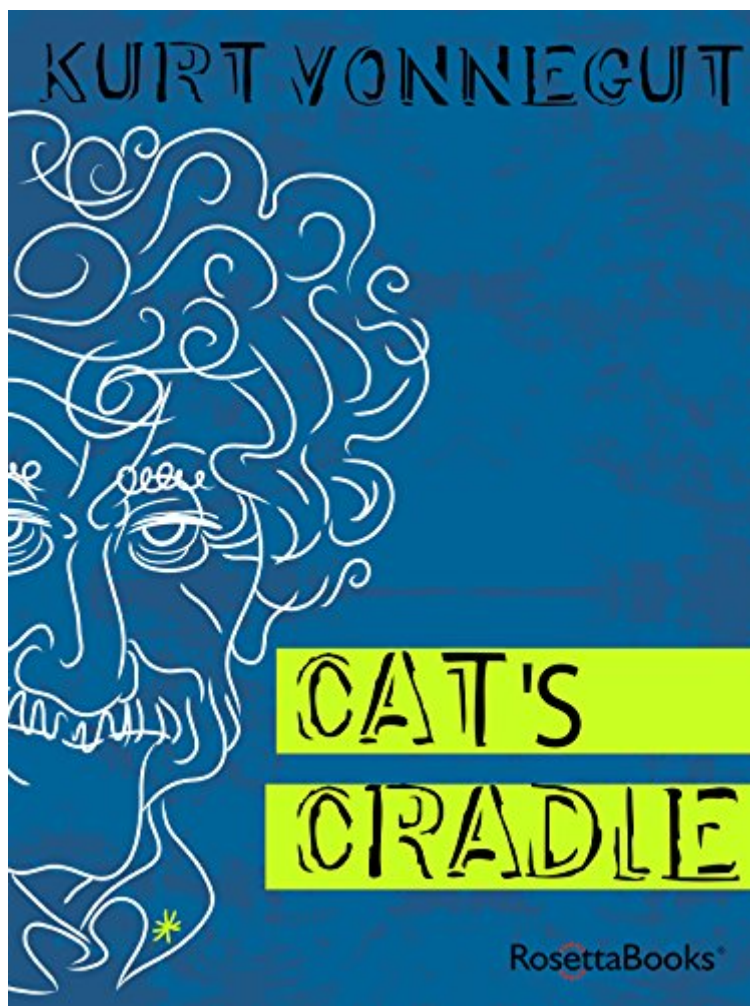


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Cat's Cradle



Synopsis

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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Customer Reviews

I find this work to be one of Vonnegut's most dire and most playful at the same time. Not as dystopian as Player Piano, and more humorous than Mother Night, Cats Cradle manages to convey a fatalistic theme in a satiric fashion. Poking fun of God, Man, and Religion along the way.

Cat's Cradle is a very Vonnegutish Vonnegut novel. It has his light flowing style, and cynical humorous satire which is in many ways is him at his best. It is a quick read, few central characters and very short chapters. Some may be turned off by the superficiality that they may find in the style of the writing, but I find the distance from the characters a strength of the story as the deeper commentary is obviously what Vonnegut is aiming for in the story, the characters are vessel for that

and are used very well as that for the most part. There are parts to the story I think are less eloquently handled, I think the relationship between the 3 Hoenikker siblings are changed somewhat through the book, and there are some loose ends in that which I think could have been handled differently so I would not sit with that feeling. To me this is not a Sci-Fi story, so readers who are not fans to that particular niche can (and should) read this one without having preset misgivings. I recommend this book, it has not dated in its base premise and can be read today 50 years after it was published without that being apparent. I do know that the review title is from the 'Cat's in the cradle' thus nothing to do with the novel I am reviewing.

Somehow through his insane, dizzying prose, Vonnegut cuts through all the hypocrisy to find something true, something surreal, something bizarrely real.

I don't really know what this book is about yet as I just finished reading it. It seems to have been about religion, death, the morality of science and the absurdity of faith in any logical system. It made me laugh quite a bit and it's a quick read. I'd recommend to anyone who wants to let their mind go a bit and expand into new horizons.

Classic Kurt Vonnegut. I was required to read *Slaughterhouse 5* way back in high school and, while I enjoyed the book, I think this would have made a better introduction to the writings of Mr. Vonnegut. The book revolves around a obscure religious leader and his cult, the workings of a third world dictatorship that pursues the cult's followers in an alternately vicious and benign way, the amoral pursuit of scientific progress, and the writer who just wanted to do a piece on one of the fathers of the atomic bomb but ends up documenting the end of the world. Man ultimately outsmarts himself and brings not just humanity to an end but the world itself. With no hope of recovery. The book is an absurd apocalyptic nightmare whose believability is actually enhanced by the absurdity of the events and characters. If humans ever do bring the destruction of the world about it will likely be through just such an unpredictable and bizarre chain of events and not through the obvious, and so avoidable, causes we all worry about.

Despite its being a classic and having grown up during Vonnegut's busiest career, "Cat's Cradle" is the first Vonnegut novel I've read. The type is clear, the paper bright, and the book sells for an appropriately low price point -- all important for a novelist who hated frippery and self-importance almost as much as he hated money men. The novel is an extremely fast read, thanks to Vonnegut's

style, which is similarly clear, bright, and without additional frippery, while the underlying satire is much more unstable and ironic than first readers may have given it credit for. While there is a criticism of basic research and play, when the subjects are physical forces of the universe, the deeper satire is of roles, of the alternative to play, where tyrants and mystics play assigned, Orwellian roles, and the intersection of this from of child's game with that other. This was an awfully nice way to spend a few nights of reading time.

Not a huge fan of science fiction usually, but what a thrilling book! I cannot claim to have understood its significance fully, but there were plenty of good places for thought exercise while being a very interesting read all the while,. I would recommend it for absolutely everyone.

Wow! What an amazing piece of writing. If you've read my previous two Vonnegut reviews for *The Sirens of Titan* and *Slaughterhouse Five* you'll know that I was not impressed with Mr. Vonnegut after my first read and he slowly grew on me with *Slaughterhouse*. I enjoyed *S5* and *Cat's Cradle* may have just become my favorite book of all time (for now). After my first two Vonnegut novels I found myself with a pretty decent understanding of Vonnegut's writing style and it seems to grow on me more with each. What I liked most about *Cat's Cradle* is that it can be whatever you're looking for in a book. It certainly holds its own if you're looking for pure entertainment. Vonnegut's wit and the story shine through here by themselves. I never felt like I had to search for greater meaning to the words in order to appreciate them. As an example there is an exchange between Miss Francine Pefko and Dr. Asa Breed early on in the novel that I found so hilarious I reread it about 8 times. Another that stands out in my mind is the chapter titled "Bicycles For Afghanistan" in which H. Lowe Crosby describes the current state of the American Bicycle industry. It just goes to show how politics can screw up the simplest of business models and although written in 1963, could very well have been penned yesterday. That being said, it would be hard for anyone with an average intelligence not to pick up what Vonnegut was trying to get across with *Cat's Cradle*. This is a wonderful book that has serious, yet comical, political, anthropological and religious messages. It's not hard to see why Vonnegut was awarded his M.A. for *Cat's Cradle* from the University of Chicago in the absence of a formal thesis. I recommend this book to just about anyone. It's very clear why *Cat's Cradle* is cemented into literary history as one of the all-time greats.

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