

STUDY GUIDES

The **Chicago Humanities Festival** is committed to creating and fostering interest in the humanities. To this end, the Festival provides study guides to help teachers to bring the humanities into the classroom. Every year, the CHF brings an amazing array of authors, thinkers, and artists to Chicago. We hope you will seize the opportunity to bring the excitement of their works and knowledge to your students.

The survey “*Saving + Spending in the Humanities*” on the following pages was prepared for the 2003 Chicago Humanities Festival: *Saving + Spending*.

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Saving + Spending in the Humanities

The humanities include diverse branches of learning, among them language and literature, philosophy, and art theory and criticism. The meanings of “saving and spending” are malleable. You can of course save and spend money, but you might also save the environment, or spend more time with your family. The excerpts on the following pages represent a sketch of how a variety of thinkers over the millennia have contributed to our notions of saving and spending. Though this primer barely begins to plumb the possibilities, it does suggest the breadth of topics suggested by this year’s Festival theme.

The texts excerpted here are intended to provide a historical and conceptual framework on which to build your own curricula. Each text is preceded by a short introduction to clarify its context and relevance.

ARISTOTLE (384- 322 B.C.)

Aristotle was a Greek philosopher, logician, and scientist. Along with his teacher Plato, he is generally regarded as one of the most influential ancient thinkers in a number of philosophical fields, including political theory.

Aristotle's Politics, while primarily a reflection on the best types of political regimes, includes in its beginning sections a discussion of what we would now call economics—the nature of the household, its management, the acquisition of wealth, and the distinction between the art (“techne”) of acquiring wealth and that of household management. This ancient microcosmic view is among the primary building blocks of our contemporary understanding of both micro- and macroeconomics. (Our word “economy” derives from the Greek word “oikonomia,” meaning household organization.)

From *The Politics*, Book 1, Chapter 4

Now possessions are a part of the household, and expertise in acquiring possessions a part of household

management (for without the necessary things it is impossible either to live or to live well).

From *The Politics*, Book 1, Chapter 9

Every possession has a double use. Both of these uses belong to it as such, but not in the same way, the one being proper and the other not proper to the thing. In the case of footwear, for example, one can wear it or one can exchange it. Both of these are uses of footwear; for the one exchanging footwear with someone who needs it in return for money or sustenance uses footwear as footwear, but not in respect of its proper use; for it did not come to be for the sake of exchange.

The same is the case concerning other possessions as well. For there is an expertise in exchange for all things; it arises in the first place from something that is according to nature—the fact that human beings have either more or fewer things than what is adequate. Thus it is also clear that expertise in commerce does

not belong by nature to expertise in business; for it was necessary to make an exchange in order to obtain what was adequate for them. In the first partnership, then—that is, the household—it is evident that exchange has no function, but only when the partnership has already become more numerous. For those [in the household] were partners in their own things, while persons separated [into different households] were partners in many things of others as well, and it was necessary to make transfers of these things according to their needs, as many barbarian nations still do, through exchange. For they exchange useful things for one another and nothing besides—giving, for example, wine and accepting grain, and similarly for other such things. This sort of expertise in exchange is not

contrary to nature, nor is it any kind of expertise in business, for it existed in order to support natural self-sufficiency.

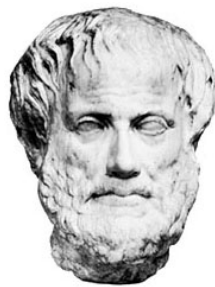
However, the latter arose from it reasonably enough. For as the assistance of foreigners became greater in importing what they were in need of and exporting what was in surplus, the use of money was necessarily devised. For the things necessary by nature are not in each case easily portable; hence with a view to exchanges they made a compact with one another to give and accept something which was itself one of the useful things and could be used flexibly to suit the needs of life, such as iron and silver and whatever else might be of this sort. At first this was something [with its value] determined simply by size and weight, but eventually they impressed a mark on it in order to be relieved of having to measure it, the mark being put on as an indication of the amount.

Once a supply of money came into being as a result of such necessary exchange, then, the other kind of expertise in business arose—that is, commerce. At first this probably existed in a simple

fashion, while later through experience it became more a matter of art—[the art of discerning] what and how to exchange in order to make the greatest profit. It is on this account that expertise in business is held to be particularly connected with money, and to have as its task the ability to discern what will provide a given amount [of it]; for it is held to be productive of wealth and goods. Indeed, they often define wealth as a given amount of money, since this is what expertise in business or commerce is connected with. At other times, however, money seems to be something nonsensical and [to exist] altogether [by] law, and in no way by nature, because when changed by its users it is worth nothing and is not useful with a view to any of the necessary things; and it will often happen that one who is wealthy in money will go in want of necessary sustenance. Yet it would be absurd if wealth were something one could have in abundance and die of starvation—like the Midas of the fable, when everything set before him turned into gold on account of the greediness of his prayer.

Source: Aristotle, *The Politics*, translated by Carnes Lord (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1984), 39, 46-48.

The bracketed sections were added by the translator “to improve the intelligibility of the translation.”
For ease of reading, this excerpt has been divided into paragraphs, which have no authority.



TITUS MACCIUS PLAUTUS (c. 254 - c. 184 B.C.)

