



## **My Vacation in Hell**

*Gene Twaronite*

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## **My Vacation in Hell** Gene Twaronite

My Vacation in Hell is a young adult dark fantasy. Set in the mid-1960s, it is a first person narrative by a 15-year-old writer named John Boggle. A troubled nerdy misfit and a frequent flyer of his imagination, John is inspired by a book report reading of Dante Alighieri's the Inferno. In the eternity of the five minutes before summer vacation, he embarks on a pilgrimage based upon his own free-wheeling interpretation of the work. Following Dante's lead, John populates his hell with all the people who have wronged him over the years, inventing deliciously cruel punishments for each of them in his teenage version of cosmic retribution. Aided by his best friend Virgil, a trusty guide in this shared imagination, John also struggles to come to terms with the world's many evils. And as he descends further into this realm, he constructs his own hierarchy of evildoers, assigning them to the levels he believes they deserve. But it is the evil perpetrated upon John, a victim of sexual abuse, which poses the most difficult challenge. The deeper he goes, the more he encounters obstacles, some of whom in the guise of colorful demon characters try their best to keep him there. But the worst obstacle of all is his own self-image, forged out of guilt and shame. He will not leave this hell of his own making, Virgil tells him, until he learns how to deal with the evil inflicted upon him and finds the true center of his being. Fortunately, he has other help besides the ever wise Virgil, who it turns out has a few problems of his own to deal with. John needs more than reason to get him through this, and divinely beautiful aid arrives in the form of Beth, an idealized version of his secret love. Rescuing the pair from the evil that threatens to consume them, she will guide John in the last stage of his spiritual odyssey. She shows him that there are even some good places in Hell, just as there is always some good, however slight, that comes from our worst experiences. Though disturbing at times due to its mature theme, My Vacation in Hell delivers a message of hope with a large dose of humor.

## **My Vacation in Hell Details**

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Author : Gene Twaronite

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## **From Reader Review My Vacation in Hell for online ebook**

### **Krissi Bryant says**

The main characters in this book is John and Virgil. It starts off with John daydreaming five minutes until summer vacation and he lands himself in hell. Soon he comes across his good friend Virgil who is his trusty guide throughout hell. The adventure moves through the nine zones of hell each one with something new for the boys to discover. Each realm of hell showing their bullies and their places in hell and a appearing monk that helps them through hell and its problems. At zone nine each boy must take their own path as they are writing their own story/handbook now. Do both of the boys make it back from hell? Is this just John's imagination can he just wake up or is he really stuck in hell? Both boys are fighting a similar trouble from their past that is pretty disturbing. In order to leave hell they must find the right door.

Fast pace, humorous book about two fifteen year old boys that travel through hell. There are no dull points and you will not be able to put this book down!

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### **Kate Robinson says**

See my interview with Gene Twaronite and a review of My Vacation in Hell at Jellyfish Day - <http://jellyfishday.blogspot.com/2012...>

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### **?Joycedale? says**

I've never read Dante's Inferno so I'm not sure how much this resembles it. John after doing a book report on Dante starts imagining what all the bad people in his life, especially "Uncle Vinnie" would deserve done to them. Somehow this leads to him being lead through hell by his best friend who is on his thrid trip there. They travel though the nine levels with occasional help from a monk only to reach the last level and face their own demons, which strangely are very similar.

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### **Gina says**

Book Description- My Vacation in Hell is a humorous young adult fantasy. Set in the mid-1960's, it is told in the first person narrative by a 15-year old writer named John Boggle. A troubled nerdy misfit and a frequent flyer of his imagination, John is inspired by a book report reading of Dante Alighieri's the Inferno. In the eternity of the five minutes before summer vacation, he embarks on a pilgrimage based upon his own free-wheeling interpretation of the work.

Following Dante's lead, John populates his hell with all the people who have wronged him over the years, inventing deliciously cruel punishments for each of them in his teenage version of cosmic retribution. Aided by his best friend Virgil, a trusty guide in this shared imagination, John also struggles to come to terms with the world's many evils. And as he descends further into the realm, he constructs his own hierarchy of

evildoers, assigning them to the levels he believes they deserve.

But it is the evil perpetuated upon John, a victim of sexual abuse, which poses the most difficult challenge for him. The deeper he goes, the more he encounters obstacles, some of whom in the guise of colorful demon characters try their best to keep him there. But the worst obstacle of all is his own self-image, forged out of guilt and shame. He will not leave this hell of his own making, Virgil tells him, until he learns how to deal with the evil inflicted upon him and finds the true center of his being. Though disturbing at times due to its mature theme, *My Vacation in Hell* delivers a message of hope with a large dose of humor.

