now flown the required sixty missions, refuses, unwilling to risk his chance of going home. Back in his quarters, Yossarian is driven to distraction by Orr's constant working on the stove. When Yossarian finally snaps at him, Orr explains that he is anxious to get the stove finished for Yossarian while there is still time. Yossarian asks him what he means, but Orr's response is vague, implying that, with his track record, it's only a matter of time before he'll be killed in action. On the heels of the dire prophecy, Orr declares that if Yossarian had any brains, he'd fly with him. Yossarian, somewhat guiltily, replies that he cannot, since he'll be flying lead again. After some short banter, Orr asks Yossarian why he doesn't want to fly with him, revealing that he knows Yossarian went to Piltchard and Wren after the first Avignon mission and told them that he didn't want to fly with him. Yossarian, lying through his teeth, denies it. Orr finally asks Yossarian directly if he will fly with him. Yossarian, laughing now, says "no," claiming that Orr will just get shot down again. In the next mission, Orr's craft is indeed shot down, and he is last seen drifting away, alone, on an escape raft. His fate is unknown until the end of the novel.

Chapter 28 "Dobbs" Analysis

Yossarian's fear isolates the very friend who goes on to realize Yossarian's own dreams of desertion. Clearly it's very important to Orr that Yossarian have trust in him. He wants Yossarian to see without being told, but sadly, Yossarian is too blinded by his own fear to realize that Sergeant Knight's amusing anecdote is really the story of how Orr rehearses his desertion. Trust is one of the central problems of Catch-22. Who do you trust, and why? Most of the characters make the the mistake of trusting Milo, but no one thinks to put their faith in a crash-prone pilot. The lesson here is that, like Milo's chocolate covered cotton, things can't always be judged by outside appearances.

Chapter 29 "Peckem"

Chapter 29 "Peckem" Summary

General Peckem proudly welcomes Colonel Scheisskopf to his command, seeing the addition of another high-ranking officer as a boost to his prestige. After making it perfectly clear to Scheisskopf that his first concern lay in deposing General Dreedle, not winning the war, General Peckem puts the Colonel to work recommending Special Services's expansion to combat activities. Seeing Colonel Scheisskopf's disappointment at not being allowed to host parades, Peckem gives him permission to issue parade cancellations. When Colonel Cargill complains that he wants to be the one to cancel parades, General Peckem plays the two Colonels against one another with lies and contradictory orders. Peckem reveals to Scheisskopf that the term "bomb pattern" is a meaningless concept that he made up on a lark, but which has rapidly convinced a number of lower ranking officers that he thinks it important for bombs to explode together to make for a neat aerial photograph.

Yossarian's group is assigned to bomb a small hillside village, thus blocking the road below with the resulting landslide. During the briefing, the group, Dunbar especially, expresses outrage when they learn that the village will not be warned ahead of time. Major Danby, dismayed by the opposition, entreats everyone to trust in headquarters, insisting that they know what they're doing. Colonel Korn approaches, quickly putting Dunbar on the defensive through skillful use of rhetoric. When Dunbar fails to back down, Korn threateningly suggests that he could easily send the group back to Bologna if they prefer. Bidding them good luck, Colonel Korn reminds everyone of the importance of tight bomb patterns. When Danby disagrees, explaining that a looser pattern will make for a better landslide, Colonel Korn explains that Colonel Cathcart doesn't care about the roadblock. He just wants a good, clean aerial photograph.

Chapter 29 "Peckem" Analysis

This operation poses a problem of accountability, relating directly to theme of bureaucracy. Assuming the village is bombed, who is responsible for the loss of these innocent lives? Is it General Peckem, for using his power and authority to establish so arbitrary a standard? Is it Colonel Cathcart, for trying to impress General Peckem by meeting that standard? Or is it Yossarian's group, for knowingly bombing a helpless village? In truth, there's plenty of blame to be spread around. The problem is systemic, collapsing like a row of Dominoes from top to bottom. The aerial photograph is a motif and symbol of Cathcart's ridiculous ambition.

Chapter 30 "Dunbar"

Chapter 30 "Dunbar" Summary

Dunbar is becoming edgy, snarling at superior officers and behaving crudely even toward the Chaplain. While breaking in some new recruits on a training mission, Yossarian is terrified by McWatt's reckless showboat flying, nearly strangling the pilot in his effort to convince McWatt to raise altitude. Yossarian and Nurse Sue Ann Duckett begin a romance, with Sue Ann fitting in perfectly amongst the guys. Returning from a training mission, McWatt performs his customary low-altitude buzzing of the bobbing raft. Clowning around, Kid Sampson leaps up to touch the aircraft as it overhead, only to be sliced in two by one of the propellers. Everyone on the beach is horrified by the grisly display. Rather than land the vehicle and face the consequences, McWatt continues to climb. Two parachutes, those of the trainees, appear and begin fluttering to the ground. McWatt dips his wings in one final salute and flies into a mountain. Colonel Cathcart raises the missions to sixty-five.

Chapter 30 "Dunbar" Analysis

In a sane world, McWatt would make for a colorful, amusing friend. Unfortunately this is not a sane world. Here, as Yossarian can attest, it pays to have a healthy paranoia. This horrifying event stands as a bleak testament as to what might happen when soldiers let their guard down. This is a war, something to be taken very seriously. For a soldier, to laugh, to love, to trust, is a tremendous risk. Even the barest intimacy calls for heroic courage. In light of this, it's easy to understand why Yossarian couldn't trust Orr.

Chapter 31 "Mrs. Daneeka"

Chapter 31 "Mrs. Daneeka" Summary

Since McWatt's flight log lists Doc Daneeka as a passenger, the doctor is assumed dead. Hearing this, Cathcart raises the mission requirement to seventy. Despite Doc's walking and talking, people in the outfit continue to insist that he is dead. The War Department contacts Mrs. Daneeka to inform her of husband's demise. She's crushed by the news, but is cheered when she receives a letter from Doc himself, informing her that he is indeed alive. Mrs. Daneeka's reply to Doc, however, comes back unread and marked KILLED IN ACTION. The War Department explains to her that she must have been the victim of a cruel hoax. Once more, Mrs. Daneeka is crushed, but this time her pain is mitigated by a windfall in the form of a G.I. bill, Social Security Survivor's Insurance and several life insurance policies. Doc Daneeka, meanwhile, finds himself ostracized by the squadron, earning no pay or PX rations. Dr. Stubbs begins brewing dissension by grounding anyone with sixty missions, only to have Group immediately return the men to active duty. Morale is falling rapidly. Dunbar is under surveillance. Doc Daneeka sends one more letter to his wife, pleading for her assistance. Mrs. Daneeka is moved, but is dissuaded from responding when she receives one of Colonel Cathcart's form condolence letters, whereupon she immediately moves herself and the children to Lansing, Michigan, leaving no forwarding address.

Chapter 31 "Mrs. Daneeka" Analysis

The bureaucracy creates reality. Mudd can't be dead, because the system never acknowledged that he was alive. Now, Doc Daneeka can't be alive, because the system says he's dead. The bureaucracy doesn't allow for gray areas, and the bureaucratic mind refuses to part with policy. Mrs. Daneeka, meanwhile, like everyone who deals with Milo, is blinded by money, invoking the theme of greed and ambition.

Chapter 32 "Yo-Yo's Roomies"

Chapter 32 "Yo-Yo's Roomies" Summary

Winter is here. Yossarian is warm, thanks to Orr's oven, but his mind is drawn to thoughts of death and mortality. Alone for a time, Yossarian returns from a mission to find that four, insufferably enthusiastic recruits have been stationed in his tent. Sergeant Towser explains that he can't requisition another six man tent, while Yossarian is living in one by himself. Yossarian insists that he isn't living alone, reminding Towser of the dead man living in his tent. Sergeant Towser affirms that Mudd is dead, but maintains that he doesn't have the authority to remove Mudd's personal effects, since Mudd never arrived.

Yossarian invites Chief White Halfoat to move in, in the hopes that Chief will scare the recruits away with his swinish habits. Chief refuses, as he is already making plans to move up to the hospital to die of pneumonia. He suggests that Yossarian enlist the aid of Captain Black. At the mere mention of the name, Yossarian thoughts toward the recruits become merciful and protective. Early the next morning, the recruits efficiently toss out Mudd's possessions like so much trash. Yossarian is shocked that these young man were able to do in moments what he and Sergeant Towser could not do in months. Fearful and alarmed that he might be disposed of so easily, Yossarian flees to Rome with Hungry Joe.

Chapter 32 "Yo-Yo's Roomies" Analysis

To these young recruits, war is still in an adventure. They've yet to see the face of death. Yossarian contemplates that once "two were killed and the rest wounded" (359), they will all turn out okay. These boys are insufferable to Yossarian, because they represent everything that he can't be. They are happy, brave and carefree. Most of all, they are innocent. Their souls are free of the stains that Yossarian will never be clean of again. Yossarian, whether he likes it or not, is a soldier.

Chapter 33 "Nately's Whore"

Chapter 33 "Nately's Whore" Summary

Missing Nurse Duckett in Rome, Yossarian searches for surrogate affection in the arms of several prostitutes. Yossarian, Hungry Joe, Dunbar and Dobbs help Nately rescue his whore from a group of high ranking Allied officers. The officers, perplexed by the woman's sleepy apathy toward such men of distinction, won't allow her to leave until they can force her to say uncle. Since she's more than willing to comply with their wishes, they can't force the woman to say or do anything, which they find very troubling. The motley rescue party arrives at the hotel, smashes all the furniture, and throws all the clothing out the window. The captors, who include a General and a Colonel, feel themselves helpless to pull rank, since they are without their uniforms and proof of rank. Nately takes his whore back to the brothel and stands guard for eighteen hours while she sleeps. When she wakes, she at last falls in love with Nately. Sensing their blossoming love, Nately immediately makes several demands on the woman, insisting that she stop associating with the old man, and that she give up prostitution. They argue. In the end, she concedes to stop sleeping with Captain Black.

Chapter 33 "Nately's Whore" Analysis

Like Yossarian after Avignon, these "men of distinction" are without their uniforms, separated from the very thing that grants them their distinction. Without their bars and stars, they're just silly looking, middle aged men. Their desire to coerce Nately's whore is just sheer folly, since, even in their uniforms, she doesn't care one way or the other. She just wants to sleep. The fact that they feel the need to undertake the exercise indicates that they are unused to dealing with a situation that they themselves have not defined.

Chapter 34 "Thanksgiving"

Chapter 34 "Thanksgiving" Summary

Milo throws a wild, drunken party for Thanksgiving. Yossarian wakes in terror to the sound of revelers firing a machinegun, and races out of his tent carrying a gun. He's intent upon killing the miscreants responsible. When Nately attempts to intervene, Yossarian violently smashes him in the face, breaking the boy's nose. Feeling guilty, and hearing that Nately is now under medical care, Yossarian and fellow faker Dunbar check into the hospital, where they are soon joined by Hungry Joe and a newly lying-liberated Chaplain.

Dunbar goes to pieces when he sees that the ward has a soldier in white, screaming feverishly that the original has returned. His panic spreads like wildfire across the ward, plunging everything into chaos. Dunbar insists that there is no one inside, that the cast is hollow. Nurse Duckett explains that a burn victim, Lieutenant Schmulker, lay within the cast. Unconvinced, Dunbar leaps onto the soldier's bed, desperately trying to peer inside the ragged dark hole near his mouth. Dunbar is pulled from the bed, and the soldier is whisked away via stretcher to another room. Nurse Duckett pulls Yossarian into a broom closet to secretly warn him that Dunbar is to be "disappeared."

Chapter 34 "Thanksgiving" Analysis

The man beneath the bandages may very well be different, but the symbol, what he represents, remains unchanged. Nurse Duckett's naming of the man does nothing to differentiate him from the original soldier in white. Maybe it was Lieutenant Schmulker last time. Maybe it's always Lieutenant Schmulker. The ease by which one soldier in white is confused for another represents the way that Catch-22's commanders view their subordinates as faceless, interchangeable bodies.

Chapter 35 "Milo the Militant"

Chapter 35 "Milo the Militant" Summary

Unwilling to ship home without his love, Nately plans to volunteer for more than the required seventy missions. Yossarian tries unsuccessfully to talk him out of it, finally advising him not to do anything until he can talk to someone. Yossarian talks to Milo, who immediately goes to Colonel Cathcart. After pretending to ask for more combat missions, Milo makes it abundantly clear to the Colonel that Milo Minderbinder is irreplaceable. The Colonel forbids Milo from flying combat missions, deciding after some overt manipulation, that he will have others fly missions on Milo's behalf, awarding to Milo any medals won. Milo tells Colonel Cathcart of Nately and his girl, insisting that the young man is willing to fly more missions to stay near her. Colonel Cathcart is thrilled with the idea of sending Yossarian back into combat. The next day, the quota is raised to 80, and the men are immediately assembled for a run. During the mission, Dobbs clips into Nately's plane, causing both vehicles to plunge into the sea. There are no parachutes. Chief White Halfoat dies of pneumonia, right on schedule.

Chapter 35 "Milo the Militant" Analysis

This chapter offers more commentary on corporatism. Milo has insinuated himself into the system, supplanting part of its infrastructure. Before Milo, soldiers were given what they needed to perform their services as a soldier. Men had inflatable life jackets which actually worked. And Med-kits included morphine. Now, instead of what they need, soldiers are given what they want, and at an ever-increasing price. Now that Milo has his one man monopoly, the system has become dependent on him for what is now perceived as a necessary service. Cathcart and the other fat-cats have become so accustomed to their small luxuries that they can't imagine what they'd do without Milo. This puts Milo in the position to do pretty much anything he wants, with minimal effort and without fear of retribution. Once again, greed and ambition is paired with bureacracy. Milo's willing betrayal of Nately and Yossarian contrasts with the compassion theme.

Chapter 36 "The Cellar"

Chapter 36 "The Cellar" Summary

The Chaplain is crushed by news of Nately's death. At the field, the men all stand dejected and morose, talking amongst themselves about the tragedy. Before he can comfort the defeated Yossarian, the Chaplain is apprehended by a group of men, pushed into a car and taken to a secluded cellar, where the Chaplain is bombarded with rhetoric, loaded questions and accusations. He is tried for stealing Colonel Cathcart's plum tomato, for being Washington Irving, and for having committed crimes and infractions not yet apparent. After a laughable proceeding, which began by assuming the Chaplain's guilt, he is found guilty on all counts and released until the judges can think of a suitable punishment. Incensed, the Chaplain later rails on Colonel Korn concerning the number of missions that the men are required to fly. When Korn proves unresponsive, the Chaplain asks for permission to take the matter to Dreedle, explaining that he has some influence over the General. Korn grants him permission to speak to General Dreedle, but reveals that General Peckem is now in command. Colonel Korn accuses the Chaplain of being sent there to speak on behalf of Dr. Stubbs, who has raised similar objections, indicating that Stubbs will soon be transferred to the Pacific.

Chapter 36 "The Cellar" Analysis

When the chaplain gives his accusers a writing sample which, of course, doesn't match Yossarian's "A. T. Tappman" signature, they conclude that the chaplain hasn't given them his real signature, and that he is using someone else's handwriting. The facts here, as elsewhere in Catch-22, are fixed around the policy. Regardless of whether or not the chaplain did it, he still did it. As with Yossarian and Fortiori, the system again demonstrates that it has no ability to track, judge or account for the actions of single individuals. Nevertheless, the system creates the reality in which all live, deciding guilt or innocence, and deciding life for death. Sadly, to many within the system, there appears to be no objective truth. This is the bureaucracy theme at its worst.

