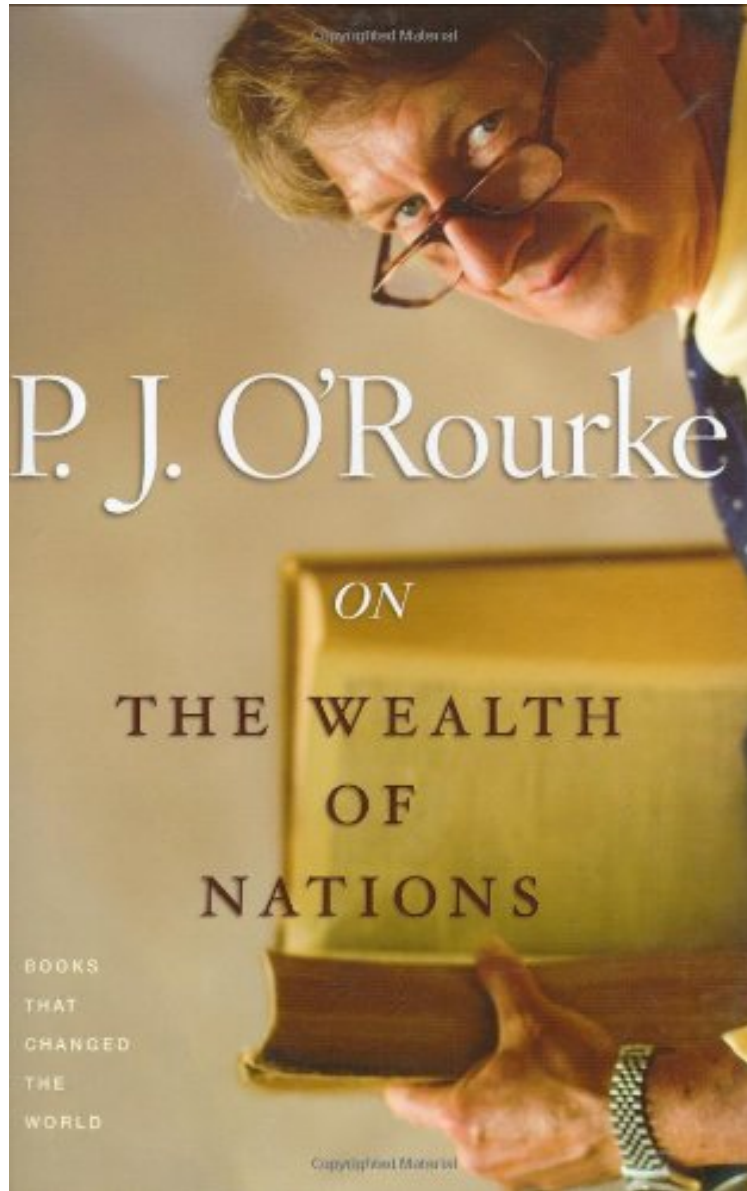


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P. J. O'Rourke : On The Wealth of Nations (Books That Changed the World) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised On The Wealth of Nations (Books That Changed the World):

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Yes, Adam Smith is Still Relevant; Too Bad There's No Reading

GuideBy Wayne LucasIf you're like me, you've long had an itching curiosity to read Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (Modern Library Classics). But after picking up his 1000-page tome and thumbing through a few sections, your itch is soon forgotten. After all, how much is there to say about 18th century economics? And, though the undisputed economic bible, how come the only quoted text I've regularly come across is a few short excerpts about an invisible hand? This well-respected and identifiable excerpt surely has my veneration, but for diving into economics, doesn't there have to be an easier, more modern means for doing so? Of course there is, but this inevitable conclusion has always left me asking whether Adam Smith was still, well, relevant. P.J. O'Rourke has given us a gift by explaining why he is. Wielding his dry wit and characteristic humor, O'Rourke clears a path through not only Smith's characteristic work, but his lesser-known *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (Penguin Classics) as well. Presenting both in terms of why they (1) should be read together and (2) should be regularly referenced when analyzing current policy, O'Rourke's buoyant style adds a bit of levity to an otherwise dense subject. Even with the occasional flippant remark and incisive jab at modern day politics though, this is still a serious book. Concentration, reflection, and, in my case reiteration, were necessary to absorb the essential ideas, and thus leaves me wondering: if a synopsis and introduction to an 18th century text requires a fair amount of work, how much more difficult is the source material? Likely very difficult, which makes this reader long for a much-needed reading guide to traverse an unrecognized economics yester-world. While giving some helpful tips, O'Rourke isn't the tour guide I wanted him to be. Neither does he suggest any shortcuts for getting to Smith's essential high points without slogging through fifty pages of colonial era corn laws. Both disappointing, and while O'Rourke does point the reader to the best versions of the original text, some useful secondary materials, and some pithy Scottish quotes to encourage you onward, a syllabus for reading Smith in so many lessons is what I really longed for. Unfortunately, it isn't to be found here. Leaving me itching more than ever to read Smith, but not inclined to scratch. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Tried to be humorous and informative but was noneBy WohlvisarIt was supposed to be funny and informative, but it was none. It had the occasional zingers and interesting information, but the economic information that I expected to learn from it was very simplified. The redeeming quality would therefore be its humor. However, if you don't enjoy PJ O'Rourke's humor, then this book will be difficult to read. I would not recommend it. This has probably been the only unpleasant book bought from that I have read. I did enjoy some of the trivia of Adam Smith, such as the friendship he had with some notable Americans, Voltaire, and David Hume. I was also impressed that Adam Smith's principles influenced The Earl of Shelburne, who signed the Treaty of Paris with the United States. The Earl of Shelburne stated to "have been converted to Smith's ideas during a trip" to London in 1761. (pg. 185) Adam Smith was also friends with some of the Physiocrats, and "admired their founder, court physician Francois Quesnay, enough that he planned to dedicate *The Wealth of Nations* to him." (pg. 111) However Adam Smith was very critical about their ideas. Overall, I would not recommend this book if you want to learn more than some tidbits of knowledge here and there. 48 of 49 people found the following review helpful. A must read! By Stephen B. WatersI should have been exposed to a reliable, useful exposition of Adam's Smith's ideas in my History, Political Science, and Economics classes. None of them did as good a job as O'Rourke has done, distilling 900 pages down. O'Rourke ties Smith to today's issues. So far I have given away copies of this book to government officials, teachers, and friends. Please do the same. It is frightening to discover that so many politicians' proposed solutions to current problems have been tried and failed, with historical examples and explanations documented by Smith. Where is our sense of history! Smith offers not belief, but fact. We all want to solve society's problems, but the solutions ought not cause greater problems than they cure. After I listened to the CDs, I bought hard copy to underline. Now I leave it on my iPod so when I shuffle, I get 3 minutes of pithy insight, interspersed with cleansing music. Put this on your permanent reading and rereading list.

