

The Invisible Heart: An Economic Romance Study Guide

The Invisible Heart: An Economic Romance by Russell Roberts

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Plot Summary

In *The Invisible Heart: An Economic Romance*, Russell Roberts attempts to make economics more user-friendly by dressing his theories up in a romance. Sam Gordon is a highly motivated teacher of economics who demands an open mind of his students. The story opens on the first day of his classes' senior year. Sam is teaching an elective and thrilled with the opportunity. Sam is a tall, lanky fellow who moves rather like a puppet as he walks down the hallway. He is wearing his first day of school tie, which only sees the light of day every year on the first day. He throws out the order for a pop quiz. The die has been cast for an exciting senior year.

The heroine is an English Literature teacher, Laura Silver. Laura feels lucky to be teaching in such a prestigious school as the Edwards School. Laura is dressed as she feels is necessary for the position of teacher. She wants to fit in and she always follows the rules. Laura is willing to write new rules to be sure everything works as she believes it should.

Sam and Laura meet for coffee and have discussions about Sam's view of economics versus Laura's more controlled view of the world. Laura doesn't have much faith in people without heavy controls enforced. Sam's faith in things turning out well without too much control by outside forces is their conflict. Laura has more questions that her family has raised her to believe, but Sam has his own beliefs about the issues.

Other characters are used to illustrate the world as Laura sees it. There is a CEO, Charles Krauss, who reminds one of the movie *Wall Street*. There is his problem, Erica Baldwin, who leads a group to investigate Krauss and big business. These two characters are used to illustrate the points that Sam makes as he discusses the world of business with Laura.

Sam is aware that he doesn't fit in with most of society. He marches to a different drummer. He is invited into Laura's home and is virtually attacked by Laura's brother for his beliefs. Because of the scene at Laura's home, Sam and Laura quit seeing each other for some little time. In the meantime, one of Sam's students is a daughter of a congressman. Sam is at odds with the senator's beliefs and Sam is asked to change his teaching if he wishes to stay at Edwards Schools.

Sam continues in his beliefs. He has faith in the human race and feels if the governmental controls and aid are withdrawn, human beings would reach for their potentials. They would have to learn to take responsibility and find their own ways to make a life. The economy would flourish. It will take time to turn the expectations of entitlement about into a work for your own needs and desires. Sam uses many of the chapters to explain his beliefs about the economic world. He is usually explaining the ideas to Laura.



As the book continues, we will discover that the example that the author has been using is a TV show starring Krauss and Baldwin to make his points. The examples have been fiction. CEO's don't really kill people who get in their way except on television.

Sam leaves the school because he doesn't believe in their basic principles. He doesn't see Laura for a little bit but eventually meets her again and they grow closer again.



Chapter One and Two pp. 2-17.

Chapter One and Two pp. 2-17. Summary

Chapter One introduces our hero and heroine on the first day of school. While they don't meet, Laura Silver hears about the economics teacher down the hall who has given away money on the first day. Laura has started her "proper" class with a quote from Wordsworth that makes the students think of money. Someone asks her why a quote from Wordsworth when they are starting the class with a study of Dickens. She tells them to read the first assignment and see if they can discover why she has used the quote. After the class ends, she goes down the hall and looks into the economic classroom. Sam is not there. His class room is decorated as she would guess a dry economist would have it decorated. One movie poster is out of sync. It's a Wonderful Life with Jimmy Stewart and Donna Reed is hanging beside the portraits of dead economists.

Chapter Two introduces the reader to the other main characters. Charles Krauss, CEO of HealthNet, is first seen driving into work. Erica Baldwin is introduced in the gym getting her daily exercise before she takes public transportation to her office, Office of Corporate Responsibility. Erica will be the Corporation police. Krauss will be attempting to get bigger and richer in spite of Erica and her group.

