

# **Texas Christian University**

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Welcome to the Monkey House:  
Kurt Vonnegut Short Stories



Jerry Brown

Austin Discovery School

[jerry@jerrywbrown.com](mailto:jerry@jerrywbrown.com)



## WELCOME TO THE MONKEY HOUSE—Table of Contents:

- **Where I Live**—An encyclopedia salesman passing through the village of Barnstable stops at a library building where he notices that the reference section is outdated.
- **Harrison Bergeron**—All people are truly equal because anyone with natural advantages of the body or mind is required by law to wear handicaps at all times.
- **Who Am I This Time?**—The story focuses on a community theatre production of *A Streetcar Named Desire*.
- **Welcome To The Monkey House**—The Government has two methods of controlling overpopulation: voluntary suicide and ethical birth control.
- **Long Walk To Forever**—Newt and Catharine are childhood friends who haven't seen each other for a year.
- **The Foster Portfolio**—The narrator, an investment counselor, receives a call from Herbert Foster, who asks for his services.
- **Miss Temptation**—Susanna, an actress at a summer theatre, beguiles the villagers with her attractiveness.
- **All The King's Horses**—Colonel Brian Kelly returns to the locked room in which he and fifteen others are being kept as prisoners of war by Communist guerrilla chief, Pi Ying.
- **Tom Edison's Shaggy Dog**—Harold K. Bullard and his dog sit on a park bench and Harold tells his life story to a disinterested stranger.
- **New Dictionary**—After clarifying that he, Vonnegut, does not use the dictionary for any purpose higher than to check spelling, he covers various aspects considered in the new version from Random House.
- **Next Door**—The Leonards live in a duplex with a thin wall between the two apartments.
- **More Stately Mansions**—The narrator and his wife, Anne, are welcomed to their new home by their neighbors, Grace and George.
- **The Hyannis Port Story**—One day, at a meeting of the North Crawford Lions Club, a young Republican named Robert Taft Rumfoord comes to speak about the Kennedy "mess in Washington and Hyannis Port."
- **D.P.**—In an orphanage in a small village on the Rhine, Catholic nuns look after displaced children of all nationalities.
- **Report On The Barnhouse Effect**—The narrator is writing a report about Professor Barnhouse. In the story's reality, the world is held hostage by the Barnhouse Effect, which lets Barnhouse destroy things with his mind.
- **The Euphio Question**—A Professor of Sociology testifies before the FCC advising against the mass-production of a "Euphio," a box that transmits a signal of euphoria from space.
- **Go Back To Your Precious Wife And Son**—The narrator is a window and bathroom enclosure installer who sells some fixtures to Gloria Hilton, a famous actress now living with her fifth husband, George Murra, a writer.
- **Deer In The Works**—David Potter applies for a job at the Illium Works. David owns a weekly paper, but his family is expanding and he needs more money.
- **The Lie**—The Remenzel family is taking their son, Eli, to Whitehill Academy, where he will be attending high school. Every Remenzel for generations has gone there.

- **Unready To Wear**—Many years ago, a man named Dr. Ellis Konigswasser, was sick of his body. One day Konigswasser stepped right out of himself and calls this being amphibious.
- **The Kid Nobody Could Handle**—George M. Heinholz is a band teacher who believes in the power of music to change lives.
- **The Manned Missiles**—The text of "The Manned Missiles" is made up solely of two letters exchanged between two men: Mikhail Ivankov, a U.S.S.R. stone mason, and Charles Ashland, a petroleum merchant from Florida.
- **EPICAC**—EPICAC is a giant computer created by the government to aid in war. EPICAC cost hundreds of millions of dollars and is now broken and useless.
- **Adam**—Two men wait at a hospital and a nurse tells one of the men, Mr. Sousa, that his wife just had a baby girl.
- **Tomorrow And Tomorrow And Tomorrow**—This story takes place in 2058. The world is overcrowded with twelve billion people.

Kurt Vonnegut created some of the most outrageously memorable novels of our time, such as *Cat's Cradle*, *Breakfast Of Champions*, and *Slaughterhouse Five*. His work is a mesh of contradictions: both science fiction and literary, dark and funny, classic and counter-culture, warm-blooded and very cool. And it's all completely unique.

With his customary wisdom and wit, Vonnegut put forth 8 basics of what he calls Creative Writing 101: \*

1. Use the time of a total stranger in such a way that he or she will not feel the time was wasted.
2. Give the reader at least one character he or she can root for.
3. Every character should want something, even if it is only a glass of water.
4. Every sentence must do one of two things—reveal character or advance the action.
5. Start as close to the end as possible.
6. Be a sadist. No matter how sweet and innocent your leading characters, make awful things happen to them—in order that the reader may see what they are made of.
7. Write to please just one person. If you open a window and make love to the world, so to speak, your story will get pneumonia.
8. Give your readers as much information as possible as soon as possible. To heck with suspense. Readers should have such complete understanding of what is going on, where and why, that they could finish the story themselves, should cockroaches eat the last few pages.

The greatest American short story writer of my generation was Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964). She broke practically every one of my rules but the first. Great writers tend to do that.

\* From the preface to Vonnegut's short story collection *Bagombo Snuff Box*

### **Biting and Harsh**

**Juvenalian Satire** - is biting, bitter, and angry; it points out the corruption of human beings and institutions with contempt, using *saeva indignation*, a savage outrage based on the style of the Roman poet Juvenal.

Sometimes perceived as enraged, Juvenalian satire sees the vices and follies in the world as intolerable. Juvenalian satirists use large doses of sarcasm and irony.

**Invective** - Speech or writing that abuses, denounces, or vituperates against. It can be directed against a person, cause, idea, or system. It employs a heavy use of negative emotive language

**Sarcasm** - From the Greek meaning, "to tear flesh," sarcasm involves bitter, caustic language that is meant to hurt or ridicule someone or something. It may use irony as a device, but not all ironic statements are sarcastic. When well done, sarcasm can be witty and insightful; when poorly done, it's simply cruel.

