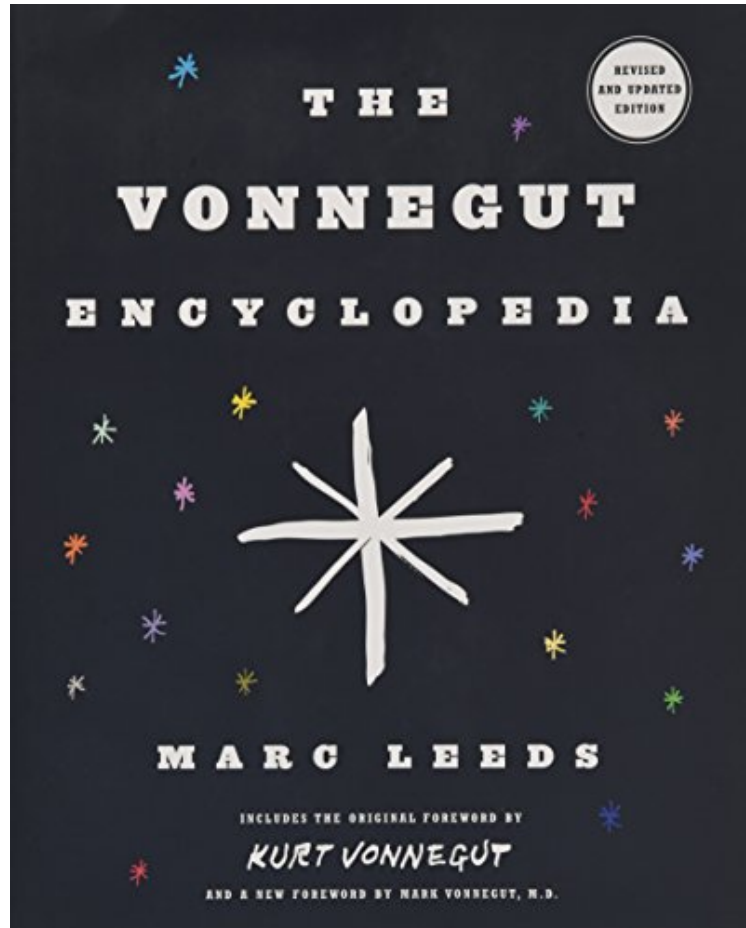


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## The Vonnegut Encyclopedia: Revised and updated edition

*Marc Leeds*

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**Marc Leeds : The Vonnegut Encyclopedia: Revised and updated edition** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Vonnegut Encyclopedia: Revised and updated edition:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Essential for fans, fascinating for everybody elseBy Alexander H SchmidtAs Lisa Simpson once said, Kurt Vonnegut's novels self-reference each other. Thanks to Marc Leeds's handy compendium of Vonne-stuff, there's finally a definitive index for the works of this great American author. Get this encyclopedia asap, or else you'll be mixing up your Rumfoords and Glamperses and Hoenikkers for years to come.4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. A reference work for hard-core Vonnegut fansBy CSAAt 725 pages, this is geared toward hard-core Vonnegut fans. This is a reference book that includes every Vonnegut character, images, themes, quotes, etc. It states that the author devoted 25 years to this project and that seems plausible judging by the depth of the information provided. This is a revised edition; the previous edition covered Vonnegut's works through 1991 and this updated version encompasses his works through his death in 2007. I gave this high marks for its thoroughness.4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. I love Vonnegut and this book looks fantasticBy John

PI love Vonnegut and this book looks fantastic. I just got it today for Christmas and couldn't happier. The quality is excellent and the parts I've read were great. Whether I'm remembering parts from his books or learning new things, this will be a great addition to my library. Well done.