The Pot of Gold (*Aulularia*) is among the best plays by the great Roman comic playwright Plautus. The story centers on Euclio, a poor man who discovers the titular treasure and struggles to find a safe place to hide it. When a slave steals the gold, Euclio is beside himself until he recovers it.

A number of subsequent dramas, most famously Moliere's *The Miser*, can be traced back to this play by Plautus. Euclio is, however, not so much a miser as an ordinary man who, when he comes into money, doesn't know what to do with it. The ending of the play is lost except for fragments, but the apparent outcome can be inferred: Euclio gives away his daughter in marriage, and with her the pot of gold as dowry. He seems happy to be rid of it and the grief that came with it, as he says "I couldn't sleep day or night, but now I will sleep."

In this soliloquy, Euclio, paranoid and hurt, bemoans the theft of his wealth.

From *The Pot of Gold*

EUCLIO: Done for! Done in! Done up! Where shall I hurry?
Where shall I not hurry? Catch him, hold on to him!
Him whom? He who? I don't know who he is!
I can't see anyone, I'm going blind,
I'm going around in circles. Oh, where am I?
Who am I? I don't know. I can't calm down
Long enough to try and find out.
(*To audience*)

All of you people
Out there in front, won't you please lend me a hand?
I didn't say give me a hand, I'll pay for your interest.
I beg of you, serve as witnesses, show me the man
Who took away my treasure. You, sir, sitting right there,
You're the sort to be trusted, I can tell you are
From looking at your face. But why are you laughing
At me, all of you, what's the reason? Oh yes, I know:
Of course, you're all of you thieves, every last one,
All dressed up in your nice white holiday gowns,
To keep your true nature covered, sitting so sedately,
As if you were reliable, thrifty people.

(*Slowly*)

I don't suppose someone of you has got it?
You've ruined me. Just tell me, please, who has it?
You don't know?
I'm a wreck, then,
Plunging straight to the bottom,
Rack and ruin, shabbily treated:
Such grief and misfortune and sorrow
This day has brought me! And famine

And poverty. I'm the most unhappiest fellow
On earth. Why should I go on living
When I've lost such a lot of gold
Which I took such pains to bury
So deep in the ground? I fooled myself,
I guess, and tricked my own mind,
And cajoled my own character,
So other men could get a big laugh
And lots of pleasure, just looking on
At my misfortunes, profiting from my losses.
I can't bear to be the target of other men's laughter.

Source: Plautus, *The Pot of Gold*, trans. Palmer Bovie, in *Plautus: The Comedies*,
vol. 2 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 139-40.

MOLIÈRE (1622 - 1673)

Molière was the foremost French comic dramatist of his age, and among the foremost of any age. When he wrote The Miser, he plainly had Plautus's Pot of Gold in mind. Despite the evident similarities between the speech below, in which Molière's protagonist Harpagon complains about the theft of his wealth, and Euclio's speech about the same, it is also clear that Harpagon is a different sort of character: more avaricious, more biting, more contemptible.

From *The Miser* (1688)

HARPAGON: [. . .] Stop thief! Stop thief! After the villain! After the murderer! Justice, just Heaven! I am lost. I am killed. My throat is cut. My money is stolen. Who can it be? Where has he taken it? Where is he? Where is he hiding? What can I do to find him? Where can I go? Where can I not go? Is that him? Or that? Who's this? Stop! (*Catching himself by the arm*). Give me back my money, thief. . . . Ah it is myself. My brain's in a whirl; and I don't know where I am, who I am or what I am doing. Oh, my beloved money, my beloved money, my kind friend, they have taken you from me, and with you is gone all my being, all my comfort, all my joy. My world is at an end. There is nothing left for me to do on earth. Without you it is impossible for me to go on living. Yes, I am finished. I am dying. I am dead. I am buried. Will no one give me back my life by giving me back my beloved money, or telling me who has taken it? Eh? What do you say? There's no one there. The rascal who has done this must have timed it to the very hour, and chosen the very moment I was talking to my traitor of a son. I'll go call the police, and have all my household put to torture, maids, valets, son, daughter, even myself. (*Looking at the audience*). What a lot of people there are all round me! I suspect them all. Each one of them has the look of a thief. Eh? What's that they are saying there? Something about the man who has robbed me? What noise is that up there? Is that the thief? (*Addressing the audience*). For pity's sake, if any of you know anything about him, I beseech you to tell me. Is he not hidden there among you? Ah, they all stare at me and grin. You can see they are all part of the gang. Come quick, constables, guards, judges, racks, gallows, hangmen. I'll have every one in the world hanged for this; and, if I don't get back my money, I'll string myself up beside them.

Source: Molière, *The Miser*, in *Don Juan and Other Plays*, trans. George Graveley and Ian Maclean (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 242-43.

CHANG YING (1638 – 1708)

The text that follows is from an essay by a Chinese official to his sons. It may be universally true—in every culture and throughout history—that parents seek to pass their own values about saving and spending on to their children.

All worldly things that once were new will eventually age. A house that has stood for a long time will decay; clothes worn for a long time will become shabby. Cattle, slaves, and horses are costly when purchased, yet ten years later they are no longer the same, and after another ten years they do not even exist. Only land remains new through hundreds and thousands of years. Even if, due to negligence, the soil becomes barren, once fertilizer is applied, it becomes rich again. With cultivation desolate land becomes productive; with irrigation dry land become arable; with weeding neglected soil becomes fertile. Since time immemorial man has not had to worry about the land becoming worn out or ruined, nor about its running away or becoming scarce. Indeed, land is truly precious.