Chapter One and Two pp. 2-17. Analysis

Chapter One introduces the reader to the style that Roberts will follow throughout the book. Sam and Laura are introduced. They each have something to say about money and power. Sam is perceived as the most analytical as all economists are perceived. Laura is more subjective as one is who works with literature or things of the arts. They don't meet in the first chapter but they are described to the reader. Sam and Laura are like the opposite sides of the coin. Laura is more interested in Sam and things she hears. She visits his classroom and adds even more questions about him as she sees the poster. A colorful movie poster among the dry, dead, black and white economists' portraits stands out and begs for a discussion. While Laura and Sam have their differences, they each have chosen a method of teaching that asks for student participation with no hard and fast answers from the teacher. They both are interested in the student thinking and do not discourage it. There are no pat answers in their classrooms.

In Chapter Two the next pair of characters appear. These two will illustrate conversations between Sam and Laura. The title of the chapter is Beauty and the Beast. The corporation is presented as a money hungry beast that will go after anyone who keeps the money out of its pocket. The CEO is the rich man with all the rich toys. He drives to work as if the world is his oyster. He owns or controls all he surveys. The beauty is the woman who is introduced working hard to keep her body healthy and



looking good. She is competing hard. She is grabbing at a world for herself and the little guy. She is after the huge company and their CEOs. She is keeping her eyes open and looking for reasons to bring them up before a government committee. The beauty wants to tame the big beast. She won't get control of the beast with love but she is hoping to find a way to control it.



Chapter Three and Four pp. 18-39.

Chapter Three and Four pp. 18-39. Summary

In Chapter Three, Sam and Laura meet at the Woodley Park Metro station. Laura introduces herself and then suggests to Sam that he is not really helping Fast Eddie by giving him change instead of something that would be good for him. Laura explains how wonderful her brother Andrew is when he carries V-8 juice to give to the homeless instead of giving them money. Sam points out that if a person wants to be charitable, he shouldn't put conditions on his gift. Sam has a belief that the strings attached to charity doesn't help the one helped to learn to be responsible. Laura has beliefs that tell her to save the world by attaching rules to everything. She even says that some people know better than others what is good for someone besides themselves. Obviously Laura is one of the ones who know better than the helpless. As the conversation jumps from subject to subject, Sam is always for allowing each person to decide his own fate. Each person should make a choice and be responsible and accept the consequences. Sam sees the idea of taking care of people as taking on the role of a parent and never allowing the child/adult to grow up. As the conversation winds down, Sam says that economics is a world where everything has a price. There is no free lunch. Sam leaves the train at his stop and Laura comments on his ability to not become offended when actively debating a question.

In Chapter Four, the reader sees Krauss in action as he refuses to listen to Howard Cantrell, his Director of Research. One of the new medications isn't testing as well as they expected. Cantrell is trying to give Krauss a heads up. Krauss' reaction is to warn Cantrell that he shouldn't be trying to work on company strategy. Krauss would handle the company, Cantrell's job was to see there were no problems. If Cantrell couldn't handle any problems in the research department perhaps he was in the wrong place. Cantrell left with a clear understanding that he would stop any problems or take himself out of the company. Krauss obviously kept a very tight hold on the company.

While Krauss is hearing from Cantrell, Erica Baldwin is meeting with her small staff to discuss the complaints that have come over their desks during the week. Marshall Jackson is a brilliant young lawyer who has joined her staff and Erica believes he will be able to help bring HealthNet down. HealthNet has numerous charges against them but none are important enough to make them stop their mistakes. Erica believes that bringing down HealthNet will put her office on the map. They will be the hub of all the lettered offices. Erica wants that badly.