Chapter 37 "General Scheisskopf"

Chapter 37 "General Scheisskopf" Summary

General Peckem, having just settled into General Dreedle's office, learns that Scheisskopf has been promoted to Lieutenant General. Now, Scheisskopf wants Peckem to clear all orders through him. Peckem believes that he is outside of Scheisskopf's chain of command, until the attending sergeant explains that combat operations is now under the jurisdiction of Special Services. A frantic phone call to ex-Sergeant Wintergreen reveals that it was Peckem's memorandums which caused the change in infrastructure and that Peckem himself didn't get the grade promotion, because he left Special Services for combat operations. Colonel Cargill, at Peckem's insistence, speaks to General Scheisskopf on the phone, finally announcing to everyone that the new Lieutenant General wants everyone to march.

Chapter 37 "General Scheisskopf" Analysis

The bureaucracy is not to be taken lightly. You never know when the winds will change. General Peckem played his game to defeat General Dreedle, but now he, like so many beneath him, finds himself the victim of a superior's capricious whims. This presents the bureaucracy as something of a headless beast. Peckem manipulated the system to his own ends, but he made the mistake of thinking he'd mastered it. General Peckem failed to realize that, in a bureaucracy, every ploy has the potential to have unforeseen and far reaching consequences. The bureaucracy knows no master.

Chapter 38 "Kid Sister"

Chapter 38 "Kid Sister" Summary

When Yossarian refuses to fly any more missions, Colonel Korn sends him to Rome to rest for a few days. In Rome, Yossarian visits Nately's whore to break the news of her lover's untimely death. In her raging grief, she and her younger sister literally try to kill the messenger. Though Yossarian escapes with his life, he has several more violent encounters with the woman, as she continually appears in the most unlikely places. Back at camp, Yossarian is secretly approached by a succession of men who wouldn't normally have cause to speak to him, each one asking about Yossarian's refusal to fly and wishing him luck. Publicly, most of the camp ignores Yossarian, as he compulsively walks around backward, gun in hand. Captain Black, however, tells Yossarian that the brothel in Rome has been closed, the prostitutes turned into the streets. Despite the fact that they both tried to kill him, Yossarian is concerned for the fate of Nately's whore and her kid sister.

Chapter 38 "Kid Sister" Analysis

This chapter finds Yossarian both vilified and idolized. Nately's whore, in her grief, needs someone to blame. The combat weary men of the outfit, meanwhile, look to Yossarian as the tenuous champion of their cause. It all comes back to a systemic lack of accountability. Who is responsible? Who will make things right? Does Yossarian's awareness of the problem, the simple fact that he has conscience, somehow make him more culpable? Yossarian's pity for Nately's whore relates to the compassion theme.

Chapter 39 "The Eternal City"

Chapter 39 "The Eternal City" Summary

Yossarian wants to find the kid sister. Milo flies an AWOL Yossarian back to Rome, berating him all the while for shirking his duty. Rome is in ruins. In the smashed remains of the brothel, Yossarian speaks to a despairing, solitary old woman. She tells Yossarian that the military police came, smashed everything, turned all the girls out into the cold, and wouldn't even allow them to take their coats. When Yossarian asks why this has happened, the old woman responds with "Catch-22. Catch-22 says they have a right to do anything we can't stop them from doing" (416).

Hearing the now-familiar axiom, Yossarian is both horrified and embittered. Hoping to find the kid sister, Yossarian momentarily enlists the aid of Milo, but, ever the capitalist, Milo soon abandons him to pursue profit in illegal tobacco smuggling. Alone once more, Yossarian walks the riotous city, moving from one scene of brutality to another. Eventually, he comes to the squad's hotel, where Yossarian discovers that Aarfy has raped and murdered a servant girl. Yossarian condemns the remorseless Aarfy, calling his attention to the approaching sirens. The police arrive and arrest Yossarian for being absent without official leave. Once more in Pianosa, in Colonel Cathcart's office, Colonel Korn tells Yossarian that he is to be sent home.

Chapter 39 "The Eternal City" Analysis

In the Eternal City, might makes right. Adults victimize children. People torture animals. Men rape women. It all parallels Yossarian's own despair. Milo, the one person who might make a difference, abandons Yossarian for his own greed and ambition. That Milo chided Yossarian for neglecting his duty is the height of hypocrisy. In truth, Yossarian hears a call which Milo may never know: the duty to one's fellow man. He owes nothing to the whore's little sister, and yet, she's still a little girl. Yossarian risks capture, possibly death, to find and assist people who have tried to kill him in the past. Such selfless dedication and forgiveness, marks Yossarian, perhaps surprisingly, as a Christ-figure, lending this chapter to the compassion theme.

Chapter 40 "Catch-22"

Chapter 40 "Catch-22" Summary

There's a catch to Yossarian being sent home. Colonel Korn explains that, by refusing to fly missions, Yossarian has given the men the impression that they have a say in whether or not they will continue to fly missions. This false hope, Korn claims, has damaged morale. Colonel Korn makes Yossarian an offer. If Yossarian will pretend to like the Colonels and speak well of them to the other men, Yossarian will be promoted to Major, decorated, and sent home as a war hero. If Yossarian refuses, Korn explains, he will be Court-Martialed. After some wrangling, Yossarian, feeling that he doesn't have much of a choice, finally agrees. Just outside the office, Yossarian is ambushed by Nately's whore, who has been disguised as a private. Colonels Korn and Cathcart respond, scaring her away, but not before Yossarian is knifed and loses consciousness.

Chapter 40 "Catch-22" Analysis

The Colonels have provided Yossarian with something of a false dilemma. Either he cooperates and betrays his friends, or he sticks to his principles and goes to jail. Things are seldom so cut and dried. Here again, the game is one of control and limiting freedoms, while creating the reality that most benefits those in power. By limiting his choices to those presented him, Yossarian is unknowingly buying into the system. Since this demonstrates how the system enforces its definition of individuals, this fits both the dehumanization and bureaucracy themes.

Chapter 41 "Snowden"

Chapter 41 "Snowden" Summary

Yossarian wakes up in a hospital, where several overzealous doctors discuss cutting into him. A colonel and a hatchet-faced man interrogate him. Yossarian pretends to faint, when one of them threatens to stick his thumbs in Yossarian's wound. Overhearing the incompetent banter of the doctors, Yossarian is forced to give up the ruse to insist that there be no surgery. The doctors put him under. Yossarian slips into and out of consciousness, waking once to a mean-faced man who brags cryptically "We got your pal, buddy. We got your pal" (442). The chaplain visits to congratulate Yossarian for protecting Colonel Cathcart from the Nazi assassin. Yossarian sets the record straight, explaining that it was Nately's whore who stabbed him, and that it was he himself who was the target. The Chaplain is disappointed to hear of Yossarian's deal with Cathcart. Yossarian declares that he has no intention of making good on the arrangement.

Yossarian, pondering that most of his friends are dead, weeps bitterly when he learns that Hungry Joe has died in his sleep, suffocated by Huple. A strange man in a hospital gown wakes Yossarian in the middle of the night to, once again, tell him "We got your pal, buddy. We got your pal." Rattled, Yossarian lays there in an icy sweat and thinks of Avignon and the doomed radio-gunner, Snowden.

Expertly bandaging the yawning wound on Snowden's leg, Yossarian sighs in relief, convinced that Snowden is no longer in danger. The boy complains of being cold, slowly shaking his head whenever Yossarian tries to console him. Finally, Snowden, with the barest motion of his chin, points to a spreading stain beneath his armpit. Yossarian removes the soldier's flak vest to inspect the wound that obviously lies beneath, only to have Snowden's entrails slither out in a heap. Yossarian recoils, screams in terror, and vomits all over the floor. Snowden continues to complain that he's cold. A still horrified Yossarian covers the boy with his own parachute, helplessly muttering "There, there."

Chapter 41 "Snowden" Analysis

With Snowden, Yossarian is helpless. He can't save him. He can't comfort him. Yossarian can't even provide the soldier with warmth. Since Milo stole the morphine from the med-kit, Snowden is doomed to die in agony, and Yossarian can do nothing but watch, offering meager words of comfort to a man who needs either medical attention or spiritual services. This is the point of trauma, the prior moment which explains Yossarian's neurotic behavior throughout the story. Snowden's death is an axis which penetrates all of Yossarian's future selves, rippling forward through time like a shockwave. Yossarian's guilt at not being to help Snowden is the most fundamental example of the compassion theme within the novel.

Chapter 42 "Yossarian"

Chapter 42 "Yossarian" Summary

Major Danby is worried about Yossarian's decision to break the deal with Colonel Cathcart. The two discuss the ethics of duty. The chaplain announces that Orr has washed ashore in Sweden, which causes Yossarian to come to a number of realizations with regards to Orr. Yossarian's bucktoothed tent-mate has been planning and practicing for the trek to Sweden the whole time, with every intentional crash. Orr paid the hooker in Rome to hit him on the head in the hopes being sent home with an injury. Orr was trying to tell Yossarian what he was up to. He wanted Yossarian to come with him. This inspires Yossarian to run away, to find the whore's little sister in Rome, then to join Orr in Sweden. The chaplain is inspired as well, vowing to stay behind and persevere, to persevere and to constantly badger Colonel Cathcart and Colonel Korn. Major Danby urges Yossarian caution, giving him a big wad of bills to spend. As Yossarian runs out the door, he narrowly misses being knifed by Nately's whore, who waits in ambush outside.

Chapter 42 "Yossarian" Analysis

Like Prince Hamlet, in Shakespeare's Hamlet, who tells his friends "I am but mad north-north-west; when the wind is southerly, I know a hawk from a handsaw," Orr tried to let Yossarian in on his secret. The story about Orr's apple cheeks demonstrates Orr's artifice, the way he manages other people's perceptions of him. The story about the whore speaks of Orr's motivation to escape. Yossarian doesn't see the light until just now. Who can be trusted? The bureacracy? The system is a headless monster, capricious and inhuman. Even when it seems orderly and in control, the system is rounding numbers, numbers representing people's lives. People with too much ambition, people who are just following orders, they are of the system, and are not to be trusted. Ultimately, the only people who show themseleves worthy of trust are those few who have the courage to stand as individuals. Yossarian's willingness to risk court-martial rather than betray his friends, cements him as the prime agency of the compassion theme. His decision shows that, with courage, the individual can choose to self-govern even in the face of tyranny, acting as a corollary to the bureaucracy theme.

Characters

Captain Aarfy Aardvaark

Yossarian's navigator, Aardvaark pretends he can't hear Yossarian's commands and laughs when Yossarian or anyone else is in trouble, because deep down he's a sadist. Captain Aardvaark is well mannered and respectful of the ladies on the surface, but he turns out to have a sinister side, coldly pushing a young girl out the window after raping her. What's one Italian girl's life worth, he asks Yossarian calmly. Against the horror of war, his question is a disturbing one, because we know that the answer is: not much.

The Chaplain

See Captain Albert Taylor Tappman

Appleby

He is as all-American as apple pie, and "everything Appleby did, he did well." Although "everyone who knew him liked him," the men tease him with the absurd charge that he has flies in his eyes, and Yossarian despises him

Captain Black

The squadron Intelligence officer, Captain Black aspires to be squadron commander, even though he is not on combat duty. Outraged by Major Major's naming as commander, he starts the Glorious Loyalty Oath Crusade and refuses to allow Major Major to sign the voluntary oath His power trip is ended by Major de Coverley, who demands to be fed after he is asked to sign an oath.

Colonel Cargill

General Peckem's forceful yet inept troubleshooter. It's Cargill's job to get the troops excited about the lame U.S.O. shows that Peckem organizes, for example. Ruddy-complexioned, he is an aggressive man who made quite a good living in civilian life as a marketing executive, hired by firms that needed to lose money for tax purposes. He is a "self-made man who owed his lack of success to nobody."

Colonel Chuck Cathcart

Cathcart is the squadron's colonel. In order to increase his chances of promotion, Cathcart keeps raising the number of missions the men must fly before getting rotated.

Because he is obsessed with being promoted to general, his priorities are absurd. For example, he asks the chaplain to lead the men in prayer before missions because it might attract the attention of the *Saturday Evening Post,* and a nice article on Cathcart and his squadron might boost his promotion chances He is less concerned with his pilots' safety than that they create tight bombing patterns that will make' "nice photographs" to impress his superiors Also, he promotes Yossarian to cover for Yossarian's insubordination, lest anyone blame Cathcart for Yossarian's bombing run gone awry. He is a symbol of military corruption and blind ambition.

Cathcart's self-absorption also causes him to go into business with Milo Minderbinder, who will trade the men's valuable supplies just to make a quick buck. Cathcart also builds a skeet-shooting range for the officers-not because it will help them be better soldiers, but just because he loves shooting skeet. Thus, he represents not just military corruption, but the self-absorbed American businessman. Down deep, he is insecure, and relies on Colonel Korn to help him succeed. He hates Yossarian for standing up to him.

Clevinger

One of the members of the squadron, he is not "clever" as "Clevinger" suggests, but rather slowwitted. He argues with Yossarian about Yossarian's paranoid and dark attitude and calls him crazy, which carries no weight with Doc Daneeka when Yossarian wants to be released from duty. The war is a black-and-white issue for Clevinger, who conducts educational sessions for the men and disappears on the Parma mission.

The Controller

See Doc Daneeka

Major Danby

The group operations officer whose name suggests that he is namby-pamby, meaning he's weak willed and unable to make decisions. He's sort of like a babbling university professor, concerned with ideas and unable to act. Danby argues with Yossarian about idealism and the ethics of deserting, and then helps Yossarian to go A WOL once and for all. General Dreedle threatens to shoot him.

Doc Daneeka

Doc Daneeka, the squadron doctor, looks out for himself first and foremost. He tells Yossarian he will scratch Yossarian's back if Yossarian will scratch his, but Doc's self-interest prevents him from doing what Yossarian really wants, which is to sign papers saying Yossarian is too crazy to fly (in contrast to Doctor Stubbs, who does this for some pilots). Doc delegates many of his dunes to two men named Gus and Wes. This

leaves Doc free to fret over his life. He is a hypochondriac, constantly having his assistants take his temperature. He is also worried about being transferred to the Pacific, with its unusual diseases. Back home, Doc's private practice had been struggling until the war came along and all his competitors were drafted. He thrived until he was drafted himself, and he complains about having lost the business he built up. Doc earns extra money, or flight pay, by having the pilots Sign documents saying that he is on flights that he isn't on. This leads the Army to assume he is dead when one of his "flights" crashes, despite his obvious living presence on base. Heller ironically describes Doc as a warm and compassionate man who is fearful and never stops feeling sorry for himself.

Major de Coverley

The mysterious de Coverley's first name is never given, and no one seems to know exactly what his job or rank is. An inspiring figure, he has some sort of godlike power; for instance, he is able to march into the mess hall and end Captain Black's Great Loyalty Oath Crusade with a simple command: "Gimme eat!" An older man, de Coverley has one eye, loves to play horseshoes, and has a skill for obtaining luxury apartments in recently recaptured cities. About halfway through the novel, he mysteriously goes off to Florence and is not heard from again.

Dobbs

A pilot. He flies with Huple on the Avignon mission in the number two seat and grabs the controls midair. When Colonel Cathcart raises the number of missions, Dobbs tries to assassinate him but is stopped by Yossarian.

