



Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut

William Rodney Allen (Editor) , Kurt Vonnegut

Download now

Read Online →

Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut

William Rodney Allen (Editor) , Kurt Vonnegut

Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut William Rodney Allen (Editor) , Kurt Vonnegut

Kurt Vonnegut says: "I've worked with enough students to know what beginning writers are like, and if they will just talk to me for twenty minutes I can help them so much, because there are such simple things to know. Make a character want something-that's how you begin." William Rodney Allen teaches English at the Louisiana School for Math, Science, and the Arts. He is the author of "Walker Percy: The Southern Wayfarer."

Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut Details

Date : Published September 15th 2011 by University Press of Mississippi (first published 1988)

ISBN : 9780878053582

Author : William Rodney Allen (Editor) , Kurt Vonnegut

Format : Paperback 356 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Biography, Writing, Essays, Language

 [Download Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut William Rodney Allen (Editor) , Kurt Vonnegut

From Reader Review Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut for online ebook

Petergiaquinta says

Four stars for Kurt Vonnegut, hell yeah, but seriously much of this is rather dull and there's a whole lotta repetition in these conversations which stretch from 1969 through 1987. I blame the interviewers more than the interviewee, though; Kurt's cagey, and he rarely gives out more than he is asked, and much of what he does say is ironic or cryptic or ironically cryptic, even. Unfortunately most of these mopes keep asking him the same damn questions over this 18-year period and then failing to follow up when he doesn't give them much to work with in response. "Oh, well, what the hell," as the author told *Playboy* magazine in what is probably the best conversation in the book.

I can't tell you, for example, how many times the question about being a "black humorist," the term applied to the author by Bruce Jay Friedman in his 1965 collection of stories, is asked of Vonnegut over the course of these 20-some interviews...maybe in every single interview...and by the book's final conversation among William Rodney Allen, Paul Smith, and Vonnegut, the term has become somewhat of a joke as to whether it can even be uttered. (Allen tells Vonnegut, "We swore those two words would not come from our lips during this interview, so you can say them but we can't.") Vonnegut never really offers much in response to the question about how the term refers to his art, although clearly he finds the label constricting; the best thing he says is comparing his inclusion in Friedman's collection to having a bell jar placed over him and bunch of fellow crickets and all of them being given the same name...he said that to Robert Scholes in 1973 but then fielded the question again and again over the next 15 years.

Ten years after that, Vonnegut no doubt would have enjoyed the pained look on the face of one of my students in the library who brought a book to me with a picture of the author on it--it was either Allen's *Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut* or Stanley Schatt's *Kurt Vonnegut Jr.*--and asked with some confusion whether the publisher hadn't made some kind of awful mistake because wasn't Kurt Vonnegut black...?

Anyway, the best of the bunch here is that 1973 *Playboy* interview; in it the author talks about Vietnam and McGovern and what the Democrats needed to do to win against Nixon. Interestingly, what they needed to do 45 years ago is what they still need to do today: "I would have set the poor against the rich. I would have made the poor admit they they're poor. Archie Bunker has no sense of being poor, but he obviously is a frightened, poor man. I would convince Archie Bunker that he was poor and getting poorer, that the ruling class was robbing him and lying to him." Sadly, Archie Bunker (or Roseanne Connor, for that matter) still doesn't understand what the hell Vonnegut is talking about.

The worst piece in this collection just might be this goofy thing from *Crawdaddy* published a year later where the writer decided he'd be Kilgore Trout and interview his creator. Vonnegut was rather kind to him (much more kind than he was later to Philip Jose Farmer who tried writing an entire novel as Trout), and in a later interview Vonnegut acknowledged the effort the writer had put into the piece despite expressing some shortcomings with how it was written.

I miss Vonnegut, but I'm glad he's dead now and doesn't have to suffer through these sad years under Trump. If he wasn't dead, Trump's ignorance and avarice and cruelty surely would have killed him anyway.

