

**Text Dependent Questions for
“An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge”**

1. What is the story’s setting?
2. How has the author structured chronological order in this story?
3. What is the primary event that occurs in Part I? Part II? Part III?
4. How much time initially seems to be covered by the story, particularly by Part III? How much time is ACTUALLY covered by the story?
5. How does point of view change in each part of the story?
6. How do tone and mood change in each part of the story?
7. Why did Bierce choose to set this story during the American Civil War?
8. Why did Bierce divide time into three parts?

And now, use what you have learned to discuss the following questions with your class.

9. Generally, readers feel as if they are “drawn in” to Peyton’s perception through the use of a tight, third-person limited point of view that allows readers to see Peyton objectively, yet share his perceptions and consciousness. What argument is Bierce making about human consciousness?
10. Given that Bierce delays telling us a crucial feature of the plot—the fact that the protagonist’s escape has occurred only in his own mind in the seconds before his death—what argument is Bierce making about reality?
11. Given that Bierce could have made Peyton an ordinary criminal hung for a capital offense, what was his symbolic or thematic reason for setting the story during the Civil War and making Peyton a Confederate saboteur? What connections exist between Bierce’s ideas about time, reality, and perception and the symbolic possibilities of the Civil War as a metaphor for the human mind?