

Breakfast of champions by kurt vonnegut

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Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions* criticizes American society as a whole, by addressing aspects such as racism and man's vulnerability towards media, which both spring from the ignorance of the American culture. The continuous critical viewpoint of Americanism and the incessant questioning of the American dream throughout this novel make it a modern artifact, a contemporary representation of American society, and a guide to learning out of past mistakes. As media and propaganda play a big role in the story, Vonnegut criticizes what an immense impact it has on the American and how its influence can lead to hysteria and madness.

After Trout's kidnapping, when the police questions him about the criminals, he cannot recall anything due to his blackout. His provocative reply, « For all I know, they may not even have been Earthlings . . . that car may have been occupied by an intelligent gas from Pluto» serves as the « first germ in an epidemic of mind-poisoning» (76) amongst the credulous masses. As a reporter rewrites Trout's recollection into a story with the headline « Pluto Bandits Kidnap Pair, » various papers soon copy the story and it all escalates to the point where all of New York is taught to fear a so-called ' Pluto Gang'.

People purchase locks for doors and gratings for windows, and the sensationalist media continually feeds the mass hysteria with this rubbish terror. No one questions the existence of the Pluto Gang and everyone believes what the media spreads across the country. Vonnegut goes on about the foolishness of these people, yet his style is « both too funny and intelligent for many», who fail to recognize his « earnestness» and critical voice due to his recurrent « satirical sketches». Racism and discrimination in

American society is another aspect Vonnegut attacks and plays an important role in *Breakfast of Champions* as well.

As the American College Dictionary defines racism as any « belief that human races have distinctive makeups that determine their respective cultures, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has the right to rule others», it becomes clearer and clearer how filled with criticism about this certain practice this Vonnegut's novel is. Again and again, does the word « Nigger» come up in the novel to underscore the harsh treatment blacks were forced to undergo, and it is used in a particular manner by Vonnegut to express again, how pathetic, blunt and almost funnily absurd this entire notion of discrimination towards blacks was.

Vonnegut purposely generalizes opinions on blacks when saying how « White people were the only people with money enough to buy new automobiles, except for a few black criminals, who always wanted Cadillacs»(41). His striking generalities poke fun at those masses that discriminate blacks and try to force them all under a certain, negative cliché. His blunt and exaggerated language also makes this particular discrimination seem absurd. Obviously, not every single Blackman feels the desire to own a Cadillac, but hearing this point presented in such a comical way brings across the stupidity of such bigotry.

Vonnegut's, seemingly depressed view of life, uses America to criticize mankind and to make people aware of their capabilities. He shows how people can act ridiculous, cruel, and naive. He criticizes to show humankind what mistakes have been made, so that future prevention is possible. His thoughts go under the skin and point out things everybody can learn from.

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America is such a good example to show this by, because this nation was founded on a dream of self-realization and happiness. This dream, however, can only be obtained through seeing past mistakes with a critical eye, learning from them, and fighting to achieve dreams.