General Dreedle

The wing commander, General Dreedle, is a solid military man who is moody but only requires that the men "do their work; beyond that, they were free to do whatever they pleased." He employs his annoying son-in-law, Colonel Moodus, to assist him. His nurse-mistress accompanies him everywhere, and he demands that people show her respect. He is constantly up against General Peckem, who is vying for Dreedle's job, but ex-P F.C. Wintergreen helps Dreedle as much as he can until Peckem finally wins and replaces Dreedle. He is not upset when Yossarian goes naked, and he dislikes Colonels Korn and Cathcart. He seems more benevolent than the other authority figures in the novel, but his hands-off attitude allows Cathcart to keep increasing the number of missions the men must fly.

Nurse Sue Ann Duckett

A nurse in the Pianosa hospital who takes care of Yossarian and later has an affair with him. Her name suggests that she ducks out of his embraces when she's not in the

mood. A serious and practical young woman who also enjoys sensual pleasures, she ends up marrying a doctor who will make a lot of money.

Lieutenant Dunbar

A fighter-pilot captain, Dunbar is Yossarian's companion in the hospital more than once, and even trades beds with the soldier named A. Fortiori to be near his pal Yossarian. He tries to make time "go more slowly," a twist on the idea that people want time to fly, so that he doesn't have to return to combat. He is a man of ethics, so he and Mc Watt get upset when they're instructed to bomb a defenseless village just to block a road. After this protest, Dunbar disappears. Yossarian wonders if it has something to do with the mysterious soldier in white who appears in a hospital bed. Is there a conspiracy to shut up Dunbar? he asks himself.

Captain Flume

Flume is a public relations officer who is terrorized by his roommate Chief Halfoat's threats to slit his throat. At one point, he is so traumatized that he moves to the woods, where he lives alone, eating strawberries.

A. Fortiori

A mysterious soldier who is involved in several mix-ups over identity. A. Fortiori's name is a Latin term used in logic for a conclusion that is more reliable than the previous conclusion or reasoning It is based on.

Chief White Halfoat

Halfoat is a semi-illiterate assistant intelligence officer who drinks a lot, beats up Colonel Moodus (which is Just fine with Moodus's father-in-law, General Dreedle), and makes his roommate Flume crazy Halfoat, whose Indian-sounding name is reminiscent of "half-crocked" or "halfnuts," is indeed a little wacky, with reason. He is a half-blooded Creek Indian. Halfoat says that the government used to chase his family around Oklahoma. Inevitably, wherever they settled, oil was found, so they kept moving on, to the point where the government wouldn't even let them settle in before they started digging. He resents having had his family exploited in this way He is set in his ways, from hating foreigners to insisting that he will die of pneumonia, which he does.

Captain Havermeyer

Havermeyer is the best bombardier in the squadron, according to Colonel Cathcart, who defends Havermeyer's upsetting habit of shooting field mice at night with a gun stolen from the dead man in Yossarian' s tent. Cathcart likes Havermeyer because he flies

straight toward a target, taking no evasive actions that might make his bombing less accurate and his men more safe As a result, the men can't stand flying With him.

Hungry Joe

Another member of the squadron, Hungry Joe is a woman chaser, pretending he is a photographer (which he really was in civilian life) as a come-on. He has nightmares on nights when he doesn't have a bombing run scheduled the next day, suggesting that while bombing runs are terrifying for the men, there is some perverse comfort in the ritual of bombing. In fact, his nightmares disappear when Cathcart increases the number of missions he must fly. Despite his anxieties over the war, Hungry Joe ends up being killed by his roommate Huple's cat, which smothers him.

Huple

Huple is the underage roommate of Hungry Joe who is only fifteen years old; his cat kills Hungry Joe. Huple, a pilot, flies the Avignon mission on which Snowden is killed.

The Kid Sister

She is the twelve-year-old sister of Nately's whore. She tries to be seductive, like her big sister, but Yossarian and Nately look out for her because they see her as a child growing up too quickly.

Lieutenant Colonel Blackie Korn

Lt. Colonel Korn is Colonel Cathcart's assistant. He runs the farm he and Cathcart co-own, which Milo provided to them. His name is reminiscent both of com, the crop, and "corny," meaning overly sentimental and cloying. Colonel Cathcart is annoyed by Blackie Korn, but he relies on him for help, since Korn is smarter and more devious. For example, Korn is the one who suggests that they give Yossarian a medal for his ill-fated bombing run over Ferrara in order to spare the military any embarrassment.

Kraft

Kraft is a young pilot who is killed on the Ferrara mission, which makes Yossarian feel terribly guilty, for he was the one who ordered a second pass on the target. Kraft only wanted to be liked. His name suggests craft, or skill, which is a joke because he is too inexperienced to have gained any skill as a pilot before he dies.

Luciana

Yossarian's Italian girlfriend whom he sees at the officers' club. Her name is derived from the Italian word for "light." She seems, at times, to know Yossarian better than he knows himself and what he will do. She laughs off his proposal of marriage.

Major Major Major Major

Major Major Major Major is the long and bony squadron commander who resembles actor Henry Fonda and is deliberately never in his office. The military insists on making him a major because they can't keep straight that Major Major Major is the man's given name, not his rank (it was a joke on his father's part). Major Major is not much of a leader, and now that he's an officer he misses being just one of the men. A timid man, he's afraid to ask Major de Coverley which of the two outranks the other. To relieve his boredom, he begins his own secret rebellion, signing orders as "Washington Irving" (the American novelist) and later as "John Milton" (the British author of "Paradise Lost").

Mc Watt

A crazy pilot who shares a tent with Clevinger and then Nately, McWatt relieves his stress by buzzing people-flying as low as possible over them-just for fun. His stunts end in his accidentally killing Kid Sampson, who is on the raft; after this Mc Watt intentionally crashes his plane, killing himself. While he's crazy-"the craziest combat man of them all probably, because he was perfectly sane and still did not mind the war"-he isn't a bad person. After all, he, along with Dunbar, protests when ordered to bomb a defenseless village just to block a road.

Lieutenant Milo Minderbinder

The ultimate capitalist, he is a mess officer turned businessman, trading all sorts of supplies on the black market and assuring everyone not to worry, they'll all be rich by the end of the war. He takes essential supplies from the planes but says that because everyone has a "share" in his business, it's for their own good. At one point, he makes a deal with the Germans in which he will have the Americans bomb their own base. He is Heller's symbol of capitalism at its most corrupt as well as its most powerful. As Milo's German bombing affair shows, wars come and go, but business goes on as usual.

Colonel Moodus

Moodus is General Dreedle's son-in-law and assistant. He is so annoying that Dreedle actually hires Chief Halfoat to punch him.

Mudd

Mudd is the dead man in Yossarian's tent. Actually, he's not really there. He's a pilot who died on a mission before he even checked in at Pianosa. Mudd's name is forever linked with the clutter that Yossarian's roommates find and throw out. The military insists Mudd is still alive because of their bureaucratic ineptness.

Lieutenant Nately

A squadron member, Nately is a gentle, sheltered nineteen-year-old kid from a wealthy family. He romanticizes his relationship with a whore he wants to save from prostitution and argues about the purpose of war and life with the old man in the whorehouse. He is killed, along with Dobbs, on the La Spezia run.

Nately's whore

An Italian prostitute, Nately's whore is too exhausted from her hard life to care about Nately, even though he's completely infatuated with her. She just uses him for his money, which supports her and her kid sister. However, one night after a good eighteen hours' sleep she wakes up and realizes she does love him after all. When Nately is killed, she blames Yossarian, who had broken Nately's nose but isn't really responsible for his death. Yossarian is, to her, a symbol of the war and all the pain it has caused her, so she tries to stab him to death. Her surrealistic pursuit of Yossarian, and the fact that she stabs him just when he makes his deal with Cathcart and Korn, suggest that she is a symbol for Yossarian's conscience.

The Old Man in Rome

The old man runs the whore house and lectures Nately on the meaning of war and life. HIS philosophy is the opposite of the young pilot's: he believes it is better to live on your knees than die on your feet. He also attacks and blinds Major de Coverley, to everyone's astonishment

Orr

Yossarian's roommate, Orr is a handyman who builds many projects with Yossarian. His tinkering with mechanical objects sometimes irritates Yossarian. Orr is a skilled pilot as well, but he keeps getting shot down in his plane and ending up in the ocean. He is nonchalant about this, even though no one wants to ride in his plane because they feel he has tremendously bad luck Orr eventually crashes near Italy and while his crew rows toward shore, he rows his own raft to Sweden, where he sits out the war. Yossarian realizes this was Orr's plan all along, because Orr had made mysterious comments about his crashes being "good practice." Orr's name is reminiscent of "oar," a tool he

uses to row to freedom, and the word "or," which reminds the reader of options and choices.

General P. P. Peckem

In charge of Special Operations/Services, General Peckem is an ambitious military man given to issuing silly orders, such as insisting that the men in Italy pitch their tents with their openings facing the Washington Monument in the United States.

His assistant, Colonel Cargill, helps him in his effort to take over command from General Dreedle His name suggests "pecking order," or hierarchy, as well as a certain part of the male anatomy.

Captain Pittchard

See Captain Wren

Kid Sampson

A pilot who is killed by McWatt in a violent accident while he is standing on the raft in the ocean.

Lieutenant Scheisskopf

A pompous but ambitious officer who is promoted to general when General Peckem takes over command from General Dreedle and who eventually becomes Peckem's superior Scheisskopf, whose name is German for "shithead," loves parades and organizes one to honor Yossarian He also has a very sexy, promiscuous wife that the men drool over.

Snowden

The young gunner on Yossarian's B-52 who dies a gruesome death as Yossarian tries in vain to save his life. His horrible death haunts Yossarian throughout the book. A sad symbol of the sheer waste of war, Snowden is so anonymous that at his funeral no one can give a eulogy because none of the commanding officers remember much about him.

The Soldier in White

Covered from head to toe in bandages, he is supposedly Lieutenant Schmulker, but no one can tell for sure. HIS appearance in the hospital coincides with the disappearance of Dunbar, which makes Yossarian suspicious that he's really some sort of spy,

especially since his body seems to be a slightly different size the second time he shows up.

Doctor Stubbs

Doctor Stubbs is a flight surgeon who resents having to treat wounded men only to have them fly again and expose themselves to danger Unlike Doc Daneeka, Stubbs will help pilots get excused from duty, and he is punished by being sent to the Pacific.

Captain Albert Taylor Tappman

Everyone calls Captain Tappman "Father," but as he tells them, he's not Catholic but an Anabaptist He's not the sort to push the point, however, being very sweet-natured and shy. He's uncomfortable around officers and hates to have to eat in the officers' mess tents, especially since he has a hard time keeping track of which tent he' s supposed to eat in each day. He lives alone in his own tent, and misses his wife and child back home. He often wonders about philosophical questions, "yet they never seemed nearly as crucial to him as the question of kindness and good manners."

Because he is quiet and unassuming, sometimes people take advantage of him, but he stands up for things that are important. He asks Colonel Cathcart to stop sending the men on so many missions, and he insists that Corporal Whitcomb not send form condolence letters to the families of men killed in combat. He puts himself on the line for others, as when he claims to be the forger instead of pointing his finger at the real culprit- Yossarian.

Corporal Whitcomb

The assistant to Chaplain Tappman, he's an opportunist, looking to advance his career, and an atheist. He doesn't get along well with his boss. For example, he wants to send form letters to the families of dead soldiers, which horrifies the sensitive Chaplain. He initiates the C.I.D. investigation of the Chaplain, fingering his boss as the forger.

Ex-P.RC. Wintergreen

A former private first class (P.F.C.), he is the mail clerk at the 27th Air Force Headquarters who tosses Peckem' s silly orders into the waste basket and processes Dreedle's orders, which he thinks are written in better prose. He's constantly being promoted and then demoted, and goes A WOL (absent without leave) regularly. By taking it upon himself to forge and discard documents, he gains a lot of power over the squadron. His name suggests that he never goes away, like an evergreen that stays green in winter.

Captain Wren

Along with Captain Piltchard, one of the squadron's operations officers whose job it is to organize combat missions. Piltchard and Wren have petty ambitions, as their names suggest ("pilchard" means sardine, and a wren is a small bird).

Yo Yo Yossarian

See Captain John Yossarian

Captain John Yossarian

The central character of *Catch-22* is Y Yossarian, a bombardier who is a captain with the 256th squadron. He is well-liked by his fellow bombardiers, and the Chaplain admires him, and even covers for him when he forges a document. Yossarian has friendships and people value his opinion (Dobbs and Milo ask him for advice, for example), but he considers himself a loner. Physically, he is big and strong and twenty-eight years old, but we learn no more than that. Yossarian also has an offbeat sense of humor, which he uses to cope with his frustration over being unable to get out of flying any more missions. He's an intelligent, complex character, honest and not given to deluding himself. He is familiar with world literature and identifies with the loners in great works of the past. Yossarian is the kind of man who is uncomfortable interacting with a woman sexually unless he is in love with her, and he cares about kids, as we can see by how he treats the kid sister of Nately's whore. He even goes A WOL (absent without leave) to find her when she's missing.

Despite his intelligence and influence, Yossarian feels powerless because his superiors keep increasing the number of missions he needs to fly before he can go home. Though he feels helpless and angry about the situation, he asks very pointed questions of the people in charge about why things are the way they are. Yossarian's questions are Heller's; they show the illogic and futility of war. His attitude toward the war and the military angers Colonel Cathcart, who resents that Yossarian, for all his powerlessness, does not cave in to the values the military promotes, such as blind obedience and unquestioning patriotism. Yossarian has a moral center that he cannot put aside for the convenience of the military, which is why he makes the squadron bomb the ocean instead of an Italian town that has no military or strategic value. He hates war and cannot ignore its horrors, and he cannot stop reliving the horror of Snowden's death. When given a final "Catch-22"-either accept a honorable discharge by lying about his refusal to fly or face a court martial- Yossarian finally discovers a way out By following Orr to Sweden, Yossarian can finally live with his conscience. As he tells Major Danby, "I'm not running *away* from my responsibilities, I'm running *to* them."

Setting

The novel's setting is the mythical island of Pianosa, modeled closely on Corsica and located off the coast of Rome, eight miles south of Elba. The year is 1944, and as World War II draws to a close, the Allies continue to conduct round-the-clock bombing missions to Europe from their Air Force base on the island. Nearby Rome serves as the playground for off-duty aviators. The site of social madness in the form of brothels, debauchery, and senseless pain and murder, the city is symbolically the Rome of ancient times, just before the fall of the Roman Empire.

Social Concerns

Heller's first novel was inspired by American political, military, and social events of the 1950s. In an interview with Ken Barnard, Heller asserted, "What Catch-22 is more about than World War II is the Korean War and the Cold War." The author's anxiety over the war in Korea and threats of war against China and Russia influenced the work, as did his disturbance over the Communist witch-hunts led by Senator Joseph McCarthy and the racial hatred that surfaced when Southern schools began to be integrated. The antagonism between groups that prevailed in the United States after the Second World War Heller translated into the enmity between the common soldiers and the officers of Catch-22.

Social Sensitivity

Readers desensitized to the indifference and brutality of society as chronicled every evening on television may not find Catch-22 as horrifying as did readers in 1961. The novel's presentation of vulgar, inhumane events is always couched in absurdity. The humor lies in pokes at the "system"; the horror stems from the realization that the search for individualism may be futile.

If readers find Catch-22 offensive or disturbing, it is more likely a result of the book's irreverence than its violence.

Heller does not regard patriotism, duty to God and country, or allegiance to noble principles as worthy goals. He concludes, existentially, that society provides a shallow and often evil structure for living. Heller is not an anarchist, advocating the overthrow of society, but is a messenger of despair.

