



I Want to Buy a Vowel

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Kurt Clausen has worked as a salad girl, a porn salesman, and -- perhaps most reluctantly -- a journalist. In this "terminally irreverent" (Richmond News-Leader) novel, he finds himself taking on everyone from his editor and his girlfriend to the fundamentalists and vegetarians covered on his beat -- and along the way, learns some surprising (and hilarious) lessons about life, love, and the press.

I Want to Buy a Vowel Details

Date : Published November 1st 1997 by Berkley (first published 1996)

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Author : John Welter

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From Reader Review I Want to Buy a Vowel for online ebook

J says

Lighthearted read. Hilarious throughout. A little bit like Catch-22 in terms of pointing out obvious and not-so-obvious contradictions. Laugh out loud funny.

Susie James says

I picked a paperback, "I Want to Buy a Vowel" by John Welter from the swap rack recently at the Carrollton, Miss., library -- finished it in today's wee hours. Sort of reminds me of the children who were protagonists in that Alabama town in "To Kill a Mockingbird", though this one is a superb salad of satire, slapstick, and sappy commentary (just a bit sappy, ha) and is set in semi-rural Texas. C'mon. I really loved this take on human alienation and unchristian Christian denominations and dominators! I plus really for the Episcopalians though....

Michael Brockley says

I'm a John Welter fool.

Karen says

very funny - this book made me laugh out loud. I read another book by this author....nothing like this one. I recommend this book but not any others by Welter.

Marley says

I seldom read novels outside of mysteries, but this is super. I found it for 25 cents at Goodwill and am glad I did.

What's not to like about a book that send-up American TV culture, bible bangers, immigration, and recreational satanists who sacrifice cans of Vienna sausage. Eva, our 11-year old heronine is engaging, Kenlow Schindler, our satanist reminds me of people I went to high school with, and Waxahachie Sheriff James Lemore is a sheriff we all need. Waxahachie, itself is one of the characters.

This is one of the funniest books I've ever read.

Janelle says

This was an okay book. It was witty and kind of humorous. About a man immigrating to America and a little

child who befriends him and how they work together to stay in America. It is also about another young man who strives for attention and becomes rebellious and how their lives intertwine.

Dorothy says

This small novel is heartwarming and funny. I'm thinking of even loaning it to my 14 year-old granddaughter to read. It is a rare book like *To Kill A Mockingbird*--only not quite so heavy, about a young girl trying to figure out the morals and mores of the adult world around her. I want to read another book by Welter--this one was written in 1996.

sue says

meh. I laughed sometimes. But why was the Guatemelan so dumb? It was kind of offensive. Wouldn't the little girls know some Spanish growing up in Texas?

Theresa says

This book is hilarious.

The story opens with Alfredo Santaya's arrival from Guatamala in a small Texas town. The only English he knows is what he's learned on TV. He knows "I want to buy a vowel" from *Wheel of Fortune*. He doesn't know what it means, it just knows that vowels are important.

The story is mostly told from the viewpoint of Eva Galt, the 11-year old daughter of an Episcopalian minister. Eva is very observant about the world around her. She wishes that her parents liked each other again. She does have one habit that her parents don't like: when she prays, she prays to Ted Williams. She does this, we learn, because she's never seen God's face and she needs a face to talk to when she prays. Her father likes baseball and has an autographed Ted Williams baseball card, so she prays to Ted Williams.

Her younger sister, Ava, who is 8, chastises her for praying to Ted Williams because he's not God. Eva tells her she knows this and says she says Ted Williams because God doesn't have a face and tells her to stop interrupting her prayers.

Eva ends up saying a prayer that goes something like this:

Dear Ted Williams, Hi. It's me again. And Ava. Thank you for all of our blessings and our parents and our house and our food and our clothes and our underwear. (Interruption from Ave asking if they really need to be thankful for underwear. Eva says they need to be thankful for everything.) Help us to be good people who care about each other. And if I die before I wake (Ava interrupts again to ask if they're going to die. Eva responds not now. Ave asks if they're done praying. Eva says no and resumes her praying.) And if I die before I wake (struggles for the rhyme) I'd like a piece of chocolate cake. (Ava says she's never heard that prayer before. Eva says it's new.)