I received this book as a gift from a book club member and I have to say I was a little hesitant to read it and unsure why my fellow club member chose this book to gift to me when it seems like not only a strange topic but genre choice. I cast this book off to the side and only decided to read it because it was a short book that matched a reading challenge requirement that I needed to fill. I honestly thought I would just skim through the book quickly and not find anything interesting about it. Well let's just say that I definitely judged a book by its cover! This book was nothing at all what I expected and it had much more substance and message than I thought a less than 200 page YA novel about hell could possibly contain.

John comes from a strange family which doesn't have much structure and seems to do a lot of daydreaming in class. At the onset of the book, John comes across as a strange character and pretty quirky. It is five minutes before the bell rings for summer vacation and he begins thinking about a recent book report that he took upon himself over Dante's *Inferno*. His daydream quickly takes him into a dramatic and colorful imagination of what hell would be like to him. In his dream, he enters hell with his good friend Virgil who will guide him through the 9 levels of hell obviously alluding to other classic literature.

As they travel through the levels of hell Virgil describes to him who inhabits each level and what eternal punishment these inhabitants are subject to. The author is definitely making a statement about the present world and the different kinds of "sins" that are being committed here on Earth. There is a place for people who don't care about anyone but themselves, including bullies and people only out for themselves, to corporate giants who strip the Earth of its resources by stripping the world of trees, to pollutants, to illegal hunters who kill off entire species of animals. There is also a place for all of the different kinds of killers. From killing in a loose sense of degrading people and "killing" their soul to killers who kill in cold blood for their own pleasure. Also leaving room for killers who think they can justify their actions. As John and Virgil travel through hell, the author is able to make his message clear about what he thinks is wrong with the world.

The last level of hell Virgil describes is different for every person. It is the level of hell that contains whatever sin or wrongdoing that is the worst possible in the minds of each individual who travels there. For John, that is his Uncle Vinnie, who sexually abused him for several years while living with his family. Virgil explains that for the last level each person is on their own to face down their personal evils and it is up to the individual to find a way out. So Virgil leaves John on his own as he faces down the three headed monster of his Uncle. At first John doesn't think he can make it. He has spent so much of his life trying to bury his memories and feelings that he doesn't think he can face what has happened to him again and fears being stuck in hell forever. However, as John literally faces what has happened to him in the "Harsh Reality of Light" he must either come to the decision to let go of his guilt and shame and find his true self or be stuck in hell forever.

This was a book that I felt needed a review because I am willing to bet not many people have heard of this book....and I think that it is a novel worth the read. It contains a powerful message of the state of our world and about how we as individuals must learn to find our true selves even when tragic events have taken place.

The author handles these messages through the eyes and narration of children and is able to insert some humor into some terrible situations, but the humor works. It isn't sick or demented humor but humor seen through the eyes of teenage boys which helps lighten up such heavy content.

So all in all, this book was a great surprise to me! I went in expecting one thing but came away with a strong message and definite understanding of why the author wrote the book. I highly recommend this little known book. My hopes are that this review makes just one person take a look at this off the beaten path book and to come away with the feelings and inspiration that the book gave to me. 5 stars!

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### **Shannon says**

I found this to be a darkly humorous and very thought provoking story very appropriate for the mature, young reader. The author, in my opinion, has done an outstanding job addressing serious and sensitive issues in such a way that should not leave the reader feeling uncomfortable. His descriptions of the various stages of hell are just "creepy" enough to entertain and maintain the young readers' attention, but not so bizarre that the underlying lessons are lost altogether.

As a mother with sons, I am always on the lookout for books especially written for the male teen/YA and am constantly disappointed at how few there seem to be. My appreciation to this author for his excellent contribution to this genre. I look forward to sharing this new book with my local high school librarian.

*I received this book free from the author. This is an honest review and all of the opinions are my own.*

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### **Jennifer says**

I really enjoyed the beginning of the story, but toward the middle of the story it got very repetitive. John, our narrator, is definitely funny, and the story is very dark(especially toward the end.) If you like horror movies this may be a great fit for you.

Side note, this author is incredibly kind!

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### **Linda says**

The title and cover art is enough to give it 5 stars. Haven't read it. Want to win it. Then I'll rate it.