Techniques

The techniques of Catch-22 have generated much critical discussion and disagreement. One topic of debate has been the genre to which the work belongs. Given the fragmented chronology, episodic structure, and caricatured characterizations, some critics have objected to labeling Catch-22 as a novel.

Instead they have observed that the book's mockery of political and social institutions and comic exaggeration are that of the satire, whereas Yossarian's series of misadventures echo the picaresque tradition. Furthermore, a number of commentators have noted affinities with the epic in the work's in medias res opening, the huge cast of characters, and the descent-into-the-underworld motif of "The Eternal City" chapter. Constance Denniston contends that the book is a "romance-parody," while John J. Murray calls it "a series of Overburyean character sketches."

The most inclusive appellation is Jessie Ritter's "social surrealist novel," which Ritter defines as "a mixture of picaresque, romance-parody, and anatomy (or Menippean satire), containing elements of surrealism, black humor, the grotesque and tragic, the absurd, apocalyptic visions, and a semi-mythic antihero." As is typical of novels of the second half of the twentieth century, Catch-22 both absorbs and parodies a variety of literary types and traditions.

Not only has there been controversy about the book's genre, but also about its structure. Early reviewers criticized Catch-22 for its lack of organization.

However, Heller, who is thoroughly modernist in believing the contemporary world is best reflected by discontinuity and fragmentation, has asserted that the surface disorder is intentional, mirroring the thematic thrust of Yossarian's quest — a rebellion against inhibiting systems. He explains, "I tried to avoid, first of all, the conventional structure of the novel; I tried to give it a structure that would reflect and complement the content of the book, itself, and the content of the book really derives from our present atmosphere, which is one of chaos, or disorganization, of absurdity, of cruelty, of brutality, of insensitivity, but at the same time one in which people, even the worst people, I think are basically good, are motivated by humane impulses." Heller has constructed his novel according to psychological rather than chronological time so that past and present are intermingled through mental associations. The narrative begins with Yossarian's stay in the hospital in response to Cathcart's raising the required number of missions to forty-five and then with cinematographic rapidity shifts back and forth between scenes that led up to his hospitalization and those that occurred after his medical release. Only towards the end of the book when Yossarian decides to desert the army does Heller favor straightforward narration.

Despite the readers' sense of dislocation, a close study of the novel and of Heller's five-year composition process reveals that Catch-22 is elaborately organized. Indeed, as Heller has confessed, "It takes a lot of care; it takes a lot of planning to make things

seem unplanned." The work is organized around three combat missions: to Avignon, to Bologna, and to Ferrara, with the first being the most significant.

Heller relies heavily upon patterns of recurrence — whether of scene, image, or verbal exchange — so that his readers, like the chaplain, experience a sense of deja vu or like the soldier of Chapter Eighteen, see everything twice.

Most notable is the incremental repetition of the Snowden episode. At various intervals in the novel, Heller presents fragments of the scene in which Snowden is wounded, building to a climax in the penultimate chapter in which Yossarian learns the extent of his gunner's injuries.

No less radical than the novel's structure is its style. Heller uses the technique of black humor, juxtaposing comic and tragic effects, mixing slapstick with the grotesque. This brand of humor is perhaps best exemplified in the scene in which Kid Sampson's legs stick up in the air and then slowly fall into the water after the propeller of McWatt's plane slices his body in half.

"I wanted people to laugh and then look back with horror at what they were laughing at," explains Heller.

Language in the novel functions in much the same way as does the structure: It reflects its author's distrust of systems. Thus Heller, through the use of oxymorons, paradox, non sequiturs, circular reasoning, and contradictions, emphasizes how authorities use language to confuse, trap, or manipulate others. Meaningful communication seems almost impossible; in fact, the truth occurs only rarely, expressed in short declarative sentences, such as Snowden's "I'm cold."

Literary Qualities

Catch-22 both absorbs and parodies a variety of literary genres. Given the book's fragmented chronology, episodic structure, and caricatured characterizations, some critics have objected to labeling it a novel. The book's mockery of political and social institutions and comic exaggeration are characteristic of the satire; Yossarian's series of misadventures echo the picaresque tradition; and the work's huge cast of characters and descent-into-the-underworld motif bring to mind the epic.

The structure of Catch-22 has also confounded traditional critics. Early reviewers criticized the book for its lack of organization. But Heller asserts that the surface disorder is intentional, mirroring the thematic thrust of Yossarian's quest□a rebellion against the repressive power of systems. Psychological rather than chronological time sets the framework for the novel; past and present intermingle through mental association. The narrative opens with Yossarian in the hospital and then shifts rapidly between scenes leading up to his hospitalization and those occurring after his release. Only when Yossarian decides to desert does Heller favor straightforward narration.

Heller relies heavily upon patterns of recurrence□whether of scene, image, or verbal exchange□so that the reader experiences a sense of deja vu. Most significant is Heller's incremental repetition of the Snowden episode; he presents fragments of the scene and builds to a climax where Yossarian learns the extent of his gunner's injuries.

No less radical than the novel's structure is its treatment of language. Heller uses the technique of black humor, juxtaposing comic and tragic effects, mixing the slapstick with the grotesque.

This brand of humor manifests itself when Kid Sampson's legs, severed from the rest of his body, stick up in the air and then slowly fall into the water. "I wanted people to laugh and then look back with horror at what they were laughing at," explains Heller. His use of language encourages readers to question authorial intent even as he would have them question, and challenge, oppressive systems. Through the use of paradoxes, circular reasoning, and contradictions, Heller emphasizes how authorities use language to confuse, trap, and manipulate. Meaningful communication seems almost impossible, and the truth occurs only rarely, expressed in such short declarative sentences as the dying Snowden's "I'm cold."

Although modernist in its portrayal of an absurd universe, its black humor, and its fragmented time scheme, Catch22 can trace its protagonist's heritage to nineteenth-century author Ralph Waldo Emerson's concept of the self-reliant hero. Yossarian belongs to that category of American heroes who come to realize that "whoso would be a man must be a nonconformist." As the novel unfolds, Yossarian witnesses countless examples of carnage, greed, and brutality, and must open his eyes to the frailty of both the human body and the human spirit. Heller alludes to Yossarian's role as the archetypal, or original, man as the bombardier, naked in a tree, watches Snowden's funeral and resists Milo's serpentlike offer to eat chocolate-covered cotton. Yossarian

again faces and rejects Satanic tempters toward the novel's end, when Colonels Cathcart and Korn offer to send him home if he promises to carry only positive reports of them back to the States.

Heller emulates James Joyce in providing naturalistic details and in using the device of the epiphany, a scene depicting a character's moment of insight. Furthermore, Heller credits Joyce's characterization of Leopold Bloom in Ulysses with inspiring his own creation of Yossarian. Another modern writer who influenced Heller is Franz Kafka, with whom Heller shares an aversion to bureaucracies. The nightmarish trial scenes of Clevinger and the chaplain are particularly Kafkaesque.

To William Faulkner, Heller attributes his structure, noting that he strove to present bits of information and connect them only at the end of his book, as Faulkner did in Absalom, Absalom! and The Sound and the Fury. Heller modeled his prose style on the work of Louis Ferdinand Celine and Vladimir Nabokov; in content, the author's most important predecessor is Jaroslav Hasek, who showed the absurdity of the military in The Good Soldier Schweik.

Feodor Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment and Dante's Inferno provided inspiration for the surrealist chapter most critics consider Catch-22's finest, "The Eternal City."

Thematic Overview

In an interview with George Plimpton published in the Paris Review, Heller contends that "Catch-22 is concerned with physical survival against exterior forces or institutions that want to destroy life or moral self." Graphic reminders of man's mortality pervade the novel, as Heller traces the desperate attempts of his protagonist, bombardier John Yossarian, to escape death. Although not, according to Heller, a war novel, Catch-22 nevertheless reflects its author's experiences as a bombardier in the U.S. Army Air Force during the Second World War. In scenes reminiscent of Randall Jarrell's "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner," Heller hauntingly depicts B-25s dodging flak, the claustrophobic womb/tomb environment of the bombardier's compartment, and Yossarian's horrifying discovery that "[t]he spirit gone, man is garbage," as he watches his wounded gunner's entrails spill out on the floor.

The obscene loss of lives of promising young men that war greedily demands — whether it be World War II or, as Heller has suggested, the Korean and Vietnam conflicts — is one aspect of Catch-22. Yet Heller's treatment of man' s vulnerability has more farreaching applications, for many of the deaths in the novel are not directly war-related. For instance, Chief Halfoat dies of pneumonia; Hungry Joe's nightmare comes true as a cat suffocates him while he is sleeping; McWatt accidentally severs Kid Sampson's trunk with the propeller of his plane and then out of guilt commits suicide; Aarfy flings a servant girl out of a window to her death on the pavement below. Through these deaths, Heller creates a brutal world, symbolized by the omnipresent knife of Nately's whore, that threatens to destroy the individual at any moment.

One of the key threats to the individual in Catch-22 is the military bureaucracy. Heller presents a procession of insensitive officers who victimize their men for self-aggrandizement.

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First of all, there are the absurd rules, such as the infamous Catch-22, which states that if a man is crazy, he must be grounded; however, if he asks to be grounded, he cannot be crazy since anyone who wants to avoid combat duty is not really crazy. Other examples include Colonel Korn's edict permitting only those people to ask questions who never do and Major Major's order that Sergeant Towser allow men in to see him only when he is out. Thus the novel abounds with paradoxes and inversions. Then, there are ridiculous situations, such as the army's denials of the death of Mudd, since he was killed before officially checking in with the squadron, while conversely declaring Doc Daneeka officially dead, although an alive Doc protests fervently.

Finally, there are the morally ludicrous happenings, as when Aarfy commits murder, yet the police ignore the corpse and instead arrest Yossarian for going AWOL. In a world seemingly without rationality, justice, or humanity, the individual becomes alienated, frustrated, and desperate.

However, Catch-22 is not a novel without hope. In fact, its most significant theme is that despite living in an absurd universe, the individual can affirm honor, integrity, and compassion. Heller has observed that the morality of his supposedly radical novel is "rather orthodox — almost medieval."

Pursuing that idea, Eric Solomon in a provocative essay entitled "From Christ in Flanders to Catch-22: An Approach to War Fiction" has suggested that Yossarian is a modern Everyman, "trapped in a mad world of the seven deadly sins: Gluttony (the lavish food and drink in the mess halls), Avarice (Milo), Lechery (a world of brothels), Sloth (Doc Daneeka), Pride (the generals and colonels), Envy (their competition), and Wrath (the war itself)."

Tempted by the desire for self-preservation, Yossarian momentarily abandons his principles. However, in a typically existentialist response to a meaningless universe, Heller's hero finds salvation in seeking freedom and asserting responsibility.

Themes

Individual vs. Society

Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* traces the efforts of Yossarian, an American bombardier in World War II, to escape participation in a war that seems meaningless. Yossarian represents the individual against a huge, corrupt institution of any sort, whether it is the army or a large corporation. The bureaucracy and rules of such large institutions, Heller suggests, often exist for their own sake, not for a good reason. Milo Minderbinder's M & M enterprises represents the corrupt corporation. In the pursuit of profits and wealth, he will trade anything, even life rafts or morphine that is needed to save the lives of the pilots, with anyone, including the enemy. The obvious question is, if we can communicate enough with the enemy to make business deals, why can't we settle our differences instead of killing each other? Negotiating peace is not the concern of Milo or his customers, however. Thus, Heller suggests that some businesspeople value money even more than human life. When Milo actually has the American pilots bomb their own base as part of a business deal with the Germans, it is perfectly logical and at the same time completely unethical. Yossarian, the sane individual, recognizes that this act is insane and evil.

The other corrupt institution in *Catch-22* is, of course, the military. Yossarian is the voice of reason. He is stunned by the priorities of the army, which at best are absurd and at worst evil, such as when the military police care about his going AWOL more than Captain Aardvaark's rape and murder of the Italian girl. Many of the orders issued by the men in power serve only to secure their own positions. Yossarian is constantly questioning the foolish arbitrary military rules and decisions and even sabotages his plane's communications systems in order to abort a mission that he feels is wrong. Individual men such as Yossarian are powerless to fight the army's corruption, which is why Yossarian decides he must leave rather than be a part of it.

Sanity and Insanity

The outrageous military regulation called Catch-22 captures Heller's attitude toward sanity and insanity. It is, he suggests, impossible to exist as a sane person in an insane environment. Heller portrays life for the men in the squadron as completely crazy. They are at the mercy of ambitious commanders who care more about their own careers than the men's lives. Their sanity is challenged by military rules that make no sense but which they must blindly obey. They see ethics thrown out the window, by Milo in pursuit of profit, for example, or by the old man in Rome, who lives only for pleasure. They are asked to endanger their lives, and begin to question why this is necessary, especially when they are asked to bomb an innocent village just to block a road.

The men deal with this insanity in different ways. Yossarian fakes illness to hide out in the hospital McWatt buzzes people with his plane. Most of the men visit the whorehouse

and have meaningless sex-"banging" women, as Yossarian calls it-to distract themselves from their fears and their deep-rooted feeling that they are risking their lives for foolish reasons.

Only Orr seems to cope well, to stay sane amid the madness, and the reader later learns it is because he has been focused on a plan to escape, and has even been practicing that escape. When Yossarian realizes what Orr has been doing, he makes the choice to escape as well. Despite the tremendous odds against the success of Yossarian' s plan, Heller suggests it is not a crazy but a sane response to an insane situation over which Yossarian has no control.

Heroes and Heroism

The protagonist of a novel is generally called the hero because he or she usually has heroic, admirable qualities. An antihero, however, is someone who does not have heroic qualities such as courage and selflessness, but is still admirable because he has qualities that may mean just as much to the reader. Yossarian is certainly not courageous: he will do anything to get out of combat, even fake illness. He's not selfless, in fact, he's obsessed with saving himself from danger. Note that Heller chose as his setting World War II, an unambiguously "good" war to most Americans. Yossarian is rebelling against fighting a just war against a very evil empire, Nazi Germany. In theory, the reader should not like or identify with such a protagonist.

However, the war that we see in the book is not the Allies versus the Axis powers but the individual against the bureaucracy. Again and again, the military and business bureaucracies steal the dignity and hope of the men in Yossarian's squadron. The reader can understand Yossarian's point of view and empathize with him because he can never reach the number of missions he must fly before he goes home; the number will constantly be bumped up-not because that is what is necessary to stop the enemy, but because more missions will help the individual ambitions of one man gunning for a promotion. The reader sees Yossarian helpless against an absurd militaristic bureaucracy, held hostage and even physically endangered by the mercenary, money-grubbing business dealings of M & M Enterprises. The reader comes to like and respect Yossarian for standing up to the absurdity, refusing the dishonesty of betraying his fellow men by taking Cathcart and Kom up on their offer (he'll be discharged if he lies and tells people he never refused to fly or challenged his superiors). Under the circumstances, Yossarian's character flaws are no match for his decency and honesty, traits which seem utterly absent in the military.

