Take home essay: This is a Test Grade. Failure to complete this essay will destroy you. Of course, you must have it typed and in MLA style.

Many critics believe that Slaughterhouse-Five is a postmodern response to Existentialism. Write an essay in which you explore how the novel illustrates this philosophy. Use textual examples cited in MLA and include a works-cited. You will be assessed using the AP-rubric.

**Existentialism – A Definition**
Existentialism in the broader sense is a 20th century philosophy that is centered upon the analysis of existence and of the way humans find themselves existing in the world. The notion is that humans exist first and then each individual spends a lifetime changing their essence or nature.

In simpler terms, existentialism is a philosophy concerned with finding self and the meaning of life through free will, choice, and personal responsibility. The belief is that people are searching to find out who and what they are throughout life as they make choices based on their experiences, beliefs, and outlook. And personal choices become unique without the necessity of an objective form of truth. An existentialist believes that a person should be forced to choose and be responsible without the help of laws, ethnic rules, or traditions.

**Existentialism – What It Is and Isn’t**
Existentialism takes into consideration the underlying concepts:

* Human free will
* Human nature is chosen through life choices
* A person is best when struggling against their individual nature, fighting for life
* Decisions are not without stress and consequences
* There are things that are not rational
* Personal responsibility and discipline is crucial
* Society is unnatural and its traditional religious and secular rules are arbitrary
* Worldly desire is futile

Existentialism is broadly defined in a variety of concepts and there can be no one answer as to what it is, yet it *does not* support any of the following:

* wealth, pleasure, or honor make the good life
* social values and structure control the individual
* accept what is and that is enough in life
* science can and will make everything better
* people are basically good but ruined by society or external forces
* “I want my way, now!” or “It is not my fault!” mentality

There is a wide variety of philosophical, religious, and political ideologies that make up existentialism so there is no universal agreement in an arbitrary set of ideals and beliefs. Politics vary, but each seeks the most individual freedom for people within a society.