“An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge” [*Ambrose Bierce*](https://americanliterature.com/author/ambrose-bierce/short-story/an-occurrence-at-owl-creek-bridge)

***Quotes***

Explain what the following quotes mean and how they relate to the story:

* *“Death is a dignitary who when he comes announced is to be received with formal manifestations of respect, even by those most familiar with him.”*
* *“The intellectual part of his nature was already effaced; he had power only to feel, and feeling was torment.”*
* *“Encompassed in a luminous cloud, of which he was now merely the fiery heart, without material substance, he swung through unthinkable arcs of oscillation, like a vast pendulum.” [Compare the pendulum to a noose and time piece.]*
* *“His whole body was racked and wrenched with an insupportable anguish! But his disobedient hands gave no heed to the command.”*
* *“An appalling splash within two yards of him was followed by a loud, rushing sound, diminuendo, which seemed to travel back through the air to the fort and died in an explosion which stirred the very river to its deeps!”*
* *“Doubtless, despite his suffering, he had fallen asleep while walking, for now he sees another scene--perhaps he has merely recovered from a delirium. He stands at the gate of his own home. All is as he left it, and all bright and beautiful in the morning sunshine.”*
* *“As he is about to clasp her he feels a stunning blow upon the back of the neck; a blinding white light blazes all about him with a sound like the shock of a cannon--then all is darkness and silence!”*

***Questions***

* *Explain the metaphor that "Death is a dignitary" in the first paragraph.*
* *What examples of military etiquette or rules of conduct are described in the story? Why are these important?*
* *What do the bridge and the fast-moving water below represent? Explain the symbolic meaning of the loose boards and "unsteady footing."*
* *Explain what Farquhar's wife represents? Why does he reject what she represents in his reckless mission to suppress Union forces?*
* *Do we know whether Farquhar actually burned the bridge? Though we are told the Union scout planted the idea in Farquhar's mind to burn the bridge and then must have reported Farquar's betrayal which resulted in his sentence to be hanged, how do we know he actually committed the crime and deserves to be hanged?*
* *Describe the transcendental experience of Farquhar willing the noose to give way and envisioning his escape into the arms of his wife and safety, then the "white light" rather than the reality of his corpse's broken bones of death.*
* *Tell the story using the same sequence of events, but from the Union Captain's point of view.*
* *Describe the symbolism of the "pendulum" (first paragraph of section III) and how it relates to time, the hanging, his emotions*