Read these conversations if you're a fan, but a better book to read first would be Vonnegut's collection *Palm Sunday* or, even better, his recent *Letters*, edited by Dan Wakefield.

Alex says

I shouldn't have tried to read this book straight through but it was still worth it. At the least provocation and seemingly at random, Vonnegut comes out with incredible bits of wisdom. Not every interview is a hit and there's a fair amount of repetition, especially in the post- Slaughterhouse-Five/ early-70s ones, but I'm glad to have read the whole book.

Dan Tasse says

Eh, it would have been great at 100 pages! At 300+, its a little long. There's only so much chatting with Kurt Vonnegut I'm interested in.

Still a fan of the guy. But I quit reading this about 3/4 through because I wasn't really getting much out of the interviews anymore.

Eva says

Fun to read, but I guess I don't need quite that much Vonnegut. A couple quotes:

On the autobiographical aspect of Slaughterhouse-Five:

"As a groggy war prisoner he witnessed the fire-bombing of Dresden, 'a terrible thing for the son of an architect to see.'"

"Ordinarily, living authors are not good friends with one another. It is, and I have talked this over with other authors, part of our stock in trade--not hating other authors, but pitying them. [laugh] There is nothing a living author has written that I wish I had written, and I am sure that is the case of every living author. This is part of the professional stance. This is part of what keeps you going."

Tracey says

Continuing with my Vonnegut kick, I checked this out from the library. A collection of interviews that spans nearly 30 years of his career (1969 - 1987), this book provides a level of insight into his personality and inspirations, as well as his current projects.

Naturally, there's a good deal of repetition - he is asked about being a "black humorist" many times & uses several of the same anecdotes over and over. One of the later interviews was repeated verbatim in Palm Sunday, another recent read for me. He appears relatively open in the interviews, replying with good humor to even potentially painful questions. He seems slightly baffled as to his college-age fandom, even as one generation was supplanted by the next.

Perhaps I should have taken more time with this book - thrown a novel or two of his in-between - as I felt the same material was being rehashed over and over. Nonetheless, I feel this book is a useful resource for those

interested in knowing more about both the writer and the man.

Quotable Quotes

"He [KV] is the impatient humanitarian, the disappointed-but-constant optimist.... p 3 (1969)

On young people: "The most conceited generation in history. They're bright, but I'm not sure that they're competent." p 11 (1969)

"The President of the United States must dream the biggest dreams for all of us. I think he should be called dreamer-in-chief." p 27 (1970)

"We have entered a period when our government doesn't really seem to like us much. I find this oppressive and realize that the Constitution can't help much, can't help at all, really, if our leaders come to dislike us -- which they apparently do." p 73 (1973)[The more things change....]

"But laughter is a response to frustration, just as tears are, and it solves nothing, just as tears solve nothing." p 89 (1973)

"In spite of chainsmoking Pall Malls since I was fourteen, I think my wind is still good enough for me to go chasing after happiness, something I've never really tried." p 110 (1973)

"If someone has read me when he was 19, which is quite likely, when he ceases to be 19 he's going to leave me behind, too. " p 140 (1974) [Not so!]

"The reason novels were so thick for so long was that people had so much time to kill." p 162 (1974)

John says

This collection of interviews, spanning 1969 through 1999 (in the later edition) will be of interest to hardcore Vonnegut fans, but it is less engaging than Vonnegut's own volumes of non-fiction. When first published, in 1988, this collection reprinted several items which had already appeared in "Wampeters, Foma & Granfalloon" (1974) and "Palm Sunday" (1981), rendering this title partially redundant. More significantly, however, is the fact that Vonnegut, as an author who was frequently being interviewed both in print and on camera, as well as speaking publicly, cultivated a collection of stock answers, anecdotes, and snarky quips, any of which, in isolation, is golden. When repeated, however, as they inevitably are in this collection, their edge becomes quickly blunted. But we should probably cut Vonnegut some slack. Which of us, after all, is not guilty of the same minor offense? And at least we didn't have to live with Vonnegut. Imagine the patience required by those who live with each of us on a daily basis!

