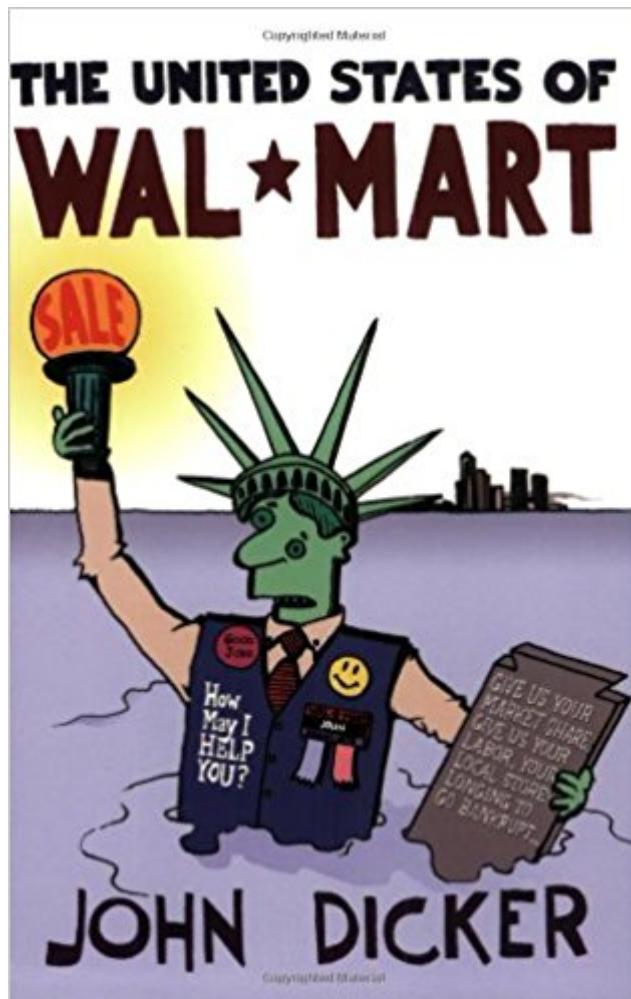


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The United States Of Wal-Mart



Synopsis

An irreverent, hard-hitting examination of the world's largest-and most reviled-corporation, which reveals that while Wal-Mart's dominance may be providing consumers with cheap goods and plentiful jobs, it may also be breeding a culture of discontent. It employs one of every 115 American workers. If it were a nation-state, it would be one of the world's top twenty economies. With yearly sales of nearly \$260 billion and an average wage of \$8 an hour, Wal-Mart represents an unprecedented-and perhaps unstoppable-force in capitalism. And there have been few corporations that have evoked the same levels of reverence and ire. The United States of Wal-Mart is a hard-hitting examination of how Sam Walton's empire has infiltrated not just the geography of America but also its consciousness. Peeling away layers of propaganda and politics, investigative journalist John Dicker reveals an American (and, increasingly, a global) story that has no clear-cut villains or heroes-one that could be the confused, complicated story of America itself. Pitched battles between economic progress and quality of life, between the preservation of regional identity and national homogeneity, and between low prices and the dignity of the American worker are beginning to coalesce into an all-out war to define our modern era. And, Dicker argues, Wal-Mart is winning. Revealing that the company's business practices have been shaping American culture, including the nation's social, political, and industrial policy, The United States of Wal-Mart provides fresh insight into a controversy that isn't going away.Â

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Although it's getting too big to be a microcosm, Wal-Mart is a fair representation of many of the most troubling aspects of the American economy, according to this lively and insightful profile of the big-box retail leviathan. Former Colorado Springs Independent staff writer Dicker admirably sums up the conventional complaints against Wal-Mart, detailing poverty-level wages, skimpy benefits, scorched-earth antiunion policies, shuttered smalltown Main Streets, suburban sprawl abetment and rampant outsourcing. Behind the facade of "corn-pone populism" fostered by folksy but steely founder Sam Walton, Dicker asserts, Wal-Mart has become a "global despot." Dicker's analysis is unsparing but balanced. He sympathizes (and sometimes strategizes) with Wal-Mart opponents, but also chides them for ignoring the appeal of the company's cheap, convenient offerings to cash-strapped customers and underserved communities. And Wal-Mart's sins, he argues, are America's; the company merely caters to the national religion of consumer entitlement that assumes shoppers have no interests in common with workers and puts low prices ahead of any social consequences. Aside from some pointless and tiresome lapses into prison-chic posturing ("[w]e're all Wal-Mart's bitches"), Dicker conveys a wealth of information in a lucid and light-handed style. (June)Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

[Dicker] offers snappy social criticism with the soul of stand-up comedy. -- The Boston Globe, July 3, 2005a nuanced and bracing portrait of the largest retailer in the world. -- The New York Times Book Review, July 17, 2005

Complete lack of objectivity. I would have though the parents of the author lost their Mom&Pop store to Walmart and he has not been able to recuperate. His anger is evident and obviously there is nothing Walmart can do right.

