



Use All the Crayons! The Colorful Guide to Simple Human Happiness

Chris Rodell

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Follow Rodell's quirky, colorful advice and, in no time at all, enjoy even the most mundane parts of life.

Chris Rodell's *Use All the Crayons* is a colorful, humorous, and well-written guide to making the most out of life. Rodell delivers 501 guideposts that may challenge the worldview of humdrum, set-in-their-ways individuals and those who need a bit of good cheer. Autobiographical vignettes, which Rodell refers to as the "Colorful Days Diary," link the daily business of his own life as writer, father, husband, and friend to the wisdom and advice he offers in the guideposts.

Use All the Crayons, which doesn't take itself too seriously, will likely appeal to readers aware of their own quirkiness or who focus on self-perceived shortcomings. Rodell makes light of his own in-need-of-work status, his unquenchable optimism, and his desire to be in bed by 9:30 p.m. In fact, the persona Rodell creates for himself in the diary entries is compelling, humorous, and engaging, helping to hold together what would otherwise be a long list of entertaining but not necessarily practical advice. At times, Rodell's ideas are so zany and over the top that readers would probably find more joy in imagining Rodell taking his own advice than actually following through on it themselves. Take, for example, #286: "After residing in it for several months, ask the people who just sold you their old home or apartment if they used to hide bags of money in odd places. If they say no and ask why, just smile and say, 'No reason.'" While not all readers will engage in pranks and jokes of this nature, one gets the feeling that Rodell certainly does—a trait that endears him to the reader.

However, Rodell's advice is not all silly; among the jokes, wordplay, and puns, there is a compelling ethic of compassion and kindness regarding everything from marriage and parenting to how to treat strangers: "Make taking the high road such a habit that confused strangers along the way ask you for directions." Most of his sage advice is offered with an ironic twist: "Be patient with your elderly parents ... Even when it seems their dying days will kill you, too." Such comments serve the dual purpose of entertaining and inspiring readers.

It's possible that *Use All the Crayons* could lose the attention of younger readers, especially when Rodell waxes eloquent on the merits of vinyl records or lists many of the older and eclectic songs in his 7,627-item iTunes music collection. Regardless, *Use All the Crayons* promises to cheer and inspire readers to live more compassionate and colorful lives.

HEATHER WEBER (January 24, 2014)

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