



# Timequake

*Kurt Vonnegut*

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## **Timequake** Kurt Vonnegut

According to science-fiction writer Kilgore Trout, a global timequake will occur in New York City on 13th February 2001. It is the moment when the universe suffers a crisis of conscience. Should it expand or make a great big bang? It decides to wind the clock back a decade to 1991, making everyone in the world endure ten years of deja-vu and a total loss of free will - not to mention the torture of reliving every nanosecond of one of the tawdiest and most hollow decades. With his trademark wicked wit, Vonnegut addresses memory, suicide, the Great Depression, the loss of American eloquence, and the obsolescent thrill of reading books.

## **Timequake Details**

Date : Published August 6th 1998 by Vintage Classics (first published 1997)

ISBN : 9780099267546

Author : Kurt Vonnegut

Format : Paperback 219 pages

Genre : Humor, Classics, Novels, Literature

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## From Reader Review Timequake for online ebook

### Danger says

2ND READ-THROUGH: There's a lot going on here. Ruminations on life and regret, but strangely enough, Vonnegut's trademark "cynicism" doesn't quite sound so cynical to me. Dare I say, there's a lot of hope and gratitude contained in this - a book that functions like an autobiography moreso than the novel within the novel it's (marginally) attempting to tell. Suffice it to say, NO ONE writes like this, or this well, or this deeply, in the way Vonnegut does. This book had me laughing and tearing up, in turn. Just spectacular!

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### Marie says

Timequake is an odd one. It's a mix of the typical sci-fi genre, with short anecdotes from his life, along with a couple of tangential rants on the perils of modern society. Reading this was certainly an experience - although I still haven't entirely decided (having finished the book and mulled it over) whether this book was any good as a novel! If the quality of the book is defined by how much I enjoyed it (which seems a reasonable approach) - it certainly would deserve the 4 out of 5 stars.

The main premise (that of a 'hiccup' in space-time, in which the universe slid back a decade and reran the events of that time in the exact sequence they first occurred) is a neat idea. It's an interesting little take on determinism and causality, in this particular context the absence of free will. All beings and objects, human and otherwise, during the timequake must act in the exact manner they did during the first 'pass' through this particular decade. Every step, breath, blink is completed in the same sequence, with the same results. There is a single history, a single path through time, in which events are pre-determined. It highlights the question as to whether the initial 'run' was itself pre-determined, implying that free will does not exist.

The personal anecdotes in the book, referencing Vonnegut's parents, wives and children, are interspersed amongst the main 'Timequake' story. Vonnegut referred to this book as a 'stew' of ideas - and it seems an apt description - with real people and events melding together with fictional ones. It serves well as a peek into the mind of the ageing Vonnegut - although it is a particularly confusing approach - with the pace of the book varying in a maddening and increasingly haphazard fashion, and with rather brutal changes in topic. This book, a story out of step with itself, is (in a way) a timequake - with events from Vonnegut's youth and old age, scattered amongst events that never happened.

In summary, whilst this is not a book for those unfamiliar with Vonnegut - I appreciated the personal nature of it, reading this after he had passed away. The concept of the timequake is a neat one, although I'm not convinced it was fully realised here, with the structure feeling quite jarring in some places. It is deservedly marked 4 stars here though, in my opinion, as an exciting little detour in science fiction.

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### Pooriya says

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## Lyn says

Another fun, rambling visit with cantankerous old Uncle Kurt.

As with most of his works, it is not so much what he writes, as how he writes it. He is funny. He is amusing and entertaining.

Here's the thing: It's about a timequake, where the world goes back 10 years and everyone and everything re-lives the past ten years all over again.

Listen: Kurt is too slick, this is an allegory about how our society will re-live our past, history will repeat itself because we are too stupid and apathetic to make a change.

Imagine!

All that and Kilgore Trout. Loved it!

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## Darwin8u says

*"In real life, as in Grand Opera, arias only make hopeless situations worse."*

- Kurt Vonnegut, Jr., Timequake

Timequake was one of the first books my wife ever gave me. I don't know why it took me so long to read. I WAS a huge fan of Vonnegut 20 years ago when we first got married and I loved my wife. Clearly, I at age 23 I wasn't a fan of Vonnegut enough or trusted my wife's taste in books enough. I think I was just fearful Vonnegut was just mailing a final novel in. This was one of the last things he published, and I think it was his last novel (I might check this and find out I was wrong, it happens).

