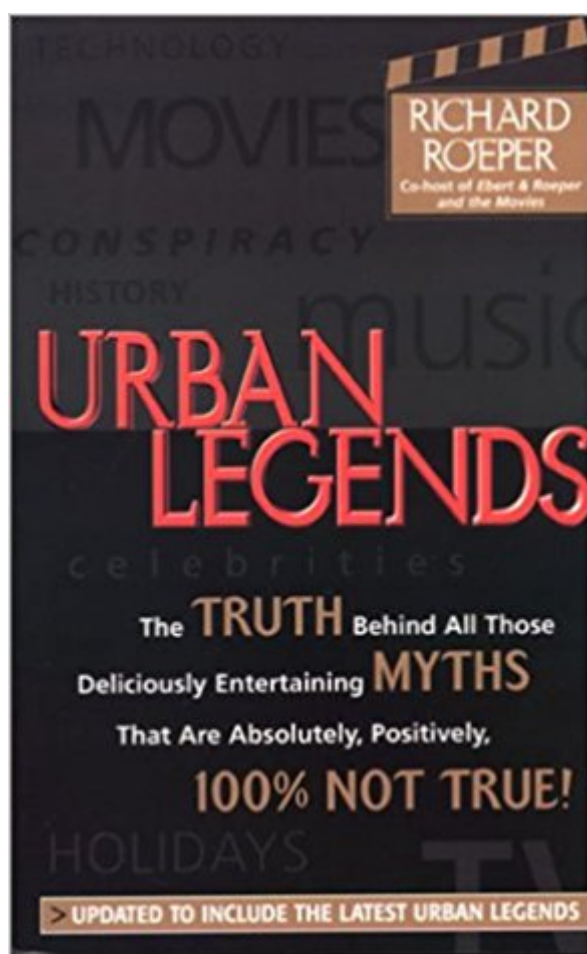


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Urban Legends: The Truth Behind All Those Deliciously Entertaining Myths That Absolutely, Positively, 100% Not True!



Synopsis

Now available in paperback, this book has been updated to include more humorous, entertaining myths that keep the rumor mills churning. Richard Roeper, the current co-host of Ebert & Roeper and the Movies, knows a lot about urban legends--tales so deliciously tasty that you desperately want it to be true. Find out: Does the "bonsai kitten" Web site celebrate cruelty to animals -- or is it just a tasteless joke? What's the real story behind the so-called Ivy League porn film supposedly in production at Yale? Could it really be true that a man named George Turklebaum dropped dead at his desk--and none of his co-workers noticed for five days? Each of these stories and hundreds more like them have been told and retold, embellished and reworked. They're fun to hear or read, and even more fun to retell. They're part of our contemporary folklore.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I really enjoyed this book. It was very entertaining and informative. I didn't know a lot about the subject matter, and it was amazing how many of the ULs I'd heard growing up and didn't know if they were true or not. Good reference if you want to give proof to some of those die-hard UL believers (like my hubby who still "insists" that he saw the ghost of a little girl in Three Men and a Baby!) I definatly recoment this book!

Not impressed with the book. Not a good read. Didn't even finish it. Wouldn't reccommend it to anyone to read.

What fun, fun, fun! I appreciate Roeper's discussing more recent Urban Legends and not retreading what Jan Brunvald has published. I loved his debunking. Especially of the Eric Clapton Takes Over Concert story. This is very breezy and worth a read in the coming, lazy, summer, months.

In this book there are many of those Urban Legends that we've heard of that have been circulating since we can remember. And, there are also many tales that we haven't heard of. Today we get most of these myths via email, but before email came to be, I remember hearing...."this happened....I heard that....so-and-so said....did you know that....?" And beyond the humor, are the effects these tall-tales can have on the people and places they're about. Many of these "alleged" rumors were followed up in the form of questions from journalists during media interviews. Often, the media will investigate a rumor (urban myth) to see if there is any merit to it. Once debunked as false however, the rumor lives on in peoples' minds. HIV positive Hyperdermic needles left in the coin returns of pay phones. Those unfortunate people who went out on the town to wake up in hotel bathtub filled with ice, and a note left to call the Doctor because their Kidney had been removed. And what's to that gerbil rumor involving a celebrity we all know? Well, that's false too. That particular myth has been tagged on other celebrities going back to the 70s. Who started these tales? When? How did they get spread? In addition to listing and describing these interesting myths, Roeper notes of the origins, means and methods of their growth, and the current believability status of many of them. Good coffee table book. It'll occupy some of the folks you'll bring over.