Now expanded and updated, this authorized compendium to Kurt Vonnegut's novels, stories, essays, and plays is the most comprehensive and definitive edition to date. Over the course of five decades, Kurt Vonnegut created a complex and interconnected web of characters, settings, and concepts. The Vonnegut Encyclopedia is an exhaustive guide to this beloved author's world, organized in a handy A-to-Z format. The first edition of this book covered Vonnegut's work through 1991. This new and updated edition encompasses his writing through his death in 2007. Marc Leeds, co-founder and founding president of the Kurt Vonnegut Society and a longtime personal friend of the authors, has devoted more than twenty-five years of his life to cataloging the Vonnegut cosmos from the birthplace of Kilgore Trout (Vonnegut's sci-fi writing alter ego) to the municipal landmarks of Midland City (the midwestern metropolis that is the setting for Vonnegut's 1973 masterpiece *Breakfast of Champions*). The Vonnegut Encyclopedia identifies every major and minor Vonnegut character from Celia Aamons to Zog, as well as recurring images and relevant themes from all of Vonnegut's works, including lesser-known gems like his revisionist libretto for Stravinsky's opera *L'Histoire du soldat* and his 1980 children's book *Sun Moon Star*. Leeds provides expert notes explaining the significance of many items, but relies primarily on extended quotations from Vonnegut himself. A work of impressive scholarship in an eminently browsable package, this encyclopedia reveals countless connections readers may never have thought of on their own. A rarity among authors of serious fiction, Kurt Vonnegut has always inspired something like obsession in his most dedicated fans. The Vonnegut Encyclopedia is an invaluable resource for readers wishing to revisit his fictional universe and those about to explore it for the first time. Praise for *The Vonnegut Encyclopedia* An essential collection for fans of the singular satirist. *San Francisco Chronicle* Indispensable. *Publishers Weekly* If you're somebody who has read one Kurt Vonnegut book then there's a chance you've read them all. For the devout reader of Vonnegut there's a voracious sense of completism. And, Marc Leeds and his new [*The Vonnegut*] Encyclopedia are here to guide you through it all. Just don't blame him if you become unstuck in time while you're reading. Inverse Vonnegut enthusiasts will be delighted with Leeds's exhaustive, almost obsessive, treatment of the characters, places, events, and tantalizingly mysterious references for which Vonnegut's five-decade writing career is celebrated. . . . A wonderful and beautifully designed reference source. *Booklist* (starred review) Leeds's scholarship and genuine love for his subject matter render this encyclopedia a treasure trove for Vonnegut readers. *The Nameless Zine*

An essential collection for fans of the singular satirist. *San Francisco Chronicle* Indispensable. *Publishers Weekly* If you're somebody who has read one Kurt Vonnegut book then there's a chance you've read them all. For the devout reader of Vonnegut there's a voracious sense of completism. And, Marc Leeds and his new [*The Vonnegut*] Encyclopedia are here to guide you through it all. Just don't blame him if you become unstuck in time while you're reading. Inverse Vonnegut enthusiasts will be delighted with Leeds's exhaustive, almost obsessive, treatment of the characters, places, events, and tantalizingly mysterious references for which Vonnegut's five-decade writing career is celebrated. . . . A wonderful and beautifully designed reference source. *Booklist* (starred review) Leeds's scholarship and genuine love for his subject matter render this encyclopedia a treasure trove for Vonnegut readers. *The Nameless Zine*

About the Author Marc Leeds is a graduate of the University at Buffalo, New York University, and Brooklyn College, and directed computer-based writing programs at East Tennessee State University and later at Shawnee State University in Ohio. He is the co-founder and founding president of the Kurt Vonnegut Society and a founding board member of the Kurt Vonnegut Memorial and Library in Indianapolis. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Numbers 2BR02B (also 2BR02B). Kilgore Trout's novel (the alphanumeric abbreviation of Hamlet's question, To be or not to be) as described in *God Bless You, Mr. Rosewater*, is a thematic cross between *Player Piano* and *Welcome to the Monkey House* (industrial mechanization leading to unemployment and depression combined with severe overpopulation leading to ethical suicide), complete with *Ethical Suicide Parlors* outfitted with pretty hostesses and *Barca-Loungers*. (GBR 2) All serious diseases had been conquered. So death was voluntary, and the government, to encourage volunteers for death, set up a purple-roofed *Ethical Suicide Parlor* at every major intersection, right next to an orange-roofed *Howard Johnson's*. There were pretty hostesses in the parlor, and *Barca-Loungers*, and *Muzak*, and a choice of fourteen painless ways to die. 2BR02B is also the title of Vonnegut's short story originally appearing in the January 1962 edition of *Worlds of If* and later reprinted in the 1999 collection *Bagombo Snuff Box*. 2BR02B is another of Vonnegut's tales that ponders the personal conflicts faced by the beneficiaries of seemingly surreal medical/scientific advances in a world whose social, moral, and legal frameworks have been amended to the dictates of science. *Welcome to the Monkey House*, *Tomorrow and Tomorrow and Tomorrow*, and *Fortitude* are as baldly dystopian as are the worlds in *Player Piano*, *Cats Cradle*, or *Hocus Pocus*. The story is set far in the future. The nation's population has stabilized at 40 million but exceedingly aged, averaging 129 years old. Ever since a cure for the effects of aging was found, people remained as youthful as they were the day they started the medication. Births, however, can occur only with the agreed-upon exchange of one soul for another literally. In the case of thrice-blessed father-to-

