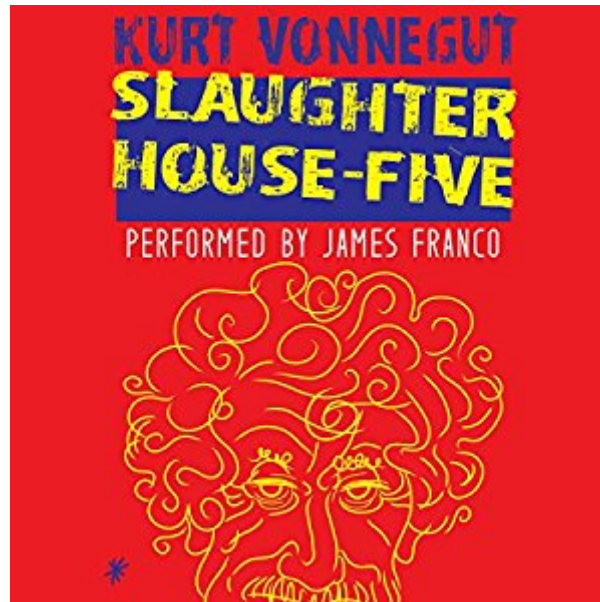




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Slaughterhouse-Five



Synopsis

Slaughterhouse-Five is the now famous parable of Billy Pilgrim, a World War II veteran and POW who has, in the later stage of his life, become "unstuck in time" and who experiences at will (or unwillingly) all known events of his chronology out of order and sometimes simultaneously. Traumatized by the bombing of Dresden at the time he had been imprisoned, Pilgrim drifts through all events and history, sometimes deeply implicated, sometimes a witness. He is surrounded by Vonnegut's usual large cast of continuing characters (notably here the hack science fiction writer Kilgore Trout and the alien Tralfamadorians, who oversee his life and remind him constantly that there is no causation, no order, no motive to existence). The "unstuck" nature of Pilgrim's experience may constitute an early novelistic use of what we now call post-traumatic stress disorder; then again, Pilgrim's aliens may be as "real" as Dresden is real to him. Struggling to find some purpose, order, or meaning to his existence and humanity's, Pilgrim meets the beautiful and mysterious Montana Wildhack (certainly the author's best character name), has a child with her, and drifts on some supernal plane, finally, in which Kilgore Trout, the Tralfamadorians, Montana Wildhack, and the ruins of Dresden do not merge but rather disperse through all planes of existence. Slaughterhouse-Five was hugely successful, brought Vonnegut an enormous audience, was a finalist for the National Book Award and a best seller, and remains four decades later as timeless and shattering a war fiction as Catch-22, with which it stands as the two signal novels of their riotous and furious decade.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

A rambling yet intense depiction of the horrors, inhumanity, and extreme disorientation of war...a page turner that begins slowly but grips and engages the reader. Kurt Vonnegut paints vivid images in the mind - images that sometimes border on the ludicrous, and yet convey a strong sense of the insanity that war brings. Written in a sometimes distracting fashion, with a distinctive style that is both unsettling and rhythmic, this is not a story for the squeamish. The author weaves in the fantastic, tales of alien civilizations and time travel, into what is convincingly a memoir of the great war experiences, and specifically, the firebombing of a German city near the end of the war. His descriptions are graphic and compelling, though the narration jumps from viewpoint to viewpoint, from setting to setting, and one time period to another at random. And so it goes, as the author loves to repeat so very often.

There are almost no characters in this story, and almost no dramatic confrontations, because most of the people in it are so sick and so much the listless playthings of enormous forces. One of the main effects of war, after all, is that people are discouraged from being characters. Slaughterhouse-Five had tried to read this book a few times, put off by the dry listless opening and apparent lack of direction. It didn't particularly help things that reading ebooks on a tiny screen is sort of terrible. But one day I had decided to trudge on past the 4% mark and finally make a dent in this story. It wasn't long before I was hooked. I can see why Kurt Vonnegut is such a big name. The tone doesn't change and the direction doesn't sort. And it's wonderful. Where the narrative leads and the character it follows shortly after our introduction to the narrator fit with it so well that anything else wouldn't seem the least bit right. It's something particularly hard to explain but easy to understand if experienced. The philosophy presented in this book has got to be my favorite part about it all-even more than our sweet little punching bag of a protagonist (though every character seems to be a punching bag of life's whim honestly). I really can't recommend this enough. I can't believe this was free.

This book was so good, and so different from anything I've read. I am truly glad I finally read this! Vonnegut's anti-war message seems pretty clear, but is draped wonderfully in the fantasy of time travel. His protagonist, Billy Pilgrim, is both likable and pitiable at once. This is an enjoyable, quick read!

Prepare yourself for a wild ride if you have never before read Kurt Vonnegut. I had not but had heard that his works were classics. And where better to start, I thought, than with

Slaughterhouse-Five, a book that most people -- including my own children -- read in high school. Well, I hadn't. And I had never talked to anyone about the book prior. So imagine my surprise, just starting out with the nameless narrator discussion how he had come back from World War II, gotten married and become somewhat successful and decided that he had to write a book about his experiences during the bombing of Dresden. While it isn't stated, I assumed that the narrator was Vonnegut himself. Then we switched to Bill Pilgrim, a man who had done a lot of what the narrator had mentioned. But who had an accident and apparently became 'unstuck in time.' Back and forth, Pilgrim rides from the current to the past, re-experiencing the war, the aftermath and trying to explain it all. Disorienting? Definitely. Confusing? Certainly. Humorous? You bet! And in a way I didn't expect -- enjoyable. I never served in a war and my father didn't discuss his experiences either, but through Vonnegut's writing, you do understand what they could have felt, what they experienced and how it was to return to the 'so called normal life' afterwards and to feel a disconnect with all that is around you. I'm glad that I came to it without any opinions on what it would be and how I should feel about the writing. Since starting the book "Slaughterhouse-Five" as I often find myself "Slaughterhouse-Five" I've read articles about Vonnegut and about the book. On reports of the book being banned -- well, I feel the same as I do for any book. It's not to everyone's taste but is there anything in here that is profane? Only war itself. This is a book that questions people and in that, it is a tour de force.

Kurt Vonnegut weaves a satirical perspective on World War 2, carefully keeping an air of authenticity and morality. Vonnegut drags the viewer around the estranged timeline of Billy Pilgrim, setting up a very unique and engaging premise. Through this unique telling, the morality and fundamental flaws of the ideal and practice of war are brought into light, forming a stronger sense of purpose through very deliberate and satirical commentary. Slaughter House Five offers a broadened analysis of seemingly commonsensical World War 2, serving as an entertaining and magical perception of human conflict.

Maybe Tralfamadore would be a great place to live. Or maybe that is just where your mind goes when you have witnessed a tragic event like the bombing of Dresden Germany. Vonnegut combines sci-fi with history. Some humor, fortunately. Sometimes you just gotta read one of the classics.

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