She ends the prayer with the sign of the cross and the sign for "hit away" since she was praying to Ted Williams.

Eva and her sister Ava go on little adventures together, like fishing at the sewage plant and hiking through the woods. Their adventures change the day that Eva decides they should go digging for dinosaur bones and they dig up a skeleton.

At the same time they dig up the skeleton, someone is going around town and drawing pentagrams and leaving various meat products in the center. One even appears at the site of the skeleton, after the skeleton has been removed. We learn that the pentagrams are being created by the son of the minister at the local evangelical church, Kenlow Shindler. He's proud of the attention that his campaign has created, but frustrated that he can't take any of the created.

There has also been a miracle at the local post office. The image of the Virgin Mary has appeared on one of the stamp machines. News reporters and people flock to see the Virgin Mary.

Then the machine is stolen. Bringing in more news reporters.

The skeleton that Eva and Ava found is determined to be that of a man who had his head bashed in sometime in the 1920s. It's also determined that the Sons of Belial were active at this time and suspicion grows that this is a Satanic murder and somehow linked to all the pentagrams showing up around the town.

The local sheriff is highly annoyed by the Virgin Mary and the stolen postage machine – especially since the investigation has to be turned over to the FBI. He's even more annoyed with the so-called Satanic activity because he knows that it's being done by a local teenager and he just hasn't been able to nail the kid.

Then Eva and Ava discover that Alfredo is living in an abandoned home in the woods and try to befriend him. They don't speak Spanish and Alfredo speaks no English. Although he is learning some Chinese at the Chinese restaurant where he works. Eva and Ava bring a Spanish/English dictionary to try to talk with Alfredo, but he can't read and he talks too fast for Eva to translate using the dictionary.

Eventually all the crazy pieces of the puzzle get put together.

This story was so much fun. The sheriff's frustration with the townspeople who want him to arrest Satan. Eva's "wisdom" that is readily shared with Ava. The Rev. Galt's frustration with his parish. The Rev. Shindler's exorcism of the jail. The efforts to get Alfredo a job that no other American can do or wants to do, so that he can get a green card that is really pink.

I found myself laughing constantly.

Mrsculpepper says

a quirky little book with some deep themes

Suzanne says

It was so good to read a book that made me think AND laugh out loud. A very comic satire on evangelism, illegal aliens, and satanism. Believe it or not, they are all intertwined in this book. It really brings out how different people can see or experience the exact same thing and come up with widely different beliefs or viewpoints. The only downside was the ending - weak but okay

Lauren says

Weird book. It's a story that is making fun of the way people react and treat others - especially when it comes to illegal aliens in our country. There is an illegal immigrant from Guatemala who shows up in town about the same time as a teenager in the town (the son of a preacher) decides to pretend to be a satanist just to get some attention. An 11-yr old girl gets in the middle of it all. It wasn't quite what I expected from reading the book jacket at the library. At first I wasn't sure if I wanted to keep reading it because I didn't like some of the language it was using. The story got better as it went along. It was kind of comical at times to see how out of hand things can get with the media and some crazy religious beliefs.

Brian Koppin says

I loved the first 2 books this author wrote, but this may have been the worst book I have ever read. I kept telling myself to put it down, throw it out, whatever, but I forced myself to read it with a sort of masochistic glee.

Rob says

Want a super cool tonic to today's ridiculous fever-pitched obsession with immigration? This is it...a laugh-out-loud story! Loved it.

Lisa says

This was completely disappointing! The biggest problem I had with it is that it wasn't at all the story it claims to be. The reviews I read made it seem it was about two young sisters in Texas that stumble across a Guatemalan immigrant (illegal) who doesn't speak English, except for the little bit he's gleaned from watching American television, and how they try to help him. Well, ends up that is very little of the book. The story focuses mainly on a string of supposed (albeit lame) attempts at satanic markings that start popping up in this small town, but you come to find they are the work of a lonely teen who is the son of a local fundamentalist minister. It was boring and not really funny (which many, many reviewers claimed it was). I barely finished it and I actually just scanned through the last 70 pages because I didn't want to waste any more of my precious reading time! I'm shocked at how highly this was rated by almost everyone on Amazon.