be Edward K. Wehling, Jr., this means needing to come up with three existing souls in exchange for those of his children. The entirety of the story takes place in the waiting room of the famed Chicago Lying-in Hospital. Edward K. Wehling, Jr., faces a rare dilemma. As the new father of triplets in a zero-sum population scheme agreed to by the nations of the world, he needs to find three people willing to die (probably by visiting an Ethical Suicide Studio) so that his children may live. His maternal grandfather has already volunteered to sacrifice himself. Despite the seriousness of Wehling's situation, the brief story's focus is the slow exposé of both the mural and muralist at work in the waiting room. Titled *The Happy Garden of Life*, the mural he was working on depicted a very neat garden. Men and women in white, doctors and nurses, turned the soil, planted seedlings, sprayed bugs, spread fertilizer. Men and women in purple uniforms pulled up weeds, cut down plants that were old and sickly, raked leaves, carried refuse to trash burners. Never, never, never not even in medieval Holland or old Japan had a garden been more formal, been better tended. Every plant had all the loam, light, water, air, and nourishment it could use. The mural is an obvious metaphor for medicine's ability to tend to all the necessities of life while gardeners in purple uniforms (like those worn by workers in the worldwide chain of Ethical Suicide Studios) prune the garden of the sick and old growth. Responsible for the breakthrough in extending life so well, Dr. Benjamin Hitz, the hospital's chief obstetrician, a blindingly handsome man, is among the many faces being filled in by the unnamed muralist, himself a man nearly two hundred years old, though he looks no more than thirty-five thanks to the cure. (Benjamin Hitz is the name of Vonnegut's best friend from childhood; he is also mentioned in the dedication to *Jailbird*.) Wehling stares at a fixed spot on the wall throughout Dr. Hitz's diatribe about how much better life is for the planet now that we have advanced so far. However, Wehling displays that thousand-yard stare, a term that came about after World War II indicating ones being shell-shocked, or, in current parlance, suffering with PTSD, post-traumatic stress disorder. As Hitz winds down his impromptu lecture, Wehling very clearly knows how to resolve the dilemma of his blessings. This child of yours whichever one you decide to keep, Mr. Wehling, said Dr. Hitz. He or she is going to live on a happy, roomy, clean, rich planet, thanks to population control. In a garden like in that mural there. He shook his head. Two centuries ago, when I was a young man, it was a hell that nobody thought could last another twenty years. Now centuries of peace and plenty stretch before us as far as the imagination cares to travel. He smiled luminously. The smile faded when he saw that Wehling had just drawn a revolver. Wehling shot Dr. Hitz dead. There's room for one a great big one, he said. And then he shot Leora Duncan. Its only death, he said to her as she fell. There! Room for two. And then he shot himself, making room for all three of his children. Watching this macabre scene from above is the unnamed muralist. The painter sat on the top of his stepladder, looking down reflectively on the sorry scene. He pondered the mournful puzzle of