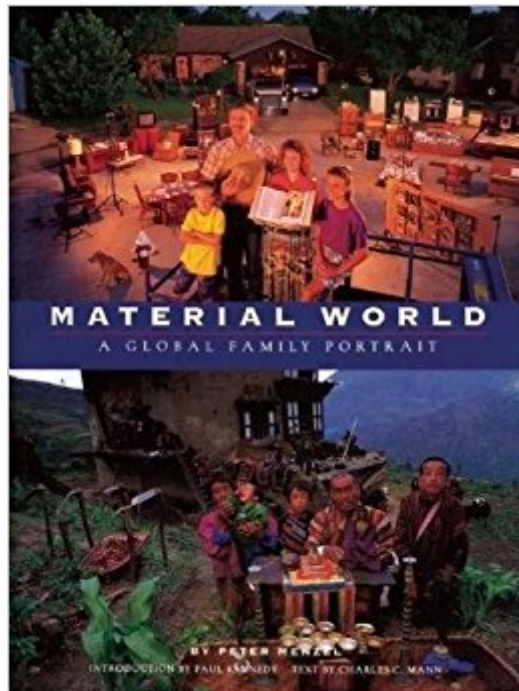




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Material World: A Global Family Portrait



Synopsis

In an unprecedented effort, sixteen of the world's foremost photographers traveled to thirty nations around the globe to live for a week with families that were statistically average for that nation. At the end of each visit, photographer and family collaborated on a remarkable portrait of the family members outside their home, surrounded by all of their possessions; a few jars and jugs for some, an explosion of electronic gadgetry for others. Vividly portraying the look and feel of the human condition everywhere on Earth, this internationally acclaimed bestseller puts a human face on the issues of population, environment, social justice, and consumption as it illuminates the crucial question facing our species today: Can all six billion of us have all the things we want?

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In honor of the United Nations-sponsored International Year of the Family in 1994, award-winning photojournalist Peter Menzel brought together 16 of the world's leading photographers to create a visual portrait of life in 30 nations. *Material World* tackles its wide subject by zooming in, allowing one household to represent an entire nation. Photographers spent one week living with a "statistically average" family in each country, learning about their work, their attitudes toward their possessions, and their hopes for the future. Then a "big picture" shot of the family was taken outside the dwelling, surrounded by all their (many or few) material goods. The book provides sidebars

offering statistics and a brief history for each country, as well as personal notes from the photographers about their experiences. But it is the "big pictures" that tell most of the story. In one, a British family pauses before a meal of tea and crumpets under a cloudy sky. In another, wary Bosnians sit beside mattresses used as sniper barricades. A Malian family composed of a husband, his two wives, and their children rests before a few cooking and washing implements in golden afternoon light. *Material World* is a lesson in economics and geography, reminding us of the world's inequities, but also of humanity's common threads. An engrossing, enlightening book. --Maria Dolan

YA?A fascinating look at the material possessions of families throughout the world. These people have been determined "average" for their countries and have agreed to have photographers move the contents of their houses outside in order to create visible representations of their relative standards of living. The dirt house and few possessions of Mali residents contrast with the 4 cars, 45-foot long sofa, and 12+ oriental carpets lined up outside the luxury home of a family from Kuwait. Each chapter includes the original spread of possessions, statistics about each family and country, as well as further pictures of daily life and some observations by the photographer. Interspersed among the chapters, which are divided by region, are pictorial representations of such interesting comparisons as televisions, meals, and toilets. Almost all of the pictures are in full color. Menzel hoped this would be "a unique tool for grasping cross-cultural realities." It is that and much more.?Susan H. Woodcock, King's Park Library, Burke, VACopyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

We love looking at this book when we are studying specific countries in our homeschool geography class. My six year old son loves to sit with me as I read to him about the families in each place and how they live. It's amazing to me to see all of these different cultures and to be able to imagine what it would be like to live in these places. Sometimes it is quite eye opening to realize just how much we have in America. This book really makes you stop and think about all of these other places - would be a great conversation piece to have in your home.

Still a great book and deeply thought-provoking. I'm not sure the represented countries and cultures are still as sensible about possessions, so I'd be interested in a follow-up to this book. Nevertheless, I think this is an important book for people to read as they consider decluttering, downsizing, or otherwise reducing the excess things they own in favor of living more simply.

I have purchased several copies of this book over the years. I replaced my first copy because my daughter took it to school so many times over the years it became tattered. The book is a series of photographs with brief narratives and data. Peter Menzel traveled forty some odd countries around the world, a good sample. In each, he found a family with the median income for the nation, a family with as many families above it as below it on the distribution of income. He photographed the family in and near its residence, focusing on the families possessions. In each case, one photo shows all the families belongings arrayed together. There are also three comparative photo spreads of meals of the world, televisions, of the world and toilets of the world. The fact that the book is 20 or so years old is obvious in terms of mobile devices and computers. Nonetheless, it is a brilliant exposition of under-consumption, sufficient consumption and over-consumption. I would note that it may be weaker in showing over-consumption given its focus on the median income family. It is still brilliant and poignant.

I loved *Material World*. It is fascinating to see how others live. Although many of the belongings seem to be very limited in 3rd world countries, it is interesting to see cherished items that look like they have been with families for years. I saw a review that said the only purpose of the book was to shame Americans for their wealth. I like to think that this book reminds us of the blessings we have and our obligation to help those in need. Most critical however is to see how others live and the things that they value in their lives. It is sad that someone would be so critical of this book when it gives such insight into others' lives. As I said above, I love this book and the message that it gives.

I LOVE this book and encourage my kids to take it to school for show-and-tell. This book gives my children a global perspective, how fortunate we are to have the "things" we do, and our responsibility to respect other cultures and countries. My children, all under 10, are always impacted when we read this book together as a family and discuss it. As an adult, I am impacted as well and feel more gratitude for my life.

I saw this book on a living room table at a party years ago. I was so bored at the party, so I picked it up not knowing what was going to happen to me. I opened the book and was instantly transported to different worlds and cultures that I was surprised I didn't need my passport. The book is a treasure of information and statistics with the images staring back on me each page I turned. I have given this book as gifts and will continue to do so until Peter Menzel creates a update and new version. I am a fan of his concept and will always wonder how much work and frequent flyer miles it

must of taken him to put it all together. This is a five star book and I highly recommend it!

Great way to show the kids how fortunate they are.

I am a teacher and I bought this book to give students a visual understanding of how people in different countries live as we evaluate climate change and our own carbon footprint. This book does this but I didn't realize it was published in 1995. It will certainly serve its purpose, and I should have read the description more carefully before ordering it. Other than that it is a fascinating book that really creates a sort of photographic time capsule of the world in the 90s.

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