

"Catch-22 n. 1. a situation in which a person is frustrated by a paradoxical rule or set of circumstances that preclude any attempt to escape from them. 2. a situation in which any move that a person can make will lead to trouble [C20: from the title of a novel (1961) by J. Heller]"

The Opening Chapter of Catch-22 :

Events of Chapter 1:

- Yossarian is a bombardier in an army hospital suffering from pain in his liver
- Pain is gone, but he's still in the hospital because of a fever
- Because he is an officer, he is given the task of censoring letters
- Other patients include: Lieutenant Dunbar, a warrant officer, an artillery captain, a fighter captain, a soldier in white who is badly wounded and wrapped in plaster and gauze, and a middle-aged colonel who is dying of a mysterious ailment not fully diagnosed
- A Texan arrives whom in three days no one can tolerate
- The soldier in white dies
- To escape from the Texan, many of the patients stop complaining of illness, say they are well, and return to duty
- The chaplain who comes to visit the sick 'hits it off' with Yossarian

Narrative Style:

Melodramatic	Focuses on dramatic efforts which the doctors and nurses made to save the life of the soldier in white and that of the dying colonel, expanding on the exemplary devotion of the chaplain
Realistic	Depicts a typical scene in an army hospital
Satirical	Exposes the misadministration and incompetence of upper echelon army personnel and the blundering and stupidly impersonal handling of the fighting men that characterized army life during WWII; commenting in a wry and bitterly humorous way, on the effects of combat on the thinking and actions of the soldiers

To accomplish his satirical purpose, chapter 1 abounds in:

- Descriptions that exaggerate and distort the shapes of objects and places and the speech, demeanor, and conduct of the characters
- Behavior that is either unmotivated and pointless or motivated by the worst possible considerations
- Conversations among the characters that are replete with non-sequiturs and do not communicate with any clarity

This scene in the hospital and the soldier in white will be repeated as Heller uses a-chronological structure to create a sense of confusion and chaos. The following is a rough sketch of this structure:

Ch. 1 Starts in the middle (the Avignon mission has already occurred)

Ch. 1-27 Flashbacks and flashforwards in time

Ch. 1-17 Contain different versions of the same event

Ch. 25 Readers learn the familiarity between Yossarian and the Chaplain

Ch. 28- end Mostly forward except for one dream flashback in ch. 41 which details Snowden