



Timequake

Kurt Vonnegut

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Timequake (1997) exists in two conjoined versions ("Timequake One"/"Timequake Two") and in meta-fictional mode is a novel about a novel, composed in short, arbitrary chapters and using its large cast of characters and disoriented chronology to mimic the "timequake" which is its subject. Some cosmic upheaval has hurled the entire population a decade back where, in full consciousness (but helplessly entrapped) everyone's pitiable and embarrassing mistakes are helplessly enacted again.

By this stage of his life--he was 72 the year the novel was published--Vonnegut was still wearing his luminescent bells and Harlequin's cape, but these had become dusty and the cape no longer fitted. Vonnegut's exasperation and sense of futility could no longer be concealed or shaped, and this novel is a laboratory of technique (deliberately) gone wrong, a study of breakdown.

Vonnegut had never shown much hope in his work for human destiny or occupation; the naive optimism of Eliot Rosewater in *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater* had in the damaged veteran Billy Pilgrim of *Slaughterhouse-Five* become a naive fantasy of escape to a sexual heaven. In the nihilism of *Timequake*, the only escape is re-enactment, but re-enactment has lost hope and force.

This is no *Groundhog Day* in which Vonnegut traps his various refugees (many escaped from his earlier works) but a hell of lost possibility. The temporal timequake of the title is the actual spiritual fracture of the 20th century, and in his 73rd year Vonnegut envisions no hope, not even the hollow diversions of *Slapstick*. Vonnegut's imaginative journey, closely tracked by his work, is one of the most intriguing for any American writer of the twentieth century.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kurt Vonnegut (1922-2007) is one of the most beloved American writers of the twentieth century. Vonnegut's audience increased steadily since his first five pieces in the 1950s and grew from there. His 1968 novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* has become a canonic war novel with Joseph Heller's *Catch-22* to form the truest and darkest of what came from World War II.

Vonnegut began his career as a science fiction writer, and his early novels--*Player Piano* and *The Sirens of Titan*--were categorized as such even as they appealed to an audience far beyond the reach of the category. In the 1960s, Vonnegut became closely associated with the Baby Boomer generation, a writer on that side, so to speak.

Now that Vonnegut's work has been studied as a large body of work, it has been more deeply understood and unified. There is a consistency to his satirical insight, humor and anger which makes his work so synergistic. It seems clear that the more of Vonnegut's work you read, the more it resonates and the more you wish to read. Scholars believe that Vonnegut's reputation (like Mark Twain's) will grow steadily through the decades as his work continues to increase in relevance and new connections are formed, new insights made.

ABOUT THE SERIES

Author Kurt Vonnegut is considered by most to be one of the most important writers of the twentieth

century. His books Slaughterhouse-Five (named after Vonnegut's World War II POW experience) and Cat's Cradle are considered among his top works. RosettaBooks offers here a complete range of Vonnegut's work, including his first novel (Player Piano, 1952) for readers familiar with Vonnegut's work as well as newcomers.

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