



# BOOK RESUME: SLAUGHTERHOUSE-FIVE

## BOOK SYNOPSIS

*Slaughterhouse-Five*, an American classic, is one of the world's great antiwar books. Centering on the infamous World War II firebombing of Dresden, the novel is the result of what Kurt Vonnegut described as a twenty-three-year struggle to write a book about what he had witnessed as an American prisoner of war. It combines historical fiction, science fiction, autobiography, and satire in an account of the life of Billy Pilgrim, a barber's son turned draftee turned optometrist turned alien abductee. As Vonnegut had, Billy experiences the destruction of Dresden as a POW. Unlike Vonnegut, he experiences time travel, or coming "unstuck in time."

**Title:** Slaughterhouse-Five

**Author:** Kurt Vonnegut

**Imprint:** Dial Press Trade Paperback

**Publisher:** Random House Publishing Group

**On sale date:** January 12, 1999

**ISBN:** 9780385333849

**Format:** Paperback

**Grade Range:** Classic

An instant bestseller, *Slaughterhouse-Five* made Kurt Vonnegut a cult hero in American literature, a reputation that only strengthened over time, despite his being banned and censored by some libraries and schools for content and language. But it was precisely those elements of Vonnegut's writing—the political edginess, the genre-bending inventiveness, the frank violence, the transgressive wit—that have inspired generations of readers not just to look differently at the world around them but to find the confidence to say something about it. Authors as wide-ranging as Norman Mailer, John Irving, Michael Crichton, Tim O'Brien, Margaret Atwood, Elizabeth Strout, David Sedaris, and Jennifer Egan have all found inspiration in Vonnegut's words. Jonathan Safran Foer has described Vonnegut as "the kind of writer who made people—young people especially—want to write." George Saunders has declared Vonnegut to be "the great, urgent, passionate American writer of our century, who offers us . . . a model of the kind of compassionate thinking that might yet save us from ourselves."

More than fifty years after its initial publication at the height of the Vietnam War, Vonnegut's portrayal of political disillusionment, PTSD, and postwar anxiety feels as relevant, darkly humorous, and profoundly affecting as ever, an enduring beacon through our own era's uncertainties.

## REVIEWS AND PRAISE

"Poignant and hilarious, threaded with compassion and, behind everything, the cataract of a thundering moral statement." —*The Boston Globe*

"Funny, satirical, compelling, outrageous, fanciful, mordant, fecund . . . 'It's too good to be science fiction,' [the critics] would say. But Vonnegut doesn't care, and you won't care, either, because this is a writer who leaps over genres." —*Los Angeles Times*

## AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- Winner of the 1970 National Book Award for Fiction

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\*Publisher suggested age range covers the wide range of readers publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate range for their diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.

### **MEDIA AND RESOURCES**

- [Educator Guide](#)

### **RESPONSE TO CHALLENGES**

- [Record of challenges created by Marshall University, 2001–22](#)
- [The Neverending Campaign to Ban ‘Slaughterhouse Five’ \(2011\)](#)
- [History Repeated: the Trials of Vonnegut’s Slaughterhouse-Five \(2021\)](#)
- [Kurt Vonnegut Museum Is Giving Florida 1,000 Copies of ‘Slaughterhouse-Five’ Amid Ban Effort \(2022\)](#)

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