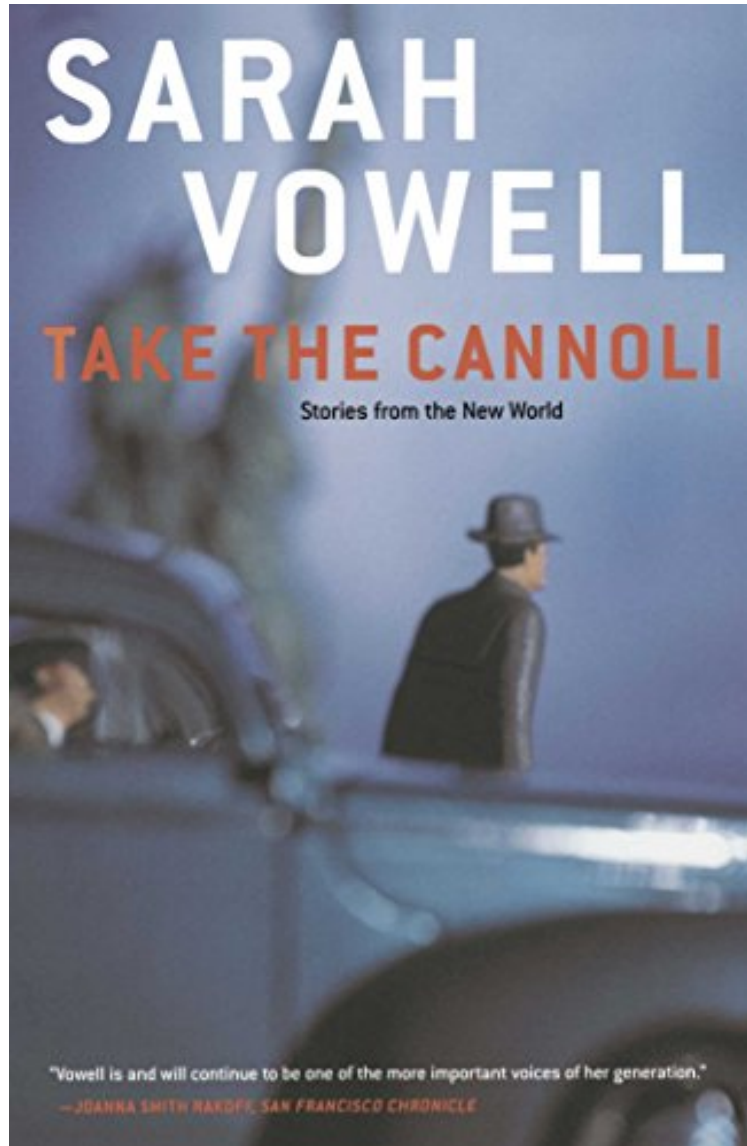


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## Take the Cannoli: Stories From the New World

*Sarah Vowell*

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#300429 in Books 2001-04-03 2001-04-03 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.44 x .70 x 5.501, .47 #File Name: 0743205405219 pages | File size: 56.Mb

**Sarah Vowell : Take the Cannoli: Stories From the New World** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Take the Cannoli: Stories From the New World:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. The best way to learn history By Ann M. I'm a fan of her unique voice, both the sound and the intellect, on NPR. This is the first book I've read however and while I thought I'd be a bit disappointed without the excitement of her voice, I really liked her writing just as well. Not every essay was a masterpiece, but all were quite good. "What I see when I look at the face on the \$20 bill," was less comical perhaps

then some but the most interesting way I've digested a history lesson in years. Sarah has a super thirst for knowledge and thanks for her gift of storytelling you'll be entertained while learning the biting truth behind many histories significant and minor. 2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Start with Any Vowell By Bartolo I first read "Assassination Vacation," then bought this. Vowell was a smart, funny interview on the Daily Show and Letterman and I wonder why I waited so long to sample her wares. I doubt it there's a weak essay in any of her books. She could be the love child of David Sedaris and Rebecca Solnit, almost as funny as the first and almost as profoundly, historically and culturally revelatory as the second. Her essay on the Cherokee and the Trail of Tears was alone worth the cost of this book. It occurs to me that the Sedaris/Solnit matchup may be as difficult to imagine literarily as it would be socially, Sedaris being gay. Which might suggest that Vowell is one of a kind, an estimation not far from the truth. The mix of humor and insight also calls to mind Twain's "Following the Equator," a comparison intended to flatter Vowell; for she is terrific, and these essays will likely transcend decades, just as his have. Her books seem to average four stars here, an estimate to which I say: nuts. She is a five-star essayist and as good a craftsman as any, painfully honest and scrupulous with facts, royally entertaining and very hard to put down. I look forward to more of her output. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Decent collection of author's early work By C. Ebeling Writer Sarah Vowell established a following on NPR's "This American Life" in explorations of the byroads of American culture as well as her own life. Many of those pieces appear in TAKE THE CANNOLI in essay form alongside articles that originally appeared in print and online. The collection reveals the growth of the writer, from insightful young talent to a person shedding the edges of youth for a mature perspective on herself and, especially, her relationship as an American with this world. While her most recent work, ASSASSINATION VACATION, has her at the top of her powers, this collection, interesting in itself, shows her getting there. Vowell begins by peeling back her youth as the liberal daughter of a Second Amendment gunsmith in Oklahoma and Montana; her life in high school band; and finally, growing up under the threat of doom held over her head by her family's Pentacostal religion and the Reagan administration's imagery of the evil empire and nuclear war. She moves onto tours of Frank Sinatra's hometown, Hoboken, New Jersey; Disney World and Celebration, Florida; New York's infamous Chelsea Hotel; Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp; and Goth culture. There a hilarious episode in which the creator of "This American Life," Ira Glass, tries to teach Vowell to drive. The second strongest piece in the collection is the essay from which she takes her title, an account of watching "The Godfather" religiously in college, hanging onto its simple imperatives in defense against the uncertain waves of diverse philosophy that swirl in academe. The strongest piece is the trip she takes with her twin sister Amy tracing the Trail of Tears their Cherokee ancestors were forced to march when President Andrew Jackson banished them from their own property. In that, you see Vowell learning to wrangle the kind of ambiguities that usually stop others in their tracks. I love how she loves America, clear-eyed but without apology. This collection of essays is often topical and thus some of them are a little dated, or at least ironic given more recent events. I'd really like to sit down with Vowell, to see what she thinks now.

