



Christmas Books

The joys of Christmas do not include coping with crowds at shopping malls or wracking your brains trying to figure out what to get as a gift for someone who already seems to have everything.

Books are a way out of both situations. You don't even have to go to a bookstore, with books so readily available online. As for the person who seems to have everything, newly published books are among the things they probably don't always have.

One of the most enjoyable new books I read this year was a biography titled *Stan Musial: An American Life* by George Vecsey. Musial was one of the great hitters in the history of baseball, with a lifetime batting average of .331.



This biography, however, is more about Musial the man, and the era in American life in which he lived, which makes it more three-dimensional. It is a good read, and may be especially appreciated by people old enough to remember that era and the values that prevailed in that era, which Musial exemplified.

Another new and very different book about a bygone era that I enjoyed was *The Great A&P and the Struggle for Small Business in America* by Marc Levinson. It is about the rise and fall of the A&P grocery chain, once the largest retailer in the world, with 15,000 stores, and renowned for its high quality and low prices.

But this is more than an economic story. It is a human story about a family that dedicated itself to making its business the best it could be — and how the death of the last member of that family was followed by A&P's decline into oblivion.

Two far less uplifting books were published this year but both contain important charges of profound and dangerous corruption. The first is titled *Injustice* by J. Christian Adams. He charges the Department of Justice under Attorney General Eric Holder with turning a blind eye to widespread election fraud and intimidation, when those who are committing these acts are black.

The other book is *FDR Goes to War* by Burton W. Folsom and Anita Folsom. The romantic legends of President Franklin D. Roosevelt that whole generations have been taught in schools, on television and in the movies have been debunked by a whole series of history books, of which this is the latest and perhaps the most devastating — and painfully relevant to our current president.

Economist and columnist Walter Williams' new book this year is *Race and Economics*. You don't need to know any economics to read it, but you will know some after you do. If you believe that things like minimum wage laws or government regulations in general help low-income minorities, you will find it hard to keep believing that after this book bombards you with hard facts and hard data, going back for decades.



Written by [Thomas Sowell](#) on December 6, 2011

Ann Coulter's new book this year, *Demonic*, is in the tradition of her other books with one-word titles, a blend of very sharp wit and thoroughly researched facts. It will delight Ann Coulter's fans and may cause those few liberals who read it to be at risk for apoplexy.

Although *Demonic* was published before the "Occupy Wall Street" movement got under way, its subtitle was prophetic: "How the Liberal Mob is Endangering America." Its theme is how mob thinking and mob actions have long been common on the left, whether in academia, the media or the streets. One chapter is titled, "You Can Lead a Mob to Water, But You Can't Make It Think."

Another writer whose series of books likewise blend wit and wisdom is Theodore Dalrymple, a British doctor who has lived in various countries around the world. His latest book this year is titled *Anything Goes*, and its theme is the degeneration of Western culture, to the accompaniment of unthinking rhetoric.

My all-time favorite among Theodore Dalrymple's books is *Life at the Bottom*. It is based on his chilling experiences working in a low-income, predominantly white neighborhood in Britain. It is a classic examination of the moral squalor produced by the welfare state and its ideological rhetoric, regardless of race.

My own new books this year include *The Thomas Sowell Reader*, which has more than 400 pages of selections of my writings over the past decades, ranging from the humorous to the painfully serious. The 4th edition of my *Basic Economics* and the 2nd edition of my *Economic Facts and Fallacies* were also published this year. Merry Christmas.

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