



Book of Totally Useless Information

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Here is enough useless information for everyone. In "The Book of Totally Useless Information", Don Voorhees has compiled over two hundred explanations for the not-so-important questions in life.

Why is the sky blue?

Why does orange juice taste funny after you brush your teeth?

Why is a left-handed pitcher known as a "Southpaw"?

Why is the National Hockey League Championship Trophy called the Stanley Cup?

When did it first become offensive to extend the middle finger?

Why are diamonds measured in carats?

What makes stainless steel stainless?

Why does a Mexican Jumping Bean jump?

Why do spokes on wagon wheels appear to move backward on television or movie screens?

What is a best boy, a key grip, and a gaffer?

Chockful of fascinating trivial facts and anecdotes, "The Book of Totally Useless Information" will entertain readers of all ages. Illustrated throughout, this useful book will satisfy the curiosity of everyone who wonders why.

Book of Totally Useless Information Details

Date : Published 1993 by MJF Books

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Author : Don Voorhees

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Taylor says

I really enjoyed reading this book just because of the title. It was interesting with a lot of new things I have never read about before. I finished this book in two days because I got such a kick out of the new information that is exactly like the title Useless information but enjoyable.

Yes I would recommend this book for fun.

Yes I would read more books by this author.

Brandy Swor says

About 1/3 of the book seemed like it was some random stuff thrown together that could or may not have been true. Much of it was very interesting to someone who appreciates the weird and random.

Julia says

An interesting collection of information that has been presented to answer questions that to be truthful never even crossed my own mind. The explanations will intrigue you or have you shaking your head.

The author adds just a bit of humor to make the reading interesting while the formatting is simple. The question is given in a bold format then answered with several paragraphs that either give multiple theories as to the origin or even in some cases more information than just the answer to that particular question.

The one thing that I did find was that for the explanation of finding where the North Star was located the section mentioned a picture but there wasn't one to look to. Otherwise I would recommend it for the person that likes trivia.

*And just to give you who are interested a heads-up there are 216 different questions that are given and answered in the book.

Erin Nudi says

Very interesting! I now know many things I did not before, some of my favorites including the following: 1) Ingredients listed on foods list the main ingredient first, the second most used ingredient next, and so on. So if sugar is listed first, it's the main ingredient. 2) Blue is for boys and pink is for girls because in most cultures boys were considered much more important than girls (kind of like China is still today!) and so they were dressed in blue to be representative of the heavens, and could therefore ward off evil spirits. Pink was chosen later on for girls because it has a soothing effect on children, although it doesn't possess special

powers like blue. (Yellow also has a calming effect on children, and red has the opposite, and is supposed to raise blood pressure and stress them out.) 3) Morning glory seeds are in the same family as LSD, and can therefore be used to make acid. 4) The year that wine was made is so important because it indicates the weather of that particular year, which would in turn influence how good of a grape crop there was, which the wine was then made from. 5) The term "blue bloods" being used to indicate the more wealthy is derived from racial prejudices; you can see the blue of the veins of white peoples skin more than of the darker skinned, making it look like white people can have blue blood.

Maeve says

It was very interesting information to read, however, it was a little frustrating that there are no cited sources. Some of the information was contrary to things I learned other places.

Jack says

For me, this title is a misnomer. I'm a fact-freak and a sponge for knowledge, without regard for "usefulness."

I didn't count, but according to the subtitle, this book contains "over two hundred" small facts and little-known bits of trivia that, if nothing else, will impress at social gatherings and perhaps win you a game of Trivia Pursuit.

I doubt you will ever really need to know any of the facts presented, but they are the type of things that, after reading, make you say, "Hey, cool!"

For example, the book explains why, in the early 70s, Chevrolet couldn't sell the Nova in South America. Oh, they were allowed, but nobody would buy one. If you are in the marketing business, this information might not actually be "totally useless," as the title suggests.

Overall, this is a fun, quick read. Something to keep in the bathroom -- except when others are waiting to use the said facilities!

Ashly Lynn says

Ughhh, this book was exactly what it said: totally useless. (As well as pretty pompous, condescending, and completely outdated.)

Alhusain says

Really nice short essays that you can read on your own pace. You have to be interested in general "not really helpful" knowledge. It explains the origin of many things that you would not typically be curious about. It is really a fun book and somewhat a reference for silly information!

Chrissy Hennessey says

Once upon a time, my boyfriend and I were going through some troubles. We decided to spent Thanksgiving apart, but reconnected and reconciled by Christmas. While I was quite sure we'd work though our issues, his parents were apparently not quite as confident. That Christmas, I received three gifts from them. The first was a set of plastic cutting boards. The second, an over sized sweater that might have come from the maternity department. The third was a copy of the Book of Totally Useless Information, probably picked up at a dollar store and, for some strange reason, bestowed upon none other than me.

