

If This Isn't Nice, What Is?: Advice to the Young-The Graduation Speeches

By Kurt Vonnegut

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Best known as one of our most astonishing and enduring contemporary novelists, Kurt Vonnegut was also a celebrated commencement address giver. He himself never graduated college, so his words to any class of graduating seniors always carried the delight, and gentle irony, of someone savoring an achievement he himself had not had occasion to savor on his own behalf.

Selected and introduced by fellow novelist and friend Dan Wakefield, the speeches in *If This Isn't Nice, What Is?* capture this side of Kurt Vonnegut for the first time in book form. There are nine speeches, seven given at colleges, one to the Indiana Civil Liberties Union, one on the occasion of Vonnegut receiving the Carl Sandburg Award. In each of these talks Vonnegut takes pains to find the few things worth saying and a conversational voice to say them in that isn't heavy-handed or pretentious or glib, but funny and serious and joyful even if sometimes without seeming so.

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Editorial Review

Review

"*If This Isn't Nice, What Is?* is a spectacular read in its entirety, brimming with Vonnegut's unflinching convictions and timeless advice to the young."—**Maria Popova**, Brainpickings.org

"Like [that of] his literary ancestor Mark Twain, Kurt Vonnegut's crankiness is good-humored and sharp-witted."—**A.O. Scott**, *The New York Times Book Review*

"Like so much of Vonnegut's work, these speeches combine absurdist humor, pessimism and countercultural politics, with improbably and disarmingly charming results."—Troy Jollimore, *Chicago Tribune's Printers Row Journal*

"*If This Isn't Nice, What Is?* is a blast of pure acid."—*Entertainment Weekly*

"The material here offers us a slightly different lens, a different window, extending across a wide range of time and geography, from Fredonia College in Fredonia New York in 1978 to Eastern Washington University in Spokane in 2004, and framed by not just Vonnegut's sense of humor but also of humanity, his faith in our essential decency."—**David Ulin**, *The Los Angeles Times*

"These delightful scattershot commencement speeches offer fresh clues to what lay behind Kurt Vonnegut's twinkly visage—clues that are well worth celebrating."—**Peter Matthiessen**

About the Author

Born in 1922 in Indianapolis, Indiana, **KURT VONNEGUT** was one of the few grandmasters of modern American letters. Called by the *New York Times* "the counterculture's novelist," his works guided a generation through the miasma of war and greed that was life in the U.S. in second half of the 20th century. After a stint as a soldier, anthropology PhD candidate, technical writer for General Electric, and salesman at a Saab dealership, Vonnegut rose to prominence with the publication of *Cat's Cradle* in 1963. Several modern classics, including *Slaughterhouse-Five*, soon followed. Never quite embraced by the stodgy arbiters of literary taste, Vonnegut was nonetheless beloved by millions of readers throughout the world. "Given who and what I am," he once said, "it has been presumptuous of me to write so well." Kurt Vonnegut died in New York in 2007.

A longtime friend of Kurt Vonnegut's, **Dan Wakefield** edited and introduced *Kurt Vonnegut: Letters*. Wakefield is the author of the memoirs *New York in the Fifties* and *Returning: A Spiritual Journey*. His novel, *Going All the Way* was made into a movie starring Ben Affleck. Wakefield also created the NBC prime time series, *James at Fifteen*. He lives in Indianapolis, Indiana.

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"One sort of optional thing you might do is to realize there are six seasons instead of four. The poetry of four seasons is all wrong for this part of the planet, and this may explain why we are so depressed so much of the time. I mean, Spring doesn't feel like Spring a lot of the time, and November is all wrong for Fall and so on. Here is the truth about the seasons: Spring is May and June! What could be springier than May and June? Summer is July and August. Really hot, right? Autumn is September and October. See the pumpkins? Smell those burning leaves. Next comes the season called "Locking." That is when Nature shuts everything down.

November and December aren't Winter. They're Locking. Next comes Winter, January and February. Boy! Are they ever cold! What comes next? Not Spring. Unlocking comes next. What else could April be?

"One more optional piece of advice: If you ever have to give a speech, start with a joke, if you know one. For years I have been looking for the best joke in the world. I think I know what it is. I will tell it to you, but have to help me. You have to say, "No," when I hold my hand like this. All right? Don't let me down.

"Do you know why cream is so much more expensive than milk?

"AUDIENCE: No.

"It is because the cows hate to squat on those little bottles."

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sarah Farmer:

This If This Isn't Nice, What Is?: Advice to the Young-The Graduation Speeches is great e-book for you because the content that is certainly full of information for you who all always deal with world and get to make decision every minute. This particular book reveal it details accurately using great coordinate word or we can say no rambling sentences within it. So if you are read it hurriedly you can have whole info in it. Doesn't mean it only provides you with straight forward sentences but difficult core information with splendid delivering sentences. Having If This Isn't Nice, What Is?: Advice to the Young-The Graduation Speeches in your hand like getting the world in your arm, data in it is not ridiculous 1. We can say that no book that offer you world in ten or fifteen second right but this book already do that. So , it is good reading book. Hi Mr. and Mrs. hectic do you still doubt this?

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