life demanding to be born and, once born, demanding to be fruitful...to multiply and to live as long as possible to do all that on a very small planet that would have to last forever. It is enough to impel the old muralist to end it all. Though he picks up Wehling's smoking revolver, he decides his nerves can't handle suicide by his own hand. Instead, he calls the Federal Bureau of Termination for an appointment that afternoon. As the operator is about to finish taking the reservation, she spouts the polite boilerplate ending to all such calls, indicating just how ubiquitous was the process as well as appealing to people's sense of good citizenship. Thank you, sir, said the hostess. Your city thanks you, your country thanks you, your planet thanks you. But the deepest thanks of all is from future generations. 27 Bethune Street, New York, NY. The location of Howard W. Campbell's apartment after the war, and the location of significant portions of *Mother Night*. 3972 Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois. The location of the Church of Jesus Christ the Kidnapped, founded by the Right Reverend William Uranium-8 Wainwright, in Slapstick. 4918 North Meridian Street, Indianapolis, Indiana. The home of Mrs. Harrison C. Conners and her brother, the memorable dwarf, Newt Hoenikker. These are two of the three children of Dr. Felix Hoenikker, inventor of ice-nine, in *Cats Cradle*. 5644 North Meridian Street, Indianapolis, Indiana. The location of the French chateau built by the title character in *Hal Irwin's Magic Lamp*. *AA Night for Love*. Originally published in the November 1954 edition of *The Saturday Evening Post* and reprinted in *Bagombo Snuff Box* (1999), the story's nexus is the full moon beaming down on the jealous sensibilities of the Whitman and Reinbeck families, separated by mere miles and millions of dollars. The moon is also the nexus for the two shining offspring of the Whitman and Reinbeck families, Nancy and Charlie, whose narrowed beams inside his coupe, beneath their families' jealous moon, guide them to elope. The more frontal subplot involves spousal jealousies long ago planted by the two early dates of Milly O'Shea Whitman and Louis C. Reinbeck. Turley is a security guard at Reinbeck Abrasives Company, and his wife, Milly, was once a beauty queen. Natalie Reinbeck, the sole wife of Louis C., the mother of young Charlie, and beneficiary of the Reinbeck lifestyle, nonetheless harbors jealousy about her husband's nearly ancient dates with Milly. An emotional resolution reaches into the minds if not hearts of the jealous spouses, acknowledging the moon's capabilities to cause such an emotional ruckus. It is at that moment that Vonnegut serves the anti-Romeo and Juliet moment by having the offspring of social-class opposites live on rebelliously by eloping. *A Present for Big Saint Nick*. The story first appeared in the December 1954 issue of *Argosy* magazine as *A Present for Big Nick* and later retitled by Vonnegut *A Present for Big Saint Nick* in the 1999 reprint collection entitled *Bagombo Snuff Box*. Vonnegut does not account for the minor retitling, but it does leave one to wonder why. Changing the title elevates the story's darkly comedic and ironic aspects. The ironic presentation of this anti-Christmas tale is evident without the change in titles. What establishes the story's

