

Leeson, Peter T. WTF?!: an economic tour of the weird. Stanford Economics and Finance, 2017. 246p index ISBN 9781503600911, \$27.95; ISBN 9781503604490 ebook, contact publisher for price.

“WTF?” The expression, as opposed to the title, pretty much sums up this reviewer’s assessment. Leeson’s earlier *The Invisible Hook* was clever and chock-full of economics. Harking back again to earlier centuries and their social mores and behaviors, and on lands across the pond instead of the high seas this time around, Leeson (George Mason) is too clever by half. It is not, as one book jacket endorsement has it, “Freakonomics on steroids,” but rather Freakonomics on crack. In eight largely stand-alone chapters—or what Leeson labels “tour stops”—the author enlightens his readers on the origins of weird practices—in alphabetical order instead of the order of appearance in the volume, and via fictitious stories rather than the more usual prose layout and description of principles—such as auctions, curses, Gypsies’ practices, judicial procedures (including vermin trials), maledictions, ordeals, and wife sales. One would be hard-pressed to ascertain chapter contents from titles such as “Chicken, Please; Hold the Poison”; “God Damn”; and “Jiminy Cricket’s Journey to Hell.” He ends with, in his words, “Appendix (for Nerds)” and “Notes (for Naysayers)”. In sum, a good jockey chose a bad mount. Summing Up: Not recommended.