Nowadays the young heirs of large estates wear fancy clothes, ride strong horses, and seek pleasure to their hearts' content in song and dance. A fur garment easily costs scores of gold taels; a feast, several taels. The price of grain in our area has been low for the past decade so that now ten piculs of grain will barely pay for a feast and a hundred piculs will scarcely buy a fur garment; but the young heirs act ignorant of this. They do not wish to know that the peasants, bodies soaked and feet muddy, toil all year round to produce a hundred piculs of grain. Furthermore, with the unpredictability of floods and droughts, one year's harvest does not guarantee the next. I have heard that in Shensi province there is an annual famine and with each famine the price of a picul of grain goes up six or seven taels. Yet young heirs of today will sell precious grain cheaply merely to

satisfy a desire for another fur garment or another feast. How can one not be deeply disturbed by these matters?

The ancients have a saying: "Use the products of the earth sparingly and you will be content." The youthful heirs should be made to observe the toil of the peasants and should be made to keep accounts when the granaries are opened for grain-sale. They should observe how it takes a strong man to carry one picul of grain, and how what four or five men can carry sells for only one gold tael, a tael which can be carelessly spent, disappearing who knows where. Such experiences should make the youthful heirs less wasteful. But what hope is there? The young heirs of today live sheltered lives; well fed and warmly clothed, they do not realize that precious resources should be conserved, and casually cast them away like dirt.

Those who accumulate wealth will always worry about fire, flood, or robbery, since valuables can suffer instant misfortune. Indeed, the commoner who accumulates ten taels of gold stops sleeping soundly at night. Land alone is not subject to fire, flood, or robbery, for even the most violent cannot snatch away one single inch of it. Thousands of *mou* of land may be worth ten thousand taels of gold, yet not one man is needed to stand guard. Should war or riot drive a person from his home, he may return to find his house gone, his livestock lost, his belongings vanished—but his land will always be there. The land that belonged to the Changs will still belong to the Changs; that which belonged to the Lis will still belong to the Lis. As soon as one has rooted out the weeds and tilled the soil,

one will have a prosperous farm again. Indeed, nothing else under the sun is as secure as land. How can one fail to try to preserve it?

It is better to seek wealth from Heaven and Earth than from other men. I have seen people lend out money for interest secured by mortgages on tillable land. In three to five years they have a return as great as the original sum lent, but the borrower, despite appearing grateful, may become contentious and resentful and may refuse to pay back the principal. I have heard of poor scholars who, having saved several dozen gold taels, lend it out in this manner, but when they become more prosperous it becomes less advantageous for them to do so (because of the enmity incurred).

The profit from land is different. Those who sow half-heartedly reap lightly; those who sow diligently reap abundantly. Some can harvest three times in four seasons, other twice in a year. The main

fields can be used for rice and wheat; the side plots and border mounds for hemp, beans, peas, cotton and so on. Every little piece of land will produce a few pennies of income. Therefore, it is worth pondering the proverb, "The land does not begrudge its treasures." In the beginning the land nourishes our grandfathers, then our fathers; soon it will nourish our sons and grandsons. It is a humble benefactor and a tireless servant. It never complains of its labor as it produces in great variety. Those who enjoy its benefits need not have scruples. Although they gain a great deal, they do not feel the discomfort brought by unjustified profit; thus they can face Heaven, Earth, and the spirits of their ancestors. They have no need to scheme and they are spared the jealousy of others. Is there anything that can compare with land.

Translated by Clara Yu

Source: Chang Ying, quoted in Patricia Buckley Ebrey, ed., *Chinese Civilization and Society: A Source Book* (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan Publishing Co., Inc., 1981), 196-97.

JONATHAN SWIFT (1667-1745)

Swift's cagey essay "A Modest Proposal" is one of the most famous economic and social propositions of all time. An excerpt follows below, though the as-yet-uninitiated are strongly encouraged to seek out the complete text.

From "A Modest Proposal for Preventing the Children of Poor People in Ireland, from Being a Burden to Their Parents or Country; and for Making Them Beneficial to the Public" (1729)

It is a melancholy object to those, who walk through this great town, or travel in the country; when they see the *streets*, the *roads*, and *cabin doors* crowded with *beggars* of the female sex, followed by three, four, or six children, *all in rags*, and importuning every passenger for an alms. These *mothers*, instead of being able to work for their honest livelihood, are forced to employ all their time in strolling to beg sustenance for their *helpless infants*. . .

I think it is agreed by all parties, that this prodigious number of children in the arms, or on the backs, or at the *heels* of their *mothers*, and frequently of their *fathers*, is *in the present deplorable state of the kingdom*, a very great additional grievance; and therefore whoever could find out a fair, cheap, and easy method of making these children sound and useful members of the commonwealth, would deserve so well of the public, as to have his statue set up for a preserver of the nation.

But my intention is very far from being confined to provide only for the children of *professed beggars*: it is of a much greater extent, and shall take in the whole number of infants at a certain age, who are born of parents, in effect as little able to support them, as those who demand our charity in the streets. . .