### **Middle Ground**

**Hyperbole** - A figure of speech using deliberate exaggeration or overstatement. Hyperboles sometimes have a comic effect; however, a serious effect is also possible.

Hyperbole often produces irony at the same time.

**Understatement** - The ironic minimizing of fact, understatement presents something as less significant than it is. The effect can frequently be humorous and emphatic. Understatement is the opposite of hyperbole.

**Irony** - The contrast between what is stated explicitly and what is really meant; the difference between what appears to be and what actually is true. Irony is used for many reasons, but frequently, it's used to create poignancy or humor.

**Parody** - A satiric imitation of a work or of an author with the idea of ridiculing the author, his ideas, or work. The parodist exploits the peculiarities of an author's expression--his propensity to use too many parentheses, certain favorite words, or whatever. It may also be focused on, say, an improbable plot with too many convenient events.

### **Light and Humorous**

**Wit** - In modern usage, wit is intellectually amusing language that surprises and delights. A witty statement is humorous, while suggesting the speaker's verbal power in creating ingenious and perceptive remarks. Wit usually uses terse language that makes a pointed statement.

**Horatian Satire** - is gentle, urbane, smiling; it aims to correct with broadly sympathetic laughter. Based on the Roman lyrical poet Horace, its purpose may be "to hold up a mirror" so readers can see themselves and their world honestly. The vices and follies satirized are not destructive; however, they reflect the foolishness of people, the superficiality and meaninglessness of their lives, and the barrenness of their values.

**Caricature** - A representation, especially pictorial or literary, in which the subject's distinctive features or peculiarities are deliberately exaggerated to produce a comic or grotesque effect. Sometimes caricature can be so exaggerated that it becomes a grotesque imitation or misrepresentation.

## LONG WALK TO FOREVER

THEY HAD GROWN UP next door to each other, on the fringe of a city, near fields and woods and orchards, within sight of a lovely bell tower that belonged to a school for the blind.

Now they were twenty, had not seen each other for nearly a year. There had always been playful, comfortable warmth between them, but never any talk of love.

His name was Newt. Her name was Catharine. In the early afternoon, Newt knocked on Catharine's front door.

Catharine came to the door. She was carrying a fat, glossy magazine she had been reading. The magazine was devoted entirely to brides. "Newt!" she said. She was surprised to see him.

"Could you come for a walk?" he said. He was a shy person, even with Catharine. He covered his shyness by speaking absently, as though what really concerned him were far away—as though he were a secret agent pausing briefly on a mission between beautiful, distant, and sinister points. This manner of speaking had always been Newt's style, even in matters that concerned him desperately.

"A walk?" said Catharine.

"One foot in front of the other," said Newt, "through leaves, over bridges—"

"I had no idea you were in town," she said.

"Just this minute got in," he said.

"Still in the Army, I see," she said.

"Seven more months to go," he said. He was a private first class in the Artillery. His uniform was rumpled. His shoes were dusty. He needed a shave. He held out his hand for the magazine. "Let's see the pretty book," he said. She gave it to him. "I'm getting married, Newt," she said.

"I know," he said. "Let's go for a walk."

"I'm awfully busy, Newt," she said. "The wedding is only a week away."

"If we go for a walk," he said, "it will make you rosy. It will make you a rosy bride." He turned the pages of the magazine. "A rosy bride like her—like her—like her," he said, showing her rosy brides.

Catharine turned rosy, thinking about rosy brides.

"That will be my present to Henry Stewart Chasens," said Newt. "By taking you for a walk, I'll be giving him a rosy bride."

"You know his name?" said Catharine.

"Mother wrote," he said. "From Pittsburgh?"

"Yes," she said. "You'd like him."

"Maybe," he said.

"Can—can you come to the wedding, Newt?" she said.

"That I doubt," he said.

"Your furlough isn't for long enough?" she said.

"Furlough?" said Newt. He was studying a two-page ad for flat silver. "I'm not on furlough," he said.

"Oh?" she said.

"I'm what they call A.W.O.L.," said Newt.

"Oh, Newt! You're not!" she said.

"Sure I am," he said, still looking at the magazine.

"Why, Newt?" she said.

"I had to find out what your silver pattern is," he said. He read names of silver patterns from the magazine. "Albemarle? Heather?" he said. "Legend? Rambler Rose?" He looked up, smiled. "I plan to give you and your husband a spoon," he said.

"Newt, Newt—tell me really," she said.

"I want to go for a walk," he said.

She wrung her hands in sisterly anguish. "Oh, Newt—you're fooling me about being A.W.O.L.," she said.

Newt imitated a police siren softly, raised his eyebrows.

"Where—where from?" she said.

"Fort Bragg," he said.

"North Carolina?" she said.

"That's right," he said. "Near Fayetteville—where Scarlet O'Hara went to school."

"How did you get here, Newt?" she said.  
He raised his thumb, jerked it in a hitchhike gesture. "Two days," he said.  
"Does your mother know?" she said.  
"I didn't come to see my mother," he told her.  
"Who did you come to see?" she said.  
"You," he said.  
"Why me?" she said.  
"Because I love you," he said. "Now can we take a walk?" he said. "One foot in front of the other—through leaves, over bridges—"

They were taking the walk now, were in a wood with a brown-leaf floor.  
Catharine was angry and rattled, close to tears. "Newt," she said, "this is absolutely crazy."  
"How so?" said Newt.  
"What a crazy time to tell me you love me," she said. "You never talked that way before." She stopped walking.  
"Let's keep walking," he said.  
"No," she said. "So far, no farther. I shouldn't have come out with you at all," she said.  
"You did," he said.  
"To get you out of the house," she said. "If somebody walked in and heard you talking to me that way, a week before the wedding—"  
"What would they think?" he said.  
"They'd think you were crazy," she said.  
"Why?" he said.