Absurdity

Language and Meaning

While the purpose of language is to communicate, Heller shows that corrupt people and institutions misuse language in order to confuse and manipulate others and avoid

responsibility. The characters' bizarre and illogical uses of language help create an atmosphere of absurdity-a state in which unreal, irrational things happen every day. In the beginning of the book, readers may be confused by the seemingly illogical discussions of flies in Appleby's eyes or Orr's story of stuffing crab apples or horse chestnuts in his cheeks to make them rosy, but soon it's clear that the men's unorthodox use of language mirrors that of their commanding officers'. Colonel Cargill tries to instill pride in the men, saying, "You're American officers. The officers of no other army in the world can make that statement." This self-evident statement has no real meaning. Captain Black says signing his loyalty oath is voluntary, but anyone who does not sign will be starved to death. And Major Major tells his assistant "I don't want anyone to come in to see me while I'm here." While the sentence is grammatical, it makes no sense. It is just a roundabout way of saying he doesn't want to see anyone, ever, which of course is absurd. He has to talk to people to do his job. Circular logic and redefining words, Heller shows, allows people to avoid the reality of situations, or to twist reality to suit their purposes. No wonder that when asked if Appleby has flies in his eyes, Yossarian thinks this impossibility might be true because "it made as much sense as anything else."

In an interview with George Plimpton published in the Paris Review, Heller contends that "Catch-22 is concerned with physical survival against exterior forces or institutions that want to destroy life or moral self." Graphic reminders of man's mortality pervade the novel, as Heller traces the desperate attempts of his protagonist, bombardier John Yossarian, to escape death. Although not, according to Heller, a war novel, Catch-22 nevertheless reflects its author's experiences as a bombardier in the U.S. Army Air Force during the Second World War. In scenes reminiscent of Randall Jarrell's "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner," Heller hauntingly depicts B-25s dodging flak, the claustrophobic womb/tomb environment of the bombardier's compartment, and Yossarian's horrifying discovery that "[t]he spirit gone, man is garbage," as he watches his wounded gunner's entrails spill out on the floor.

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Style

Setting

Catch-22 is set on an army air force base on the island of Pianosa off the coast of Italy in 1944, toward the end of World War II. The majority of the action takes place on the base itself, in the B52 bomber planes as they go on raids, and in the local whorehouse, where the men relax; there are also flashbacks to training camps in America and some scenes in Italy. The island is real, but there was not a base on it in WWII. Note that the 256th is an army squadron of pilots; the army and navy both had air forces during the war but a separate U.S. Air Force was not created until 1947.

Point of View

The story is told in third person. Sometimes the narrative is omniscient ("all-knowing"), meaning that readers can see the large picture and everything that goes on. Sometimes, however, the narrator's vision is somewhat limited, we see things as if through a particular character's eyes. For example, the first several chapters are really from the point of view of Yossarian, but then in chapter nine we pull back and see the larger picture. This switching from limited to omniscient narration allows Heller to focus on the big picture or just one character.

Structure

Catch-22 is not a linear novel in which events follow each other chronologically. Instead, to underscore his points, Heller has the narrative jump around in time, using flashbacks and *dejavu*□ a French term for repetition meaning "already seen." This allows the author to juxtapose scenes that have a strong connection to each other thematically. The reader can follow the chronological chain of events by noting the references to Cathcart's continual raising of the number of missions the men must fly; the growth of M & M enterprises, which becomes increasingly powerful over time; and the revelations about the gruesome death of the young pilot named Snowden, a singular event that serves as an epiphany for Yossarian, that is, a moment that makes him "see the light." After he finally relives the event in full, he is determined to escape the insanity of war rather than try to find a way to cope with it.

The scrambling of scenes serves a second purpose as well: to reflect the state of mind of a combat pilot. Life in the military is in certain ways controlled and orderly, even dull, but it is intermingled with the sheer terror of death, which is completely unpredictable. Heller wants the reader to understand that time itself has a different meaning for someone in this situation, that what is important is not each day's separate events but the themes that are apparent in so many different situations at different times: the absurdity of bureaucracy, the callousness of ambitious men, the difference between reality and appearance.

Irony, Satire, and Black Humor

Writers often combine irony, satire, and black humor to express their themes and ideas, because the three techniques work together well. Heller uses all of these techniques liberally in *Catch-22.* One definition of irony is the use of words to express something other than their literal meaning---or even the opposite of their meaning. Thus, naming a pilot who is inexperienced at his craft "Kraft" is an ironic choice Satire is the bolding up of human vices and follies to ridicule or scorn through wit and sarcasm. *Catch-22* is a social satire, ridiculing targets such as the military (an example would be Scheisskopf s absurd obsession with military parades) and big business (witness the success of Milo's M & M Enterprises: countries that are actually at war with each other hypocritically do business with each other as well). Satire usually involves extremes, and certainly much of the absurdity in *Catch-22* is due to extreme examples of bureaucracy run amok, or capitalism at its most corrupt. The absurdity Heller creates is also funny, although not in a lighthearted way. Heller uses black humor, that is, humor with a dark tone to it, or an edge. Joking about death, for example, is a form of black humor. Thus, when Heller makes the army unable to recognize that Mudd is dead and Doc is alive (because they have more faith in the military's records than in the reality of one dead and one live body), it is black humor.

Allusion

Allusions are subtle references authors make to other books or events that are relevant to the point at hand, or to other events within the book itself. Throughout *Catch-22,* Joseph Heller makes references to literature, the Bible, and other writings and historical events. So, for example, when Yossarian censors letters in an absurdly nonsensical way, he signs off on them as "Washington Irving" or "Irving Washington." Washington Irving, a nineteenth-century novelist and essayist, often used black humor, and created the famous character Rip Van Winkle, who was, like Yossarian, an antihero (a protagonist whose admirable qualities are not the usual ones). This allusion points out to the reader that Yossarian identifies with the antihero Van Winkle and with Irving's black humor.

Allusion can also achieve a comic effect. At one point, Heller turns around Shakespeare's classic proclamation that "some men are born to greatness" and "some men have greatness thrust upon them" by writing that Major Major Major was "born to mediocrity" and had "mediocrity thrust upon him." The reader, remembering the loftiness of the original quote and its source, is meant to see the humor in changing "greatness" to "mediocrity," as if mediocrity, like greatness, could be stunningly admirable and spoken of with the utmost respect.

Finally, allusions to events within the novel itself remind readers of thematic connections between the events. Heller makes many such allusions to drive home his themes.

Historical Context

Italy in World War II

Catch-22 takes place on an American Army Air Force base on an island off the coast of Italy. Italy had been drawn into World War II by Benito Mussolini, a former Socialist who had come to power in 1925. His fascist government, marked by strict government control of labor and industry, ended civil unrest in the country but limited the rights of its citizens. Mussolini was constantly engaged in military campaigns, conquering Ethiopia in 1936, for example, and that same year he signed an agreement with Nazi Germany's Adolf Hitler to cooperate on a mutually beneficial foreign policy

When Germany invaded Poland in 1939, Great Britain and France declared war, and Italy officially joined Germany in the alliance of Axis Powers in 1940.

Italy had neither the economic or strategic resources to succeed for long, and by mid-1943 the Allied Forces of the United States and Great Britain had begun occupying Italian territory. By this time, Mussolini was in political trouble, and he was exiled and eventually executed in 1945. A new government of Italian businessmen and workers signed an armistice with the Allies, and in October 1943 declared war on Germany. The Germans, however, still controlled the northern part of the country and Italy now found itself divided. By the time that

Yossarian and his combat crew entered the war, Italy had largely withdrawn from the war and Germany still occupied portions of the country. Although the war with Germany ended on May 7, 1945, the Allies would continue to occupy Italy until a peace treaty with the country was finally signed in 1947.

U.S. War Involvement

Italian territory occupied by Allied forces provided good locations for air force divisions, which played a key strategic role during World War II. The United States Army Air Force employed two types of military bombers: the smaller fighter bombers, and the strategic bombers, which were large, long-range planes that could attack targets deep in enemy territory. They generally held between two and eight people. In the novel, Yossarian flies aboard a B-25, one model of this type of strategic bomber. The men on board these planes had distinct duties. Seated in the nose of the plane were the bombardier and the navigator. While the navigator directed the plane toward its destined target, the bombardier timed the release of the plane's bombs to most effectively destroy that target. These two men had to work closely with each other to facilitate the exchange of in-flight information. Above and behind the nose was the pilot's compartment. Here the pilot and copilot steered the plane toward its destination and through any enemy fire, or "flak." The body of the plane held the bomb bay and the radio compartment. Radio operators generally worked as communication men as well as gunners. Also on the

planes were men who worked as aerial engineer gunners and armored gunners, whose mechanical backgrounds would come into play when planes suffered damage. Altogether, though each of them held a different post and their ranks varied, the crew worked as a unit each time its members entered the sky.

Catch-22 is set at the end of World War II, the so-called "good war" because almost all Americans supported it. Any reluctance to join the Allies in their battle against Germany's Adolf Hitler and the Axis powers was erased in 1941 when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Having already been through a world war, however. Americans realized that wars rarely settled political grievances; they were becoming more cynical about war in general. The Korean War (technically only a "police action" that lasted from 1950 to 1953) left Americans wary about the futility of entering "limited" wars in other countries. The Vietnam War, which America began to enter in the late 1950s, was not yet unpopular in 1961, but Americans after the Korean War would soon embrace Heller's absurdist, antiwar message as strongly as they did his satire of Cold War America.

The Cold War

While *Catch-22* takes place in 1944, in it Heller makes frequent allusions to events in America in the 1950s, even using anachronisms (things out of time) such as computers and helicopters so that people would think of the Korean War as well as WWII. Heller felt that the Cold War era, far from being an ideal, peaceful time, was filled with tension and paranoia. Allusions to the 1950s abound: the C.I D. (a representative of the CIA or FBI) accuses the Chaplain of hiding documents in a plum tomato stolen from Cathcart's office. Absurd though it sounds, Heller was drawing upon the story of real-life state department official Alger Hiss, who was accused of being a communist and of hiding documents in a hollowed-out pumpkin. Captain Black starts a loyalty oath "crusade," and Chief Halfoat makes references to being "red" talking about communism, not skin color. When Milo claims "what's good for the syndicate is good for the country," he is echoing a member of President Eisenhower's cabinet, who said, "what's good for General Motors is good for the country." These are ideas that Americans would come to question in the 1960s.

The Zeitgeist of the 1960s

Readers of *Catch-22* responded to the novel's celebration of the individual and its satire of institutions such as the government, the military, and business corporations. Yossarian stands up against absurd and corrupt authority, discusses the shallow values of ambition and materialism, recognizes the hypocrisy of the army, and bravely makes up his own mind about how to respond to a demoralizing situation. He wrests control of it, and overcomes his powerlessness.

These themes would become a crucial part of the *zeitgeist,* or spirit of the age, in the 1960s. American youth were questioning the idea that American institutions and

politicians were completely trustworthy and free from corruption. The communist witch-hunts of the 1950s led by Senator Eugene McCarthy, in which people were hounded and blacklisted from their professions because they were suspected communists, had made many Americans rethink their blind trust in politicians and the government. This distrust would build to a peak in the early 1970s, when the Watergate scandal of the Nixon administration eroded the public's faith in the presidency Meanwhile, in the 1960s, the Vietnam War took increasingly more American lives and became even more violent and bloody. People started to question why politicians had led the country into it initially, and why they were still there, especially since there was no end in sight. Had the U.S. become involved for idealistic reasons, or because of business deals between the country and Vietnam? Why was there still fighting if there did not seem to be any progress? Could it be that politicians just didn't want to admit they had been wrong, and were letting young men die in Vietnam rather than being honest about the situation? As more Americans asked these difficult and important questions, they began to rethink other issues as well. They stopped taking for granted that the status quo (the way things are) was the best that it could be.

Racism and Sexism

Until the late 1950s and early 1960s, few white Americans gave any thought to the plight of black Americans. "Negroes" were, after all, a minority, and segregation kept them in different neighborhoods, different schools, and in the South, even in different restaurants, bus seats, and bathrooms. However, black Americans were beginning to take action against the treatment they received. Their "separate but equal" schools were inferior to white students' schools. A 1954 Supreme Court ruling, *Brown vs. the Board of Education,* forced school integration, and helped launch the Civil Rights movement. The movement, which would be led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr , began to gather power, inspiring the Civil Rights Act of 1957, which created the Civil Rights Commission and spelled out penalties for voting rights violations, and the Voter's Rights Act of 1965, which guaranteed black Americans access to the voting booths. Other black leaders and organizations, from Malcom X to the Black Panthers, demanded respect and power for their people. Heller alludes to the growing civil rights movement when he has Colonel Cathcart claim that he would never let his sister marry an enlisted man-in other words, an inferior. This summed up many white American's attitude towards blacks: they would claim to have many Negro friends, but in the end, they wouldn't want a relative to actually marry a black person.

As the Civil Rights movement gained momentum, the feminist movement was just beginning. In 1963 Journalist Betty Friedan published a best-selling book called *The Feminine Mystique,* which pointed out that housewives were on the whole an unhappy lot, unfulfilled because their lives were built around men's. The book launched an entire movement, as women began questioning what they needed and wanted for themselves as individuals outside of their relationships to others. In 1961, Heller's portrayal of military women, prostitutes, and nurses seemed funny, honest, and dead on. It would be several years before most people would notice that the female characters in *Catch* 22 are mostly shallow, portrayed as sex-starved and preoccupied with men.

Critical Overview

When a chapter of *Catch-22* was first published as a novel-in-progress in 1955, Joseph Heller got several letters of encouragement from editors.

Then, when the finished book was published in 1961, Orville Prescott of the *New York Times* described it as "a dazzling performance that will outrage nearly as many readers as it delights." Half the reviews were positive, but the other half were negative, and some were downright scathing. *New York Times Book Review* contributor Richard G. Stem said the novel "gasps for want of craft and sensibility," "is repetitious and monotonous," "is an emotional hodgepodge" and certainly no novel, and, finally, that It "fails" The structure was problematic for some acclaimed author Norman Mailer said in *Esquire:* "One could take out a hundred pages anywhere from middle... and not even the author could be certain they were gone." *New Yorker* critic Whitney Balliett said It "doesn't even seem to have been written; instead, it gives the Impression of having been shouted onto paper," and that "what remains is a debris of sour jokes." Further, the critic said Heller "wallows in his own laughter and finally drowns in it."

The last laugh was on these reviewers, however, because although the book did not win any prizes or appear on any best-seller lists, It soon became an underground hit and sold extremely well in paperback. More and more Critics began to see in it what readers saw. The book had quickly become a favorite of the counter-culture because of its antiauthoritarian and antiwar attitude. As Eliot Fremont-Smith said in the *Village Voice* (New York City's progressive counterculture newspaper), *"[Catch-22]* came when we still cherished nice notions about WWII. Demolishing these, it released an Irreverence that had, until then, dared not speak its name." While *Catch-22* was set in World War II, its message was very contemporary. As some critics pointed out, in *Catch-22* the real enemy is bureaucracy, and Vietnam was a war in which the real enemy seemed to be not the Viet Cong but the U.S. military and big business, which dehumanize people. Carol Pearson wrote in the *CEA Critic* that the book captures how people "react to meaninglessness by renouncing their humanity, becoming cogs in the machine. With no logical explanation to make suffering and death meaningful and acceptable, people renounce their power to think and retreat to a simpleminded respect for law and accepted 'truth.'" Jean E Kennard wrote in *Mosaic,* "Heller's horrifying vision of service life in World War II is merely an Illustration of the human condition itself."