It is true a child, *just dropped from its dam*, may be supported by her milk, for a solar year with little other nourishment; . . . and it is exactly at one year old, that I propose to provide for them in such a manner, as, instead of being a charge upon

their *parents*, or the *parish*, or *wanting food and raiment* for the rest of their lives; they shall, on the contrary, contribute to the feeding, and partly to the clothing of many thousands.

There is likewise another great advantage in my *scheme*, that it will prevent those *voluntary abortions*, and that horrid practice of *women murdering their bastard children*; alas! too frequent among us; sacrificing the *poor innocent babes*, I doubt, more to avoid the expense than the shame; which would move tears and pity in the most savage and inhuman breast.

The number of souls in Ireland being usually reckoned one million and a half; of these I calculate there may be about two hundred thousand couple whose wives are breeders; from which number I subtract thirty thousand couples, who are able to maintain their own children; although I apprehend there cannot be so many, under the *present distress of the kingdom*; but this being granted, there will remain an hundred and seventy thousand breeders. I again subtract fifty thousand, for those women who miscarry, or whose children die by accident, or disease, within the year. There only remain an hundred and twenty thousand children of poor parents, annually born: the question therefore is, how this number shall be reared, and provided for? Which, as I have already said, under the present situation of affairs, is utterly impossible, by all the methods hitherto proposed. . .

I am assured by our merchants, that a boy or a girl before twelve years old, is no saleable commodity; and even when they come to this age, they will not yield above three pounds, or three pounds and half a crown at most, on the exchange; which cannot turn to account either to the parents or the kingdom; the charge of nutriment and rags, having been at least four times that value.

I shall now therefore humbly propose my own thoughts; which I hope will not be liable to the least objection.

I have been assured by a very knowing American of my acquaintance in London; that a young healthy child, well nursed, is, at a year old, a most delicious, nourishing, and wholesome food; whether *stewed, roasted, baked, or boiled*; and, I make no doubt, that it will equally serve in a *fricasse, or ragout*.

I do therefore humbly offer it to *public consideration*, that of the hundred and twenty thousand children, already computed, whereof only one fourth part to be males; which is more than we allow to *sheep, black cattle, or swine*; and my reason is, that these children are seldom the fruits of marriage, a *circumstance not much regarded by our savages*; therefore, one male will be sufficient to serve *four females*. That the remaining hundred thousand, may, at a year old, be offered in sale to the *persons of quality and fortune*, through the kingdom; always advising the mother to let them suck plentifully in the last month, so as to render them plump, and fat for a good table. A child will make two dishes at an entertainment for friends; and when the family dines alone, the fore or hind quarter will make a reasonable

dish; and seasoned with a little pepper or salt, will be very good boiled on the fourth day, especially in *winter*. . . .

I grant this food will be somewhat dear, and therefore very *proper for landlords*; who as they have already devoured most of the parents, seem to have the best title to the children. . . .

[T]he poorer tenants will have something valuable of their own, which, by law, may be made liable to distress, and help pay their landlord's rent; their corn and cattle being already seized, and *money a thing unknown*. . .

[W]hereas the maintenance of an hundred thousand children, from two years old, and upwards, cannot be computed at less than ten shillings a piece *per annum*, the nation's stock will be thereby increased fifty thousand pounds *per annum*; . . . and the money will circulate among ourselves, the goods being entirely of our own growth and manufacture. . .

I desire those politicians, who dislike my overture, and may perhaps be so bold as to attempt an answer, that they will first ask the parents of these mortals, whether they would not, at this day, think it a great happiness to have been sold for food at a year old, in the manner I prescribe; and thereby have avoided such a perpetual scene of misfortunes, as they have since gone through; by the *oppression of landlords*; the impossibility of paying rent, without money or trade; the want of common sustenance, with neither house nor clothes, to cover them from the inclemencies of weather; and the most inevitable prospect of entailing the like, of greater miseries upon their breed for ever.

Source: Jonathan Swift, "A Modest Proposal," in Charles Beaumont, ed., *A Modest Proposal*, The Merrill Literary Casebook Series (Columbus, OH: Charles E. Merrill Publishing Company, 1969), 11-18.

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN (1706-1790)

Benjamin Franklin coined many well known, commonsensical axioms about saving and spending, such as "A penny saved, is a penny earned." To judge by Franklin's appeal then and now, his emphasis on frugality, industry, and self-reliance strikes a deeply American chord.

"Necessary Hints to Those That Would Be Rich" (1736)

The use of money is all the advantage there is in having money.

For six pounds a year you may have the use of one hundred pounds, provided you are a man of known prudence and honesty.

He that spends a groat* a day idly spends idly above six pounds a year, which is the price for the use of one hundred pounds.

He that wastes idly a groat's worth of his time per day, one day with another, wastes the privilege of using one hundred pounds each day.

He that idly loses five schillings' worth of time loses five schillings, and might as prudently throw five schillings into the sea.

He that loses five schillings, not only loses that sum, but all the advantage that might be made by turning it in dealing, which, by the time that a young man

becomes old, will amount to a considerable sum of money.

Again, he that sells upon credit asks a price for what he sells equivalent to the principal and interest of his money for the time he is to be kept out of it; therefore he that buys upon credit pays interest for what he buys, and he that pays ready money might let that money out to use; so that he that possesses any thing he has bought, pays interest for the use of it.