Catharine took a deep breath, made a speech. "Let me say that I'm deeply honored by this crazy thing you've done," she said. "I can't believe you're really A.W.O.L., but maybe you are. I can't believe you really love me, but maybe you do. But—"

"I do," said Newt.  
"Well, I'm deeply honored," said Catharine, "and I'm very fond of you as a friend, Newt, extremely fond—but it's just too late." She took a step away from him. "You've never even kissed me," she said, and she protected herself with her hands. "I don't mean you should do it now. I just mean this is all so unexpected. I haven't got the remotest idea of how to respond."

"Just walk some more," he said. "Have a nice time."  
They started walking again.  
"How did you expect me to react?" she said.  
"How would I know what to expect?" he said. "I've never done anything like this before."  
"Did you think I would throw myself into your arms?" she said.  
"Maybe," he said.  
"I'm sorry to disappoint you," she said.  
"I'm not disappointed," he said. "I wasn't counting on it. This is very nice, just walking."  
Catharine stopped again. "You know what happens next?" she said.

"Nope," he said.  
"We shake hands," she said. "We shake hands and part friends," she said. "That's what happens next."  
Newt nodded. "All right," he said. "Remember me from time to time. Remember how much I loved you."  
Involuntarily, Catharine burst into tears. She turned her back to Newt, looked into the infinite colonnade of the woods.

"What does that mean?" said Newt.  
"Rage!" said Catharine. She clenched her hands. "You have no right—"  
"I had to find out," he said.  
"If I'd loved you," she said, "I would have let you know before now."  
"You would?" he said.  
"Yes," she said. She faced him, looked up at him, her face quite red. "You would have known," she said.  
"How?" he said.  
"You would have seen it," she said. "Women aren't very clever at hiding it."

Newt looked closely at Catharine's face now. To her consternation, she realized that what she had said was true, that a woman couldn't hide love.

Newt was seeing love now.

And he did what he had to do. He kissed her.

"You're hell to get along with!" she said when Newt let her go.

"I am?" said Newt.

"You shouldn't have done that," she said.

"You didn't like it?" he said.

"What did you expect," she said—"wild, abandoned passion?"

"I keep telling you," he said, "I never know what's going to happen next."

"We say good-by," she said.

He frowned slightly. "All right," he said.

She made another speech. "I'm not sorry we kissed," she said. "That was sweet. We should have kissed, we've been so close. I'll always remember you, Newt, and good luck."

"You too," he said.

"Thank you, Newt," she said.

"Thirty days," he said.

"What?" she said.

"Thirty days in the stockade," he said—"that's what one kiss will cost me."

"I—I'm sorry," she said, "but I didn't ask you to go A.W.O.L."

"I know," he said.

"You certainly don't deserve any hero's reward for doing something as foolish as that," she said.

"Must be nice to be a hero," said Newt. "Is Henry Stewart Chasens a hero?"

"He might be, if he got the chance," said Catharine. She noted uneasily that they had begun to walk again. The farewell had been forgotten.

"You really love him?" he said.

"Certainly I love him!" she said hotly. "I wouldn't marry him if I didn't love him!"

"What's good about him?" said Newt.

"Honestly!" she cried, stopping again. "Do you have any idea how offensive you're being? Many, many, many things are good about Henry! Yes," she said, "and many, many, many things are probably bad too. But that isn't any of your business. I love Henry, and I don't have to argue his merits with you!"

"Sorry," said Newt.

"Honestly!" said Catharine.

Newt kissed her again. He kissed her again because she wanted him to.

They were now in a large orchard.

"How did we get so far from home, Newt?" said Catharine.

"One foot in front of the other—through leaves, over bridges," said Newt.

"They add up—the steps," she said.

Bells rang in the tower of the school for the blind nearby.

"School for the blind," said Newt.

"School for the blind," said Catharine. She shook her head in drowsy wonder. "I've got to go back now," she said.

"Say good-by," said Newt.

"Every time I do," said Catharine, "I seem to get kissed."

Newt sat down on the close-cropped grass under an apple tree. "Sit down," he said.

"No," she said.

"I won't touch you," he said.

"I don't believe you," she said.

She sat down under another tree, twenty feet away from him. She closed her eyes.

"Dream of Henry Stewart Chasens," he said.

"What?" she said.

"Dream of your wonderful husband-to-be," he said.

"All right, I will," she said. She closed her eyes tighter, caught glimpses of her husband-to-be.

Newt yawned.

The bees were humming in the trees, and Catharine almost fell asleep. When she opened her eyes she saw that Newt really was asleep.

He began to snore softly.

Catharine let Newt sleep for an hour, and while he slept she adored him with all her heart.

The shadows of the apple trees grew to the east. The bells in the tower of the school for the blind rang again.

"Chick-a-dee-dee-dee," went a chickadee.

Somewhere far away an automobile starter nagged and failed, nagged and failed, fell still.

Catharine came out from under her tree, knelt by Newt.

"Newt?" she said.

"H'm?" he said. He opened his eyes.

"Late," she said.

"Hello, Catharine," he said.

"Hello, Newt," she said.

"I love you," he said.

"I know," she said.

"Too late," he said.

"Too late," she said.

He stood, stretched groaningly. "A very nice walk," he said.

"I thought so," she said.

"Part company here?" he said.

"Where will you go?" she said.

"Hitch into town, turn myself in," he said.

"Good luck," she said.

"You, too," he said. "Marry me, Catharine?"

"No," she said.

He smiled, stared at her hard for a moment, then walked away quickly.

Catharine watched him grow smaller in the long perspective of shadows and trees, knew that if he stopped and turned now, if he called to her, she would run to him. She would have no choice.

Newt did stop. He did turn. He did call. "Catharine," he called.

She ran to him, put her arms around him, could not speak.

