



The Infographic History of the World

Valentina D'Efilippo , James Ball

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The History of the World, but not as you know it.

A new type of history is here – all 13.8 billion years of it, exploded into a visually jaw-dropping feast of facts, trends and timelines that tell you everything you'd ever want to know about the history of the world.

From the primordial soup to the technological revolution of the 21st century, interesting stuff has been going on; and ever since prehistoric man scratched the first tally markings into a damp cave wall, we've been counting and measuring it all.

Which historic warriors conquered the most territory, killed the most people, or had the largest empire?

When did everything evolve?

Which languages are related to which?

What's been invented and when?

Where are we being born, and what are we dying of?

Which countries are eating all the food, causing all the pollution and taking all the drugs?

A story of civilisation and barbarism, of war and peace, this is history done in a new way – a beautifully designed collection of the most insightful and revealing trends that tell us what the human race has been up to, and where we're heading.

The Infographic History of the World Details

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From Reader Review The Infographic History of the World for online ebook

Sud666 says

This was a very cool book. It is the history of the world as told in infographics. Using the power of graphs and charts all stylized to represent forms is an expression of history that I have not often run across. Full of funny and interesting information-it is a joy to read and see. Everything from the development of the earth, the cosmos, humanity itself, the rise of civilization, etc.

All of it is here and broken into very interesting sections and the author has funny non-technical descriptions of various complicated things. From which Empire is biggest, when did everything evolve, which languages are related to which, what's been invented and when...these are just a few of the topics in this wonderful book. My only complaint is that I wished it were a bigger book. Well done and a great idea!

Daniel Walker says

I really enjoyed reading this book. Do you know how long a Light Year is?

Imagine flying all the way around the world, approximately 40,000 km. Now imagine repeating this 80 times over. That's a pretty long way, right? Now imagine repeating this feat every single day for 8,079 years. At the end of that time you'll have travelled one light year!

Nelson C says

Very biased book! This infographic history book has an extremely obvious left-wing political slant. I don't get involved in political issues - but it's pretty obvious there's an agenda in this book. There's also a snarkiness toward religious belief. This isn't particularly surprising as James Ball works at the Guardian so you know he's not objective (which is further confirmed when you browse his articles!). It's hard to say this book presents data objectively. A few infographics were kind of interesting but overall it was pretty bad. Do not recommend.

Anna says

Some reviewers are criticising this book for not being enlightening. I believe the authors wanted to present the data in interesting ways and crunch the numbers in order to leave readers to draw their own conclusions. Yes, the commentary is not strictly academic, but that makes this coffee table read enjoyable and fun. Boo, hiss to the haters.

Charity U says

Calling all my non-fiction loving friends! Do you occasionally get side-tracked on Pinterest or in articles by infographics? Do you love their clean clear presentation of information? If you answered "yes" to either of those questions, you need to get your hands on this book. Once you pick it up, it's impossible to put down - and each page is so packed with information that one can spend immense amounts of time on them with ease. You'll learn something new with every perusal. My only gripe would be regarding how many pages are devoted to evolutionary "history." However, the pages on the Crusades; war death rates; most popular books of all time; and technology all rank among my favorites. Highly recommended for the intellectual reader. This book will be enjoyed by any who want to know a fun fact or two.

Virginprune says

A very big disappointment. I'd bought the book on the strength of good reviews, but honestly the best thing about it is that it feels nice, like a coffee table ornament.

... and one of the best clues to a coffee table book is when the publishers / authors tell you that you don't need to start at the beginning, but can dip in anywhere - fine perhaps for an album of landscape photos, but the authors are referring to a book they call a "History" - which, if not linear, certainly has progression. I staunchly read the thing from front to back, and I can assure you, they're right - you really don't need to.

So, where to start?

- graphics - I had expected this to be the highlight. I was keen to see mastery of graphical representation of data; I hope to be amazed by the originality and creativity. Sadly, no. Many graphics are unreadable due to ridiculous fonts or colour combinations; others are severely compromised in their fluidity by the same.

Sometimes the artistic "idea" so overwhelms the communication that you've no idea what the page is supposed to be telling you - even when you (as they suggest) read the side text first. Such a shame - I was hoping to be wowed, but to be honest, the best graphics were not their own.

- text - the real low point. Utterly puerile, stuffed with sad, embarrassing half-jokes and clichés. There are glaring factual errors ("trillion - that's a thousand million") and all too often the analysis of the information (nay, data) at hand is facile and unilluminating. (The treatment of unemployment trends, for example, simply tells you what's on the charts and then draws sweepingly crass conclusions without, say, making a mention of changes in the participation rate, a major factor in these trends.)

- content - to cap it all, a large amount of this is well-worn subject matter, rarely treated differently from pre-existing studies. Admittedly, there's not much quantifiable information available from ancient history, but even there I've seen much more inventive analysis and insightful choice of data and treatment elsewhere.

All told, if anyone would get anything out of the contents of this book, it might be a pre-teen (preferably with a critical eye as to how they'd do it better). Perhaps in a decade or two, people will drag this book out and laugh at its incompetence. Until then, hmm... estate agents and a certain type of pub might find it useful for stacking shelves of books that are not meant to be read.

Sorry, this review is posted a little too late for xmas!