Yet, in buying goods, it is best to pay ready money, because he that sells upon credit expects to lose five per cent by bad debts; therefore he charges, on all he sells upon credit, an advance that shall make up that deficiency.

Those who pay for what they buy upon credit pay their share of this advance.

He that pays ready money escapes, or may escape, that charge.

*A groat is an old British coin worth four pennies.

Source: Benjamin Franklin, "Necessary Hints to Those That Would Be Rich," in *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. John Bigelow, vol. 2 (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 26-7.



One of Franklin's most famous writings is "The Way to Wealth," a loose compendium of sayings from Poor Richard's Almanac, strung together in a fictional address by an old gentleman speaking on the hard economic times. Franklin wryly notes that upon hearing the old man's advice, the people who'd listened "immediately practiced the contrary, just as if [the speech] had been a common sermon."

Adages from "The Way to Wealth" (1736)

There are no gains without pains.

If you would be wealthy, think of saving as well as of getting.

Buy what thou hast no need of, and ere long thou shalt sell thy necessities.

If you would know the value of money, go and try to borrow some; for he that goes a borrowing goes a sorrowing.

Creditors have better memories than debtors; creditors are a superstitious sect, great observers of set days and times.

Source: Benjamin Franklin, "The Way to Wealth," in *The Works of Benjamin Franklin*, ed. John Bigelow, vol. 2 (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1904), 27-3 passim.

ADAM SMITH (1723-1790)

*The framer of capitalism, Adam Smith's significance in intellectual and political history is truly vast. It is striking that his epochal volume *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* was first published in 1776—that is, at the moment when colonists in America were moving to dissolve the political bands that connected them to the British. It is thus fair to say that Smith's economic philosophy, and the American political system established themselves in perfect tandem.*

From *The Wealth of Nations* (1776)

In that rude state of society in which there is no division of labor, in which exchanges are seldom made, and in which every man provides every thing for himself, it is not necessary that any stock should be accumulated or stored up beforehand, in order to carry on the business of the society. Every man endeavours to supply by his own industry his own occasional wants as they occur. When he is hungry, he goes to the forest to hunt; when his coat is worn out, he clothes himself with the skin of the first large animal he kills: and when his hut begins to go to ruin, he repairs it, as well as he can, with the trees and the turf that are nearest it.

But when the division of labour has once been thoroughly introduced, the produce of a man's own labour can supply but a very small part of his occasional wants. The far greater part of them are supplied by the produce of other mens [sic] labour, which he purchases with the produce, or what is the same thing, with the price of the produce of his own. But this purchase cannot be made till such time as the produce of his own labour has not only been completed, but sold. A stock of goods of different kinds, therefore, must be stored up somewhere sufficient to maintain him, and to supply him with the materials and tools of his work, till such time, at least, as both these events can be brought about. A weaver cannot apply himself entirely to his peculiar business, unless there is beforehand stored up

somewhere, either in his own possession or in that of some other person, a stock sufficient to maintain him, and to supply him with the materials and tools of his work, till he has not only completed but sold his web. This accumulation must, evidently, be previous to his applying his industry for so long a time to such a peculiar business.

As the accumulation of stock must, in the nature of things, be previous to the division of labour, so labour can be more and more subdivided in proportion only as stock is previously more and more accumulated. The quantity of materials which the same number of people can work up, increases in a great proportion as labour comes to be more and more subdivided; and as the operations of each workman are gradually reduced to a greater degree of simplicity, a variety of new machines come to be invented for facilitating and abridging those operations. As the division of labour advances, therefore, in order to give constant employment to an equal number of workmen, an equal stock of provisions, and a greater stock of materials and tools than what would have been necessary in a ruder state of things, must be accumulated beforehand. But the number of workmen in every branch of business generally increases with the division of labour in that branch, or rather it is the increase of their number which enables them to class and subdivide themselves in this manner.

As the accumulation of stock is previously necessary for carrying on this great improvement in the productive powers of labour, so that accumulation naturally leads to this improvement. The person who employs his stock in maintaining labour, necessarily wishes to employ it in such a manner as to produce as great a quantity of work as possible. He endeavours, therefore, both to make among his workmen the most proper distribution of employment, and to furnish

them with the best machines which he can either invent or afford to purchase. His abilities in both these respects are generally in proportion to the extent of his stock, or to the number of people whom it can employ. The quantity of industry, therefore, not only increases in every country with the increase of the stock which employs it, but, in consequence of that increase, the same quantity of industry produces a much greater quantity of work.

Source: Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (New York: The Modern Library, 1994), 299-300.



ABRAHAM LINCOLN (1809–1865)

When we think of saving, we also think of saviors. These are sometimes religious, sometimes political, and this year's Festival contemplates many sacred and secular savior figures.

Abraham Lincoln holds a place of honor in American history for saving the Union. While he engenders tremendous admiration, the ambiguity of his attitude on slavery, as suggested in the passage below, also can lead to ambivalence about his place in the American pantheon.

Lincoln was a master of rhetoric, as demonstrated perhaps most readily by the Gettysburg Address. In the letter excerpted below, the president uses the careful repetition of words, phrases, and constructions to make his position more emphatic.

