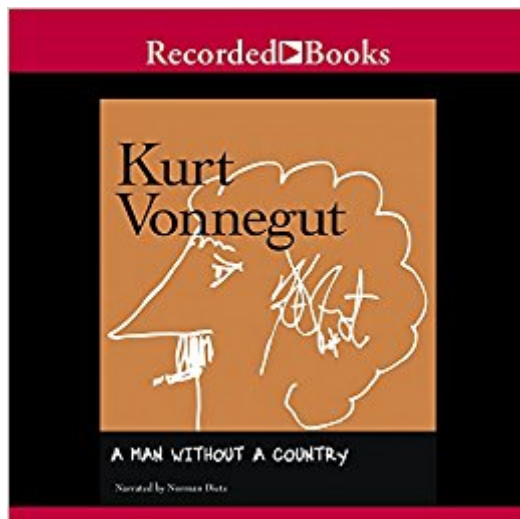


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Man Without A Country



Synopsis

One of the greatest minds in American writing, Kurt Vonnegut has left an indelible impression on literature with such inventive novels as *Cat's Cradle*, *Slaughterhouse-Five* and *Breakfast of Champions*. Now this iconic figure shares his often hilarious and always insightful reflections on America, art, politics and life in general. No matter the subject, Vonnegut will have you considering perspectives you may never have regarded. On the creative process: "If you want to really hurt your parents . the least you can do is go into the arts. I'm not kidding." On politics: "No, I am not going to run for President, although I do know that a sentence, if it is to be complete, must have both a subject and a verb." On nature: "Evolution is so creative. That's how we got giraffes." On modern cultural attitudes: "Do you think Arabs are dumb? They gave us our numbers. Try doing long division with Roman numerals." And on the fate of humankind: "The good Earth-we could have saved it, but we were too damn cheap and lazy." *A Man without a Country* showcases Vonnegut at his wittiest, most acerbic, and most concerned. Beyond the humor and biting satire is an appeal to all readers to give careful thought to the world around them and the people they share it with.

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Customer Reviews

In his first book since 1999, it's just like old times as Vonnegut (now 82) makes with the deeply black humor in this collection of articles written over the last five years, many from the alternative magazine *In These Times*. But the pessimistic wisecracks may be wearing thin; the conversational tone of the pieces is like Garrison Keillor with a savage undercurrent. Still, the schtick works fine most of the time, underscored by hand-lettered aphorisms between chapters. Some essays suffer

from authorial self-indulgence, however, like taking a dull story about mailing a manuscript and stretching it to interminable lengths. Vonnegut reserves special bile for the "psychopathic personalities" (i.e., "smart, personable people who have no consciences") in the Bush administration, which he accuses of invading Iraq so America can score more of the oil to which we have become addicted. People, he says, are just "chimpanzees who get crazy drunk on power." Of course, that's exactly the sort of misanthropy hardcore Vonnegut fans will lap up. —the online versions of these pieces are already described as the most popular Web pages in the history of *In These Times*. (Sept.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

"Thank God, Kurt Vonnegut has broken his promise that he will never write another book. In this wondrous assemblage of mini-memoirs, we discover his family's legacy and his obstinate, unfashionable humanism."

Kurt Vonnegut's comedic wit will surely be missed. His book "A Man Without a Country" says it all. He argues that the Bush administration's justification for committing an act of manifest destiny upon Iraq is hilarity at its most paramount. One statement that he makes on pages 77 will have you laughing out loud. Just make sure you don't disturb your neighbors. "Speaking of plunging into war, do you know why I think George W. Bush is so [-----] off at Arabs? They brought us Algebra. Also the numbers we use, including a symbol for nothing, which Europeans had never had before. You think Arabs are dumb? Try doing long division with Roman numerals.".....Well, I thought it was funny. Vonnegut also discusses the Mexican-American War and what Abraham Lincoln thought about it. As a matter of fact in the 1840's slavery was illegal there. So I guess that justified an invasion... right? The truth is the war was a land grab for California, Utah, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado and Wyoming. And rightwing Americans have the audacity to say that Latinos are illegal! This book is great! Each quote is elegantly witty, yet enlightening. For example: "No matter how corrupt, greedy, and heartless our government, our corporations, our media, and our religious and charitable institutions may become, the music will still be wonderful." And he's right considering Black people created the music that is the very milieu of American culture today and the world's for that matter. Vonnegut states "African Americans gave the whole world when they were still in slavery, a gift so great that it is now almost the only reason many foreigners still like us at least a little bit. That specific remedy for the worldwide epidemic of depression is a gift called the blues." All I can say is that a little Jimi Hendrix goes a long way. On page 56 Vonnegut alludes to the notion