power beneath its darkly comedic aspects is revealed by the otherwise mundane plight of workers, their sense of helplessness, lack of self-esteem, and absolute fear in the face of an overbearing and threatening employer. True, not everyone works for the Mafia, but the families victimized in this story were otherwise law-abiding people who had been failing in their civilian employment before working for The Family and Big Nick. One, former middleweight boxer Bernie OHare, had (in a sense) been owned by Big Nick through a legal contract (establishing his rights as Bernies manager). The updated title allows the reader to focus on a collage of ironic twists often rendered comedically despite their dark overtones. From the outset we read of Big Saint Nick, heir to the power of Al Capone. His great power is juxtaposed by his masquerade as the altruistic one who knows who has been naughty and who has been nice, preparing the reader for some sort of comedic clowning. But Nicks Santa charade has but one purpose: to seduce the children of his employees in order to solicit from them in their moment of gratitude and peaceful Christmas greediness the rebellious, disrespectful, and perhaps disloyal sayings of their parents when they are at ease in their own homes. The parents are aware of his strategy and take great care to prepare the children. The tense struggle between Nicks ego and paranoia versus the parents careful preparation of toddlers and grade schoolers lets hang in the balance certain disappearances at the bottom of Lake Michigan or bonus payments for well-indoctrinated answers. All are aware that lives are on the line except for the children, who would be orphaned if their trained lies fail to convince Big Saint Nick. Big Nick is played for the clown in the opening scene of the story. Bernie OHare and his family accidentally meet Mr. Pullman and his family in a jewelry store where both are looking for grotesque holiday gifts for their boss, a man all recognize as having the worst taste. While both families revel in their knowledge of Nicks low-class tastes, they delight in their search for the most horrendous cacophony of smashed-up style and substance, debased beyond all reason. In the meantime, however, both families suffer for their intimate knowledge of Big Nick. Constant contact with the great bully leaves them afraid for their lives, but it has been Nicks effect on their children that is most troubling. Young Willy OHare and Richard Pullman severely suffer Santa-phobia: visibly shaken and stricken with fear at the thought of seeing Santa, even department store Santas or the great and jolly fat man as a small plastic figurine. Mrs. Pullmans exasperation lets loose for all to hear, including the jewelry salesman, Its psychosomatic, said Mrs. Pullman. He (her son Richard) snuffles every time he sees a Santa Claus. You cant bring a child downtown at Christmastime and not have him see a Santa Claus somewhere. One came out of the cafeteria next door just a minute ago. Scared poor Richard half to death. She later explains Big Saint Nick from the childrens perspective. Why pretend? said Mrs. Pullman. Our Santa Claus is a dirty, vulgar, prying, foulmouthed, ill-smelling fake. The clerks eyes rolled. Later at the party, Big Nick, dressed as Santa, abuses his position to bribe the children to get the dirt on their parents. However, direct questioning is exactly what the parents worked so hard to train their children to deflect with complimentary responses. Unfortunately, no one thought while training their children to keep them from offering what they heard other parents say, and their young minds could not grasp Nicks initial subterfuge. Unless prompted by a direct question, the children had no filters on their responses. The childrens literal-mindedness, devoid of cunning or artifice, is what begins to elevate the tension in the room. After Richard Pullman and Gwen Zerbe pass their initial interrogations and busy themselves with their gifts, Big Saint Nick turns his attention to Willy OHare, son of Bernie, the one-eyed bodyguard who was offered a job in a moment of true compassion by the otherwise malevolent Nick. Having offered Big Saint Nick nothing but a well-rehearsed answer, Willys unassuming young mind slips back to the concerns of a young boy. The situation begins to spiral out of control for everyone as the other children join in on matters they were unable to appreciate. Willy OHare! thundered Santa Claus. Tell Santy the trut, and ya get a swell boat. Whats your old man and old lady say about Big Nick? They say they owe him a lot, said Willy dutifully. Santa Claus guffawed. I guess they do, boy! Willy, you know where your old mand be if it wasnt for Big Nick? Hed be dancin aroun in little circles, talking to hisself, witout nuttin to his name but a flock of canaries in his head. Here, kid, heres your boat, an Merry Christmas. Merry Christmas to you, said Willy politely. Please, could I have a rag? A rag? said Santa. Please, said Willy. I wanna wipe off the boat. Willy! said Bernie and Wanda together. Wait a minute, wait a minute, said Santa. Let the kid talk. Why you wanna wipe it off, Willy? I want to wipe off the blood and dirt, said Willy. Blood! said Santa. Dirt! Willy! cried Bernie. Mama says everything we get from Santas got blood on it, said Willy. He pointed at Mrs. Pullman. And that lady says hes dirty. No I didnt, no I didnt, said Mrs. Pullman. Yes you did, said Richard. I heard you. My father, said Gwen Zerbe, breaking the dreadful silence, says kissing Santa Claus isnt any worse than kissing a dog. Gwen! cried her father. I kiss the dog all the time, said Gwen, determined to complete her thought, and I never get sick. I guess we can wash off the blood and dirt when we get home, said Willy. Why, you fresh little punk! roared Santa Claus, bringing his hand back to hit Willy. Though Bernie saves the day by grabbing Big Nicks hand before having the chance to wallop young Willy, all the adults in the room have their lying faades compromised. Nick assures them that knocking off everyone will come cheaply to him. Bernie follows the grab with a professional boxers jab at his face, sending Nick into the Christmas tree, and the sight of Big Saint Nick clawing down ornaments as he fell is just the kind of slapstick comedy children cherish.