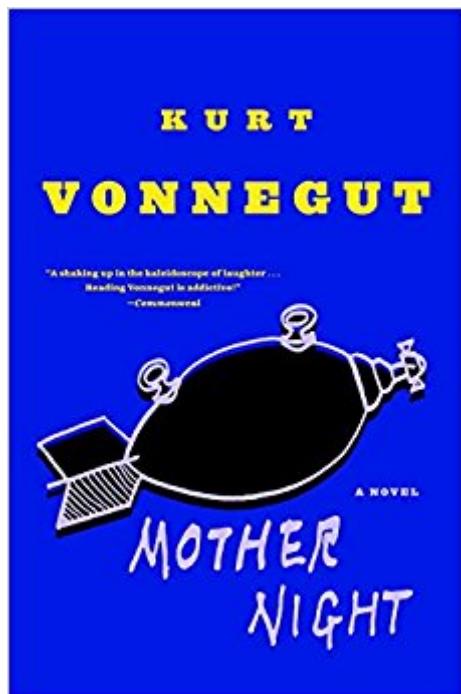


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Mother Night: A Novel



Synopsis

Mother Night is a daring challenge to our moral sense. American Howard W. Campbell, Jr., a spy during World War II, is now on trial in Israel as a Nazi war criminal. But is he really guilty? In this brilliant book rife with true gallows humor, Vonnegut turns black and white into a chilling shade of gray with a verdict that will haunt us all. From the Trade Paperback edition.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

listening to this book after not reading it in 40 years made me instantly remember why I love Vonnegut and why this was always my favorite Vonnegut. This should be read by every human - especially in this day and age with what is happening all around us. I also wish to praise the narrator who did an absolutely astonishing job of bringing this book to life and making Howard W. Campbell live in my ears as well as my mind! This book has so much heart and so much compassion and so much humanity - read it, please!

If you're a fan of the WWII/post-WWII backdrop, this story is especially amazing. I tend to think that era was about the most interesting aspect of American History and so, this is one of my favorite stories yet. Oddly enough, it does serve to humanize a group of people who we're taught to instinctively consider as monsters, but it does so without absolving anyone of responsibility for their actions.

****WARNING SPOILERS / DETAILS**** What froze me was the fact that I had absolutely no reason to move in any direction. What had made me move through so many dead and pointless years was curiosity. Now even that had flickered out. Vonnegut declares the moral of his story in the very first paragraph: we are what we pretend to be. Howard W. Campbell, Jr. then confesses his experience in this moral. A man stuck between two sides of the most famous hideous war mankind has ever created, being so lost in the curiosity and cruelty of war that he ends up with very little left of himself. He has no political message, he claims no country, he bleeds only with a lost desire of his nation of two with his presumed dead wife Helga. This is his cost of pretending, a loss of identity, a numbness to the things that used to stir passion within him; writing he could never do again. I really liked this book. Matter of fact, I think I could even say I loved it. Due to my recent enjoyment of both *The Pacific* and *Band of Brothers* miniseries, both set in WWII, I have reignited my curiosity and fascination with WWII. I think this definitely played a part in what I drew from the book. Vonnegut writes really well. I was surprised because I read *God Bless You, Mr Rosewater*, also by Vonnegut, and I felt nothing for it. This was so different though, written differently I feel. Plenty of yellow highlights in my copy, I think I want to read it again to mull over some of the conversations had and the little subplots and curiosities they formed in my mind at the time. There is loads of satire in this book apparently, a literary device that Vonnegut is famous for. What that means I don't really know, but I guess it's the way Vonnegut creates humour and provoking self-assessment from his shameless/shameful re-enactments of disaster and the conversations and interactions his characters have with love, loss, racism, war and simple plain evil. I thought the story/plot was brilliant. I loved the interactions between Kraft and Campbell. I loved what Vonnegut did with Kraft and all that he represented. I loved the Resi/Helga twist and the Russian little sub plot at the end. I liked the tie-ins with real history, the conversation with Adolf Eichmann the obvious one. To me, this is great literature. Smart clever writing, story and themes that question life and identity, dialogue that is witty and twisted, characters that you can see and touch and carry in your pocket. I could easily read this again, and probably will.

This was my first introduction to Vonnegut, but I very much enjoyed it - so much that I immediately read Slaughterhouse 5. It's a great read, but it's a bit more page-turner than literature for my tastes. By the middle, the perspective wears off a bit - but the plot continued to push me along. I'd definitely recommend it.

I really can't give any Vonnegut book anything but 5 stars as I consider him one of the greatest writers ever. Ever. Mother Night is one of his shorter books, and less recognized as his primary works, but it's a fantastic tale of morality and the pointlessness of existence. But it still makes you giggle while you weep inside. I suggest 2 whiskeys before reading.

What I took away from this book was the idea that you'd better be meticulous with the maintenance of your own character, because you have very little control over anything else. While the protagonist was impacted by events not of his own making, it also was true that anything that he built turned against him, and every petty crime or minor indiscretion that he committed was granted a life of its own, grew to immense proportions, and returned to wreak havoc upon him. In the midst of all that, he maintained a great equanimity. I enjoyed the book immensely. It was humorous, farcical, and had a lot of plot twists. It was episodic, with each chapter/episode being a few pages long, so it moved along quite quickly. I haven't read much Vonnegut, but this is the one I enjoyed most, and would definitely recommend it.

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