“An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge”

Outcomes: CR 10.1

Questions: Is there a master plan or are we masters of the plan?

Before

What do you know about the Civil War in the United States? With a partner, write down everything you know:

What is suspense? What is a flashback?

During

While you read the story, try to:

1. Identify the main character
2. Identify and define any words that do not make sense to you.

After

1. In Section I, Bierce includes few details about the condemned man and does not reveal the reason why he is being hanged. How does this help create suspense?
2. In what ways are the condemned man's perceptions of time and motion distorted as he is waiting to be hanged? Why are his distorted perceptions important?
3. What is the significance of the man’s perception of his ticking watch?
4. In Section II, Bierce finally introduces Peyton Farquhar.  Why place this information in the middle of the story, and in a flashback?   How does this authorial decision contribute to suspense and our sympathies toward Farquhar?
5. Why was Farquhar captured?  Why did the Federal scout lie?
6. What details in Part III suggest that Farquhar's journey occurs in his mind? How is the journey connected with the plan of escape that occurs to him moments before he is hanged?
7. What is the ultimate fate of Peyton Farquhar?  About how long did it truly take for the events of the story to unfold?
8. Why is the limited third-person point of view appropriate for this story? How might the story be different if Bierce had used an omniscient third-person narrator?
9. Were you surprised by the ending?  Why or why not?