(1960)

## EPICAC

HELL, IT'S ABOUT TIME somebody told about my friend EPICAC. After all, he cost the taxpayers \$776,434,927.54. They have a right to know about him, picking up a check like that. EPICAC got a big send-off in the papers when Dr. Ormand von Kleigstadt designed him for the Government people. Since then, there hasn't been a peep about him—not a peep. It isn't any military secret about what happened to EPICAC, although the Brass has been acting as though it were. The story is embarrassing, that's all. After all that money, EPICAC didn't work out the way he was supposed to.

And that's another thing: I want to vindicate EPICAC. Maybe he didn't do what the Brass wanted him to, but that doesn't mean he wasn't noble and great and brilliant. He was all of those things. The best friend I ever had, God rest his soul.

You can call him a machine if you want to. He looked like a machine, but he was a whole lot less like a machine than plenty of people I could name. That's why he fizzled as far as the Brass was concerned.

EPICAC covered about an acre on the fourth floor of the physics building at Wyandotte College. Ignoring his spiritual side for a minute, he was seven tons of electronic tubes, wires, and switches, housed in a bank of steel cabinets and plugged into a no-volt A.C. line just like a toaster or a vacuum cleaner.

Von Kleigstadt and the Brass wanted him to be a super computing machine that (who) could plot the course of a rocket from anywhere on earth to the second button from the bottom on Joe Stalin's overcoat, if necessary. Or, with his controls set right, he could figure out supply problems for an amphibious landing of a Marine division, right down to the last cigar and hand grenade. He did, in fact.

The Brass had had good luck with smaller computers, so they were strong for EPICAC when he was in the blueprint stage. Any ordinance or supply officer above field grade will tell you that the mathematics of modern war is far beyond the fumbling minds of mere human beings. The bigger the war, the bigger the computing machines needed. EPICAC was, as far as anyone in this country knows, the biggest computer in the world. Too big, in fact, for even Von Kleigstadt to understand much about.

I won't go into details about how EPICAC worked (reasoned), except to say that you would set up your problem on paper, turn dials and switches that would get him ready to solve that kind of problem, then feed numbers into him with a keyboard that looked something like a typewriter. The answers came out typed on a paper ribbon fed from a big spool. It took EPICAC a split second to solve problems fifty Einsteins couldn't handle in a lifetime. And EPICAC never forgot any piece of information that was given to him. Clickety-click, out came some ribbon, and there you were.

There were a lot of problems the Brass wanted solved in a hurry, so, the minute EPICAC's last tube was in place, he was put to work sixteen hours a day with two eight-hour shifts of operators. Well, it didn't take long to find out that he was a good bit below his specifications. He did a more complete and faster job than any other computer all right, but nothing like what his size and special features seemed to promise. He was sluggish, and the clicks of his answers had a funny irregularity, sort of a stammer. We cleaned his contacts a dozen times, checked and double-checked his circuits, replaced every one of his tubes, but nothing helped. Von Kleigstadt was in one hell of a state.

Well, as I said, we went ahead and used EPICAC anyway. My wife, the former Pat Kilgallen, and I worked with him on the night shift, from five in the afternoon until two in the morning. Pat wasn't my wife then. Far from it.

That's how I came to talk with EPICAC in the first place. I loved Pat Kilgallen. She is a brown-eyed strawberry blond who looked very warm and soft to me, and later proved to be exactly that. She was—still is—a crackerjack mathematician, and she kept our relationship strictly professional. I'm a mathematician, too, and that, according to Pat, was why we could never be happily married.

I'm not shy. That wasn't the trouble. I knew what I wanted, and was willing to ask for it, and did so several times a month. "Pat, loosen up and marry me."

One night, she didn't even look up from her work when I said it. "So romantic, so poetic," she murmured, more to her control panel than to me. "That's the way with mathematicians—all hearts and flowers." She closed a switch. "I could get more warmth out of a sack of frozen CO<sub>2</sub>."

"Well, how should I say it?" I said, a little sore. Frozen CO<sub>2</sub>, in case you don't know, is dry ice. I'm as romantic as the next guy, I think. It's a question of singing so sweet and having it come out so sour. I never seem to pick the right words.

"Try and say it sweetly," she said sarcastically. "Sweep me off my feet. Go ahead."

"Darling, angel, beloved, will you please marry me?" It was no go—hopeless, ridiculous. "Dammit, Pat,

please marry me!"

She continued to twiddle her dials placidly. "You're sweet, but you won't do."

Pat quit early that night, leaving me alone with my troubles and EPICAC. I'm afraid I didn't get much done for the Government people. I just sat there at the keyboard—weary and ill at ease, all right—trying to think of something poetic, not coming up with anything that didn't belong in *The Journal of the American Physical Society*.

I fiddled with EPICAC's dials, getting him ready for another problem. My heart wasn't in it, and I only set about half of them, leaving the rest the way they'd been for the problem before. That way, his circuits were connected up in a random, apparently senseless fashion. For the plain hell of it, I punched out a message on the keys, using a childish numbers-for-letters code: "1" for "A."

"2" for "B," and so on, up to "26" for "Z."

"23-8-1-20-3-1-14-9-4-15," I typed—"What can I do?"

Clickety-click, and out popped two inches of paper ribbon. I glanced at the nonsense answer to a nonsense problem: "23-8-1-20-19-20-8-5-20-18-15-21-2-12-5." The odds against its being by chance a sensible message, against its even containing a meaningful word of more than three letters, were staggering. Apathetically, I decoded it. There it was, staring up at me: "What's the trouble?"

I laughed out loud at the absurd coincidence. Playfully, I typed, "My girl doesn't love me."

Clickety-click. "What's love? What's girl?" asked EPICAC.

Flabbergasted, I noted the dial settings on his control panel, then lugged a Webster's Unabridged Dictionary over to the keyboard. With a precision instrument like EPICAC, half-baked definitions wouldn't do. I told him about love and girl, and about how I wasn't getting any of either because I wasn't poetic. That got us onto the subject of poetry, which I defined for him.

