

## An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge

### Literary Analysis

A story's **point of view** depends on who is telling the story.

- A story with an *omniscient point of view* means that the narrator is an “all-knowing” observer. The narrator is not personally or emotionally involved in the events.
- A story with a *limited third-person point of view* means that the narrator writes about events as a character experiences them. The narrator tells the personal thoughts and feelings of one character.

Ambrose Bierce shifts from an omniscient to a limited point-of-view. Also, he uses a literary technique known as stream of consciousness. He conveys the main character's thoughts in short bursts and without clear connections. The shift in point of view and the use of stream of consciousness change the reader's perception of events in the story.

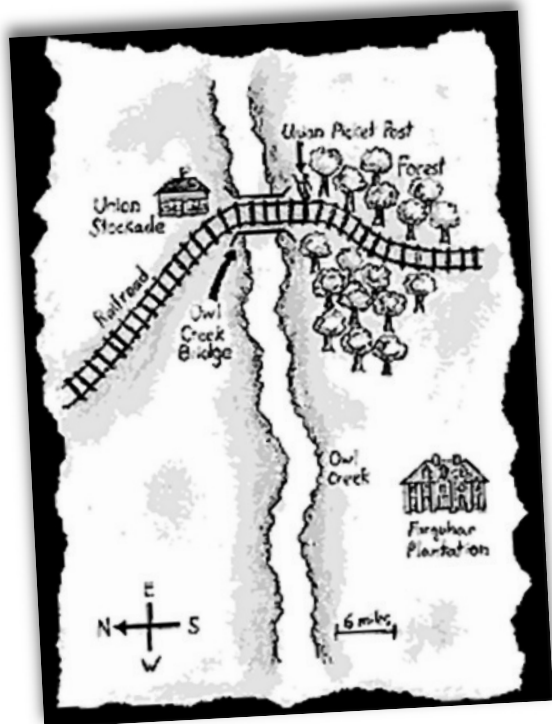
### Reading Strategy

You can understand the meaning of events in a story by thinking about the story's **pattern of organization**. Bierce organizes this story in three sections. Each section represents a shift in time. Use a chart to identify the time order of the sections and key events for each section.

Section:	Section:	Section:
Key Events:	Key Events:	Key Events:

# An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge

Ambrose Bierce



**Summary** A southern plantation owner is about to be hanged. He stands at the edge of the Owl Creek Bridge. Union soldiers prepare to put him to death for trying to burn down the bridge. A sergeant releases the plank that supports the plantation owner, and the author describes what happens as the man falls.

### Note-taking Guide

Make a story map by completing the chart below. Record your responses in the second column.

Setting	
Characters	
Main Events	
High Point of Story	
Conclusion	

## An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge

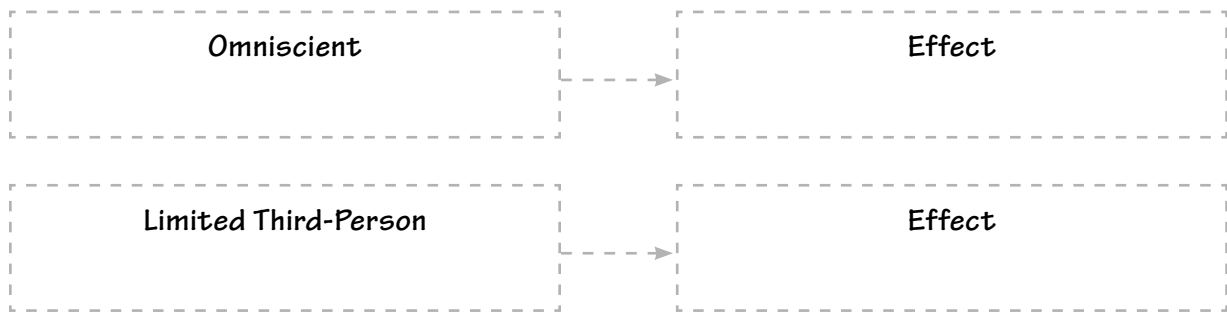
1. **Extend:** What does this story suggest about the mind of a person facing a life or death situation?

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2. **Literary Analysis:** A story's point of view depends on who is telling the story. Bierce uses two **points of view** in this story. Analyze the story to identify these two different points of view. Determine the effects created by each one. Write your responses in a chart like this one.



3. **Literary Analysis:** The author uses stream of consciousness in the third section of the story. What effect does his use of the technique have on you?

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4. **Reading Strategy: Analyze the pattern of organization** in the story by deciding which happened first: Farquhar's encounter with the Federal scout or his preoccupation with his ticking watch.

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### Writing About the Essential Question

**What is the relationship between place and literature?** How does the contrast between the ordinary settings and the awful events of this story add to its power? Explain.

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