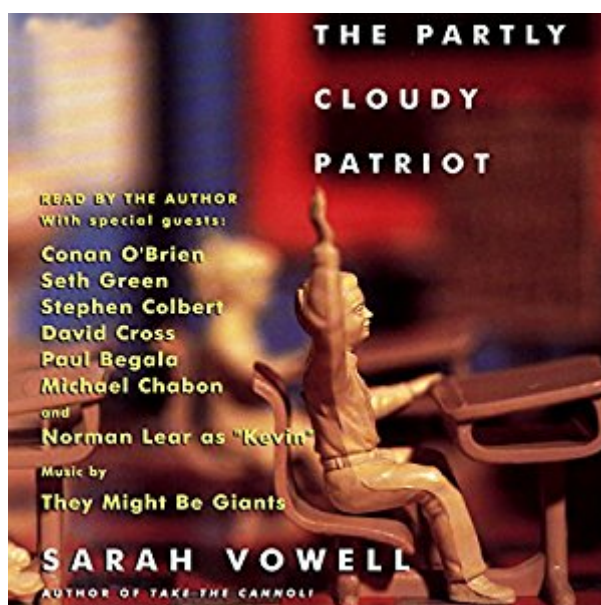


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The Partly Cloudy Patriot



Synopsis

In "The Partly Cloudy Patriot," Sarah Vowell travels through the American past and, in doing so, investigates the dusty, bumpy roads of her own life. In this insightful and funny collection of personal stories Vowell -- widely hailed for her inimitable narratives on public radio's "This American Life" -- ponders a number of curious questions: Why is she happiest when visiting the sites of bloody struggles like Salem or Gettysburg? Why do people always inappropriately compare themselves to Rosa Parks? Why is a bad life in sunny California so much worse than a bad life anywhere else? What is it about the Zen of foul shots? And, in the title piece, why must doubt and internal arguments haunt the sleepless nights of the true patriot? Her essays confront a wide range of subjects, themes, icons, and historical moments: Ike, Teddy Roosevelt, and Bill Clinton; Canadian Mounties and German filmmakers; Tom Cruise and "Buffy the Vampire Slayer;" twins and nerds; the Gettysburg Address, the State of the Union, and George W. Bush's inauguration. The result is a teeming and engrossing book, capturing Vowell's memorable wit and her keen social commentary.

--This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In "The Partly Cloudy Patriot", Vowell describes her sociopolitical perspective on the U.S. In a series of nineteen essays (many of which originally aired on her NPR program), she illustrates her observations with personal experiences and often uses pop-culture analogies for elucidation. She's a self-described "history geek", and she applies her impressive, encyclopedic knowledge effectively. Throughout much of the book, Vowell applies a dry humor mostly effectively; it's the type

of humor that makes you chuckle consistently, but seldom generates robust laughter. Vowell is a warm, sincere essayist. Her casual prose and unique pop-culture approach is witty without ever being pendent or condescending (if you've ever heard an interview, she's very self-effacing). Despite her leftist slant, her strongest essays offer keen observation of the uniqueness (for better and worse) of the collective American psyche. In "Cowboys v. Mounties", she compares the histories of the U.S. and Canada. Even though she's generally a fan of Canadians, something about them seems "off". In her experiences with The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, she learns what it is: Individual Canadians truly considering themselves a minor part of collective social fabric; their unerring modesty and politeness are characteristic of this and seem creepy to the American sense of individuality. In "Wonder Twins" she compares her relationship with her fraternal twin sister with that of Myanmar twins who briefly commanded a guerilla army. Some of her ideas seem a bit flimsy to me, but her assertions are usually interesting and worthy of consideration. Vowell's best essays make social observations rather than being overtly political.

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