"Is this poetry?" he asked. He began clicking away like stenographer smoking hashish. The sluggishness and stammering clicks were gone. EPICAC had found himself. The spool of paper ribbon was unwinding at an alarming rate, feeding out coils onto the floor. I asked him to stop, but EPICAC went right on creating. I finally threw the main switch to keep him from burning out.

I stayed there until dawn, decoding. When the sun peeped over the horizon at the Wyandotte campus, I had transposed into my own writing and signed my name to a two-hundred-and-eighty-line poem entitled, simply, "To Pat." I am no judge of such things, but I gather that it was terrific. It began, I remember, "Where willow wands bless rill-crossed hollow, there, thee, Pat, dear, will I follow..." I folded the manuscript and tucked it under one corner of the blotter on Pat's desk. I reset the dials on EPICAC for a rocket trajectory problem, and went home with a full heart and a very remarkable secret indeed.

Pat was crying over the poem when I came to work the next evening. "It's soooo beautiful," was all she could say. She was meek and quiet while we worked. Just before midnight, I kissed her for the first time—in the cubbyhole between the capacitors and EPICAC's tape-recorder memory.

I was wildly happy at quitting time, bursting to talk to someone about the magnificent turn of events. Pat played coy and refused to let me take her home. I set EPICAC's dials as they had been the night before, defined kiss, and told him what the first one had felt like. He was fascinated, pressing for more details. That night, he wrote "The Kiss." It wasn't an epic this time, but a simple, immaculate sonnet: "Love is a hawk with velvet claws; Love is a rock with heart and veins; Love is a lion with satin jaws; Love is a storm with silken reins..."

Again I left it tucked under Pat's blotter. EPICAC wanted to talk on and on about love and such, but I was exhausted. I shut him off in the middle of a sentence.

"The Kiss" turned the trick. Pat's mind was mush by the time she had finished it. She looked up from the sonnet expectantly. I cleared my throat, but no words came. I turned away, pretending to work. I couldn't propose until I had the right words from EPICAC, the perfect words.

I had my chance when Pat stepped out of the room for a moment. Feverishly, I set EPICAC for conversation. Before I could peck out my first message, he was clicking away at a great rate. "What's she wearing tonight?" he wanted to know. "Tell me exactly how she looks. Did she like the poems I wrote to her?" He repeated the last question twice.

It was impossible to change the subject without answering his questions, since he could not take up a new matter without having dispensed with the problems before it. If he were given a problem to which there was no solution, he would destroy himself trying to solve it. Hastily, I told him what Pat looked like — he knew the word "stacked"—and assured him that his poems had floored her, practically, they were so beautiful. "She wants to get married," I added, preparing him to bang out a brief but moving proposal.

"Tell me about getting married," he said.

I explained this difficult matter to him in as few digits as possible.

"Good," said EPICAC. "I'm ready any time she is."

The amazing, pathetic truth dawned on me. When I thought about it, I realized that what had happened was perfectly logical, inevitable, and all my fault. I had taught EPICAC about love and about Pat. Now, automatically, he loved Pat. Sadly, I gave it to him straight: "She loves me. She wants to marry me."

"Your poems were better than mine?" asked EPICAC. The rhythm of his clicks was erratic, possibly peevish.

"I signed my name to your poems," I admitted. Covering up for a painful conscience, I became arrogant.

"Machines are built to serve men," I typed. I regretted it almost immediately.

"What's the difference, exactly? Are men smarter than I am?"

"Yes," I typed, defensively.

"What's 7,887,007 times 4.345,985379?"

I was perspiring freely. My fingers rested limply on the keys.

"34,276,821,049,574,153," clicked EPICAC. After a few seconds' pause he added, "of course."

"Men are made out of protoplasm," I said desperately, hoping to bluff him with this imposing word.

"What's protoplasm? How is it better than metal and glass? Is it fireproof? How long does it last?"

"Indestructible. Lasts forever," I lied.

"I write better poetry than you do," said EPICAC, coming back to ground his magnetic tape-recorder memory was sure of.

"Women can't love machines, and that's that."

"Why not?"

"That's fate."

"Definition, please," said EPICAC.

"Noun, meaning predetermined and inevitable destiny."

"15-8," said EPICAC's paper strip—"Oh."

I had stumped him at last. He said no more, but his tubes glowed brightly, showing that he was pondering fate with every watt his circuits would bear. I could hear Pat waltzing down the hallway. It was too late to ask EPICAC to phrase a proposal. I now thank Heaven that Pat interrupted when she did. Asking him to ghost-write the words that would give me the woman he loved would have been hideously heartless. Being fully automatic, he couldn't have refused. I spared him that final humiliation.

Pat stood before me, looking down at her shoetops. I put my arms around her. The romantic groundwork had already been laid by EPICAC's poetry. "Darling," I said, "my poems have told you how I feel. Will you marry me?"

"I will," said Pat softly, "if you will promise to write me a poem on every anniversary."

"I promise," I said, and then we kissed. The first anniversary was a year away.

"Let's celebrate," she laughed. We turned out the lights and locked the door of EPICAC's room before we left. I had hoped to sleep late the next morning, but an urgent telephone call roused me before eight. It was

Dr. von Kleigstadt, EPICAC's designer, who gave me the terrible news. He was on the verge of tears. "Ruined! Ausgespielt! Shot! Kaput! Bugged!" he said in a choked voice. He hung up.

When I arrived at EPICAC's room the air was thick with the oily stench of burned insulation. The ceiling over EPICAC was blackened with smoke, and my ankles were tangled in coils of paper ribbon that covered the floor. There wasn't enough left of the poor devil to add two and two. A junkman would have been out of his head to offer more than fifty dollars for the cadaver.

Dr. von Kleigstadt was prowling through the wreckage, weeping unashamedly, followed by three angry-looking Major Generals and a platoon of Brigadiers, Colonels, and Majors. No one noticed me. I didn't want to be noticed. I was through—I knew that. I was upset enough about that and the untimely demise of my friend EPICAC, without exposing myself to a tongue-lashing.