Chapter Three and Four pp. 18-39. Analysis

In Chapter Three, Roberts uses conversations with Laura to teach the reader about his theories of economics. Laura has the opportunity to ask questions and give some of her own ideas. Laura is very conservative. Her ideas seem to be from a rubber stamp that



her family holds. Her family and her social group believe they know better than most of society. Laura is one of the rule makers. She wants to keep the world safe and listens to "experts" about how to do it. She hasn't been a part of the society she is protecting. Laura only sees one side of the story. Sam is definitely a teacher and his discussion with Laura sounds like a lecture. Because of Laura's questions in rebuttal, Sam has the opportunity to explain the other side. He believes in the more practical stance. He sees people as they really are. Laura is the open idealist. Sam's idealism is invisible to her. Sam believes that if people are left to fix and live their own lives the world will change for the better. Sam believes as the person reaches adulthood they should have learned to make choices and be responsible for themselves. The person who doesn't use his own creativity and thinking for himself will be like a sheep who simply follows the group. Creativity is lost and many never reach their potential. All of society is poorer for it.

Roberts idea of romance is interesting. Each time Sam and Laura meet, there is a suggestion of two people who might be attracted to each other. It is a clever vehicle to make economic theory more easily understood. A real situation is presented in the fiction to get the point across. This isn't just a theory lecture. Roberts asks questions and makes suggestions that cause the reader to become more involved in the real life lesson.

In Chapter Four, Roberts takes the reader back to the big, bad corporation. Fear and greed are the main aspects of the beginning of the chapter. Krauss, the CEO, refuses to acknowledge any rules apply to his company. He doesn't want to see any problem. An employee in his company is to take care that problems are not discovered. Krauss has no consideration for society. He is ready to cover up a problem with his new medicine. Someone may die but that is not Krauss' worry. His worry is to bring more money into the shareholders' pockets.

Erica Baldwin is the adversary of Krauss. She is aware that big business doesn't care about anything but more money. She is just as stubborn and narrow minded as Krauss. While he doesn't care for the public good, she believes in hunting down culprits of crime against society and nailing them. She is just as determined as Krauss but on the opposite side. Roberts gives business examples from supposedly real life to go along with his lecture and conversations with Laura.



Chapter Five and Six pp. 40-61.

Chapter Five and Six pp. 40-61. Summary

Chapter Five brings the story back to Laura and Sam. Laura has stayed late and goes into the teacher's lounge before she leaves school. She finds Sam there in a relaxed attitude reading. She comments on how hard the work is for the teacher and wants to know if it will get easier for her. As the conversation continues, Laura talks about the unfairness of the world that teachers aren't paid enough. She resents the millions sport figures received while a teacher has a more important job and gets practically nothing compared to the sports person. Sam once again goes into a lecture about free will. If Laura doesn't like the salary, she has options. She can change jobs, get a second job, or find another alternative. Sam compares teachers in America with teachers in other countries. He gives an example of living in Russia where people had to be part of the party in order to have anything. Sam also suggests that teaching is a great job. There are many perks to not working at least eleven months out of the year. A teacher who learns how to teach his subject and is organized can grow to a place where he can be home at 3:30. If you love to teach, the job itself is very good. Sam suggests that if a teacher was paid more, more people would want the job. There would be more people trying to get the job. The supply and demand principle would make it harder to get a job.

As the conversation winds down, Laura says she might go on to law school. Sam tells her that she should never become a lawyer. Of course Laura questions that. Sam tries to end the conversation that he believes would anger her with a dinner invitation. Laura refuses. Sam wonders if he will ever get a date with the woman.

As Sam gets ready to leave, he picks up his mail. He discovers a confidential letter from his boss. It is suggested that Sam leave quietly. His beliefs and methods are supposedly not appreciated by the students that he teaches.

In Chapter Six, the reader meets George Sutherland, the supervisor of the HealthNet plant in Ohio. George is making a speech to his fellow workers. The plant is closing and moving to Mexico. After the men leave the building, George thinks back through his working life with HealthNet. He drives a forklift and remembers. He puts off going home to tell his family the news. He sits in the park in the middle of town and holds his head in his hands.

Krauss appears again on his golf course. He had had the course built beside his corporate headquarters for his enjoyment. He had his Director of Corporate Communications, Rob Blankenship, in his power this time. Krauss wanted all negative publicity choked off by Rob. Krauss felt as if he had wasted too much money giving the employees in Ohio a severance package. Krauss was playing gold to win just as he played everything to win.