Raymond M. Olderman wrote in *Beyond the Waste Land* that the key scene of the novel is when the M.P.s arrest Yossarian for being A WOL while they overlook the murdered young Italian girl lying in the street. This incident, Olderman said, symbolizes "much of the entire novel's warning-that in place of the humane we find the thunder of the marching boot, the destruction of the human, arrested by the growth of the military-economic institution." This institution is personified by Milo Minderbinder, the wheeling and dealing businessman who values money and business deals above all else. In the *Canadian Review of American Studies,* reviewer Mike Frank Said that "for Milo, contract, and the entire economic structure and ethical system It embodies and

represents, is more sacred than human life." After all, Milo even trades away the men's life rafts and makes a deal with the Germans to bomb the Americans' own base

Critics pointed out that Yossarian' s sense of powerlessness in the face of large institutions such as the military, the government, and big business are experienced by people everywhere. Yossarian became a timeless symbol of rebellion and reason, and his decision to take the moral high ground and defect despite the odds against him was embraced by many. Olderman noted that Yossarian's choice in the end was more admirable than it appears on the surface. As he points out, Yossarian's choices are that "He can be food for the cannon, he can make a deal with the system; or he can depart, deserting not the war with its implications of preserving political freedom, but abandoning a waste land, a dehumanized, inverted, military-economic machine."

Critics also noticed Heller's distinctive use of language. Kennard of *Mosaic* wrote that in the novel, "Reason and language, man's tools for discovering the meaning of his existence and describing his world, are useless." Language, Heller reveals, can be easily manipulated to the point where it doesn't reflect reality but instead has the power to "divest Itself from any necessity of reference, to function as a totally autonomous medium with its own perfect system and logic," as Marcus K. Billson II pointed out in the *Arizona Quarterly.* Of course, the most memorable misuse of language is in the circular logic of the fictional military rule called "Catch-22."

While Heller's novel is humorous, he said he wanted the reader to be ashamed that he was amused and to see the tragedy. Morris Dickstein in the *Partisan Review* pointed out that Milo's antics, which are funny at first, "become increasingly somber, ugly and deadly-like so much else in the book-that we readers become implicated in our own earlier laughter." Nelson Algren in the *Nation* also saw the more serious side of the novel: "Below its hilarity, so wild that it hurts, *Catch-22* is the strongest repudiation of our civilization, in fiction, to come out of World War II."

Today, more than ten million copies of the book have been sold, and *Catch-22* is considered a classic novel. As Richard Locke said in the *New York Times Book Review,* "It is probably the finest novel published since World War II ... the great representative document of our era, linking high and low culture." Indeed, the term "catch-22" has entered the language itself and can be found in many dictionaries.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Felty is a visiting instructor at the College of Charleston. In the following essay, he discusses how Catch-22 *explores larger issues of social order and individual responsibility within the context of a war novel.*

As most critics recognize, *Catch-22* offers more than a critique of World War II, despite its focus on the destructiveness of warfare. Instead, Joseph Heller employs this setting to comment upon the condition of mid-century American life. His satire targets not just the military but all regimental institutions that treat individuals as cogs in a machine. His central character, Yossarian, recognizes the insanity of social institutions that devalue human life and tries to rebel against them, first in minor ways and finally through outright rejection of them. Yet Yossarian is not, as some have contended, an immoral or non-idealistic man. He is a man who responds to human suffering, unlike characters such as Colonel Cathcart and Milo Minderbinder, who ignore the human consequences of their actions. Yossarian's perceptions conflict with most everyone else's in the book. Thus, his encounters with people inevitably lead to mutual misunderstandings, to Yossarian labelling everyone else crazy, and to a sense of pervasive lunacy. This lack of rationality creates wild comedy in the novel, but, ultimately, it drives the book toward tragedy.

Yossarian sees the conflicts of the war in purely personal terms. To him, his enemies, which include his superior officers, are trying to murder him. Those who believe in the war cannot comprehend his reduction of its conflicts to personal assaults. The young airman Clevinger, for instance, refuses to accept Yossarian's views that people are trying to kill him:

"No one's trying to kill you," Clevinger cried. "Then why are they shooting at me?" Yossarian asked.
"They're shooting at *everyone,"* Clevinger answered. "They're trying to kill everyone"
"And what difference does that make?"
Clevinger was already on the way, half out of his chair with emotion, his eyes moist and his lips quivering and pale. There were many principles in which Clevinger believed passionately He was crazy.

Yossarian reduces the war to its barest elements and refuses to see himself as one component in a wider cause, which befuddles the "principled," patriotic Clevinger. Yet Yossarian does not reject the aims of the war (stopping the spread of Nazism); he reacts the way he does because he sees that the aims have been perverted. The men no longer serve a cause; they serve the insane whims of their superiors.

Men with authority in the novel do not focus on a common goal (which Clevinger believes), nor do they recognize the humanity of those they command. They value only the power they hold in the military (or the medical, religious, or commercial professions). To gain more power, these men corrupt and exploit the founding principles of the institutions they serve. For instance, instead of fighting to stop totalitarian regimes that would eliminate freedom, the military itself has imposed totalitarian rule. To maintain it,

they utilize "Catch-22," a rule that they can change to fit their needs and that keeps the men trapped in their current roles. "Catch-22" grows more sinister as the novel progresses. It begins as a comic absurdity reflecting the essential powerlessness of those in the squadron since it keeps them flying the additional missions Colonel Cathcart orders:

There was only one catch and that was Catch-22, which specified that a concern for one's own safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr [who wants to keep flying] was crazy and could be grounded All he had to do was ask, and as soon as he did, he would no longer be crazy and would have to fly more missions.

When Yossarian attempts to go over Colonel Cathcart's head to division headquarters, the rule simplifies further. Despite the fact that he has flown the number of missions needed to complete his tour of duty, as specified by Cathcart's superiors, he Still must obey Cathcart because "Catch-22" "says you've always got to do what your commanding officer tells you to." The soldiers, who see no alternative to these rules, accept them. Thus, everyone (except Yossarian and a scant few others) is insane because they ascribe to insane principles. They see not reality but the "reality" constructed by those who manipulate them. And they die, not to stop the Germans, but to fulfill the ambitions of their superiors and to maintain the institutions that abuse them.

Of even wider significance than military authoritarianism, however, is Milo Minderbinder's capitalistic fervor and the excesses he commits in its name. Through Milo, Heller condemns the unscrupulous expansion of commercial interests that exploit people for profit or even reduce them to the status of commodities. Milo himself acts not out maliciousness, but out of blindness. He recognizes only the right to profit, which forms his very morality. Milo embodies an American ideal. He is an individualist who believes in initiative, hard work, and opportunism, and these principles make him rich. But he is also the ultimate organization man. He forms the M & M Enterprises syndicate on the premise that every man owns a share. Thus, by supposedly incorporating everyone into his ventures, he monopolizes the black market and ensures the cooperation of those he manipulates. His vision proves destructive, however, because it excludes any notion of humanity For instance, he contracts with the Allies and the Germans to both bomb and defend a bridge at Orvieto, and he even bombs his own squadron to make money to offset his losses in the Egyptian cotton market. When Yossarian criticizes him for his actions at Orvieto, Milo replies, "Look, I didn't start this war I'm just trying to put it on a businesslike basis. Is anything wrong with that? You know, a thousand dollars ain't such a bad price for a medium bomber and a crew." Here, Milo unwittingly reveals his purely economic intelligence, which equates men with machinery. His agreements also betray his notions of loyalty: neither the Allies nor the Germans are his enemies because they both belong to the syndicate. He remains loyal only to his economic empire, in which the sanctity of a contract means more than the sanctity of life.

The catastrophic results of the callous misuse of power in the novel find their most wrenching expression in "The Eternal City" chapter. This chapter loses all vestiges of

comedy and becomes a nightmare vision of brutality run amuck. Yossarian wanders through Rome encountering a succession of horrors and thinks, "Mobs with clubs were in control everywhere." He also learns the essence of "Catch-22": "Catch-22 says they have a right to do anything we can't stop them from doing." Power is all. And the power to control belief is even more valuable than the power to kill, since, as Yossarian realizes, "Catch-22" works because people *believe* that it exists when it actually does not. Like Milo Minderbinder's capitalistic rationalizations, it serves to "bind" people's minds. Therefore, they accept the abuses heaped upon them and the world turns absurd.

In such a world, Colonel Cathcart can keep raising missions and Milo can brazenly bomb his own squadron. Hence, the restraints governing commerce and the military have completely collapsed. Survival becomes all that matters, and one must look to save himself because the institutions that supposedly support him actually look to cannibalize him. Yossarian learns this lesson most forcefully through the death of Snowden, an event that haunts him throughout the book but which he only fully understands at the novel's end. When Snowden's insides spill out as Yossarian is trying to save him, Yossarian discovers a secret: "Man was matter Bury him and he'll rot like other kinds of garbage. The spirit gone, man is garbage." He graphically encounters human vulnerability and comprehends the essential need to understand another's humanity, to see his "spirit," not to view him as only an expendable object.

Thus, the more Yossarian understands the abuses of those who wield power, and the more he sees people suffer because of these abuses, the more stubborn he becomes in his refusal to participate in the war When he finally decides to desert from the military altogether, he does not run from the defense of principles of freedom, individuality, and justice. He, like his dead comrades, defended those ideals. His only recourses besides desertion are imprisonment or accepting Cathcart and Korn's deal to become their "pal.'" Both options ultimately defend Cathcart and Korn's actions and spur others to continue fighting. If imprisoned, Y Yossarian implicitly validates his superiors' "right" to punish him. If he accepts their deal, he would advocate murder, since men are now dying not for the cause but to help maintain their superiors' hold on authority. As Victor J. Milne contends, Yossarian's flight affirms "that an individual has no right to submit to injustice when His action will help to maintain an unjust system.'" Instead, Yossarian tries to flee the system itself. However futile this effort, he refuses to sanction corrupt officials and become, like them, an exploiter of others for personal gain, thereby preserving his own moral character.

Source: Darren Felty, in an essay for *Novels for Students,* Gale 1997.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Hasley explores how Heller uses a dramatic contrast between humorous and harrowing incidents to heighten the horror of the novel.

A book that was widely acclaimed a classic upon its appearance and that has suffered no loss of critical esteem deserves many critical examinations. Now, more than ten years after its first publication in 1961, Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* may justify another attempt to fix certain qualities in it more precisely than has yet been done. My special concern here is the pattern of dramatic tension between the preposterous events of the story and the built-in dimension of laughter. It is part of the pattern that the laughter, intermittent and trailing away just before the end, contributes to a catharsis in which the grimness of war provides the dominant memory.

It is part of the book's greatness that its hilarious force comes so near to a stand-off with the grimness. Heller has achieved his declared purpose, mentioned elsewhere, not to use humor as a goal, but as a means to an end. "The ultimate effect is not frivolity but bitter pessimism," he said *(Time,* Mar. 4, 1966). And yet the alternating play of humor and horror creates a dramatic tension throughout that allows the book to be labeled as a classic both of humor and of war. It is not "a comic war novel" despite the fact that comedy and war are held more or less in solution, for the war is *not* comic but horrible-this we are not allowed to forget. The laughter repeatedly breaks through the tight net of frustration in which the characters struggle only to sink back as the net repairs itself and holds the reader prisoned in its outrageous bonds.

Right here the unskillful reader may protest that *Catch-22* is a comic war novel. For who could believe that war is conducted as the novel pictures It-realism blandly ignored, motivations distorted beyond recognition, plausibility constantly violated. Even conceding that war is not peace, that the conditions of any war are abnormal, could any serious work stray so far from what we know of human character?

The answer lies in an artistic strategy relating to the thesis of the novel, which, put simply, is this: War is irrational; and the representative things that happen in war are likewise irrational, including man's behavior in war. This thesis is an underlying assumption, a donnee, illustrated not documentarily but imaginatively throughout the book

It is, in terms of the book, unarguable-you take it or leave it-for the author has seen to it that all the evidence favors his thesis What he asks, and it is everything, is that his readers accept the credibility of his characters and their actions, if not at face value, then as wild, ingratiating exaggeration that nevertheless carries the indestructible truth that war is irrational.

It would be an uncritical reader indeed who would accept at face value the greater part of what is related in this hilarious, harrowing book. For the absurd, the ridiculous, the

ludicrous, are pyramided, chapter after chapter, through the lengthy book's entire 463 pages.

Starting with the opening page in which Captain Yossarian, the book's non-hero, is goldbricking in a hospital bed and censoring letters which he as censoring officer signs "Washington Irving" and sometimes with variant whimsicality "Irving Washington," to the last page in which "Nately's whore" makes a final but unsuccessful attempt to stab Yossarian because he had told her of Nately's death-through all this the predominance of the outré in events and behavior is unchallenged. One such episode has Yossarian appearing naked in formation to be pinned with the Distinguished Flying Cross by General Dreedle. Another has Lieutenant Milo Minderbinder directing his buddies in the bombing of their own camp and leaving the runways and the mess halls intact so they could make a proper return landing and have a warm snack before retiring. But It is useless to enumerate. "So many monstrous events were occurring that he [the chaplain] was no longer positive which events *were* monstrous and which *were* really taking place." That quoted sentence can stand as characterizing the events of the entire book.

The effect of such wildly imagined actions is an artistic triumph in which the reader perceives the author's attitude as overtly playful in expression and managed event, this being the only way, or at least a meritoriously acceptable way, of facing the fundamental inhumanity and irrationality of war. The author begins with an *absurdum,* though the reader does not always recognize it as such, and makes It into a further and unmistakable *reductio ad absurdum.* It thus becomes unabashed hyperbole; its literary costume is familiar to one who has read Cervantes, or Rabelais, or Swift, or the American humorists of the Old Southwest and their principal heir, Mark Twain, who could be as darkly pessimistic as is the author of *Catch-22.*

Heller's comic genius, however, does not come to rest in the mere contrivances of exaggeration, daft though the exaggerations are. No part of the whole texture of objectively rendered dialogue, narrative, description, and introspective characterization fails to enhance the total artistry. Of random examples, let us cite first a bit of comic circularity-not hard to find-such as this one in which the staff psychiatrist, Major Sanderson, questions Yossarian:

"Hasn't it ever occurred to you that in your promiscuous pursuit of women you are merely trying to assuage your subconscious fears of sexual impotence?"
"Yes, Sir, it has."
"Then why do you do it?"
"To assuage my fears of sexual impotence."

Even in a paragraph of only ten lines, Heller can blend a telling bit of narrative with characterization and cynical reflective analysis:

Nately was a sensitive, rich, good-looking boy with dark hair, trusting eyes, and a pain in his neck when he awoke on the sofa early the next morning and wondered dully where he was. His nature was invariably gentle and polite. He had lived for almost twenty years without trauma, tension, hate, or neurosis, which was proof to Yossarian of just

how crazy he really was. His childhood had been a pleasant, though disciplined, one. He got on well with his brothers and sisters, and he did not hate his mother and father, even though they had both been very good to him.

Verbal humor crops up with considerable frequency in *Catch-22.* Yossarian, for example, said he "would rather die than to be killed in combat." A certain apartment maid in Rome (who wore lime colored panties) "was the most virtuous woman alive: she laid for *everybody,* regardless of race, creed, color or place of national origin" Often the irony is both humorous and grim, as in Corporal Whitcomb's form letter for Colonel Cathcart's self-serving and hypocritical condolence:

Dear Mrs, Mr., Miss, or Mr. and Mrs: Words cannot express the deep personal grief I experienced when your husband, son, father or brother was killed, wounded or reported missing in action.

Much of the verbal humor still more acutely serves Heller's almost constant preoccupation with characterization, as when Colonel Cathcart adjures his men to attend a U.S.O. show.

