

“Harrison Bergeron” by Kurt Vonnegut – Questions

1. At the end of the story, how did you feel about Hazel? George? Harrison?
2. What details in the story make us infer, or guess, that all does not work very smoothly in this society where everyone is equal “every which way”? Do you think this is a realistic prediction of what would happen if all competition were done away with? Why, or why not?
3. What kinds of societies could be the targets of Vonnegut’s satire in this story? What attitudes is he mocking?
4. What is the difference between believing that people are equals under the law and believing that everyone is the same?
5. Poor Hazel says of the bumbling announcer, “... he tried. That the big thing.” Should people be rewarded for trying or for actually accomplishing something? Talk about your thoughts on this complicated issue. See if talking it over with other readers affects the way you think.
6. Do you think this story has anything to say to us today?
7. This story is a fantasy. What figures from actual life have tried to save a people from repression the Harrison does?
8. Do you agree with Vonnegut’s view of technology, or would you challenge some details in the story? Explain in terms of your own experiences.
9. What has happened by the year 2081? Why has Harrison been put in jail?
10. What handicaps have been imposed on people with above-average abilities?
11. What action does Harrison take to resolve his conflict with the government?
12. At the story’s end, who or what has triumphed?
13. Write a sentence for a political speech using the word *hindrances*.
14. Write a sentence for a car advertisement that uses the word *symmetry*.
15. Use the word *consternation* to say something about people’s attitudes toward the media.
16. Use the word *covered* in a sentence from a veterinarian’s report on a sick dog.
17. Write a sentence about an audio system using the word *synchronizing*.