As one of the first titles in Atlantic Monthly Press' "Books That Changed the World" series, America's most provocative satirist, P. J. O'Rourke, reads Adam Smith's revolutionary *The Wealth of Nations* so you don't have to. Recognized almost instantly on its publication in 1776 as the fundamental work of economics, *The Wealth of Nations* was also recognized as really long: the original edition totaled over nine hundred pages in two volumes—including the blockbuster sixty-seven-page "digression concerning the variations in the value of silver during the course of the last four centuries," which, "to those uninterested in the historiography of currency supply, is like reading *Modern Maturity* in Urdu." Although daunting, Smith's tome is still essential to understanding such current hot-topics as outsourcing, trade imbalances, and Angelina Jolie. In this hilarious, approachable, and insightful examination of Smith and his groundbreaking work, P. J. puts his trademark wit to good use, and shows us why Smith is still relevant, why what seems obvious now was once revolutionary, and why the pursuit of self-interest is so important.

From Publishers WeeklyThe famous satirist headlines a new series of Books That Changed the World," in which well-known authors read great books "so you don't have to." While irreverently dissecting Adam Smith's 18th-century antimercantilist classic, *The Wealth of Nations*, O'Rourke continues the dogged advocacy of free-market economics of his own books, such as *Eat the Rich*. His analysis renders Smith's opus more accessible, while providing the perfect launching pad for O'Rourke's opinions on contemporary subjects like the World Bank, defense spending and Bill

Moyers's intelligence (or lack thereof, according to O'Rourke). Readers only vaguely familiar with Smith's tenets may be surprised to learn how little he continues to be understood today. As O'Rourke observes, "there are many theories in [The Wealth of Nations], but no theoretical system that Smith wanted to put in place, except 'the obvious and simple system of natural liberty [that] establishes itself of its own accord.'" Libertarian that he is, O'Rourke would probably agree that one shouldn't take only his word on Smith. Still, the book reads like a witty Cliffs Notes, with plenty of challenges for the armchair economist to wrap his head around. (Jan.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Old and weighty as it is, Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* remains the seminal work on the fundamentals of economics. Political satirist O'Rourke plumbs the hefty tome, examining the eighteenth-century text in relation to our modern economy, demonstrating the enduring wisdom and application of Smith's work. O'Rourke marvels at Smith's ability to cut to the marrow of economic concepts, the simplicity behind the notion of division of labor and self-interest. Despite the lack of personal introspection shown by authors of Smith's era, O'Rourke finds Smith's sense of humor shining through the long-winded writing typical of the time. In a discourse on the need for imported goods, Smith ponders the trading of French wine for English hardware to avoid an oversupply of pots and pans in the nation. Working without benefit of the graphs and jargon that modern-day economists employ, Smith analyzed the nation's early mercantilism and its benefit to society. In a highly accessible, often hilarious tone, O'Rourke parses Smith's notions of political and economic freedom. Readers well versed and not so well versed in economic theory will enjoy this delightful look at Smith's famous and famously dense work. Vanessa Bush Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved "Highly accessible, often hilarious.... [Listeners] well versed and not so well versed in economic theory will enjoy this delightful look at Smith's famous and famously dense work." ---Booklist