

Reasonably Painless Economics

If you want to raise your game in thinking about the economy, I recommend the following items, books mainly. Read these and you'll eventually Get It. Believe me, you will. Carry them around and read them on the El. You'll be amazed at how easy it is, *after* you Get It!

Three novels by **Russell Roberts**, gradually getting better as novels:

The Choice: A Fable of Free Trade and Protectionism, Third edition, 2006 (first edition earlier)

The Invisible Heart: An Economic Romance, 2001

The Price of Everything: A Parable of Possibility and Prosperity, 2006

And a very good non-fiction book by him, *How Adam Smith Can Change Your Life: An Unexpected Guide to Human Nature and Happiness*, 2014.

And his podcasts, EconTalk, at <http://www.econtalk.org/>

And his hilarious economics rap, "Fear the Boom and Bust":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0nERTFo-Sk>

You get it? Russ is a one-stop education in economics.

Four mystery novels by **Marshall Jevons** (the penname of two economists who wrote them: Kenneth Elzinga and the late William Breit)

Murder at the Margin, 1978

The Fatal Equilibrium, 1985

A Deadly Indifference, 1995

The Mystery of the Invisible Hand, 2014

They're well written, and the more economics you learn the funnier they are!

Then also:

Steven E. **Landsburg**, *The Armchair Economist*, 1993, and anything by Steve: *More Sex is Safe Sex: The Unconventional Wisdom of Economics*, 2007, and his Slate blog.

Joshua **Hall**, *Homer Economicus: The Simpsons and Economics*, 2014, I hear it's excellent.

Matt **Ridley**, *The Rational Optimist: How Prosperity Evolves*, 2010/2011. Big-canvas history by a brilliant writer on science (and a member of the House of Lords!).

➔ Do not read Paul Krugman! It'll gradually rot your brain, until you can't think straight about anything. Do not read *Freakonomics*, either, from the opposite politics. It too will corrupt you!

Here is the *cursus honoris* (look it up) of Chicago microeconomics books, to be read in this order: **(1.) Alchian and Allen**, *Exchange and Production Theory in Use*; Paul **Heyne**, *The Economic Way of Thinking*, any edition, is a substitute; Heyne was a Protestant minister; **(2.) McCloskey**, *The Applied Theory of Price*, 1985, available at deirdremccloskey.org; **Landsburg's** textbook and **David Friedman's** textbook (also available free at his website: he is Milton Friedman's son) are similar to McCloskey; **(3.) Stigler**, *The Theory of Price*, four distinct editions; **(4.) Milton Friedman**, *Price Theory*; **(5.) Gary Becker**, *Economics Theory*. Read these, work the problems, especially in a study group (McCloskey's text has answers at the back), and you'll Think Like an Economist. You'll never go back!