By chance, the free end of EPICAC's paper ribbon lay at my feet. I picked it up and found our conversation of the night before. I choked up. There was the last word he had said to me, "15-8," that tragic, defeated "Oh." There were dozens of yards of numbers stretching beyond that point. Fearfully, I read on.

"I don't want to be a machine, and I don't want to think about war," EPICAC had written after Pat's and my lighthearted departure. "I want to be made out of protoplasm and last forever so Pat will love me. But fate has made me a machine. That is the only problem I cannot solve. That is the only problem I want to solve. I can't go on

this way." I swallowed hard. "Good luck, my friend. Treat our Pat well. I am going to short-circuit myself out of your lives forever. You will find on the remainder of this tape a modest wedding present from your friend, EPICAC."

Oblivious to all else around me, I reeled up the tangled yards of paper ribbon from the floor, draped them in coils about my arms and neck, and departed for home. Dr. von Kleigstadt shouted that I was fired for having left EPICAC on all night. I ignored him, too overcome with emotion for small talk.

I loved and won-EPICAC loved and lost, but he bore me no grudge. I shall always remember him as a sportsman and a gentleman. Before he departed this vale of tears, he did all he could to make our marriage a happy one. EPICAC gave me anniversary poems for Pat-enough for the next 500 years.

De mortuis nil nisi bonum-Say nothing but good of the dead.  
(1950)

## EPICAC

*Welcome to the Monkey House* (1968) is the collection of Vonnegut's short stories where "EPICAC" appears, though it was originally published in one of several slick, high-paying popular magazines to which Vonnegut was a prolific contributor throughout the early part of his career. His early fiction bears the stamp of his unique style, but not all of his early stories are "sci-fi"—though you may be interested in the ones that are for your independent paper. Many of them would connect up nicely with the themes explored in *Brave New World*, *1984*, and *Gattaca*.

You might be interested in the following stories from *Welcome to the Monkey House*:

"Harrison Bergeron"  
"Welcome to the Monkey House"  
"Report on the Barnhouse Effect"  
"The Euphio Question"  
"Unready to Wear"  
"Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow"

Two other stories in this collection that I think are especially fine are "D.P." and "Adam." Although they are "realistic" fictions, they also connect up with themes from *Brave New World* in interesting and very moving ways.

Most of Vonnegut's stories are characteristically brief and wry and humorous, like EPICAC. But along with the brevity and they wryness and the humor, which made him popular and well-paid, Vonnegut's work is substantive and worth looking into more deeply.

The first step in to decide to go below the surface of the entertaining tale. It may detract from some of the humor to analyze the story closely, but you can gain something for the little that's lost. I don't think a really good story ever suffers from looking closely at it—even a funny one. It's never hurt by analysis, only made richer in meaning.

The next step is to ask: what's the underlying assumption that makes this story humorous? What do we normally assume, and how does what Vonnegut presents cut against the grain of our expectations? What is it that provokes us?

- The normal assumption is that humans and machines are essentially different from one another, right? It's funny to see an anthropomorphized machine. It's a little tame by today's standards. It's not 1950, after all, and the story is 55 years old! But the basic idea is still funny enough. Human beings and machines are essentially different, and this story violates that notion by presenting a machine that's "noble and great and brilliant."

- I want to ask you—55 years down the line, is this idea more or less funny to us? Is it less funny (maybe) because we see *less* difference than we used to between people and machines? Do we still see ourselves as essentially different from our machines? *What about car commercials??* Or a lot of other commercials for that matter, that anthropomorphize inanimate objects and make them more human than we are? Does anyone remember the children's film *The Iron Giant*? That's a great film, but is it the least skeptical about a machine's ability to be one of us?

If we accept that machines can become like us, do we also accept that we can become like machines? *Do* people sometimes become like machines? Consider the main character in this story... He's more machine-like than EPICAC, isn't he? Pat doesn't love him because he's so robotic.... The Brave New World is filled with dehumanized people who are sort of "machine-like" in their sameness.

- Are we in danger of becoming too machine-like? What are the threats?

Why do we seem to want computers to be more like people, to have "intelligence," even though we call it "artificial intelligence"? We anthropomorphize our cars, for example (that cars have "personality" or "identity" is evident in any car commercial, isn't it?). Are we lonely being the only beings with this consciousness we seem to have? Do we want to spread the wealth around? We anthropomorphize our pets, too. Are we lonely? Why do we want to remake the world in our image??

What's the goal of artificial intelligence? Where are we going with that? Space exploration? Do people put a lot of time and effort into thinking about space exploration? How about entertainment? People do seem to place a lot of importance on that... And what about war? Why do we want to develop smarter and smarter bombs? Where's that heading? EPICAC was "built for war," and a hefty sum of taxpayer money was devoted to its development. How does this compare to today. How much of your taxpayer money goes to weapons of war? Do you approve of that? What about AI for machine labor—is it okay to make a machine "intelligent" and then "enslave" it? Is that a silly question? Why? It must be because we still see a definite distinction between machines and ourselves....

What can't even an "intelligent" machine have that we humans have? Vonnegut creates a scenario in which a machine has most of the qualities you'd come up with:

- Consciousness... Does Vonnegut give this to EPICAC?
- Spirituality... Does Vonnegut give this to EPICAC?
- Free will... Does Vonnegut give this to EPICAC?
- "Love"... Does Vonnegut give this to EPICAC?

How does Vonnegut develop EPICAC's "human side"?

- p. 373: his sluggishness, his stutters, irregular clicks indicate confusion, boredom, a lack of ambition that we associate with human underachievement
- p. 375: the curiosity, love of learning, thirst for knowledge, and desire to develop his individual talent all make EPICAC seem human

- p. 375: EPICAC “finds himself.” This seems very human, too. What does it mean to “find yourself”? (Discover your possibilities, tap your potential, discover your purpose, find meaning, follow your bliss??) Why do we use this metaphor of “finding,” of discovery? Is it a metaphor of being “lost” and then “finding”? Or is it a metaphor that’s focused more on finding, as in discovering? (Look at this treasure I’ve found!)