Anyway, I think all three of us were right. My wife was beautifully right in buying me Kurt Vonnegut. Kurt Vonnegut was right in writing it. I was right in waiting. I wasn't ready for this book. I'm now 20 years closer to death. I am now a father to two pimply teenagers who are sleeping tonight waiting for their parents to pretend still they are Santa and bring them goodies on Christmas morning. We are all pretending the best we can. We are all making the best of this short spin on Earth. I am now in a place where I can functionally GET the older Vonnegut better. I can get better his take on free will, money, morality, and art.

Timequake isn't a great novel, but it has absolutely brilliant parts. I love its lines and sentences better than I liked the book. It has a fantastic message about extended family and friends and community that I absolutely adored. It has so many good lines (yes, I said that before, but now I'm going to pull back the curtain):

*"Only when free will kicked in again could they stop running obstacle courses of their own construction."*

*"Let us be perfectly frank for a change. For practically everybody, the end of the world can't come soon enough."*

*"I define a saint as a person who behaves decently in an indecent society."*

*"...when things were really going well we should be sure to notice it."*

*"Pictures are famous for their humanness, and not for their pictureness."*

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## **Goldberg says**

"You are not enough people!"

Worth reading just for this quote.  
A lot of fun...

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## **fortuna.spinning says**

"Ting-a-ling, motherfucker." - Kilgore Trout

This semi-autobiographical "stew" is kind of bonkers, but I liked it. A must read for established fans.

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## **Girish says**

*"..that all that could be learned from history was that history itself was absolutely nonsensical, so study something else, like music"*

Kurt Vonnegut's one of the last books (i think), is a semi autobiographical caricature painting based on the human condition. If through a timequake, people are made to relive the last 10 years, without free will, essentially do the exact same thing again and again, will be appreciate life any better? We have Kilgore Trout and Kurt Vonnegut walk out of such a timequake which happened in 2001 along with his usual set of quirky caricature characters, Trouts short stories and inserts of the Vonnegut family.

One of the parallel tracks is appreciation of life, art and the value. The book actually became a lot more sober towards the end when the author ends up reminiscing and the fact and fiction sort of overlap. It was a lot more personal to the author and hence by extension a bit lost. However, the writing style for around 60% is the usual pseudo arbitrary intellectualism laced with wit and humor.

*"I say in speeches that a plausible mission of artists is to make people appreciate being alive at least a little bit."*

Based on my readings of Vonnegut books, I wondered if he was a cynic and pessimist. I have concluded he is a closet optimist, who wanted to open up the readers to see the point of being pessimistic is often comical.

*"In real life, as during a rerun following a timequake, people don't change, don't learn anything from their mistakes, and don't apologise. In a short story they have to do at least two out of three of those things"*

The books is partly stories of the people in his life. No life is perfect. But then every life is beautiful. And this book is just perfect the way it is without regrets.

*"You were sick, but now you're well again, and there's work to do" "If this isn't nice, what is?" "Ting-a-ling!"*

## Kirstine says

This is an odd mix of fiction and autobiography. Narrated by the author himself (who is not fictional), while relying on stories and quotations from the old science fiction author Kilgore Trout (who is). There are fake stories, true stories, and all of them will tell you something about being human, in all its terrible glory.

*“Extenuating circumstance to be mentioned on Judgment Day: We never asked to be born in the first place.”*

The universe happened upon the same question that hits us all, often for no particular reason and out of nowhere: What the hell am I supposed to do with myself? Do I continue expanding or do I quit and start over? In its understandable confusion and crisis it shrinks a bit and sends everyone back 10 years, forcing everyone to relive every moment, fully aware of having done it all before, but incapable of changing anything.

A nightmare really (“and they have to relive the 90s” I say, not knowing if the 90s really were awful, because I was a baby and then a child for all of it, Ting-a-ling! I once asked someone, though, what it was like being young in the 90s and he said “it was certainly ugly” referring to the fashion, so it probably wasn’t all that great), but it makes for good storytelling.

