**Character Analysis** ***Cat’s Cradle* Seminar Coaching**: DUE April 7th NAME:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

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| **Character** | **Characterization**  (What is the character like? What does the character do? Say? Want? Believe?) | | **Significance**  (Why is this character important to the story? Is Vonnegut satirizing some element of humanity through his characterization?) |
| 1. |  | |  |
| 2. |  | |  |
| 3. |  | |  |
| 4. |  | |  |
| 5. |  | |  |
| 6. |  | |  |
| 7. |  | |  |
| 8. |  | |  |
| 9. |  | |  |
| 10. |  | |  |
| **Major Themes/Interpretive Claims**  (*What is Vonnegut trying to express about various themes related to human nature, pursuit of truth, religion, science, etc…*?) **Pick 3 different themes and analyze them using evidence.** | | **Evidence from the Novel**  (*What in the novel makes you think so*?) | |
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**Historical Context**:

In Chapter 44, H. Lowe Crosby calls Ambassador Minton a “communist sympathizer.” We find out that he was once fired from the State Department “during the worst era of Senator McCarthy.” To understand the historical context better, research the following:

1. Who was Senator Joseph McCarthy and what is he famous for?
2. Investigate the House Un-American Activities Committee and the Hollywood blacklist (1947).
3. What is meant by the term “Red Scare”?
4. What can you infer from your research about the political climate in the USA in the decade that followed the end of World War II?
5. Why do you think Claire Minton’s letter got her husband fired in such a political climate?

**Big Picture Questions (Choose 3-6 of the following to answer in writing)**

1. *Cat’s Cradle* satirizes many of the institutions and modes of that make up our experience as human beings. Explore *Cat’s Cradle*’s commentary on **any** of the following:

a) religion and belief systems

b) science and technology

c) the human quest for truth

d) social institutions

e) interpersonal relations

1. What does the “cat’s cradle” symbolize?
2. How does historical context inform our understanding of this novel?
3. Explore any individual character’s purpose in the novel. What does that character represent about human beings and their experiences and/or actions?
4. Analyze Vonnegut’s use of irony and humor in *Cat’s Cradle.* What effect does his irony/humor have on the reader? Based on how and in what contexts he uses irony/humor, what does it suggest about his own perspective?
5. Make an interpretative claim about a theme in *Cat’s Cradle* and support it with evidence.

***Cat’s Cradle* Seminar Questions***(We will work through these as a group. Feel free to take notes on these as you read the novel, but no need to submit responses in writing to these before seminar)*

**Opening question:**

* What does Vonnegut think about human beings and their pursuits?

**Science**

* What is Vonnegut suggesting about science?
* Why does he present the scientists the way that he does?
* Is Felix Hoenikker inherently good or inherently evil?
* What is the moral obligation of a scientist who is working on a new technology?

**Religion**

* What is Vonnegut suggesting about religion?
* Why does he characterize Bokonon the way that he does?
* How can a religion based upon “shameless lies” be useful?
* What purpose does religion serve in human life?

**Characters**

* Who is the most moral character in the story?
* Why Sherman Krebbs?

**Other?**

* What other elements of human life are being satirized in this novel? How so?
* What commentary does Cat’s Cradle make on the institution of love?
* What commentary does the novel make on the institution of government?
* What commentary does the novel make on interpersonal relations?
* What is the message? What does Vonnegut want us to get out of this novel?
* Why is this novel called Cat’s Cradle? What is the symbolism at work here?
* Between a scientific worldview and a religious worldview, which is more beneficial to human life? What would Vonnegut say and what do you say?
* Is the human quest for truth a futile pursuit? At what point should we limit this quest, if at all?