

(Free) Understanding USA

Understanding USA

Richard Saul Wurman

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Richard Saul Wurman : Understanding USA before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Understanding USA:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great graphics - interesting ideasBy Erik AagardI bought this book

to see how Wurman handles information and graphics. There are lots of ideas to be gleaned from it. The information in it was of secondary importance to me. Wurman knows how to clearly illustrate interesting problems. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. I bought this for the design, not the content. By Pennyheart I know people complain about the setup of this book, but as a designer and someone who creates information graphics, I love it. I look to it for inspiration for new ways to represent data. 66 of 80 people found the following review helpful. Style over substance. By David Jankowski This book intrigued me when I first saw it in the store. I always have an almanac handy, and I was hoping that this book might prove to be a nice supplement. I was wrong, and my almanac has nothing to worry about. Here's why: 1. The book is poorly organized. The book is organized by contributor, and in many cases there is no logic behind the grouping of any particular contributor's topics. Don't bother looking for an index or a helpful table of contents. 2. Why did I pay for this book? The preface goes to great lengths to emphasize that this information should be free. So why isn't it? With all of the corporate underwriters attached to this book it should be given away. 3. Somebody call an editor. The number of mistakes in this book is atrocious. 4. The book appears to be less about information and more about the egos of the contributors. Most of the contributors are not subject matter experts in anything but architecture or design. This makes the commentary that accompanies the pretty pictures seem uninformed. Which leads me to my final beef ... 5. There is a major bias prevalent throughout this book. The beauty of an almanac is that it presents the facts and lets you draw your own conclusions. Unfortunately, the left-leaning contributors of this book can't help but take the opportunity to advance their social agenda. Save your money and buy a copy of The World Almanac.

Book by Wurman, Richard Saul

.com If a picture truly is worth a thousand words, then Understanding USA is one of the most comprehensive reference books ever written. Every page is packed with clear, simple graphics designed to break down massive amounts of information into easily digestible bits--but while the text is certainly informative, it tends to be a bit superficial. Nearly any topic that relates to the U.S. in a broad scale is covered here: financial, social, and political statistics are presented in reasonably clear-cut chapters. As each chapter is color-coded in the top right corner, it's easy to flip to the section of interest. General subjects include war, crime, education, environmental issues, and federal income and expenses. Within each of those areas, you can dive into the numbers of pretty specific queries, such as "How many nuclear weapons have been detonated since 1945?" or "How solvent is the social security program?" The format for all these statistics is reminiscent of USA Today's front page--pretty colors, a large variation in the type of chart use, cute graphics, and an occasional photo of real people. It's easy to understand, and full of interesting--although not always useful--information. Certainly, an understanding of the electoral process is good to have. (And there's a great explanation in the second chapter, but does it matter much that "in 1997, over 8 million people reported difficulty in lifting and carrying"?). As a basic family reference book, or a sourcebook for trivia buffs, this is a fine choice, but you'll need a deeper level of information than this to achieve true understanding. --Jill Lightner