A wickedly funny collection of personal essays from popular NPR personality Sarah Vowell. Hailed by Newsweek as a "cranky stylist with talent to burn," Vowell has an irresistible voice -- caustic and sympathetic, insightful and double-edged -- that has attracted a loyal following for her magazine writing and radio monologues on This American Life. While tackling subjects such as identity, politics, religion, art, and history, these autobiographical tales are written with a biting humor, placing Vowell solidly in the tradition of Mark Twain and Dorothy Parker. Vowell searches the streets of Hoboken for traces of the town's favorite son, Frank Sinatra. She goes under cover of heavy makeup in an investigation of goth culture, blasts cannonballs into a hillside on a father-daughter outing, and maps her family's haunted history on a road trip down the Trail of Tears. Take the Cannoli is an eclectic tour of the New World, a collection of alternately hilarious and heartbreaking essays and autobiographical yarns.

From Publishers Weekly A good storyteller can engage, provoke and intrigue in a few pages or a matter of moments. A great storyteller can accomplish all that while reflecting on something as mundane as an Italian dessert or a Midwestern bridge. A regular on Public Radio International's This American Life, Vowell (Radio On: A Listener's Diary) proves to be the latter in this quirky collection of thoughts, ramblings and memories that charmingly cohere into a full picture of American life. While she occasionally attempts to tackle larger political and historical issues, her talent lies in making small details bright and engaging. Especially sharp are her explorations of topics that might at first seem tired and overplayed, such as the Godfather movies (from which she draws the book's title), road trips, Disney and Sinatra. She displays her knack for insight during both her journalistic quests, as when she writes histories of New York's Chelsea Hotel and Chicago's Michigan Avenue Bridge, and her personal journeys, as when she describes a courtship conducted by exchanging cassette tapes. The essays, which rarely reference each other, stand on their own as snippets from the mind of a pop culture maven Taken together, however, they form a vivid autobiographical portrait: Vowell's description of growing up a gunsmith's daughter in Oklahoma complements another essay about road tripping with her sister down the Trail of Tears, and makes an ensuing piece on a visit to Disney's planned town, Celebration, even funnier. Vowell's writing Aa blend of serious observations and bouncy

remarksAmakes for rich commentary on America, and for great stories. Agent, Wendy Weil. (Apr.) Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.From Library JournalIn this eclectic addition to the autobiographical literary genre, Vowell (*Radio On: A Listener's Diary*) explains her journey from natural-born liberal to understanding the differences between herself and her conservative family. Her father is a gunsmith and partial to the Second Amendment. The best anecdotes in this book have been pilfered from her family, and she graciously acknowledges the debt. Her liberal use of pop culture serves as a touchstone throughout the collection. The most memorable essay, "What I See When I Look at the Face on the \$20 Bill," recounts a cross-country trip with her fraternal twin sister. They followed the Trail of Tears searching for their heritage and discovered their own constantly conflicting emotions. Many of these pieces were written for radio and lack depth, but *Take the Cannoli* is still a satisfying read. Recommended for larger public libraries.-Pam Kingsbury, Alabama Humanities Fdn., Florence Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.From BooklistVowell takes her cranky but always entertaining take on life to the airwaves of public radio and the e-pages of Salon. This collection of essays, drawn mainly from those sources, is marked by wit and a certain degree of disingenuousness. From its opening salvo, where she describes her relationship with her father the gunmaker, to her hilarious set piece on touring Disneyworld with an extremely urban gay friend, we are in for a lot of good conversation. The title, a quote from *The Godfather*, comes from her essay on her obsession with that movie. Most intriguing--and emotionally complicated--is "What I See When I Look at the Face on the \$20 Bill," which recounts the trip she and her twin sister took along the infamous Trail of Tears, seeking their one-eighth Cherokee heritage and finding that there are "only so many hours a human being can stomach unfocused dread." Sharp and engaging. GraceAnne A. DeCandido