"... Now, men, don't misunderstand me. This is all voluntary, of course. I'd be the last colonel in the world to order you to go to that u.s.o show and have a good time, but I want every one of you who isn't sick enough to be in a hospital to go to that USO show right now and have a good time, and *that's an order!"*

Some indication of the mixture of horror and hilarity appears in examples already cited. But not enough to show how the cumulus of horror maintains itself against the pull of hilarity and finally establishes its ascendancy. Reappearing periodically throughout is Yossarian's memory of the bombing flight over Avignon when Snowden is mortally wounded and Yossarian as bombadier bandages a thigh wound of Snowden only to find that "whole mottled quarts" of Snowden's guts fall out when Yossarian rips open the injured man's flak suit. Memory of this experience recurs to Yossarian at intervals throughout the book, but it is so metered that it is only in the second to the last chapter that the horrible trauma experienced by Yossarian is brought home to the reader, helping to provide a clinching explanation of his refusal to obey any further flying orders and his decision to desert.

But there are other notable horror scenes of a different kind. In a chapter called "The Eternal City,"_ Yossarian wanders through the bombed ruins of Rome compassionately in search of a twelve-year-old girl who has been made homeless. It is a dark night of the soul, a nightmare of the bizarre and the surrealistic typified by a blue neon sign reading: "TONY'S RESTAURANT. FINE FOOD AND DRINK. KEEP OUT." As Yossarian tramps the streets in the raw, rainy night,

a boy in a thin shirt and thin tattered trousers walked out of the darkness on bare feet. His sickly face was pale and sad. His feet made grisly, soft, sucking sounds in the rain puddles on the wet pavement as he passed, and Yossarian was moved by such intense pity for his poverty that he wanted to smash his pale, sad, sickly face with his fist and

knock him out of existence because he brought to mind all the pale, sad, sickly children in Italy He made Yossarian think of cripples and of cold and hungry men and women, and of all the dumb, passive, devout mothers with catatonic eyes nursing infants outdoors that same night with chilled animal udders bared insensibly to that same raw rain.

Other similarly pathetic sights whip up in Yossarian a tide of frenzied anguished questions.

The night was filled with horrors, and he thought he knew how Christ must have felt as he walked through the world, like a psychiatrist through a ward full of nuts, like a victim through a prison full of thieves.

Another dramatically moving horror scene centers on an unfortunate character whose name, given him by a father with a bizarre sense of humor, is Major Major Major. By the whim of an IBM machine he is vaulted from private to major in four days; later he is arbitrarily named squadron commander by Colonel Cathcart, whereupon Major Major Major Major is dogged by ineptitude, loneliness, and ostracism. In a desperate attempt at fellowship he joins in an outdoor basketball game, first disguising himself with dark glasses and a false moustache. The scene that follows gradually takes on the ritual killing of a scape-goat reminiscent of Shirley Jackson's brilliant horror story, "The Lottery."

The others pretended not to recognize him, and he began to have fun. Just as he finished congratulating himself on his innocent ruse he was bumped hard by one of his opponents and knocked to his knees Soon he was bumped hard again, and It dawned on him that they did recognize him and that they were using his disguise as a license to elbow, trip and maul him. They did not want him at all And Just as he did realize this, the players on his team fused instinctively With the players on the other team into a single, howling, bloodthirsty mob that descended upon him from all sides With foul curses and swinging fists They knocked him to the ground, kicked him while he was on the ground, attacked him again after he had struggled blindly to his feet He covered his face with his hands and could not see They swarmed allover each other in their frenzied compulsion to bludgeon him, lack him, gouge him, trample him. He was pummeled spinning to the edge of the ditch and sent slithering down on his head and shoulders At the bottom he found his fooling, clambered up the other wall and staggered away beneath the hail of hoots and stones with which they pelted him until he lurched into shelter around a comer of the orderly room tent

Of course, Yossarian is no King Lear whose single tragic fault causes him to fall from on high. He lies, goldbricks, fornicates, cheats at gambling, even for a time goes about naked. Yet he is more sinned against than sinning. The military organization, commanded by a Vain, selfish publicity seeking, ambitious, greedy and unscrupulous authoritarian, has persecuted his squadron beyond endurance by periodically raising the number of missions required before a flier can be sent home. The number starts at twenty-five and moves by stages up to eighty. It is only after Yossarian points out that he

has now flown seventy-one "goddam combat missions" that his rebellion becomes final and he refuses to fly any more missions.

The central actions of Yossarian are nevertheless not to be seen as those of a strong-minded individualist. The entire sense of the book is that war, in itself irrational, makes everyone connected with it irrational. There are no good guys in this book. Just about everyone of the approximately two score characters of some importance is called crazy at one time or another. Not only can Nature be hostile ("There was nothing funny about living like a burp in a tent in Pianosa between fat mountains behind him and a placid blue sea in front that could gulp down a person with a cramp in a twinkling of an eye"); the Deity is likewise roundly vituperated by Yossarian. In an adulterous visit to Lieutenant Scheisskopf's wife (on Thanksgiving!) he argues with her about God:

"And don't tell me God works in mysterious ways," Yossarian continued.. "There's nothing so mysterious about It He's not working at all He's playing. Or else he's forgotten all about us. That's the land of God you people talk about-a country bumpkin, a clumsy, bungling, brainless, conceited, uncouth hayseed What in the world was running through that warped, evil, scatological mind of His when He robbed old people of power to control their bowel movements? Why in the world did he ever create pain?"

Even the chaplain is not immune from what seems the universal corruption of war. He

had mastered, in a moment of divine intuition, the handy technique of protective rationalization, and he was exhilarated at his discovery. It was miraculous. It was almost no trick at all, he saw, to turn vice into virtue and slander into truth, impotence into abstinence, arrogance into humility, plunder into philanthropy, thievery into honor, blasphemy into wisdom, brutality into patriotism, and sadism into Justice. Anybody could do It; It required no brains at all It merely required no character With effervescent agility the chaplain ran through the whole gamut of orthodox immoralities...

The responsive reader of *Catch-22* is thus made to walk a tight-rope as he leans first to riotous humor and then tips to the side of black tragedy. There is much in the book that illustrates Charlie Chaplin's dictum that humor is "playful pain." "The minute a thing is over tragic," says Chaplin, "it is funny." And he is supported emotionally, If not logically, by W C Fields, who said' "I never saw anything funny that wasn't terrible. If it causes pain, it's funny, if it doesn't it isn't." The humor in *Catch-22,* we are forced to conclude, is only secondary. Where Heller comes through in unalleviated horror is where the message lies. The book's humor does not alleviate the horror, it heightens it by contrast.

It is not therefore the disinterestedness of pure humor that we find in *Catch-22.* It does not accept the pain of life with wry resignation. Instead it flaunts in bitterness the desperate flag of resistance to the wrongs of this life-wrongs suffered, not by the wholly innocent, but by the insufficiently guilty. And the wrongs are perpetrated not only by unscrupulous, Ignorant, and power-hungry men, but also by the inscrutable deity.

Source: Louis Hasley, "Dramatic Tension in *Catch-22,"* in *The Midwest Quarterly,* Vol. 15, No.2, January, 1974, pp. 190-197.

Critical Essay #3

In the following excerpt, McDonald places Yossarian's character within the tradition of "American rebels" such as Huck Finn, Hester Prynne, and Ike McCaslin.

Yossarian of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* has been called a coward, an amoralist, a cop-out, a traitor. Others see him as a casualty, an individualist, a prophet of love, the last soul true to himself. The first readers object primarily because he "takes off," claiming this is artistically, patriotically, or morally no way to end the book..

Yet Yossarian gives up safety, rewards, and a hero's homecoming when he flees. He is in fact following an American tradition-escaping, or trying to escape, in order to save himself from absurdity, compromise, or despair. In what Hemingway called the source of modern American literature, *Huckleberry Finn,* Twain's puckish hero (after surviving a river's length of encounters with man's hideous inhumanity to man) also "lights out" for the Indian Territory. The similarity is striking when we realize that Yossarian leaves rather than be comfortably tamed and returned as a hero to the civilized States (for the glory of Colonels Cathcart and Korn) and that Huck leaves to avoid the comfortable (but to him confining and compromising) civilized family life.

There is in American fiction a tradition of heroes who "take off," or who renounce ease, or who deny themselves pleasure in quest of individual rather than conventional fulfillment. This radical individualism-absurd, perhaps, or ascetic-shows Yossarian at the end of the story to be not a copout, but one of many rebels in a tradition of rebels.

Thoreau set the tradition's example and gave it voice in the concluding chapter of *Walden:* "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away." Such a code romanticizes Natty Bumppo, for example, who refuses the comfort of the Effingham's' cabin in *The Pioneers,* preferring the free wilderness (and see his Lone Ranger solitude in the other Leather stocking tales, as well).

In a spirit of free renunciation and penitence, Hester Prynne resumes her symbol in *The Scarlet Letter,* long after anyone requires it. Hawthorne speculates that Pearl would "most joyfully" have entertained her mother in England in regal comfort. But Hester hears a drum no others hear.

However much we may think Lambert Strether's ethics are precious and overstrained at the end of *The Ambassadors,* we recognize in him another American individualist denying himself pleasure (marriage to Miss Gostrey) in order to save his concept of honor.

As if reading Thoreau's urging as a command ("Enjoy the land, but own it not," from "Baker Farm" in *Walden*), Faulkner's Ike McCaslin renounces his birthright to save himself and, he hopes, the land, which has been cursed by slavery. Repeatedly, his

cousin McCaslin Edmonds urges him to inherit the land and demands a reason for his refusal. The involuted Part IV of "The Bear" is Ike's attempt to explain the call of the different drummer he hears. Finally, even the temptation of his bride's sweet body is not enough to break his resolve, and Ike becomes uncle to half a county and father to none.

with Frederick Henry the tradition begins to involve patriotism rather than mere personal gain. But since It is the Italian Army, most readers easily allow him to take his farewell to Italian arms without rebuke. His desertion seems hardly that, justified as it is by the absurd circumstances. Justified also by this American code of individualism, he deserves to escape, deserves better surely than the tragic end, his farewell to Catherine Barkley's English arms.

Because life in those times played such dirty tricks on individuals, we even allow an American like Jake Barnes to exile himself in Europe after the war *(The Sun Also Rises*). Life in exile may not have been as simple as a hero's return; it may, in fact, have required a certain asceticism for Jake Barnes to endure the sad desperate crowd of his lost generation. But it is his solitary choice, preferring his troubled priestly life among the lost to the sterile homecoming of young Krebs in "Soldier's Home."

But it is Yossarian himself, literally marching backwards with his gun on his hip, who is the fullest example of Thoreau's man marching to a different drummer. At this same time of rebellion, he refuses to fly any more missions because, as the final blow, Nately has been killed. It is this point, it would seem, which critics would object to, rather than his actual desertion. For it is at this time, not when he runs away, that Yossarian quits the fight.

When he refuses to fly, his superiors have two choices: to court-martial him or to let it pass. Seeing a chance for profit to themselves, Colonels Cathcart and Korn offer him a deal: as Yossarian summarizes for the chaplain, "They'll let me go home a big hero if I say nice things about them to everybody and never criticize them to anyone for making the rest of the men fly more missions." It is such a "good deal" that Colonel Korn says, "'You'd have to be a fool to throw it all away just for a moral principle.'"

But that is exactly what Yossarian does. The passage is Heller's *donnee,* the stipulation of the rules the rest of his fiction is to be played by. The "deal" is what takes Yossarian *out* of the war. He does not desert from combat; he takes off from a "luxurious, privileged existence" that he would "have to be a fool" to turn down.

At first, even though he knows it would be "a pretty scummy trick" he would be playing on the men in his squadron who would have to remain, Yossarian leaves his new "pals" the colonels exhilarated. "He was home free he had pulled it off, his act of rebellion had succeeded, he was safe, and he had nothing to be ashamed of to anyone."

But after Nately's whore stabs him and as he is recovering in the hospital, Yossarian cannot go through with "the odious deal." The colonels have even compounded the lie by writing in the official report that Yossarian has been stabbed while heroically saving his colonels from a Nazi spy. Yossarian's "moral principle" which Colonel Korn has

scorned interferes: "'Let them send me home because I flew more than fifty missions,' Yossarian said, 'and not because I was stabbed by that girl, or because I've turned into such a stubborn son of a bitch.'"

But by now he is trapped: as Major Danby explains, "'If you don't go through with the deal, they're going to institute court-martial proceedings as soon as you sign out of the hospital.' " If he goes through with the deal, he violates his moral principle, dupes his country, and betrays his fellows. If he refuses and is court-martialed, he risks becoming another Billy Budd, whom Captain Vere martyred to preserve discipline For if Yossarian is found innocent, "'Other men would probably refuse to fly missions, too... and the military efficiency of the unit might be destroyed. So in that way,'" Major Danby concludes, "'it *would* be for the good of the country to have you found guilty and put in prison, even though you *are* innocent.' "

Here, Heller is carefully plotting, ethically walking the thin line between anarchy and individualism, and even doing so conservatively. Yossarian is in an absurd dilemma; he is faced with preposterous alternatives. Given such a situation, he invents a compromise: he does not want "to destroy the military efficiency of the unit"; neither does he want to be the pampered bellwether of the colonels' flock. So he says, "'I can run away.... Desert. Take off. I can turn my back on the whole damned mess and start running.'" Even before he hears that Orr has arrived in Sweden, Yossarian has decided to light out for the Territory. Orr's escape merely injects more hope into him.

Yet it is no life of ease Yossarian seeks in Sweden now, as he once has yearned for. Before things come to a crisis, Sweden has represented Elysium to him: Yossarian "would certainly have preferred Sweden, where the level of intelligence was high and where he could swim nude with beautiful girls with low demurring voices." But Sweden then "was out of reach," and at the story's close it may still be. Though the movie makes Yossarian ridiculous, rowing hopelessly away in his tiny raft for Sweden, the novel's Yossarian is more realistic:

"'You'll never get there,'" Major Danby warns. " 'You can't run away to Sweden. You can't even row.'"

" 'But I can get to Rome,' " Yossarian says, "'if you'll keep your mouth shut when you leave here and give me a chance to catch a ride.' "

Rather than swimming nude with beautiful girls, Yossarian's goal is more spartan now, to live accordingly to his "moral principle" or "responsibilities"-to march not in Scheisskopf's parade nor in Cathcart's and Korn's, but to the beat of his own drummer-specifically, at first, to rescue Nately's whore's kid sister from the hell of "The Eternal City" and save her life by taking her with him to Sweden.

He has chosen the harder way. Although he refuses the martyrdom of a court-martial, he has also renounced the free trip home to a hero's welcome. " 'Your conscience will never let you rest,' " Danby warns, but Yossarian laughs: "'God bless it...I wouldn't want to live without strong misgivings.'" Yossarian has not bought a ticket to safety, either.

The last time we see him, that latter-day fury Nately's whore slashes out at him. "The knife came down, missing him by inches."

"He took off," therefore, running not away from but toward his own honor. Like many in American fiction before him, by rebelling, he denies himself the easy, comfortable way. When I asked Heller if he was conscious of this radical tradition of renunciation, he replied in a letter dated February 8, 1971:

I conceived the ending to my book first and wrote the book, and It was only in the years since that I dwelled upon It as being in an old tradition of alienation and renunciation To the protagonists you mention [see above, Huck, Hester, Ike, etc.] can be added Ahab, Bartleby, Hightower (again Faulkner), to name a few.
The difference, though, is that Yossarian does not make good his escape, but only tries, and that this attempt is Illegal and turns turn into a fugitive, thereby instituting a struggle between turn and the authorities in the environment he repudiates. It may have been an easy way out for me, but definitely not for him, who could have more safely and comfortably accepted the offer of the Colonels to turn him into a hero and send him home My purpose was to raise a question rather than answer one; his action institutes a conflict rather than evades one And if his mood is one of elation at the end, it is mainly because he has moved off dead center finally and begun to act for himself.