that technology has become our Achilles heel, breeding an insalubrious environment. "Today we have contraptions like nuclear submarines armed with Poseidon missiles that have H-bombs in their warheads. And we have contraptions like computers that cheat you out of becoming" someone special. "But it's you who should be doing the becoming, not the (dang) fool computer. What you can become is the miracle you were born to be through the work that you do." In other words don't let the elites' idea of progress rob you of your humanity. Overall, Vonnegut laughs in the face of the "American Drug War," which he compares it to prohibition of the 1920's and early 1930's. He also says, "Now let me give you a marketing tip. The people who can afford to buy books and magazines and go to the movies don't like to hear about people who are poor or sick." I find that quote to be the truism of the century. A case in point: Vonnegut points out that the so-called Christian right argues for the Ten Commandments to "be posted in public buildings," but "for some reason, the most vocal (extreme right-wing) Christians among us never mention the Beatitudes" of Christ Jesus. None of them have ever demanded "that the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes be posted anywhere." It's funny how the Evangelical ultra right-wing never quotes Jesus or adheres to his teachings. What a wonderful world we would live in if they embraced Christ principles. Matthew 5:5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the Earth." Matthew 5:7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" Matthew 5:9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God." As Vonnegut explains, Jesus' words are "not exactly in the Republican platform." It definitely can't be found in the Tea Party's or the Christian Right's doctrine. If Jesus were here in the physical sense he would be tarred, feathered and branded a socialist. And "doesn't anything socialistic make you want to throw up? Like great public schools, or health insurance for all?" said Vonnegut facetiously of course. His diatribe about the Republican Party during the George W. Bush presidency is on point. He diagnoses them (including the Christian Right aka white supremacists) as having psychopathic personality disorder, "and what syndrome better describes so many executives at Enron and WorldCom and on and on, who have enriched themselves while ruining their employees and investors and country and who still feel as pure as the driven snow, no matter what anybody may say to or about them? And they are waging a war that is making billionaires out of millionaires, and trillionaires out of billionaires, and they own television, and they bankrolled George Bush and not because he's against gay marriage" either! These Republicans only stand for cutting healthcare, cutting taxes for the rich, Building trillion-dollar missile shields, taping everybody's telephones, suspending Habeas Corpus indefinitely, and eviscerating our Constitutional rights as a free republic according to Vonnegut. I also like what he had to say on page 24 that art is the very catalyst that makes the world a bearable place to live in because it is our *raison d'être*. "Practicing an

art, no matter how well or badly, is a way to make your soul grow, for heaven's sake. Sing in the shower. Dance to the radio. Tell stories. Write a poem to a friend, even a lousy poem, do it as well as you possibly can. You will get an enormous reward. You will have created something." Plus, it will keep you sane and well grounded in this insane world we live in. This book is a powerful polemic that is simultaneously cynical and quixotic. The truth is Vonnegut's diatribe is socialistic since he believes in Marxism. "A Man Without a Country" is one of the most compelling pieces of truth telling literature you will ever read, and it is so relevant considering today's political paradigm is pretty dire. Overall, this book is part polemic, part memoir. ENJOY, I highly recommend it.

As a long time Vonnegut fan, I found this somewhat interesting, but it largely lacks the humor which makes his novels so successful. As he himself admits toward the end of the book, he has lost his sense of humor and become "grumpy." It consists largely of a long rant against humans, the American government, and especially George Bush and his administration.

Incredible book that will have to serve as a semi-memoir for a great man. This is the only book I've read by Vonnegut, but it was so good, I took my family to visit his memorial library in Indiana. My daughter read the book out loud on the way home. We were all very moved.

Big Vonnegut fan. Funny, personal and fulfilling. Know this is not a novel, but a collection of several essays (that read more like one long one). If you are a Vonnegut fan, this is a must read. He melds his personal/political views with his own personal history while referencing fond characters and plot lines from his novels. Short, but very sweet.

KV creates by 'running off at the mind'. He has a great imagination, so everything around him prompts a response - some funny, or not, or prophetic, or insightful - just something. KV's always thinking - about literature, the arts, environmental problems, war, the family, the country, capitalism - and more, much more. "Running off at the mouth", we know, is not praiseworthy, but 'running off at the mind', a la KV, I'd say, is. KV has written here a nice little book. R. Amos, Severn MD

I'd urge all of you to spend \$10-\$15 to buy it. Despite the fact that it's a collection of essays on different topics, it's fluid and cohesive. It reads like a completely lucid 82 year old man (he was 82 when he wrote the book in 2005) sitting down and sharing his ample wisdom, quirky stories, and thought-provoking facts. He writes about jokes, sex, Socialism, art, and even gives a small lesson

on creative writing (and that's not everything that encompassed in even the first 80 pages).Buy it!

This is the first book written by Kurt Vonnegut that I have read, and it won't be my last. If the reviews listed here are correct, this is not one of his finest work, but it was enough to get me curious. If this was written by the old, washed-up Kurt, I can only imagine what he was capable of writing on his younger days. The reason that I gave it four stars is because it was very, very short, seriously, I haven't read a book this short since high school. That being said, it is very well written and I really enjoyed it.

Reading this now, with a salivatingly mad king in the White House, I could not stop wishing we still had Kurt Vonnegut's wry humor and piercing wit around to help us find our way through the madness.

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