This book is exactly what it claims to be - a slim volume of explanations for inane things, like why the sky is blue, and whether a real Aunt Jemima ever existed, and where the phrase "posh" came from. On the one hand, I don't really care about these questions. I care even less about their answers. And yet, I found myself reading through the book, quoting snippets of my new information to my boyfriend, and actually improving my score in Jeopardy. Coincidence? Probably. But if you see this at a dollar store, it can't hurt to pick it up and give it a whirl.

Zach Schmidt says

Not a bad book. It reads as fact after random fact but it was an enjoyable read. Some was a bit outdated but it was published a few years back so I did excuse that but overall a fun read.

Hopefully it'll help with some trivia in the future.

Shelley says

If you like random trivia and facts, you'll enjoy this. It was published in the 90s so some if is outdated -- I laughed out loud when he referenced the cost of a postage stamp at 29 cents!

Vaishali says

Not as funny as the title, and written before the Internet... a time when info could only be gleaned from a library.

Uncovered gems:

* Ancient Spartan men who never married were fined

* The British outlawed the Scottish kilt in 1745

- * "Subaru" is Japanese for the constellation Pleiades
- * In 1792, France created a decitime system: 1 week=10 days, 1 day=10 hours, 1 minute=100 seconds. Napoleon changed it back to our system to please the pope.
- * "Posh" is an acronym for "port out starboard home", stamped on wealthy British luggage whose vacationing owners were enroute to India
- * Quartz is earth's most abundant mineral, making up 10% of the crust
- * 12th-century London passed a law whereby bread of nonstandard weight couldn't be sold
- * "Snafu" is an acronym meaning "situation normal all fucked up"
- * Snowflakes are made only at certain temps. Polar regions produce snow dust. Each snowflake contains a billion billion molecules
- * Fireflies react $Mg + O_2 + \text{luciferin}$, making cool-temperature light that's 98% fuel-efficient.
- * Pidgeons can fly upto 80 mph
- * In 15,000 years, Vega will replace Polaris as the north star. In about 27,900 years Polaris will return to its present position
- * By the medieval era, condom use increased dramatically due to syphilis. China made condoms from oiled silk paper
- * The Flatey Manuscripts tells of a Norse trader (Herjulfsson) whose ship accidentally sailed into the Americas in 986 AD.
- * Cashews are in the same family as poison ivy; its oil inhibits Gram positive bacteria.
- * Shampoo parts dispelled:
Cocamide DEA - lathering agent
Lauryl sulfate - molecule attracts H₂O at one end and dirt/grease on the other
Glycol stearate - pearly look
- * Of 500,000 known plant species, man has only domesticated about 100
- * Stainless steel is such because its FeO₂ and Cr shield can recreate itself
- * The moon became geologically inactive 3 billion years ago
- * Earth's core is mostly Fe and Ni, and about 15,000 degrees Fahrenheit... hotter than the sun's surface.
- * Trees close their vasculature pre-winter, decreasing chlorophyll for photosynthesis. Thus the green color is reduced, though yellow pigments remain. Darker colors (red/brown) come with sugar breakdown.
- * Only 4 global locations enjoy "SoCal" weather: the Mediterranean, central Chile, South Africa, and

southern Australia.

* Kohinoor was not the world's largest diamond; it was the Cullinan, weighing 3 pounds.

* Attention vegans : salmonella lingers for months, so scrub those cutting boards if living with meat/dairy consumers :)

* "Lightening only strikes once" ... wrong! Each bolt is a succession of bolts that hits a certain spot several times.

Jeff says

I took a break to do some light reading. What can I say? It was on the bargain shelf in Barnes & Noble and this is sometimes my idea of "light reading".

Was the information useless? Guilty as charged. Were the explanations accurate? As far as I could tell, yes, although there were a few that seemed a little too "tidy" based upon my earlier readings, so either Mr. Voorhees has found a few new authoritative sources or he bought into someone else's tall tales. Was this new information for me? Probably 50% of it was.

Mr Voorhees does a good job with his explanations. He's reasonably clear and concise. He capably expands some of his explanations when he thinks the additional information will be interesting. But I felt compelled to give this book 3 stars, not because it fell below my expectations, but, rather, because it lived up to its name and stated purpose a little too well and I walked away thinking that it paled in comparison to other books of the genre. In the end, it could be that the information provided was just a little *too* useless. I'm a tough grader. So, sue me.

And so, my "light reading" recess is over and this book will go to a public bookshelf in the train station where, with any luck, someone will be able to pick it up, pick up a few tidbits of useless information, and pass it on to the next reader.

