

Title: "Atlas Shrugged"
Author: Ayn Rand
Publisher: Signet Books
Publication Date: 1992 (35th anniversary release)
Length: 1,073 pages
Reading time: 30 hours
Reading rating: 5 (1 = very difficult; 10 = very easy)
Overall rating: 4 (1 = average; 4 = outstanding)

"Atlas Shrugged" is not the book that most of you would expect to see as a book review in the Business section of the *Asheville Citizen-Times*. After all, the book is a novel that was originally published in 1957 and would be thought by most to be a philosophy book rather than a business book. However, in the opinion of this reviewer, this book is one of the most profound and well-written books on the subject of business and economics ever written.

As one peruses the business and economics sections of local bookstores it seems that most of the current books are about the latest and greatest fads. Actually few books seldom offer anything new but are merely a rehash of old and trusted principles of business. "Atlas Shrugged" is very different. The reader is required to think. Whether or not one agrees with Ayn Rand's philosophy of business, the reader is always challenged, sometimes confounded, and often shocked.

The book begins with the question "Who is John Galt?" Over the next 1,073 pages (not a beach novel!), the reader discovers the significance of the statement. The essence of the book is that the great minds of the industrial world go on strike against a government and society that is intent on "looting" (Rand's term) the product of their labor and investment. In the process of telling the story, Rand provides the reader with treatises on money, the role of government, management of business, and the importance of productive work. On the subject of money, one of the quotes from a speech made by a key character in the book is, as follows, "You say that money is made by the strong at the expense of the weak. What strength do you mean? It is not the strength of guns or muscles. Wealth is the product of man's (remember, this was written before political correctness) capacity to think. Then is money made by the man who invents a motor at the expense of those who did not invent it? Is money made by the intelligent at the expense of fools? By the able at the expense of the incompetent? By the ambitious at the expense of the lazy? Money is made before it can be looted or mooched. An honest man is one who knows that he cannot consume more than he has produced."

The concept of value for value runs throughout the book. Rand posits that a person can only achieve satisfaction out of his/her work if the value of the rewards matches the value of the work.

Ayn Rand is perhaps the greatest writer this reviewer has ever read. "Atlas Shrugged" is rich with great characters and prose. There is never a dull moment despite the

extraordinary length of the book. In fact, “Atlas Shrugged” spurred a philosophical movement called objectivism that exists even today. I highly recommend that this book be read by all who have an interest in the world of business. It is impossible to read this book without being changed in some way.

Philip Little is a Professor of Accountancy, Finance, and Entrepreneurship at Western Carolina University, where he teaches and publishes in the areas of Managerial Accounting, Financial Analysis, and Entrepreneurial Finance. For previously reviewed books, visit our Web site at www.wcu.edu/cob.