While debunking an urban legend that appeared in his email inbox, author Richard Roeper makes this comment about the syntax of the email: "You'll notice a pattern in the texts of these e-mail chain letters--they almost always read as if penned by junior high students who are attempting to imitate adults [...] You'd think someone would elevate the grammar and clean up the syntax..." This is an interesting observation for Mr. Roeper to make, since the same thing could be said regarding the style of his book, "Urban Legends". This may be one of the most poorly-written books I have ever read which was not self-published or scrawled across a series of cocktail napkins. I am even more amazed by the fact that, according to the book jacket, Mr. Roeper "writes a daily column in the Chicago Sun Times". The voice, style and syntax of this book would be impressive if it were found on a twelve-year-old girl's blog titled "Sparkle Pony". Coming from a "journalist", however, it just goes to show how illiterate our society has become. I can only thank my lucky stars that I checked this book out from the public library (someone had penciled grammar corrections in the margins),

rather than dropping \$4.95 on something my six year old nephew could have written. And my nephew speaks English as a second language! I can't tell whether the author is going for a folksy, casual, down-to-earth tone or trying to give off a pseudo-intellectual air. Either way, he fails on both accounts. The narrative style jolts back and forth between stream-of-consciousness chattiness (dropping in phrases such as "come on now", "I know, right?") and bumbling attempts to sound smart. Often both take place in the same sentence: the author finds a fancy-sounding term in a thesaurus and artlessly drops it into a phrase that otherwise shows all signs of functional illiteracy. To wit: FANCY WORD: "scintilla" (Ooh! A neat-sounding synonym for "a minute particle"!)

CONTEXT: "I've yet to uncover a scintilla of evidence that Janet Reno has ever had dreams about defining a cultist." [NOTE: The urban legend in question has nothing to do with Ms. Reno's dreams, waking or while asleep. Why the author chooses to reference "what she dreams about" is a mystery that he will likely take to the grave. One of many that define his "unique" narrative style.]

If you are interested in the fascinating world of urban legends and modern folklore, I suggest reading one of the many books by renowned folklorist Jan Harold Brunvand. But please, for the love of all that is holy--I beg you, in the name of the Vanishing Hitchhiker, the Killer with the Hook, AIDS Mary, and all the other saints of urban lore--avoid Richard Roeper's book at all costs. Avoid it as if it were one of those infected needles hidden in the coin slots of public pay phones.

What is it about a salacious urban legend that appeals to my secret morbid curiosity? Gaping at car wrecks, nasty gossip about lovers' trysts, celebrity rivalries and divadom--you may not want to admit you live for this stuff, but I do and if you've found your way here than you do too. Urban Legends bring a little spunk or rush to what maybe an otherwise dull existence. Believing the story is true, knowing that "this happened to a friend of a friend of my aunt's" makes it that much more juicy. I think the lure of the UL dates back generations, because they're actually a modern-day version of folk tale and story telling, which indeed is an art. Once these stories are proven false, however, the bubble bursts, and I'm left feeling deflated. Somehow with Roeper's book though, the debunking of these urban legends is fun! He has a way of exposing the myths that is just as much of an art form as the story telling itself. He explains why we might be inclined to believe them, and that although the stories sound better had they been true, there truly is no possibility of it. He's got the journalistic talent and a thorough researcher and fact checker to back up what he's written. It is easy to see that Roeper has a passion for the ULs and years of experience tracking them. Plus, you'll never believe some of the ones he's included. You'll be surprised how many of them you've heard and believed to

be true! This is a great book to read all in one night or pick up every now and then for light entertainment. I have done both. Don't miss the one that compares "The Wizard of Oz" with "Pink Floyd's Dark Side of the Moon," "kidney harvesting" and the chapter on weddings. Those are particularly fun.

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