Of course, a timequake is entirely unfeasible and would never occur, except it does every day of our lives. Humans are all too good at living in the past, reliving painful or humiliating memories, or being nostalgic for beautiful moments that are no more. That’s our timequake, and we are completely incapable of changing a thing that has happened. Reliving it too much, however, will freeze you in your present moment, because you forget that right now, you have the absolute power, you have your free will, to make every moment something you might not hate reliving.

I read this book and suddenly realized that if I had to relive the past 10 years of my life, it’d probably suck 80 percent of the time and I’d come out of it traumatized. But I can’t change a single second, so it’s best to just move on, and try to be the best I can be for the rest of my life.

Casting the ridiculous and brilliant Kilgore Trout as the hero of the story, the ideal of who we should try to be should this particular event ever occur, is a little bit genius. No one can be Trout, obviously, as he’s entirely fictional, and frankly I don’t think anyone *wants* to be him, but I do want to be *like* him.

*“The main thing about van Gogh and me,’ said Trout, ‘is that he painted pictures that astonished **him** with their importance, even though nobody else thought they were worth a damn and I write stories that astonish **me**, even though nobody else thinks they’re worth a damn. How lucky can you get?”*

The Timequake, however, plays a small role in the book. It is the frame, yes, the story we return to, but mostly this is a collection of stories from Vonnegut’s life and Kilgore Trout’s arsenal of oddball short stories. With his usual wit and round-a-bout way of saying anything, Vonnegut dishes up some striking social commentary. I’m continuously surprised by how achingly humane he is, making his observations all the more salient, because they come from a place of compassion and honesty.

I kept coming back to this one quote from a song by Say Anything, it goes:

*“I guess that everyone includes me*

*and that's why I'm a humanist"*

If anyone, Vonnegut embodies that saying, at least in this particular book.

The song is called Hate Everyone. In a way, that is also very fitting.

Sure, "being alive is a crock of shit", but also "I am eternally grateful for my knack of finding in great books, some of them very funny books, reason enough to feel honored to be alive, no matter what else might be going on."

Thank you for such a book.

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## **MJ Nicholls says**

Timequake is billed as Vonnegut's last "novel" but it's neither his last, nor a novel. Hocus Pocus was the final novel from the Master, and A Man Without a Country his last book. This is almost entirely autobiographical, with a few digressions on the career of Kilgore Trout to keep the fictional proceedings going.

No complaints from me. Kurt is on fine form, wisecracking and wise, settling into his batty old grandfather role with ease. What is surprising about this volume is the candour he displays when talking about his own family, a matter of contention among the Vonnegut clan. But his personal life was always entwined with his writing: from way back to his early 70s novels, when he began to write personally detailed prefaces.

This book's catchword: Ting-a-Ling!

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## **JSou says**

Perfect last novel from one of my very favorite authors. This is the first time I've re-read this since Vonnegut passed, which made this book even more amazing. I've been yelling, "I FRY MINE IN BUTTER!" all week now, making many people think I'm even more "special" than they had originally assumed.

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## **notgettingenough says**

Come the half way point or so in this book I was rather indignantly thinking how wrong all the harsh criticism of it is. As usual Vonnegut was making me liberally annotate as I wrote. Here: Yes! There: Haha! Somewhere else: Ting-a-ling!!! By the end, however, it was a chore. Those explanation points! Those ting-a-lings!!! I wanted to get right into the very paper of the book and kill them!!!!

Maybe it's worth reading as a piece on how writers suffer when they can't write – or think they can't write, since obviously they can.

But it is worth reading for the insights into life.

They say the first thing to go when you're old is your legs or your eyesight. It isn't true. The first thing to go is parallel parking.

It is worth reading for his regret,

rest here: [https://alittleteaalittlechat.wordpre...](https://alittleteaalittlechat.wordpress...)

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### **Jessica says**

So . . . huh.