Letter to Horace Greeley (August 22, 1862)

I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution. The sooner the national authority can be restored; the nearer the Union will be "the Union as it was." If there be those who would not save the Union, unless they could at the same time *save* slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time *destroy* slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle *is* to save the Union, and is *not* either to save or to destroy slavery. If I

could save the Union without freeing *any* slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing *all* the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone I would also do that. What I do about slavery, and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear, I forbear because I do *not* believe it would help to save the Union. I shall do *less* whenever I shall believe what I am doing hurts the cause, and I shall do *more* whenever I believe doing more will help the cause.

Source: Abraham Lincoln, letter to Horace Greeley, 22 August 1862, in *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 5 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953) 388.

KARL MARX (1818-1883)

Much of the twentieth century was marked by a global economic, political, and (sometimes) military struggle between capitalism and communism. The writings of the German philosopher Karl Marx form a cornerstone for communism, much as Smith's form the basis for capitalism. It is little surprise that Marx responded directly to Smith, as in this excerpt from Das Kapital:

From Capital: A Critique of Political Economy (1867)

The accumulation of capital presupposes surplus value; surplus value presupposes capitalistic production; capitalistic production presupposes the pre-existence of considerable masses of capital and of labor power in the hands of producers of commodities. The whole movement, therefore, seems to turn in a vicious circle, out of which we can get only by supposing a primitive accumulation (previous accumulation of Adam Smith) preceding capitalistic accumulation; an accumulation not the result of the capitalist mode of production, but its starting point.

This primitive accumulation plays in political economy about the same part as original sin in theology. Adam bit the apple, and thereupon sin fell on the human race. Its origin is supposed to be explained when it is told as an anecdote of the past. In times long gone by there were two sorts of people: one, the diligent, intelligent, and, above all, frugal elite; the other, lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living. The legend of theological original sin tells us certainly how man came to be condemned to eat his bread in the sweat of his brow, but the history of economic original sin reveals to us that there are people to whom this is by no means essential. Never mind! Thus it came to pass that the former sort accumulated wealth and the latter sort had at last nothing to sell except their own skins. And from this original sin dates the poverty of the great majority that, despite

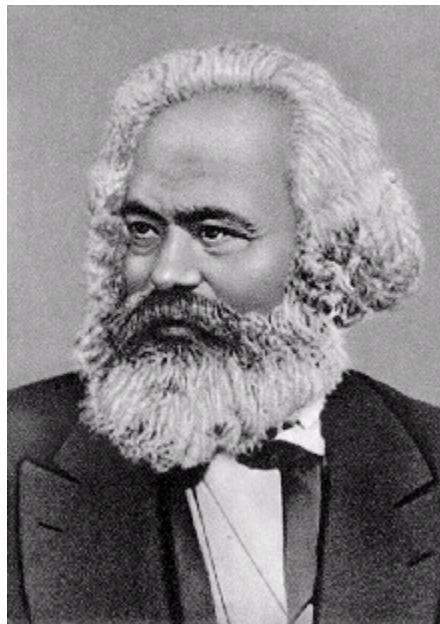
all its labor, has up to now nothing to sell but itself, and the wealth of the few that increases constantly although they have long ceased to work. Such insipid childishness is every day preached to us in defense of property. . . . But as soon as the question of property crops up, it becomes a sacred duty to proclaim the intellectual food of the infant as the one thing fit for all ages and for all stages of development. In actual history it is notorious that conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder—briefly, force—play the great part. In the tender annals of political economy the idyllic reigns from time immemorial. Right and “labor” were from all time the sole means of enrichment. . . . As a matter of fact, the methods of primitive accumulation are anything but idyllic.

In themselves, money and commodities are no more capital than are the means of production and of subsistence. They want transforming into capital. But this transformation itself can take place only under certain circumstances that center in this, viz., that two very different kinds of commodity possessors must come face to face and into contact: on the one hand, the owners of money, means of production, means of subsistence, who are eager to increase the sum of values they possess, by buying other people's labor power; on the other hand, free laborers, the sellers of their own labor power, and therefore the seller of labor. Free laborers, in the double sense that neither they themselves form part and

parcel of the means of production, as in the case of slaves, bondsmen, etc., nor do the means of production belong to them, as in the case of peasant proprietors; they are, therefore, free from, unencumbered by, any means of production of their own. With this polarization of the market for commodities, the fundamental conditions of capitalist production are given. The capitalist system presupposes the complete separation of the laborers from all property in the means by which they can realize their labor. As soon as capitalist production is once on its legs it not only maintains this separation, but reproduces it on a continually extending scale. The

process, therefore, that clears the way for the capitalist system can be none other than the process which takes away from the laborer the possession of his means of production: a process that transforms, on the one hand, the social means of subsistence and of production into capital; on the other, the immediate producers into wage laborers. The so-called primitive accumulation, therefore, is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production. It appears as primitive, because it forms the prehistoric stage of capital and of the mode of production corresponding with it.

Source: Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, in *Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy* by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, ed. Lewis S. Feuer (Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, 1959), 160-162.



ELEANOR ROOSEVELT (1884 – 1962)

Eleanor Roosevelt was one of the most influential and politically outspoken first ladies. Her comments below, written shortly before the outbreak of World War II, seem eerily contemporary.

