“Occurrence At Owl Creek Bridge” by Ambrose Bierce

Name: ____________________________________________

Sections I & II

1. Summarize the scene in the story’s first two paragraphs. Who is involved? What reactions does the narrator describe? Why do the observers of the event respond to it in the way they do?

2. In sections I and II, what do you learn about Farquhar’s appearance, personality, and background? What can you infer about the narrator’s attitude toward Farquhar from these descriptions?

3. Why are the soldiers on the bridge motionless and quiet?

4. What distracts the condemned man as he tries to concentrate of thoughts of his wife and family?

5. Farquhar imagined himself swimming and then running to make his escape. What exaggerated sights, sounds, and feelings did he experience while making his escape?

6. What literary device does Bierce use in this section of the story? Is this literary device effective? Explain why or why not.
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Section III

1. What is Farquhar’s crime? What was he caught doing?

2. What does Farquhar ask the gray-clad soldier who stops at his gate for water?

3. What was the soldier’s real motive for stopping at the Farquhar’s gate?

4. What does Farquhar believe has happened to save him from a death by hanging?

5. Why does Farquhar imagine the officer will order his men to “fire at will” rather than to fire a volley in unison?

6. What does Farquhar do after he leaves the water?

7. What does Farquhar imagine is happening at the moment of his death? What is really happening?

8. Why do you think Bierce called this unusual story of a hanging “an occurrence”?

9. How does Bierce foreshadow the twist at the end of the story?

10. In what point of view is the story told?

11. What elements of Naturalism are present in the story?