Toe says

Objective Summary

This trivia book provides "over two hundred explanations for the not-so-important questions in life." These stood out to me:

1. The U.S. government split up the Standard Oil Company as a monopoly, and it became Chevron, Mobil, Esso (S.O., which became Exxon), and others.

2. Scottish highlanders used kilts as blankets, umbrellas, as well as clothing that allowed free movement of limbs in mountainous terrain.
3. Water vapors from jet engines form contrails in the sky.
4. The Pleiades star cluster in the Taurus constellation inspired the Subaru logo's six stars. The Pleiades cluster represents the seven daughters of Atlas, but only six can now be seen with the naked eye. The name Subaru means "united," and the logo represents the union of companies that merged into the Fuji Heavy Industries company.
5. Posh = "port out, starboard home," which was stamped on the luggage of wealthy British citizens traveling to India by ship at the height of the British Empire. The view of Africa and Asia, seen from the portside traveling east and from the starboard side traveling west, was more interesting than the sea.
6. Scuba = self-contained underwater breathing apparatus.
7. Snafu = situation normal, all-fucked up.
8. Thomas Nast, a political cartoonist popularized the Democrats as donkeys, the Republicans as elephants, and Santa with a beard.
9. Uncle Sam = Sam Wilson, who supplied meat to U.S. soldiers in War of 1812 = United States = U.S. government
10. Champagne bottles have dents or "punts" in the bottom because for easier gripping and storage, and for increased bottle strength.
11. The U.S. interstate highway system is numbered with roads running east and west as even numbers increasing from south to north. Roads running north and south are odd numbers increasing from east to west. City bypasses are three-digit numbers that are odd or even depending on directional orientation.
12. Ok = Old Kinderhook = Martin Van Buren's nickname
13. Red herring is a pungent fish that criminals may have dragged behind them while escaping to cover their own scent. It now means following the wrong trail.
14. Qwerty keyboards intentionally slowed down typists who used alphabetically arranged typewriters too rapidly and jammed the mechanical keys. August Dvorak invented a more efficiently laid out keyboard in the 1930's, but it never caught on.
15. The flu virus originates in China and Southeast Asia possibly from the close proximity of chicken, pigs, and fish in an integrated system that reuses waste from each.
16. Cashews reside in the same family as poison ivy and are one of the only nuts not sold in shells because of the irritation and difficulty of removing them.
17. Largest diamond ever found was the Cullinan. It weighed 3,106 carats, and was found in South Africa. It was cut into 9 large gemstones (the largest is the Cullinan 1 at 530 carats), and 98 smaller gemstones.
18. The U.S. launches rockets east from Cape Canaveral, Florida so that parts of the rocket can fall harmless into the Atlantic Ocean, and to move with the Earth's rotation and more easily gain speed to reach orbit.
19. To estimate your distance in miles from a lightning strike, count the number of seconds between seeing the flash and hearing the thunder, then divide by five.
20. The phrase "skeletons in the closet" came from scientists acquiring bodies illegally to study them then hiding the remains.
21. Fruits are mature, sexually-produced seed-bearing ovaries of a flowering plant (e.g., apples, oranges, nuts, peas, beans, squash, eggplants, tomatoes). Vegetables come from vegetative or nonsexual plant parts like roots (e.g., carrots and radishes), leaves (e.g., lettuce and spinach), flower buds (e.g., broccoli and cauliflower), and stems (e.g., rhubarb).
22. Babe Ruth the candy bar was named after Grover Cleveland's daughter, not the baseball player.
23. The aristocratic Franks' coat of arms showed three golden toads, so the French commoners were distinguished with the insulting name "frogs."
24. The Americas were named after Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci, Columbus's contemporary.
25. Oceans are 3.5% salt, and the Dead Sea is 25% salt.

Subjective Thoughts

This trivia book could be appropriately placed on a coffee table or end table. Some disgusting people may put it in a bathroom, but I think you should finish your business and get out. I'm not sure how much of a place trivia books have nowadays with Wikipedia, smartphones, and easy access to the internet. Fun facts are less impressive when someone can easily expand upon or verify the veracity of your claim.

Revealing Quotes

“Of the five-hundred-thousand known plants species, man has only domesticated about one hundred. Only about thirty of these species provide us with 85 percent of our food and 95 percent of our protein and calories. Seventy-five percent of all of man's food comes from only eight cereal species—corn, rice, wheat, oats, barley, sorghum, millet, and rye. Of the forty-five hundred mammal species on Earth, only sixteen have been domesticated for man's use.”

“Seven basic units comprise the metric system: time, second; mass, kilogram; length, meter; electric current, ampere; thermodynamic temperature, kelvin; amount of substance, mole; and luminous intensity, candela.

Alexis says

Satisfied my curiosity.