Bob says

I wanted something outside my normal scope of reading material, and this definitely qualified. It was rather entertaining and creative. Definitely some of the infographics worked better than others, but some of them were quite good. It felt like it took a long time to get through the speculative "ancient earth and early man" sections: that covers like half of the book and since so much of it is guesswork I was not very interested in that. Guesstimates plucked out of thin air don't lend themselves very well to statistics-focused charts and diagrams. When it got to medieval and modern times it was much more interesting. It is UK-based, which felt a little odd, and a bit dated since it was published several years ago. Some complaints, but for what it was, I liked the book, especially the second half.

Sarah - All The Book Blog Names Are Taken says

Really interesting way to visually represent the history of our world. Easy read, as naturally the graphics are the focal point. I especially found the representations of the wars and soldiers killed interesting, as we in the western world have been trained for years to think of WWI and WWII as the deadliest in human history.

This would be a great way to help students, perhaps middle school age and up, understand some of these huge concepts - such as how big the universe really is.

Victoria says

If you love data and if you love graphs, then this is the book for you! I do love these things so I found this so enjoyable! It's very England centric as a heads up, and if you're looking for a lot of Canadian data, it isn't there.

Very fun to read!

Shallowreader VaVeros says

I really enjoyed dipping in and out of this history book. Infographics demonstrating different periods of world history and often, through the use of graphics, comparing modern times with ancient times through graphical representation of statistics. Highly rec!

Anton Iokov says

An outstanding book on how not to do data visualization.

Pretty pictures that either make no sense or are almost impossible to decode. Color encoding with shades of red, arbitrary axis, size represented as a bunch of icons and much more. Almost every chart in this book have a legend and is useless without it.

Somebody should make a dataviz course redesigning this 100+ charts.

P.S. You won't learn much history from the book too.

Sarah says

What a great Christmas gift this would make! Often when books are very visual I scan the photos or art and skip the text, but this text is so well-written and funny, I am reading front cover to back.

B. Zucker says

This book changed my opinion on infographics. I used to like infographics. Now I realize I only like *good* infographics. So many of the graphics in this book obscure, rather than clarify, their subject. In many cases, a simple pie chart, bar graph, scaled timeline, or even a table of numbers would be much easier to understand than what this book presents.

This book does have some pretty colors, after the first 40 pages, which are in black and white. It also has some semi-witty commentary and a few fun facts, if you are patient enough to decipher the hieroglyphics. (This is not a metaphor; the artist literally uses Egyptian hieroglyphics to represent numbers in one graphic. And I thought the Roman numerals were bad.)

This is not a good book for learning new things. It is good for promoting eyestrain and forehead creases. Suggested uses include waiting-room material for optometrists and cosmetic surgeons.

Adam says

Wonderfully designed, with an interesting formatting schematic; as the book travels through its four sections (Earth before humanity, Earth before human civilization, the beginnings of civilization to 1900, and the modern era) the color scheme and typesetting choices become more and more varied and entertaining. For the history of the Universe and Earth before humanity, the pages are largely sepia with monochromatic ink. In the next section, we get subdued pastels. Following that, we have bright colors and a very modern typeface, and in the final section the pages are actually printed on a different, glossy stock with abundant colors.

This is not a book to be read in one sitting; the flood of information can be overwhelming and the layout of the various infographics is not always as intuitive or engaging as one might hope. The authorial tone also leaves something to be desired; the writers have chosen a jovial, snarky, slightly tongue-in-cheek voice which gets cloying after a while and detracts from the otherwise mostly fascinating infographics which cover everything from the location and population of the first cities to the trade routes of the British, Dutch, and Spanish empires in the 18th and 19th centuries to the worst man-made disasters in history and the likelihood of humanity's survival in the next hundred, thousand, or hundred thousand years.

By and large this book is an interesting take on dispensing information in a fun and engaging way. It is not without faults, but is worth at least a cursory glance. One would not be at a loss if they only hopped around

from page to page rather than read it straight through; in fact, the authors encourage both approaches, though I would strongly suggest the former. It would make an excellent coffee table book.

Greg says

The objectives of D'Efilippo and Ball in writing *The Infographic History of the World* were to use advanced techniques of graphical data to succinctly summarise and present the entire history of the world. Just a tad ambitious.

The book is certainly a graphical feast, but I think in the end it becomes self-defeating. Towards the end I just wanted to scan the text to pick up the cogent facts and move on; not at all what the authors had in mind, I'm sure. The complexity of some of the diagrams is bewildering and sometimes far too much information is included, at the expense of clarity. It seemed to me also that the authors often chose what they thought would be a cool graphical shape for the subject under discussion and then shoe-horned their data to conform to that shape. In my view the best graphical design uses the form that best represents the data, not the other way round.

I also wished for a somewhat less glib and smart-arse commentary. I feel that the authors were conflicted over their need to inform and the need to entertain but, to be true to their objective, they should have erred on the side of information, which they do not do. The book is also far too UK-centric; the frequent use of "we" to refer to the UK seems somewhat out of place in a supposed history of the world.

Still there is some very interesting information here, and some of the graphical devices used are excellent. I think overall this is not a book to read cover-to-cover, but rather something to dip into occasionally for a bit of arcane trivia and some idle amusement.
