



# **The Short Fiction of Kurt Vonnegut (Contributions to the Study of American Literature)**

*Peter Reed*

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Kurt Vonnegut's career as a novelist encompasses virtually the whole second half of the twentieth century, and his novels are among the most widely read in America. Yet Vonnegut enjoyed another successful career as a short story writer. His short fiction brought him much acclaim in the early years of his writing career and made him visible to a very large audience. His stories were illustrated by some of the best artists in the business and were featured prominently in leading magazines such as *Collier's*, *the Saturday Evening Post*, *Ladies Home Journal*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Argosy*. Commentary on Vonnegut has generally separated his career as a novelist from his career as a short story writer. This volume provides a detailed analysis of Vonnegut's short fiction and shows that his short stories are an integral part of his overall canon.

The short stories do not simply precede Vonnegut's novels. There is an extensive overlap of the publication of his novels and his shorter works. In writing short fiction, Vonnegut learned and practiced many of the skills and techniques that he employs in his novels. This volume begins by examining the relationship of the short fiction to the larger body of Vonnegut's writings. It then examines Vonnegut's earliest training as a writer, during his high school years and as a college journalist. The chapters that follow are then devoted to later periods in his life, the development of his short stories, and the recurrence of their techniques and content in Vonnegut's novels. The study concludes with a reassessment of the importance of the short story to Vonnegut's canon.

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