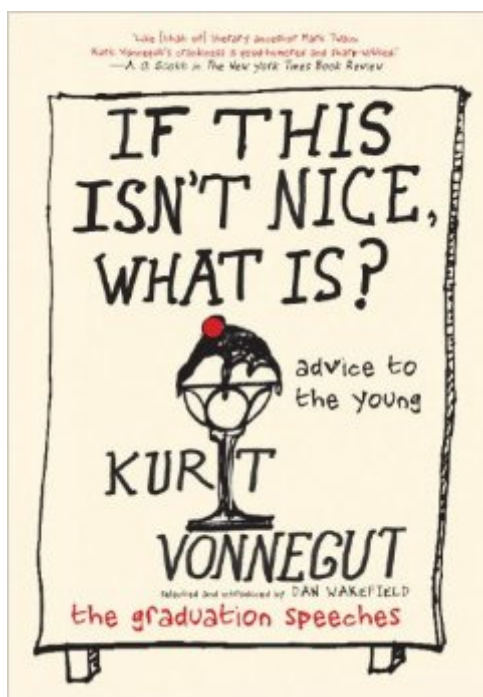


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# If This Isn't Nice, What Is?: Advice To The Young-The Graduation Speeches



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 144 pages

Publisher: Seven Stories Press; First Edition / First Printing edition (April 8, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1609805917

ISBN-13: 978-1609805913

Product Dimensions: 5.9 x 0.7 x 8.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (89 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #147,374 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #29 in [Books > Literature & Fiction > Essays & Correspondence > Speeches](#) #182 in [Books > Reference > Words, Language & Grammar > Speech](#) #2117 in [Books > Self-Help > Motivational](#)

## Customer Reviews

If you love Vonnegut, of course you'll love this. A lot of it will seem familiar, but who cares. A lot of it is repeated. Again, who cares? He is smart, witty, cynical, genius. If you don't have everything by Vonnegut yet, this should not be at the top of your list, but once you've read everything by him and you want more, get it. It's not Vonnegut at his best, but even when he's mediocre, he's better than most.

This was a quick and interesting collection of speeches given by Kurt Vonnegut, mostly to

graduating college classes. Though every speech was different, there were definitely a few repeating themes. Well worth a read, and uplifting for the most part. I enjoyed it and I think some of the ideas will stick with me.

I love Vonnegut. Reading his grocery shopping list would be enjoyable, entertaining and informative. This book is all of that and more.

I give Vonnegut's compilation of speeches a solid three stars, as it was a very quick and enjoyable read. Although mildly redundant--how could it not be given the similar themes throughout most of his speeches--and sometimes a bit too sarcastic-ly cynical in my opinion, I still appreciated his thoughts and perspective. What I liked best was his assertion that being happy and not realizing it is the most tragic waste of all. So, he pleads, notice when little things make you smile. Remember and recount these moments, for they are happiness.

I love Kurt Vonnegut, and I love many of the words of wisdom that appear in this book. It was a nice idea to compile these speeches into one volume. That said, the book is very short, and there is much overlap among the speeches. The same phrases and ideas are mentioned over and over. I don't think Mr. Vonnegut set out to write a "fresh" speech every time his services were requested. Nevertheless, I bought a hardcover copy for both of my boys, who are 18 and 25. I think the book makes a nice gift for young people, despite its shortcomings. If you're looking to read this book yourself, though, and you have a Kindle, I would definitely borrow it instead of buying it, and save yourself a few bucks.

Kurt Vonnegut was a wise and hilarious man, as well as a creative genius, so I was glad to read his graduation speeches. Still, having several of his speeches in one book reminded me that even geniuses have formulas, and Vonnegut certainly had his own version of a speech. I found the formula a bit tiring after the first few speeches, but I did appreciate the chance to read some of Vonnegut's words of wisdom, and I have found myself saying, "If this isn't nice, what is?" all the time now!

If you've read Vonnegut's fiction you won't find a lot new here but his graduation speeches do a good job of distilling his overall worldview. The speeches do repeat themselves a bit. Not to the point where you would say read one, read them all but enough that they echo each other. If you

haven't read any Vonnegut and want a concise view into his opinions this is a great place to look. If you love his message as I do and want a book you can read to remind yourself of why you love his message this is a good book to have. My only caveat is that if you are well versed in Vonnegut you won't find much new here.

Great collection. Wry, wise, and funny. Love his line that those who want to post the Ten Commandments in public places never suggest that we post the Beatitudes. He quotes Twain that the object of life is for others to hold us in high regard. Lots of gems sprinkled throughout. Good introduction by Dan Wakefield. Oh the book's title? When he and his uncle would hang out on a nice day, the uncle would look around and say, "if this isn't nice, what is?" A good mindset to live by.

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