



Cat's Cradle

Kurt Vonnegut

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Cat's Cradle (1963) is Vonnegut's most ambitious novel, which put into the language terms like "wampeter", "kerass" and "granfalloon" as well as a structured religion, Boskonism and was submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for a Master's Degree in anthropology, and in its sprawling compass and almost uncontrolled (and uncontrollable) invention, may be Vonnegut's best novel.

Written contemporaneously with the Cuban missile crisis and countenancing a version of a world in the grasp of magnified human stupidity, the novel is centered on Felix Hoenikker, a chemical scientist reminiscent of Robert Oppenheimer... except that Oppenheimer was destroyed by his conscience and Hoenikker, delighting in the disastrous chemicals he has invented, has no conscience at all. Hoenikker's "Ice 9" has the potential to convert all liquid to inert ice and thus destroy human existence; he is exiled to a remote island where Boskonism has enlisted all of its inhabitants and where religion and technology collaborate, with the help of a large cast of characters, to destroy civilization.

Vonnegut's compassion and despair are expressed here through his grotesque elaboration of character and situation and also through his created religion which like Flannery O'Connor's "Church Without Christ" (in *Wise Blood*) acts to serve its adherents by removing them from individual responsibility. Vonnegut had always been taken seriously by science fiction readers and critics (a reception which indeed made him uncomfortable) but it was with *Cat's Cradle* that he began to be found and appreciated by a more general audience. His own ambivalence toward science, science fiction, religion and religious comfort comes through in every scene of this novel.

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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