Savagely funny and pointed, Dicker pulls no punches in his crystallization of the walmart juggernaut as it seeks to dominate a retail landscape near you. Probing both the good and the bad, Dicker manages a balanced account of Walmart and is sensible enough to point out that Walmart, essentially, is a colossal version of the american consumer. It, Walmart, pursues cheap because we the customer want it that way. Sprinkled with anecdotes, Dicker provides interesting reading for anyone who follows Walmart.

I loved this book. I think it's so engrossing because it gives you the straight dope on Wal-Mart as

well as eye-opening analysis of why some opponents win and some lose. With a healthy sprinkle of good jokes along the way. If you want to really understand this issue, you'll be glad you read it.

I write a weekly business columnist for the Richmond Register (you can check it out at [...]) and plan to devote a future column to this book. I have not figured out how to contact the author (he does not seem to have a web page) but once I can interview him, I consider it my public duty to let people know about the book. It is a masterpiece. Readable, well researched and gives all sides of the Wal Mart argument. Dicker's first book will not be his last. His writing style is entertaining but fact based. I've bought three copies of the book and will buy several more for my friends. Don McNay [...]

Wal-Mart is having a profound effect on our world. This book is intelligent and well written. It's easy to read and very compelling. Hopefully it will have a very large audience. Keep an open mind. The life you save may be your own.

Mr. Dicker seems to believe that peppering his text with foul language gives his work an edge. I can't decide if he is just trying to be hip, urbane or if his vocabulary is so limited he has no other option. If Mr. Dicker considers himself a serious writer, and apparently he does, he should concentrate on holding the readers' attention through solid writing and give up the crass language. I would not recommend this book for anyone expecting a thoughtful, carefully crafted critique of Wal-Mart.

The author states that the goal of this book "Is an examination of how one company has single-handedly altered our expectations of what we deserve as consumers and what we will tolerate as citizens." One of the points Mr. Dicker has demonstrated effectively is that the consumer gets low prices while employees get low wages often without insurance. Another troublesome aspect of those low prices is the source of those low price items. Suppliers are forced to outsource to be able to provide goods at a low enough price for Wal-Mart. Those cheap prices have other costs that aren't visible. Another complaint Mr. Dicker addresses is where the Wal-Mart employees go for health insurance when it's not provided by the employer. An intriguing bit of information was the leaked internal Wal-Mart audit from the Summer of 2001 printed by "the New York Times". This was used as an example of how cost obsession can subvert labor standards. There was some history of Wal-Mart and Sam Walton. The growth of the company, the history of some retailers, a comparison of Wal-Mart with A&P. This was all very interesting as a history/trivia lesson. Paul Samuelson was

quoted on cheap labor vs. wage loss- "Being able to purchase groceries 20 percent cheaper at WalMart does not necessarily make up for the wage losses."The importance of Chinese labor to WalMart is discussed.John Dicker got a lot of solid points across with this book. I do think that he could have done it without some of the language though.

We don't have a Wal Mart in our area yet ~~ but it's coming soon. I will be honest. I picked this book up out of curiosuty. It seems that Wal Mart is everyone's favorite new bashing toy ~~ no matter how many people I know work there. The author has had me intrigued from the first page on.He gives some interesting history of Sam Walton, the founder of the company. He also gives some history of retail business and how it affects the economy/nation. He interjects sarcastic remarks as well as insightful remarks ~~ he keeps me, the reader, on my toes throughout this book. He presents the facts as I've read throughout the years in the newspapers as well as presenting some interesting tidbits that one wouldn't get from the media.He makes good points in his arguments. Yes. Wal Mart is a retail giant ~~ one of the largest in the world. Yes. Wal Mart is not paying her employees fairly or with health insurance. Yes. Wal Mart has a high turnover in employees. Yes. Wal Mart has moved into small rural communities and "take away the jobs" and edged out their mom and pop competitors. Yes. Wal Mart is a way of life nowadays for a lot of people. Yes. Wal Mart is cheap.Wal Mart took advantage of the suburbia mania ~~ when everyone started leaving the downtown and moving to the suburbs, where the malls are. Wal Mart also made the prices lower than the competitors till the competitors all fade away. Wal Mart also practices censorships of certain musical artists, magazines but yet sells guns and religious material in their stores. They have a ready excuse for any complaint and yet doesn't do anything to address the issue at hand.It is an interesting book ~~ one that has definitely waken me up to what is going on in our country. My husband is an union member and now I am finally starting to understand why the unions are so anti-Wal Mart. And Wal Mart is not the only institution out there guilty of being cheap. But they're the biggest and easiest to point at because the facts are there. The author pointed out that sometimes the truth hurts.If you're looking for an entertainment reading, I wouldn't pick this one. It's not entertaining. It's a book that keeps you thinking and reading and thinking. It's a book that compels you to action ~~ even if it's just a simple act of not shopping at Wal Mart anymore and supporting the local businesses in your community. This is not your beach book ~~ this is a insightful book on a serious situation facing our country today. It's one that I wish I had read a lot sooner.1-29-06

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