Letter to journalist Martha Gellhorn (1938)

The trouble is that most people in this country think that we can stay out of wars in other parts of the world. Even if we stay out of it and save our own skins, we cannot escape the conditions which will undoubtedly exist in other parts of the world and which will react against us. That

is something which I have preached from coast to coast on deaf ears I fear. We are all of us selfish. . . and if we can save our own skins, the rest of the world can go. The best we can do is to realize nobody can save his own skin alone. We must all hang together.

Eleanor Roosevelt, letter to Martha Gellhorn, 5 April 1938, quoted in Joseph P. Lash, *Eleanor and Franklin* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1971), 572.



Eleanor Roosevelt in 1933

SAMUEL BECKETT (1906 – 1989)

Beckett's famous tragicomedy Waiting for Godot may, at first encounter, seem impenetrably strange. On second perusal though, the play lends itself to some fairly obvious interpretations. One common reading is that Beckett's subject is redemption—the Christian idea that we are saved by Christ's sacrifice. As they wait for Godot, who never arrives, are Estragon and Vladimir really waiting for God to turn up and save them? In the excerpt below, Gogo and Didi ponder the fate of the thieves crucified with Christ, and perhaps their own fate as well.

From *Waiting for Godot* (1949)

- VLADIMIR: [. . .] One of the thieves was saved. (*Pause.*) It's a reasonable percentage. (*Pause.*) Gogo.
- ESTRAGON: What?
- VLADIMIR: Suppose we repented.
- ESTRAGON: Repented what?
- VLADIMIR: Oh. . . (*He reflects.*) We wouldn't have to go into the details.
- ESTRAGON: Our being born?
Vladimir breaks into a hearty laugh which he immediately stifles, his hand pressed to his pubis, his face contorted.
- VLADIMIR: One daren't even laugh any more.
- ESTRAGON: Dreadful privation.
- VLADIMIR: Merely smile. (*He smiles suddenly from ear to ear, keeps smiling, ceases as suddenly.*) It's not the same thing. Nothing to be done. (*Pause.*) Gogo.
- ESTRAGON: (*irritably.*) What is it?
- VLADIMIR: Did you ever read the Bible?
- ESTRAGON: The Bible. . . (*He reflects.*) I must have taken a look at it.
- VLADIMIR: Do you remember the Gospels?
- ESTRAGON: I remember the maps of the Holy Land. Coloured they were. Very pretty. The Dead Sea was pale blue. The very look of it made me thirsty. That's where we'll go, I used to say, that's where we'll go for our honeymoon. We'll swim. We'll be happy.
- VLADIMIR: You should have been a poet.
- ESTRAGON: I was. (*Gesture towards his rags.*) Isn't that obvious?
Silence.
- VLADIMIR: Where was I . . . How's your foot?
- ESTRAGON: Swelling visibly.
- VLADIMIR: Ah yes, the two thieves. Do you remember the story?
- ESTRAGON: No.
- VLADIMIR: Shall I tell it to you?
- ESTRAGON: No.
- VLADIMIR: It'll pass the time. (*Pause.*) Two thieves, crucified at the same time as our Saviour. One—
- ESTRAGON: Our what?

VLADIMIR: Our Saviour. Two thieves. One is supposed to have been saved and the other. . . (*he searches for the contrary of saved*) . . . damned.

ESTRAGON: Saved from what?

VLADIMIR: Hell.

ESTRAGON: I'm going.
He does not move.

VLADIMIR: And yet. . . (*pause*) . . . how is it—this is not boring you I hope—how is it that of the four Evangelists only one speaks of a thief being saved. The four of them were there—or thereabouts—and only one speaks of a thief being saved. (*Pause.*) Come on, Gogo, return the ball, can't you, once in a way?

ESTRAGON: (*with exaggerated enthusiasm*). I find this really most extraordinarily interesting.

VLADIMIR: One out of four. Of the other three two don't mention any thieves at all and the third says that both of them abused him.

ESTRAGON: Who?

VLADIMIR: What?

ESTRAGON: What's all this about? Abused who?

VLADIMIR: The Saviour.

ESTRAGON: Why?

VLADIMIR: Because he wouldn't save them.

ESTRAGON: From hell?

VLADIMIR: Imbecile! From death.

ESTRAGON: I thought you said hell.

VLADIMIR: From death, from death.

ESTRAGON: Well what of it?

VLADIMIR: Then the two of them must have been damned.

ESTRAGON: And why not?

VLADIMIR: But one of the four says that one of the two was saved.

ESTRAGON: Well? They don't agree and that's all there is to it.

VLADIMIR: But all four were there. And only one speaks of a thief being saved. Why believe him rather than the others?

ESTRAGON: Who believes him?

VLADIMIR: Everybody. It's the only version they know.

ESTRAGON: People are bloody ignorant apes.

Source: Samuel Beckett, *Waiting for Godot* (New York: Grove Press, 1954), 4-7.

GWENDOLYN BROOKS (1917 – 2000)

In this poem first published in *A Street in Bronzeville*, Brooks ponders a black man who saves the lives of whites.

Negro Hero

to suggest Dorie Miller

I had to kick their law into their teeth in order to save them.
However I have heard that sometimes you have to deal
Devilishly with drowning men in order to swim them to shore.
Or they will haul themselves and you to the trash and the fish
 beneath.
(When I think of this, I do not worry about a few
Chipped teeth.)

