

O'Rourke, P.J. On The wealth of nations. Atlantic Monthly, 2007. 242p bibl index ISBN 0871139499, \$21.95 Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* provided the foundation for the study and application of modern (or free market) economics and economic thought. It is tough sledding for any reader, but with political satirist and humorist O'Rourke's book, there is no excuse for not studying this work. O'Rourke's CliffsNotes-like coverage takes what Smith treated in five "books" in order, from production, distribution, and his famous principle of specialization and division of labor (Book 1), to capital, profit, and banking (Book 2), a comparative look at the evolution of economic ideas and practices in Europe (Book 3), railings against the mercantilists and physiocrats (Book 4), and finally, government and public policies (Book 5). Apart from outlining Smith's thoughts and principles in *The Wealth of Nations*, O'Rourke includes thoughtful complementary chapters on Smith's important earlier volume *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (chapter 3, and frequent asides throughout the volume), and an inquiry into Smith himself (chapter 13). The volume concludes with a tongue-in-cheek dictionary of usage, notes, and a bibliography. Scholars are drawn to Adam Smith for what he said; readers will be drawn to O'Rourke for how he says it. Summing Up: Recommended. General readers; students at all levels; faculty and practitioners. -- A. R. Sanderson, University of Chicago