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### **Jade Eby says**

Originally published at my blog [Chasing Empty Pavements](#)

This is the Twaronite's second novel and it skips ahead two years when John Boggle is 15. Not only does his age set him up so that his novel feels more YA, but the title alone seems to fit in well with YA themes.

The Good: This was QUITE a change from The Family that Wasn't yet Twaronite's humor and voice shined through on this novel as well. The dark nature of this novel immediately set itself apart from his first novel as the main character deals with some hefty issues. Retribution, sexual abuse, cruelty, hope and inspiration all come into play in this novel. John is facing some really tough decisions and I think Twaronite guides him seamlessly through the obstacles in this novel. I love that the novel is based partially on Dante's Inferno but that a lot of it is also the way John interprets and depicts Dante's Inferno that influences his own personal "hell." I think the tough situations and issues are handled wonderfully by Twaronite and I would highly recommend young adults read this book.

The Bad: Nothing too negative to say, there were a few dialogue passages that I felt were out of character and jolted me out of the reading but otherwise, the book was wonderful.

I give this one an A too!

\*\*I received this book free from the author in exchange for an honest review. All the opinions are my own and I was not obligated to write a favorable review.

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### **Katrina says**

I wasn't actually aware that this was Twarnoite's second novel about the character John Boggle until I'd finished the book and had a scan through the reviews. Not that it mattered as I've found the book to be accessible even as a stand alone novel in itself.

There are some very dark themes throughout this YA story in which the author doesn't gloss over. Decent use of Dante's Divine Comedy as inspiration.

Was pleasantly surprised by it, I have to say.

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### **Chris Gamer says**

An entertaining modern version of dante's classic tale. Using vivid imagery, the author paints a picture of a teenager's personal version of hell, with characters that are easy to relate to, and understand.

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### **Sara says**

Once I picked it up, I didn't want to stop! Its such an entertaining story on a topic that I have never read much about before. After getting home from work, I'd think to myself, "Hmm what should I do now, oh I know! I'll read my hell book!" It became my own little hell trip, too, in a good way. I haven't read Dante's Inferno but, after this book, I really want to. This book made the concept of hell so interesting and entertaining that I want to keep going!

The main character, John, is portrayed extremely well through his first-person narrative and through his best friend and hell travel companion, Virgil. Their friendship and back-and-forth banter is so raw and relatable and really makes the story that much more comical and addicting. It also contrasted well with the dark theme

of traveling through hell.

I highly recommend this book for the sheer entertainment of a quick, comical and spooky read.

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## **Kelly says**

My Vacation in Hell is intense. I was surprised to see that it's described as humorous in the synopsis, because while I did find myself chuckling at a few parts, overall, I found it anything but humorous. Instead, I found it dark and intense, and psychologically very, very interesting.

I've never read Dante's Inferno, but I've heard My Vacation in Hell compared to it, and I think this is probably pretty accurate. While I was reading, I wondered how much of My Vacation in Hell might have come from mythology, and now I realize that a great part of it was likely inspired by Dante's Inferno. I loved reading about all the different parts of hell that John experienced, especially since he was the one who, to an extent, created them. I found it fascinating to see how he would punish people for doing wrong, and what wrongs he considers worse than others.

What I found most fascinating, though, was John's contemplation of himself and his thoughts and actions. Is he just as bad as Vinnie because of what John thinks about and how he reacts to certain things? This really becomes a major theme in the novel, as John gets the opportunity to explore it. By the end, we have the answer.

In some places, the story felt heavy on dialogue, but descriptions in other places of the book balanced it out pretty well. There were some things that just made me cringe with how horrifying and disgusting they were, and those are the kinds of descriptions I enjoy, because I react to them. I need to be able to react to the characters, of course, but I love it when I'm able to react to the setting, too. And in a book like this, it's vital to react to the setting.

There is sexual content that readers need to be aware of. Gene Twaronite handles the sexual content beautifully; it's not graphic, but it doesn't shy away from John's experiences, either. More important than the descriptions of what happened to John are his reactions to what happened, and Gene Twaronite uses those reactions to show readers how horrible what he went through was, instead of relying on depicting what happened in a graphic manner.

I enjoyed Gene Twaronite's first book, The Family That Wasn't, but I have to say that I enjoyed My Vacation in Hell so much more. If you haven't read either book yet, you should. They deal with subjects that are too important to be ignored.

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