It is good I gave glory, it is good I put gold on their name.
Or there would have been spikes in the afterward hands.
But let us speak only of my success and the pictures in the
 Caucasian dailies.
As well as the Negro weeklies. For I am a gem.
(They are not concerned that it was hardly The Enemy my fight
 was against
But them.)

It was a tall time. And of course my blood was
Boiling about in my head and straining and howling and singing
 me on.
Of course I was rolled on wheels of my boy itch to get at the gun.
Of course all the delicate rehearsal shots of my childhood
 massed in mirage before me.
Of course I was child.
And my first swallow of the liquor of battle bleeding black air
 dying and demon noise
Made me wild.

It was kinder than that, though, and I showed like a banner my
 kindness.
I loved. And a man will guard when he loves.
Their white-gowned democracy was my fair lady.
With her knife lying cold, straight, in the softness of her sweet-
 flowing sleeve.
But for the sake of the dear smiling mouth and the stuttered
 promise I toyed with my life.
I threw back!—I would not remember
Entirely the knife.

Still—am I good enough to die for them, is my blood bright
 enough to be spilled,
Was my constant back-question—are they clear
On this? Or do I intrude even now?
Am I clean enough to kill for them, do they wish me to kill
For them or is my place while death licks his lips and strides to
 them
In the galley still?

(In a southern city a white man said
Indeed, I'd rather be dead;
Indeed, I'd rather be shot in the head
Or ridden to waste on the back of a flood
Than saved by the drop of a black man's blood.)

Naturally, the important think is, I helped to save them, them
 and a part of their democracy.
Even if I had to kick their low into their teeth in order to do that
 for them.
And I am feeling well and settled in myself because I believe it
 was a good job,
Despite this possible horror: that they might prefer the
Preservation of their law in all its sick dignity and their knives
To continuation of their creed
And their lives.

Source: Gwendolyn Brooks, *Blacks* (Chicago: Third World Press, 1987), 48-50.

RACHEL CARSON 1907-1964

*In 1962 Rachel Carson published *Silent Spring*, a provocative overview of the damage being done to the environment, in particular damage caused by pesticides. At the time, some scientists dismissed her charges, though then and now, the general public has taken her book to heart. Today, Carson is widely considered the author of the modern environmental movement.*

“A Fable for Tomorrow” from *Silent Spring* (1962)

There was once a town in the heart of American where all life seemed to live in harmony with its surroundings. The town lay in the midst of a checkerboard of prosperous farms, with fields of grain and hillsides of orchards where, in spring, white clouds of bloom drifted above the green fields. In autumn, oak and maple and birch set up a blaze of color that flamed and flickered across a backdrop of pines. Then foxes barked in the hills and deer silently crossed the fields, half hidden in the mists of the fall mornings.

Along the roads, laurel, viburnum and alder, great ferns and wildflowers delighted the traveler’s eye through much of the year. Even in winter the roadsides were places of beauty, where countless birds came to feed on the berries and on the seed heads of the dried weeds rising above the snow. The countryside was, in fact, famous for the abundance and variety of its bird life, and when the flood of migrants was pouring through in spring and fall people traveled from great distances to observe them. Others came to fish the streams, which flowed clear and cold out of the hills and contained shady pools where trout lay. So it had been from the days many years ago when the first settlers raised their houses, sank their wells, and built their barns.

Then a strange blight crept over the area and everything began to change. Some evil spell had settled on the community: mysterious maladies swept the flocks of chickens; the cattle and sheep

sickened and died. Everywhere was a shadow of death. The farmers spoke of much illness among their families. In the town the doctors had become more and more puzzled by new kinds of sickness appearing among their patients. There had been several sudden and unexplained deaths, not only among adults but even among children, who would be stricken suddenly while at play and die within a few hours.

There was a strange stillness. The birds for example—where had they gone? Many people spoke of them, puzzled and disturbed. The feeding stations in the backyards were deserted. The few birds seen anywhere were moribund; they trembled violently and could not fly. It was spring without voices. On the mornings that had once throbbed with the dawn chorus of robins, catbirds, doves, jays, wrens, and scores of other bird voices there was no sound; only silence lay over the fields and woods and marsh.

On the farms the hens brooded, but no chicks hatched. The farmers complained that they were unable to raise any pigs—the litters were small and the young survived only a few days. The apple trees were coming into bloom but no bees droned among the blossoms, so there was no pollination and there would be no fruit.

The roadsides, once so attractive, were now lined with browned and withered vegetation as though swept by fire. These, too, were silent, deserted by all living things. Even the streams were now

lifeless. Anglers no longer visited them, for all the fish had died.

In the gutters under the eaves and between the shingles of the roofs, a white granular powder still showed a few patches; some weeks before it had fallen like snow upon the roofs and the lawns, the fields and streams.

No witchcraft, no enemy action had silenced the rebirth of new life in this stricken world. The people had done it themselves.

This town does not actually exist, but it might easily have a thousand

counterparts in America or elsewhere in the world. I know of no community that has experienced all the misfortunes I describe. Yet every one of these disasters has actually happened somewhere, and many real communities have already suffered a substantial number of them. A grim specter has crept upon us almost unnoticed, and this imagined tragedy may easily become a stark reality we shall all know.

What has already silenced the voices of spring in countless towns in America? This book is an attempt to explain.

Source: Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1962), 1-3.