



The Book Corner

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Fraser Institute researcher-recommended books on free market policies and economics

Homer Economicus **The Simpsons and Economics**

Joshua Hall (Editor)

The Simpsons is a well-known television cartoon show depicting the lives of a dysfunctional middle-class American family. It is the longest-running sitcom in American history—currently finishing its 25th season. A group of eminent economists noticed as the show's episodes unfolded that its characters sometimes face situations that illustrate basic economic concepts. The economists have used these examples in their book, *Homer Economicus*, to demonstrate how this popular television series provides a window into the world of economics.

The book's first three chapters look at individual behaviour and decision-making, what is known as "the economic way of thinking." Homer's wants are limitless (donuts, beer...), but his

resources are not, so he is forced to make choices and trade-offs among the things he wants. The next six chapters guide readers through questions of money and entrepreneurship/profit, markets, and government failure. For example, when Bart wins an elephant in a radio contest, he charges his neighbours to ride it, making \$58 in profit, which Homer is excited about until Marge points out that the elephant's food bill for that day alone is \$300. The book's final chapters focus on more theoretical economics (applied microeconomics), including immigration ("Coming to

Homerica"), a study of gambling using Mr. Burns' casino as an example, and health care.



Joshua Hall

An entertaining, humorous, and culturally relevant book, *Homer Economicus* uses the interactions of the residents of Springfield to highlight key economic concepts including unintended consequences, supply and demand, and specialization.

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