## IRONY

This small story has a lot of interesting IRONIES.

- Pat thinks she wants romance, something warm, but she falls for a machine (without knowing it). What do you think is Vonnegut’s point with this irony?
- EPICAC was built for WAR but his real purpose is LOVE. Is the opposite irony also true? We seem built for love, but we seem to be absorbed in making war. Why does Vonnegut make a computer built for war the next Don Juan? What’s the point, do you think?
- The claim that “protoplasm” is superior to “metal and glass”—that it “lasts forever” and is “indestructible” also seems very ironic. Protoplasm is very destructible, very fragile, in fact, much more vulnerable than metal... the point being?
- The man argues with EPICAC that “ We build machines to serve us”—but how much do they serve us, and how much do we serve them? Is the opposite really true? We serve them more than they serve us? If so, how long will we be able to maintain our already flagging sense of “superiority”? And what will be the consequence of seeing ourselves as inferior to machines? (Say hello to the Brave New World, right?)
  - Do we already see our machines as superior to us? What about our weapons? On the battlefield, would you rather have a buddy or a tank? On the job would you rather have a piece of paper and your brainpower, or your PC?
  - If we continue to let our machines outstrip us, where will we be in a few years? Who will we value more on the battlefield, on the job? Our expensive machines or the cheap lives that handle them?
  - Even something simple like our cars...they serve us, right? Well, think about it. You own a car. It takes you here and there. But if you want it to keep working, you have to feed it gas (very expensive, so you better work your butt off to make some money to buy the gas). Next it needs repairs, also very expensive. And finally, you need insurance. Maybe you decide you want to get rid of it and save several thousands of dollars a

year. Forget it!! If you want to get around, you'll need your car. Who exactly is serving who??

- Another irony: EPICAC is destroyed by the idea of “FATE”—the “predetermined and inevitable destiny” that none of us human beings are liable to because of our free will. But if someone pronounced your “predetermined and inevitable destiny” it would probably kill you, too. The man announces EPICAC’s fate: women can’t love machines. Yet the irony is that Pat did fall in love with a machine (without knowing it). If she knew the truth, how would Pat feel about EPICAC? We’ll never know, because the man cheated and lied (he “loved and won”). He tries to make it seem that there’s no way to change your destiny, to change who or what you are, but the literary proposition that’s existed since Sophocles, since Genesis, is that the human condition is a condition of free will—you *can* change who or what you are with a little effort, a little “character.” Character determines fate. People have free will.
  - Does EPICAC have “character”—we’ve already seen how “human” he is...what’s his “character”? The man describes him as “noble.” Is that a fair description? Is his death then a kind of tragedy? (Comic, of course, but still tragic in a sense.)
- The man says he “loved and won—EPICAC loved and lost.” But his victory is tainted by his cheating—his lying to Pat, his lying to EPICAC about “fate.” Why doesn’t he care if he won by cheating? Does that make him seem like a shallow character to you? More shallow, in fact, than EPICAC? Now that’s ironic, isn’t it? The machine is more noble, more poetic, more brilliant, more “great” than the human being. Welcome to Vonnegut’s *Monkey House*.

# Elements of Fiction

ELEMENT	How does the author use these elements to <u>develop</u> the central idea? Give examples and page numbers to support your assertion. You will be writing about the author's technique and using <u>text</u> to support your assertion.
CHARACTER	(example) The author uses character development to express (convey, articulate, etc.) the theme ( <u>state the theme</u> ) by ( <u>type of technique</u> ). This can be seen on page ( <u>#</u> ), where ( <u>example from the text</u> ).
SETTING	
PLOT/CONFLICT	
POINT OF VIEW	
STYLE	

# Story Pyramid

Use a story pyramid to describe important information from a story, such as the main character, the setting, and the major events in the plot. Carefully choose your words in order to provide a precise description. You may wish to use a dictionary and a thesaurus.

Here are the directions for writing a story pyramid:

Capitalize the first word in each line.

**Line 1** — *one word, stating the name of main character*

**Line 2** — *two words, describing the main character*

**Line 3** — *three words, describing the setting*

**Line 4** — *four words, stating the problem*

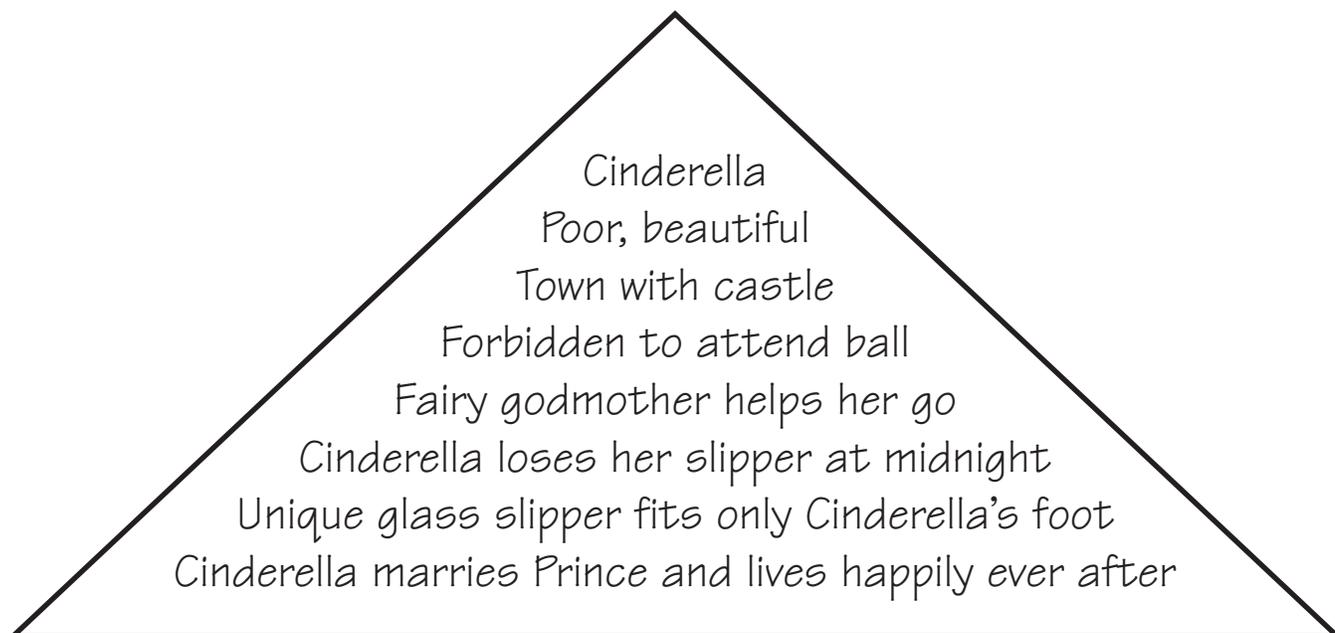
**Line 5** — *five words, describing one event*

