



# Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything

By Steven D. Levitt, Stephen J. Dubner

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Which is more dangerous, a gun or a swimming pool? What do schoolteachers and sumo wrestlers have in common? Why do drug dealers still live with their moms? How much do parents really matter? What kind of impact did *Roe v. Wade* have on violent crime?

These may not sound like typical questions for an economist to ask. But Steven D. Levitt is not a typical economist. He is a much heralded scholar who studies the stuff and riddles of everyday life—;from cheating and crime to sports and child rearing—;and whose conclusions regularly turn the conventional wisdom on its head. He usually begins with a mountain of data and a simple, unasked question. Some of these questions concern life-and-death issues; others have an admittedly freakish quality. Thus the new field of study contained in this book: freakonomics.

Through forceful storytelling and wry insight, Levitt and co-author Stephen J. Dubner show that economics is, at root, the study of incentives—;how people get what they want, or need, especially when other people want or need the same thing. In *Freakonomics*, they set out to explore the hidden side of ... well, everything. The inner workings of a crack gang. The truth about real-estate agents. The myths of campaign finance. The telltale marks of a cheating schoolteacher. The secrets of the Ku Klux Klan.

What unites all these stories is a belief that the modern world, despite a surfeit of obfuscation, complication, and downright deceit, is not impenetrable, is not unknowable, and—;if the right questions are asked—;is even more intriguing than we think. All it takes is a new way of looking. Steven Levitt, through devilishly clever and clear-eyed thinking, shows how to see through all the clutter.

*Freakonomics* establishes this unconventional premise: If morality represents how we would like the world to work, then economics represents how it actually does work. It is true that readers of this book will be armed with enough riddles and stories to last a thousand cocktail parties. But *Freakonomics* can provide more than that. It will literally redefine the way we view the modern world.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Economics is not widely considered to be one of the sexier sciences. The annual Nobel Prize winner in that field never receives as much publicity as his or her compatriots in peace, literature, or physics. But if such slights are based on the notion that economics is dull, or that economists are concerned only with finance itself, Steven D. Levitt will change some minds. In *Freakonomics* (written with Stephen J. Dubner), Levitt argues that many apparent mysteries of everyday life don't need to be so mysterious: they could be illuminated and made even more fascinating by asking the right questions and drawing connections. For example, Levitt traces the drop in violent crime rates to a drop in violent criminals and, digging further, to the *Roe v. Wade* decision that preempted the existence of some people who would be born to poverty and hardship. Elsewhere, by analyzing data gathered from inner-city Chicago drug-dealing gangs, Levitt outlines a corporate structure much like McDonald's, where the top bosses make great money while scores of underlings make something below minimum wage. And in a section that may alarm or relieve worried parents, Levitt argues that parenting methods don't really matter much and that a backyard swimming pool is much more dangerous than a gun. These enlightening chapters are separated by effusive passages from Dubner's 2003 profile of Levitt in *The New York Times Magazine*, which led to the book being written. In a book filled with bold logic, such back-patting veers *Freakonomics*, however briefly, away from what Levitt actually has to say. Although maybe there's a good economic reason for that too, and we're just not getting it yet. --John Moe

#### From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. Forget your image of an economist as a crusty professor worried about fluctuating interest rates: Levitt focuses his attention on more intimate real-world issues, like whether reading to your baby will make her a better student. Recognition by fellow economists as one of the best young minds in his field led to a profile in the *New York Times*, written by Dubner, and that original article serves as a broad outline for an expanded look at Levitt's search for the hidden incentives behind all sorts of behavior. There isn't really a grand theory of everything here, except perhaps the suggestion that self-styled experts have a vested interest in promoting conventional wisdom even when it's wrong. Instead, Dubner and Levitt deconstruct everything from the organizational structure of drug-dealing gangs to baby-naming patterns. While some chapters might seem frivolous, others touch on more serious issues, including a detailed look at Levitt's controversial linkage between the legalization of abortion and a reduced crime rate two decades later. Underlying all these research subjects is a belief that complex phenomena can be understood if we find the right perspective. Levitt has a knack for making that principle relevant to our daily lives, which could make this book a hit. Malcolm Gladwell blurbs that Levitt "has the most interesting mind in America," an invitation Gladwell's own substantial fan base will find hard to resist. 50-city radio campaign. (May 1)

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#### From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

"Rogue" economist might be an overstatement. As a professor of economics at the University of Chicago and the recipient of the John Bates Clark medal (presented by the American Economics Association to the nation's most outstanding economist under 40) Steven Levitt is hardly an outsider. Yet when journalist Stephen Dubner published a profile of Levitt in *The New York Times Magazine*, the economist's theories struck many as, well, freaky. Levitt's field of behavior economics tries to combine classical economics with the emotional rules of human behavior. Some critics complain that *Freakonomics* reads too much like an extended collection of articles without a theme; wasn't this the same complaint we heard most often about

Malcolm Gladwell's *Blink* (\*\*1/2 Mar/Apr 2005)? Sometimes we don't mind learning about a variety of things, you know. Levitt and Dubner's continued partnership uncovers entertaining tales of the many quirks of human behavior.

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### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Annie Boyd:**

Book is to be different for each and every grade. Book for children until eventually adult are different content. As you may know that book is very important for all of us. The book *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything* ended up being making you to know about other expertise and of course you can take more information. It is very advantages for you. The e-book *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything* is not only giving you more new information but also to become your friend when you really feel bored. You can spend your own personal spend time to read your reserve. Try to make relationship with the book *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything*. You never sense lose out for everything in case you read some books.

#### **Loraine Brown:**

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#### **Henry Reavis:**

Is it anyone who having spare time and then spend it whole day simply by watching television programs or just lying down on the bed? Do you need something new? This *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything* can be the solution, oh how comes? A book you know. You are and so out of date, spending your spare time by reading in this brand-new era is common not a geek activity. So what these guides have than the others?

#### **Robert Burke:**

As a scholar exactly feel bored to be able to reading. If their teacher inquired them to go to the library or make summary for some guide, they are complained. Just minor students that has reading's spirit or real their interest. They just do what the professor want, like asked to the library. They go to generally there but nothing reading significantly. Any students feel that reading through is not important, boring and can't see colorful photographs on there. Yeah, it is being complicated. Book is very important for yourself. As we

know that on this period, many ways to get whatever you want. Likewise word says, many ways to reach Chinese's country. Therefore this Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explores the Hidden Side of Everything can make you truly feel more interested to read.

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