I didn't know what this was, just that it was on sale for Kindle a couple of months ago and the only Vonnegut I've ever read is Slaughterhouse-Five (a favorite). So I got this, and I read it and it . . . is unusual. It's not so much a novel as a description of a story about a writer, Kilgore Trout, who is Vonnegut's alter ego and imaginary friend, along with descriptions of the stories Trout wrote and then threw away during the Timequake. It's . . . yeah, it's hard to describe. I didn't dislike it, but I wasn't expecting it. Vonnegut's ramble touches on everything: life, death, marriage, art, writing, education, anything and everything. And it's fascinating, and funny, and crass at times. I wouldn't recommend it as "gateway Vonnegut," but I would recommend it if you loved Slaughterhouse-Five and want to try something else.

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### **Bernard Batubara says**

jika racun angrek hantu dalam dongeng raden mandasia dapat diolah menjadi bubur kertas dan berakhir sebagai buku berisi penuh tulisan, mungkin buku inilah hasilnya.

'gempa waktu' novel kurt vonnegut membuat saya terpingkal-pingkal selama tiga hari terakhir, dan sebagai puncaknya, semalam saya muntah dua kali semburan. kisah yang ia tulis adalah parodi atas kehidupan nyata yang ia jalani.

lelucon vonnegut satir dan sikapnya terhadap beberapa hal di dunia begitu sinis, tetapi dalam beberapa hal lain ia juga tampak positif, seperti ketika membicarakan pentingnya kehadiran cinta dan keluarga besar bagi manusia.

saya menyebut kegiatan membaca buku ini sebagai 'usaha bunuh diri yang bisa berhasil jika kau tak mencukupkan diri membacanya'.

(karena mengingat saya membaca buku ini hingga muntah-muntah, tampaknya 'tertawa sampai mati' bukanlah sekadar slogan).

ting-a-ling!

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### **Liz says**

At first I didn't get into this book, and I had put it down and forgotten about it. Recently I spotted it on my bookshelf and, needing something new to read when I finished my last book, I grabbed Timequake. I read it

mostly on the train thinking that would force me to get over the hump I couldn't overtake a couple years ago when I first tried to read it. I was surprised this time around that I had ever put it down. It's extremely witty; full of humor and beauty and sadness, but told in a refreshing, lighthearted way.

I was waiting throughout the book for something to "happen" - I guess I was confusing it with another Vonnegut book I had started and then gave up on. But by the end of this book, I really didn't care that very little "happened". I enjoyed learning about Vonnegut's life, his family, the little anecdotes that only he could put such a witty, quirky twist on. It saddens me that this was his last book, but it makes sense. It seems that by the end he has come to terms with, well, being old, and one might even say being ready for death; because he has enjoyed life so much, and found humor and "soul" out of the happy and even the sad parts of life.

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## **Adam Florida says**

This has the distinct honor of being my favorite KV book!

### **On re-reading 8/18/15 in preparation for English 298: The Novels of Kurt Vonnegut (which will probably be canceled due to low enrollment):**

After a decade, re-reading this same novel, as if in a timequake, I can only repeat what my thoughts were the first time I read it: Wow, this is one of the best book's I've ever read. It's one of the best examples of postmodernism. It's one of the best examples of the value of art. It's one of the most touching, beautiful, meaningful, sad, and funny pieces of literature ever.

Read it!

Now I expect 4-7 pages on one of the following topics:

- 1) How does this novel develop/answer/culminate a theme or style from his other book(s) we've read?
  - 2) What does this book have to say about Art, Freewill, and The Purpose of Life?
- 

## **Art says**

I hate to say this because I love Vonnegut. Cat's Crade and Slaughterhouse were pure genius - satire at it's best. I also liked Sirens and Breakfast of Champions even though they were not of the calibre of his best works.

However, I am starting to fear that most of his other books are a waste of time. I think people read them only because they love Vonnegut and they desperately want to experience again the simple delight of discovering books that can shake you and engulf you.

I did not enjoy Vonnegut's short stories (much as I wanted to) and I had to give up on Timequake. That's right. Put it to rest before completing it. At some point in his life, Vonnegut appears to have stumbled upon a formula; a superbly quirky and poignant style and a set of peculiar characters to go along. Miserably

pathetic, gloriously mournful, wonderous people, dredging through the absurdities of life. But it is still sorely disappointing when you see the same themes and characters repeated in his other books. Thinly veiled, these books are suspiciously like rejected drafts of his more successful novels or tired attempts to re-create magic.