Yossarian, marching backwards by himself and then renouncing a hero's comfortable role, is our clearest dramatization of Thoreau's man who steps to the beat of a different drummer. In Heller's intention, Yossarian is not copping out, is not taking the easy way, but rather "moved off dead center finally." And in his peculiar world of horror and absurdity, he is Ironically a "traditional" American rebel, like so many other cultural mavericks who have made their separate, principled peace.

Source: Walter R. McDonald, "He Took Off. Yossarian and the Different Drummer," in *The CEA Critic,* Vol 36, No. I, November, 1973, pp. 14-16.

Adaptations

A film of *Catch-22* was released in 1970 in the U.S., directed by Mike Nichols, screenplay by Buck Henry, starring Alan Arkin (as Yossarian), Martin Balsam, Richard Benjamin, and Art Garfunkel. Available on videotape from Paramount Pictures.

Catch-22: A Dramatization was a one-act play based on the novel, produced in East Hampton, New York, at the John Drew Theater, July 23, 1971 Script published by Samuel French, New York, 1971

Catch-22, a sound recording on two cassettes (approx. 120 minutes); abridged by Sue Dawson from the novel by Joseph Heller, read by Alan Arkin. Published by Listen for Pleasure, 1985.

Catch-22, an unsold pilot for a television comedy series, was created in 1973. Written by Hal Dresner, directed by Richard Quine, it starred Richard Dreyfuss as Yossarian.

Topics for Further Study

Research the antiwar movements of the 1950s and 1960s. Compare the reasoning antiwar activists presented for their opposition to war with the ideas presented in *Catch-22.*

Discuss the themes of greed and corruption in the business world in *Catch-22.* Find a real-life case of a disaster caused by corporate greed and compare it to Milo Minderbinder's actions.

Research the military justice system. Investigate under what circumstances a soldier may be charged with disobeying orders or desertion and what the penalties are. Then analyze how Yossarian's actions in *Catch-22* would have been charged and penalized.

Discuss how Heller uses language itself to show that war is absurd. Use examples from several characters and be sure to take quotes from the text to support your analysis.

Compare and Contrast

1940s: The U.S. invades Normandy, France, in June, 1944, while massively bombing Japan. Two atom bombs dropped on Japan in August will lead to Japan's surrender. The war ends in 1945.

1960s: In November 1961, President Kennedy begins increasing the number of American advisers in Vietnam, which will grow from 1,000 to 16,000 over the next two years. Two U.S. Army helicopter companies, the first direct American military support of South Vietnam, arrive in Saigon. In 1965, President Johnson will begin sending combat troops, without getting the approval of Congress.

Today: Recent police actions, such as Operation Desert Storm in 1991 and the 1983 invasion of Grenada (an island in the Caribbean), have been publicly questioned by Americans even as these actions were taking place. Congress must now vote on such actions.

1940s: Jim Crow laws in the South are the most obvious evidence that blacks are expected to keep their distance from whites. Throughout the country, African Americans have fewer educational and economic opportunities.

1960s: The Civil Rights movement is in full swing, as African Americans forced the federal government to pass the Civil Rights Act in 1957. Movement leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., advocate peaceful civil disobedience, but others, such as Malcolm X and the Black Panthers, suggest that armed resistance against white oppression should not be ruled out.

Today: Racism continues to afflict America, as the different responses between African Americans and whites to the O. J. Simpson trial pointed out African Americans still have higher rates of infant mortality, joblessness, and poverty than whites do.

1940s: While many men are off at war, women work as "Rosie the Riveters," taking jobs in the war industry. For many women, this is the first time they have entered the work force and earned their own money.

1960s: Betty Friedan publishes *The Feminine Mystique* In 1963, launching the modern-day feminist movement. The movement focuses on individual women at first, and only begins to be a major political force toward the end of the Vietnam War In the early 1970s.

Today: The term "feminism" has become so loaded with contradictory meanings that many women who are technically feminists (anyone who believes in political, social, and economic equality of the sexes) avoid it. Women make up 46% of the work force but still only make 75 cents for every dollar men earn.

What Do I Read Next?

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest (1962) by Ken Kesey is another novel about a man caught in an insane institution, in this case literally. Randall Patrick McMurphy was sent to an insane asylum as part of a plea bargain arrangement, and must fight to retain his sanity and sense of himself when he is confronted with the brutal authoritarian figure of Big Nurse, who runs the ward.

Slaughterhouse-Five (1969) by Kurt Vonnegut is another semi-autobiographical, satirical novel that uses a nonlinear structure to make its points about the horror and absurdity of war. The main action is set during the Allied bombing of Dresden, Germany, in World War II, and the main character, Billy Pilgrim, like Yossonan, is a bombardier.

Going after Cacciato (1979) is an antiwar novel by Tim O'Brien, set during the Vietnam War. In it, the main character, Cacciato, like Yossarian, tries to escape the war, in this case Vietnam, and arrive in a safe place, Pans. O'Brien, like Heller, uses black humor and surrealism to bring out his themes.

V. (1963) by Thomas Pynchon is a novel about a mysterious woman who shows up at key points in European history. Pynchon uses black humor to point out the flaws in American values in the 1950s. He also shows, like Heller, that language can serve to confuse people rather than clearly communicate Also, like *Catch-22, V.* has an unusual narrative structure that jumbles chronology.

The Best of Abbie Hoffman' Selections from "Revolution for the Hell of It," "Woodstock Nation," "Steal This Book," and New Writings (1990) by Abbie Hoffman, edited by Daniel Simon Abbie Hoffman was a highly influential political activist, radical, and counterculture hero of the 1960s who, like Joseph Heller, used humor to make important points about American society and values, as well as to criticize the war and big business. He believed that "street (guerilla) theater" got people's attention in the television age, so he arranged stunts such as dropping dollar bills on the Stock Exchange and threatening to have people meditate en masse, causing the Pentagon to levitate. He explained his ideas in several nonfiction books, excerpted in this collection.

*M*A*S*H*,* like *Catch-22,* was a satirical movie about the insanity of war, released in 1970 in the U.S., directed by Robert Altman, screenplay by Ring Lardner, Jr., starring Donald Sutherland, Elliot Gould, Sally Kellerman, and Robert Duvall. Available on video from 20th Century Fox.

Key Questions

Catch-22 has generated avid discussion among readers and critics since it was first published, for the novel was so experimental that it immediately raised debate about whether the designation of "novel" was appropriate, whether it had a form, whether the content was offensively vulgar, and whether Heller had significant problems with characterization. Evaluating the position of Catch-22 within literary tradition can lead to provocative discussion. Readers can compare the book to other treatments of war, such as Stephen Crane's The Red Badge of Courage (1895) or Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms (1929), can relate Heller's focus on Yossarian's quest for freedom to existentialist works; or can consider similarities and differences between Heller's treatment of a fragmented chronology with that of such writers as Faulkner and Fitzgerald.

Since Heller was involved in writing both film and television scripts, readers might enjoy relating this novel to works in other media. For instance, they might compare some of Heller's slapstick scenes to Mel Brooks's movies or note connections between Catch-22 and McHale's Navy, the pilot of which Heller wrote.

Heller excels in making us wary of systems from military hierarchies to hospital administration to our much celebrated American capitalism. Assessing the fairness of his depictions of these systems should provoke stimulating discussion. As should examining Heller's treatment of language. Do we find Doublespeak prevails in American society? Are we entrapped by logical illogic? What Catch-22 regulations exist in our culture?

1. In its unsettling combining of realistic and surrealistic techniques, is Catch-22 a novel, or perhaps does it expand our definition of what a novel is?

2. Does it seem, as one critic contended, that the pages of Heller's manuscript got scrambled on the way to the printer, or do you find meaningful structural patterns?

3. Is Heller's use of a large cast of flat characters a strength or a weakness?

4. Are Heller's portrayals of female characters demeaning? Are the male characters sex-obsessed? If so, is there a significant reason why?

5. What are Heller's major criticisms of the military? Of the medical establishment? Of capitalism? Of the judicial system? Do these criticisms seem justified?

6. What does Heller's portrayal of Chaplain Tappman suggest about the author's attitudes towards religion?

7. Of what significance are some of the characters' names, such as Orr, Milo Minderbender, Major Major, and General Peckem?

8. How effective is Yossarian as a protagonist? Why does Heller emphasize that he is Assyrian? Of what significance is his nakedness?

9. What impact does Chapter ThirtyNine "The Eternal City" make upon the reader?

10. How does Heller fixate upon mortality? Why is the Snowden incident repeated throughout the novel?

11. Is the ending of the novel pessimistic or affirmative or merely irritatingly inconclusive?

12. Heller has said of Catch-22, "The morality is rather orthodox — almost medieval." Do you agree with him?

Topics for Discussion

1. Catch-22 is an allegory; that is, each character represents some human quality. List the major characters and their allegorical characteristics.

2. Yossarian's nickname is Yo-Yo. He marches backwards; he clings naked to a tree, only to be brought down by one of Milo's schemes. Examine how Heller uses details to build Yossarian into a symbol. What is Yossarian a symbol of?

3. The names of several other characters are also symbolic—names like Orr, Snowden, Scheisskopf, Mindbender. What is the effect of these names on the tone of the novel?

4. Is Yossarian crazy? Is he insane? Is there a difference?

5. What is "black humor"? How does it contribute to the themes of Catch-22?

6. Catch-22 was published in 1961, during the early days in the presidency of John Kennedy, a time when many Americans were very optimistic and idealistic. Why would a book as bleak as Catch-22 become so popular during such an era?

Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Research the philosophical terms "existentialism" and "nihilism" and show how they apply to the themes in Catch-22.

2. Read the novel One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest by Ken Kesey, or Slaughterhouse-Five by Kurt Vonnegut, and compare the use of black humor and absurdity in that book and Catch22.

3. Compare Catch-22 to a traditional World War II novel.

4. Define the term "anti-hero" and explain why Yossarian fits the role.

5. Although the "loss of innocence" theme usually focuses on younger characters, such as Huck Finn or Holden Caulfield, it applies to the adult Yossarian in Catch-22. Discuss some of the episodes in which Yossarian loses his innocence.

Literary Precedents

Catch-22 reveals the thorough acquaintance with modern literature of its author, a possessor of both a B.A. and an M.A. in English. The novel is modernist in its portrayal of an absurd universe, its black humor, its' fragmented time scheme, and its alienated protagonist. One writer who influenced Heller is James Joyce, whom Heller emulates in providing naturalistic details and in using the device of the epiphany, a scene depicting a character's moment of insight. Furthermore, Heller credits Joyce's characterization of Leopold Bloom in Ulysses (1914) with inspiring his own creation of Yossarian. Another modern writer who influenced Heller is Franz Kafka, with whom Heller shares an aversion to bureaucracies. The nightmarish trial scenes of Clevinger and the chaplain are particularly Kafkaesque. To William Faulkner, Heller attributes his structure, noting that he strove to present bits of information and then to connect them at the end of his book, much as Faulkner did in Absalom, Absalom! (1936) and The Sound and the Fury (1929).

The immediate impetus for Catch-22 came from two authors Heller discovered in the same week: Louis-Ferdinand Celine and Vladimir Nabokov.

Heller states, "What I got from Celine is the slangy use of prose and the continuity that is relaxed and vague rather than precise and motivated; from Nabokov's Laughter in the Dark (1938), the flippant approach to situations which were filled with anguish and grief and tragedy." Heller's humor seems also close to that of Nathanael West.

In content, Heller's most important predecessor for showing the absurdity of the military is The Good Soldier Schweik (1920) by Jaroslav Hasek.

Catch-22 also alludes to and parodies other twentieth-century war novels, including Ernest Hemingway's A Farewell to Arms (1929), James Jones's From Here to Eternity (1951), and Norman Mailer's The Naked and the Dead (1948).

Inspiration for the chapter most critics agree is the novel's finest, "The Eternal City," a surrealistic vision of inhumanity, came from Dostoevsky's Crime and Punishment (1866) and Dante's Inferno (1321).

Further Study

Alex Cockburn, review in *New Left Review,* Vol. 18, January-February, 1963, pp 87-92.

Cockburn praises Heller's humor but Criticizes him for never moving beyond parody into satire.

Review in *Daedalus' Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences,* Vol. 92, No.1, Winter, 1963, pp 155-65.

A scathing review of the novel, focusing on its immoral underpinnings and Heller's faults as a writer.

Gary Lindberg, "Playing for Real," in *The Confidence Man in American Literature,* Oxford University Press, 1982, 231-58.

Lindberg contrasts Yossarian and Milo as confidence-men figures, and favorably compares Yossarian to Huckleberry Finn.

Robert Merrill, "The Structure and Meaning of *Catch-22,"* in *Studies in American Fiction,* Vol 14, No.2, Autumn, 1986, pp. 139-52.

Merrill focuses on Heller's use of cyclical repetition of episodes that "move from the comic to the terrible" in the novel, causing the reader to reevaluate his own reactions to these episodes.

Robert Merrill, *Joseph Heller,* Twayne, 1987.

Merrill examines Heller's thematic and technical concerns in his work.

Victor J. Milne, "Heller's 'Bologmad': A Theological Perspective on *Catch-22,"* in *Critique: Studies in Modern Fiction,* Vol 12, No 2, 1970, pp 50-69.

This critical article examines Heller's use of the mock-epic form, as well as Heller's asserting a humanistic Christian ethic over a destructive competitive ethic.

Janies Nagel, editor, *Critical Essays on Joseph Heller,* G. K. Hall, 1984.

A collection of Critical essays on Heller's work

George *J.* Searles, "Joseph Heller,"' in *Dictionary of Literary Biography, Volume* 28' *Twentieth Century American Jewish Fiction Writers,* edited by Darnel Walden, Gale, 1984, pp. 101-107.

An overview of the author's works and career.

David Seed, *The Fiction of Joseph Heller Against the Grain,* Macmillan, 1989.

A full-length study of Heller's body of work.

Leon F. Seltzer, "Milo's 'Culpable Innocence': Absurdity as Moral Insanity in *Catch-22,"* in *Papers on Language and Literature,* Vol 15, No 3, Summer, 1979, pp. 290-310. Seltzer provides an in-depth study of Milo, focusing on his extreme commitment to capitalistic ideals and the moral blindness that results from this commitment.

Jan Solomon, "The Structure of Joseph Heller's *Catch-22,"* in *Critique,* Vol 9, No.2, 1967, pp 46-57

Solomon asserts that the differing time sequences of Yossarian's and Milo's stories reinforce the absurdity of the novel.

Jeffrey Walsh, "Towards Vietnam, Portraying Modern War," in *American War Literature* 1914 *to Vietnam,* Macmillan, 1982, pp, 185-207.

Walsh contends that the novel's satire, themes, and form distinguish it from the traditional war novel.

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Mike Frank, "Eros and Thanatos in *Catch-22,"* in *Canadian Review of American Studies,* Spring, 1976, pp 77-87 Eliot Fremont-Smith, "Kvetch-22," in *Village Voice,* March 5, 1979, pp. 74-75.

Jean E Kennard, "Joseph Heller. At War with Absurdity," *in Mosaic,* Vol. IV, No 3, Spring, 1971, pp. 75-87. Richard Locke, "What I Like," in *New York Times Book Review,* May 15, 1997, pp. 3, 36-37.

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Carol Pearson, *"Catch-22* and the Debasement of Language," in *The CEA Critic,* November, 1974, pp. 30-5

Orville Prescott, review of *Catch-22,* in *New York Times,* October 23, 1961, p. 27.

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BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

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