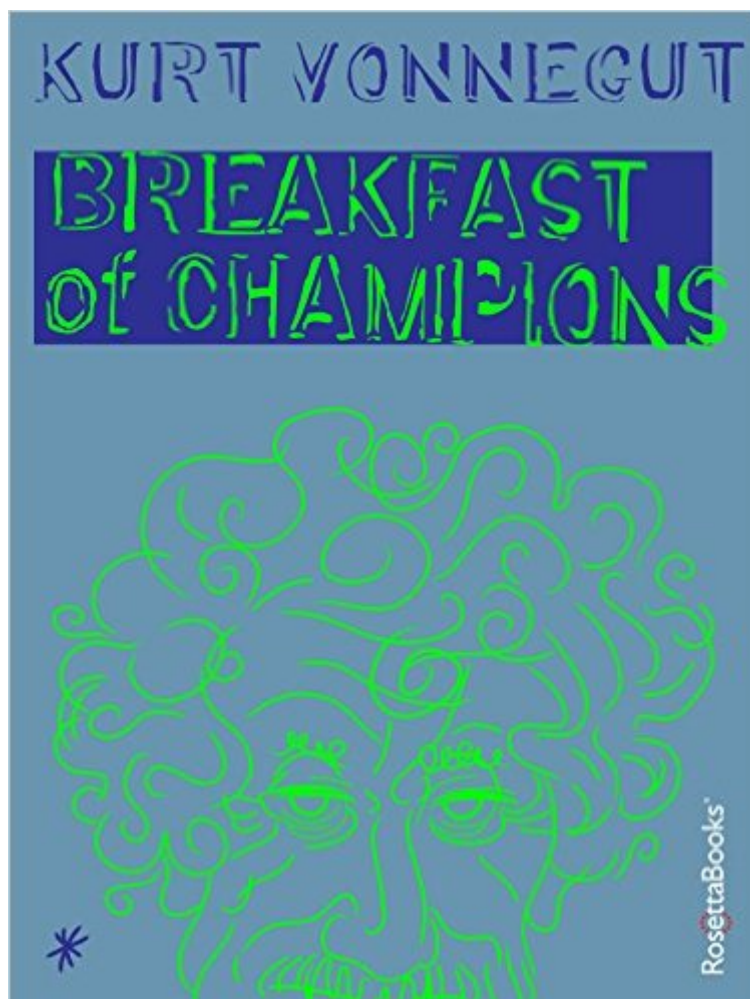


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# Breakfast Of Champions



## Synopsis

Breakfast of Champions (1973) provides frantic, scattershot satire and a collage of Vonnegut's obsessions. His recurring cast of characters and American landscape was perhaps the most controversial of his canon; it was felt by many at the time to be a disappointing successor to Slaughterhouse-Five, which had made Vonnegut's literary reputation. The core of the novel is Kilgore Trout, a familiar character very deliberately modeled on the science fiction writer Theodore Sturgeon (1918-1985), a fact which Vonnegut conceded frequently in interviews and which was based upon his own occasional relationship with Sturgeon. Here Kilgore Trout is an itinerant wandering from one science fiction convention to another; he intersects with the protagonist, Dwayne Hoover (one of Vonnegut's typically boosterish, lost and stupid mid-American characters) and their intersection is the excuse for the evocation of many others, familiar and unfamiliar, dredged from Vonnegut's gallery. The central issue is concerned with intersecting and apposite views of reality, and much of the narrative is filtered through Trout who is neither certifiably insane nor a visionary writer but can pass for either depending upon Dwayne Hoover's (and Vonnegut's) view of the situation. America, when this novel was published, was in the throes of Nixon, Watergate and the unraveling of our intervention in Vietnam; the nation was beginning to fragment ideologically and geographically, and Vonnegut sought to cram all of this dysfunction (and a goofy, desperate kind of hope, the irrational comfort given through the genre of science fiction) into a sprawling narrative whose sense, if any, is situational, not conceptual. Reviews were polarized; the novel was celebrated for its bizarre aspects, became the basis of a Bruce Willis movie adaptation whose reviews were not nearly so polarized. (Most critics hated it.) This novel in its freewheeling and deliberately fragmented sequentiality may be the quintessential Vonnegut novel, not necessarily his best, but the work which most truly embodies the range of his talent, cartooned alienation and despair.

**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

Kurt Vonnegut Jr. has specialized in two types of novels. The first types are made up of sharp, witty tales that poke fun at humanity, while all the time keeping one eye on the plot. Both SLAUGHTERHOUSE FIVE and MOTHER NIGHT are sterling examples. The second type of Vonnegut novel is awkward and unusual in the extreme, often leaving the reader dazed, thumping his or her head on the floor in a vain attempt at comprehension. They are enjoyable, but their precise meaning continues to elude. TIMEQUAKE is a fine example. BREAKFAST OF

CHAMPIONS is another. BREAKFAST, to define some semblance of a plot, follows two main story threads. In the first, Vonnegut presents us with Dwayne Hoover, car-salesman extraordinaire, who is slowly and surely losing his mind. In the second, we have Vonnegut regular Kilgore Trout, the unemployed and unlikable science-fiction writer, who is hitch-hiking his way across the country to receive a sizable award at an arts convention. This is the plot, but Vonnegut adheres to it only in passing. In countless asides and divergences, Vonnegut explores sex, race, politics, sex, environmental catastrophe, sex, aliens, robots, god, and sex. All this, plus numerous obscene doodles and an appearance from Vonnegut himself, bestowing wisdom upon his creations. What, exactly, is Vonnegut trying to say? American culture is a vast wasteland of imbecility? People are generally self-centred and greedy, and above all, not nice? As a culture, America is doomed to die in its own sewage? The answer to all would seem to be yes. Vonnegut has often had a core of anger in his writings, and BREAKFAST is perhaps his angriest. But BREAKFAST is not simply a gloomy discussion of the end of us all. Vonnegut is far too wise to dwell on man's foibles for long.

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