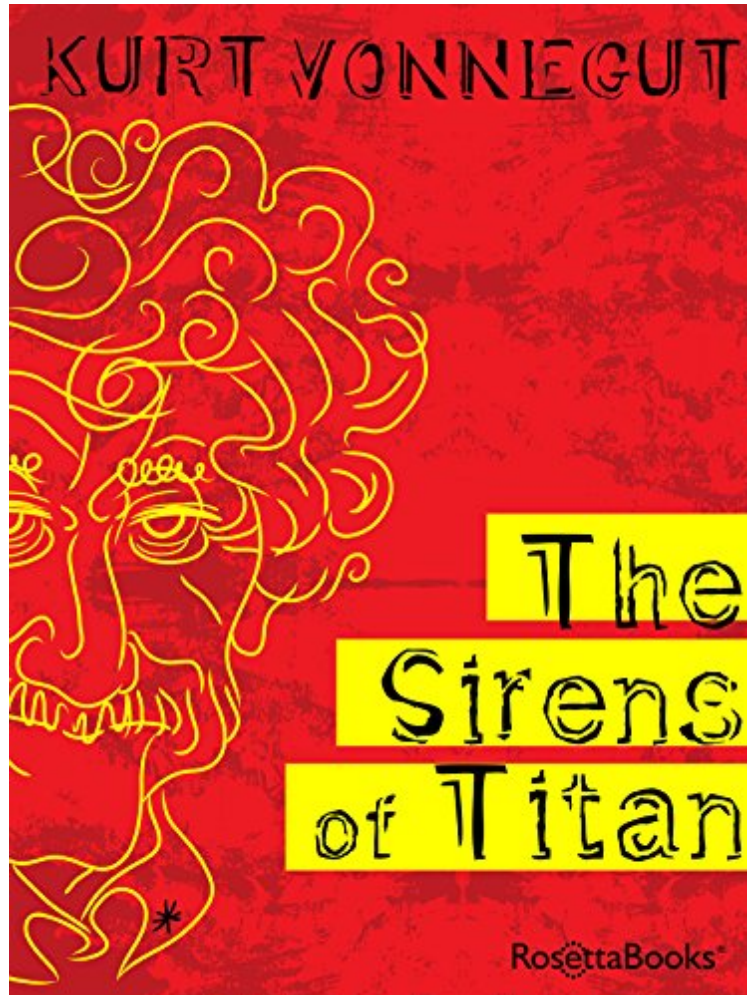


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## The Sirens of Titan (English Edition)

Von Kurt Vonnegut

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**Von Kurt Vonnegut : The Sirens of Titan (English Edition)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Sirens of Titan (English Edition):

**Kurzbeschreibung**The Sirens of Titan (1959) is Vonnegut's second novel and was on the Hugo ballot with Robert Heinlein's Starship Troopers but lost in what Harlan Ellison has called a monumental injustice. Sirens of Titan is a picaresque novel which almost defies being synposized; it is an interplanetary Candide (lacking perhaps Voltaire's utter bitterness), the book follows lead character Malachi Constant, a feckless but kind-hearted millionaire as he moves

through the solar system on his quest for the meaning of all existence. Constant is aided by another tycoon, Winston Rumfoord, who with the help of aliens has actually discovered the fundamental meaning of life (the retrieval of an alien artifact with an inscribed message of greetings). With the assistance of Salo, an alien root and overseeing the alien race, the Tralmafadorians (who also feature in *Slaughterhouse-Five*), Constant attempts to find some cosmic sense and order in the face of universal malevolence. Together Constant and Rumfoord deal with the metaphysics of "chrono-synclastic infundibula", they deal with the interference of the Tralmafadorians; the novel is pervaded by a goofy, episodic charm which barely shields the readers (or the characters) from the sense of a large and indifferent universe. All of Vonnegut's themes and obsessions (which are further developed and/or recycled in later work) are evident here in this novel which is more hopeful than most of Vonnegut's canon. It is suggested that ultimately Constant learns that only it is impossible to learn, and that fate (and the Tralmafadorians) are impenetrable, unavoidable circumstance. On the basis of this novel, Vonnegut was wholly claimed by the science fiction community (as witnessed by the Hugo nomination), but Vonnegut did not likewise wish to claim the community for himself and the feelings were not reciprocal. He felt from the outset that being identified as a science fiction writer could only limit his audience and trivialize his themes. His recurring character, the hack science fiction writer, Kilgore Trout (who also features in *Slaughterhouse-Five*), represented to Vonnegut the worst case scenario of the writer he did not wish to become.

**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.

de Kurt Vonnegut's second SF novel was published way back in 1959 but remains horribly timeless. For all the book's wild inventiveness, it's one of the most blackly nihilistic comedies ever published in the genre. The tragicomic godgame is presided over by Winston Niles Rumfoord, who has accidentally become a standing wave in space/time and knows the past and the future. Since the future is fixed, he can't change it even though it involves him arranging nasty fates for many people--in particular Malachi Constant, richest man in the world since his father's career of interpreting the Bible as a coded guide to the stockmarket. Despite his struggles, Constant is destined for a grimly comic pilgrimage around the Solar System to Titan, home since 203,117 BC of the visiting alien Salo whose presence has warped the whole of human history. Salo's far-off people manipulated us into building Stonehenge, the Great Wall of China and other vast constructions as reassuring signals to their stranded emissary--who himself is carrying a message of truly cosmic unimportance. Small wonder that Rumfoord tries to cheer up humanity by founding the Church of God the Utterly Indifferent. Vonnegut scatters crazed ideas in all directions, forcing you into painful laughter at the grandiose futility of his cosmos. Another worthy Millennium SF Masterworks classic. --David Langford.co.uk

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