Kealan O'ver says

Merely a collection of interviews spanning 30 years but they are interviews with Kurt Vonnegut which makes them some of the best interviews you'll read. Although because the interviewers are different some of

the topics do get repeated over again.

Ray Dunsmore says

A fairly entertaining & enlightening collection of interviews with Vonnegut from various magazines & periodicals. Mainly goes over ground that was better trod later in the *And So It Goes* biography and Vonnegut has a tendency to repeat himself almost word-for-word with similar questions, but there's enough in here for it to be worth a fanatic's time.

Travis Roberson says

Kurt Vonnegut is my favorite author of all time. He has been for quite some time now. I was so happy to finally get my hands on this book. Nothing but interviews picking the brain of the genius that is Vonnegut.

At times, the interviews can get a tad repetitive-- the same questions asked, the same answers given. But Vonnegut has always been a fan of repeating himself.

Many of the interviews were rather insightful, and I learned a couple of new things I never knew about this incredible man. It also shows the progression of Vonnegut with reviews from his earlier days, to the late 90's. It's definitely worth reading for die hard and dedicated Vonnegut fans.

Wolfy says

Take the repetition as a lesson that needs to be heard over and over to be learned. Vonnegut's voice, in both his writing and his interviews, comforts and stresses in tandem.

A few things to remember:

-Simple isn't an insult

-G**damnit, you've got to be kind.

-Some of the best things are harmless untruths and horsesh*t

There are two types of artists. Which are you?

Emma says

Definitely suggest reading this only after you've read a good amount of his other works. "Meeting my Maker: a visit with Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., by Kilgore Trout" is especially worth the read.

John says

I only read part of this, while hanging out in the Charlotte public library in 1990. Interesting thoughts on the Vietnam war and why he would (if younger) want to go there (during the war) to find out what is really

going on.

Unbridled says

Finished Conversations with Kurt Vonnegut yesterday and this morning learned the unfortunate news that he died yesterday. Of the book, like every other in the "conversations with authors" series, the interviews do seem to become monotonous. This is good and bad – on the one hand, it's comforting and on the other, it's disappointing – both going to expectations and disappointments in what any writer is capable of. There are limits to wit and anecdote and spontaneity, after all. Of Kurt specifically I would say he is funny, smart, and kind – a mensch through and through. Importantly, he was also very wise about the technical foundations to good writing. On a lighter note, which Kurt might appreciate, this morning on the BART a man and woman (who was in a wheelchair) sitting directly across from Heather and me noted how funny it was that Heather was reading a book called *The Invisible Man* (Ellison) and I was reading a book called *Women* (Charles Bukowski). So it is. So it was. So it goes. Goodnight Kurt.

Megan Anderson says

A collection of interviews conducted with Kurt Vonnegut from various sources dating from 1969 to 1999. A very interesting read if you're a big Vonnegut fan or an aspiring writer.

It's funny: I'm pretty sure that this book, which weighs in at about 330 pages, is longer than any of the books that Vonnegut actually wrote. I really loved getting to know some of Vonnegut's biographical history and his thought processes. I also thought it was interesting to see how his interests and goals changed. For a time, Vonnegut thought he would mainly be a playwright. I didn't know that at all.

The first half of the book is really repetitive, because interviewers kept asking Vonnegut the same questions over and over (the main one was some variation of, "How do you feel about the label black humorist?"). It gets better as it goes, but this read is probably only worth it if you're a hardcore fan.

I really want to find a Vonnegut biography now!

Jay C says

300+ pages of interviews of Vonnegut, sequenced chronologically. More great insight into a great author. Helps if you've read most of his works, but this isn't required to enjoy the book. Somewhat repetitive at times, as interviewers tend to ask the same or similar questions. I read it for the book club at the Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library, which met today. That groups average rating - on a scale of 10 - was 7.2.