Something interesting I noticed in *Timequake* was Vonnegut's very 1950s view of women and his hand-waving simplification of their personalities and desires. This was only alluded to in his other books but starkly stated in *Timequake*. I don't think he intended to be chauvinistic or mean as he appears to have been a nice and sweet man in real life. But it was too late. Already jaded at this pivotal juncture in *Timequake*, I could now put it down with good reason. And shake my head. Oh, Kurt. Tsk tsk. Rest in peace, and thanks for the cat.

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## **Kemper says**

I'm suprised that I found some of Vonnegut's later, less talked about books as enjoyable as some of the classic ones. But I enjoyed *Bluebeard*, *Hocus Pocus* and *Timequake* just as much as *Slaughterhouse 5*, *Cat's Cradle*, *Mother Night* or *Breakfast of Champions*.

Even though this technically isn't the last Vonnegut work, it's obvious that he was thinking of it as his swan song in fiction, and it's a near-perfect farewell.

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## **Rob says**

I suppose it would be fair to call this a rant. Essentially, this is a summary of a novel Vonnegut struggles to write mixed with reflections from his life. The two main characters in this semi-auto-biographical novel are Kilgore Trout, Vonnegut's alter-ego, and the author himself. The fact that much of the narrative consists of tangential reflections on actual events in the author's life make it difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction in this book.

Obviously, there was no "timequake" in 2001; the universe did not randomly begin shrinking, launching us ten years into the past, ten years into our past, which we were then forced to relive in precisely the same way we lived it before. And Obviously anything Kilgore Trout says and does is fiction--or is it? Anyways, through this clever metafictional stew Vonnegut is able to wax philosophical on a number of issues, ranging from free will to marriage.

Though much of the novelistic rant is characterized by lengthy non-sequiturs, plenty of delightful nuggets of Vonnegut wisdom surface throughout the text. He talks about his marriages, explaining his belief that many marriages fail today because we are no longer connected to our extended families. He talks about growing old, about his craft, about art generally, about the government, dead authors, science, and he posits his cantankerous opinions all along the way.

This is the kind of book that would be really horrible to read if it were written by most people's grandpas, even though the content would be virtually the same. At it's core, *Timequake* is an old fart asserting his opinion on a number of topics. What makes this book fun, is the fact that the old fart is Kurt Vonnegut. Each page is imbued with wit, humor, irony, insight, and truth. Vonnegut was one of the few who got it, whatever it is.

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## $\Delta x \Delta p \geq \frac{1}{2}$ ? says

Jika kata 'Humor Cerdas' didefinisikan sebagai *humor yang dibuat oleh orang cerdas, diceritakan oleh orang cerdas, disampaikan dengan gaya yang cerdas serta orang yang menyimaknya akan menjadi cerdas*, kira-kira menurut Anda, ada berapa jumlah buku di dunia yang memiliki humor cerdas?

Setau saya, jumlahnya hanya ada satu. dan buku ini yang paling layak disebut sebagai cerita 'humor cerdas'.

Ok, buku ini akan membuat otot perut dan otot alis pegal saat membacanya. Soalnya saat membaca buku ini kita akan diajak untuk tertawa nggak tetapi sekaligus mengerutkan kening untuk merenung.

Kata siapa 'tertawa' adalah antonim dari kata 'merenung'? Buku ini menjadikan kedua kata itu sebagai sinonim. Novel yang apik dan mengalir. tidak akan terasa kalau kita hanyut dalam cerita, tau-tau halaman berakhir.

Well, saya tidak akan merusak kesenangan cerita Anda dengan yang namanya sinopsis ;) Anda harus membacanya sendiri untuk mendapatkan sensasi ajaib buku ini. Dua kata ini akan menggambarkan buku secara keseluruhan : Unik dan Gokil

Buku yang akan membuat kegiatan tertawa terbahak-bahak dan menggaruk kepala bisa berjalan beriringan dengan apiknya. Paduan sempurna dari buku lawak dan cerita satire.

Well, buku yang membuat kita tertawa dan merenung. Bukankah hanya dengan tertawa dan merenung hidup kita menjadi lebih bermakna?

Selamat membaca, selamat hidup!

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