The Shortest History of Economics

Explore the human story of economics...
Andrew Leigh

‘The secret of economics is that the most powerful insights come from a handful of big ideas that anyone can follow.’

This small book tells a big story. From ancient times to the modern world, The Shortest History of Economics unearths the hidden economic forces behind war, innovation and social transformation. It traces how capitalism and the market system emerged, and introduces the key ideas and people who shaped the discipline of economics.

From the emergence of agriculture to the warming of our planet, Andrew Leigh weaves a fascinating narrative punctuated by expert insights into key moments in human history. He reveals the radical origins of the game of Monopoly, why the invention of the plough led to gender inequality, how certain diseases shaped the patterns of colonialism, the reasons skyscrapers emerged first in American cities, and much more.

The result is an illuminating, entertaining book about the economic ideas and forces that shape our world.

ANDREW LEIGH is assistant Treasurer and assistant minister for Competition, Charities and Employment, and federal member for Fenner in the ACT. Before being elected in 2010, Andrew was a professor of economics at the Australian National University. He holds a PhD in Public Policy from Harvard and is a fellow of the Australian Academy of Social Sciences. A keen triathlete and marathon runner, Andrew is also the author of several previous books, including Randomistas: How Radical Researchers Are Changing Our World and Reconnected: A Community Builder’s Handbook.

In praise of Andrew Leigh’s The Shortest History of Economics:

‘If you read just one book about economics, make it Andrew Leigh’s clear, insightful, and remarkable (and short) work.’ —Claudia Goldin, Henry Lee Professor of Economics, Harvard University

‘An engaging romp through key moments in the world’s economic history’ —Betsey Stevenson, Professor of Economics, University of Michigan