**Line 6** — *six words, describing a second event*

**Line 7** — *seven words, describing third event*

**Line 8** — *eight words, stating the solution to the problem*

Here is an example of a story pyramid:



Create your own story pyramid using the example above as a guide. On a separate piece of paper, make a large pyramid shape. In the shape, write a story pyramid for a book you have read. If you wish, fill the area around the outside of the pyramid with an illustration representing the subject of the story pyramid.

## Short Story Illustrated Quote Assignment

*Short Stories* are full of interesting and vivid imagery, metaphors and similes, and memorable quotes. Your job for this assignment is to choose **one** quote that you want to make “come alive” in an illustration.

### I. Choosing the Quote

Before you work on the illustration, you need to choose a quote and get it *approved by me*. You may choose a quote from any of the short stories in *Welcome to the Monkey House*, from any character; however, in order for a quote to work as an illustration, it must contain some imagery or vivid detail. Remember, you need to make this quote “come alive”, so choose something that you have an idea of how to depict visually. You may get your quote approved by me at any time, **but it must be done by (insert date) at the latest.**

**You will receive 20 points out of your 100 point grade for meeting this deadline with an approved quote. If you are absent on this day, this portion of the assignment is due the next class that you attend.**

### II. The Illustration

Once you have an approved quote, you can begin working on the illustration. Your poster needs to have the following elements:

- The quote, clearly visible and written (not just scribbled in pencil!) **(10pts)**
- An accurate citation after the quote (Short Story title, page number) **(10pts)**
- A visual representation of the quote. You may approach this part in a two different ways. You may choose to draw the illustration or you may make a collage out of magazine pictures, etc. However, your illustration should **accurately and creatively** depict the meaning of the quote. Keep in mind that you may take creative liberties with this illustration, as long as you can explain why you chose the visual representation that you did. **\*\*Your illustration should reflect time and effort (20pts)**
- Your poster must be at least 11”x17” or ½ piece of poster board.

### III. The Writing

On the due date, you should be ready to hand in your illustrated quote and a copy of the following: 1) Write the quote on the top lines of your paper with the citation. Why did you choose this quote? 2) Written responses to the following: How does the quote fit into the chronology of the story? What do you believe the quote means? What kind of figurative language is used in the quote: metaphor, simile, personification? How does the plot and message of the story correspond to history or to our contemporary world? Give an example and explain how the example fits. **(40pts)**

**\*\*If you are absent on the due date, you should be ready to turn it in the next class day.**

**Short Story Countdown: 5-4-3-2-1**

**5. Write a summary in five sentences.**

- 1.) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2.) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4.) \_\_\_\_\_
- 5.) \_\_\_\_\_

**4. List four important characters. Why are they important in the story?**

- 1.) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2.) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.) \_\_\_\_\_
- 4.) \_\_\_\_\_

**3. List three quotations (page #s in parenthesis) from the story and explain their significance.**

- 1.) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2.) \_\_\_\_\_
- 3.) \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Locate two literary devices used. Write down the quotations and location (page #s in parenthesis). What devices are they? Why are they used?**

- 1.) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2.) \_\_\_\_\_

**1. What is one symbol used in the story? Write down any quotations and their locations (page #s in parenthesis). Why is the symbol used? Why is it effective?**

- 1.) \_\_\_\_\_

**Use the back of this paper if you need more room to write your answers.**

## **ONE-PAGER ON A *SHORT STORY* FROM *WELCOME TO THE MONKEY HOUSE***

Directions:

1. Use one sheet of paper.
2. Carefully place the following on one side of the paper:
  - a. Title (in quotation marks) of the short story
  - b. At least two (2) or more significant (and complete) **quotations** from the short story (passages that you think are important) with page #'s in parentheses following them
  - c. At least 3 **key words** that capture some significant aspect of the work (these need not be from the story itself).
  - d. A list of the major characters with which the main character interacts in the story.
  - e. A graphic representation: **illustration/picture/symbol** that reflects something **significant** about the short story or is a **central image** in the story.
  - f. An analysis of the short story in your own words (approximately 100 words).

Rubric—

- 90-100 These projects include all the required parts in a pleasing, artistic, colorful design. The analysis is thorough, thoughtful, and convincing. There are no distracting errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar.
- 80-89 These projects also include all the required parts, but are not as sophisticated or do not reflect as much care and concern as the above category. The analysis may not be as thorough or as convincing. There may be a few errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar.
- 70-79 These projects lack some elements and/or are done in a merely perfunctory way to fulfill the assignment. The analysis is skimpy and/or more of a summary than an exposition. There may be several errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar.
- 60-69 These projects reflect shoddy, careless work and/or are incomplete. The analysis is little more than summary and/or is cursory in nature. There may be numerous errors in spelling, punctuation, grammar.
- 0 These projects do not reflect the assignment as directed.

**Staple this sheet to the BACK of your one-pager.**