Erica makes an appearance in her home. She watches the news and sees George Sutherland's wife and children interviewed. The news is telling of the town's dying and the big corporation growing richer while it killed a town. Erica was afraid that public opinion was going to force her to attack HealthNet before she was ready.

A mystery person is introduced at the end of the chapter. The person moves to take out Erica's office number as the news ends.

Chapter Five and Six pp. 40-61. Analysis

In Chapter Five, Sam discusses freedom to change jobs if the benefits and advantages do not exist as you wish them. He talks about fair and unfair in the world. Sam doesn't agree with the usual complaint about teachers deserving more pay. He talks about the sports figures and the millions they bring in. He does point out that a kid who breaks all the chemistry records doesn't have an audience of millions around the world watching him. Sam speaks of people made to do different things and make different amounts of money. As Sam talks about moving forward in life and discovering that you might not fit in a certain job. This foreshadows HealthNet moving out of Ohio and the town having to discover a way to continue if it doesn't want to die. Sam will have to practice what he preaches. At the end of the chapter, Sam is allowed to quit his job or be fired. Will Sam fight to keep his job or will he move on? Can he move on as graciously as he has been suggesting others move on?

In Chapter Six, the world view comes into play again. Roberts has the factory close and a town die. Roberts makes Krauss more greedy villain with each page. Krauss is definitely king of his hill. He is the most important man in two countries because of HealthNet and the government's inability to bring the big corporation under control. Krauss does not get the bad publicity stopped as he had commanded.

Erica is also included in this chapter with Krauss. Because of the bad publicity, Erica can see the government hearing coming too soon. Erica still doesn't have the smoking gun she needs. However, as the chapter ends, we have new evidence suggested. A stranger takes the number for Erica's office. Someone might be going to blow the whistle on HealthNet.



Chapter Seven and Eight pp. 62-89.

Chapter Seven and Eight pp. 62-89. Summary

Chapter Seven is another discussion between Sam and Laura. They run into each other at the dry cleaners where Laura complains that Sam can get twice as many shirts done as she can blouses for the same price. Once again Laura is pointing out how unfair things are. Sam and she get into a discussion about competition. What Laura sees as greed, Sam sees as self-interest. Sam agrees that people want to make more money but it always works best in the marketplace when a person sees a need in the community. The person fills the need and provides a service for others. No one is making him provide for the need. He does it to help himself and his family. As his customer base grows, he looks for ways to make a better product at a lower price. He wants to provide his customer with the best so the customer will return. The service provider will get richer and provide for his family better. Things will get better for everyone in the cycle. Sam talks about balance in the world if it is left alone. No one can predict exactly what needs to be produced in what quantities or qualities. The same survival of the fittest will take place in the marketplace. New things will be added and other things will die away. Sam uses the example of a slide rule. Everyone carried one to class before the calculator became so easy to carry and so much more accurate. After all the discussion of the marketplace, Sam and Laura decide to ask the drycleaner why the women's clothing costs more to clean. It appears that the form that cleans and presses the shirts is too big for the women's and children's clothing. More men use drycleaners. Once again Sam invites Laura to dinner but she claims to have too much work to do. Sam wonders if that is really true or she just doesn't like economists.

In Chapter Eight, the reader discovers who the stranger was who watched the news about HealthNet. Heather Hathaway, a receptionist for Krauss, takes her chance to copy some papers that Krauss was shredding himself. Krauss kept such a strict schedule that she knew he would take a short break to smoke half a cigarette at a certain time. Heather copied some of the file when Krauss was out of the office. She sent it to Erica in the office of responsibility. Erica would be studying it to discover exactly what someone wanted to destroy.

Chapter Seven and Eight pp. 62-89. Analysis

In Chapter Seven, Sam again has his say about free will and a freer marketplace. The chapters which Sam is speaking are growing more lecture-like. Laura says very little and asks few questions. Laura is always looking for fairness. In the book, *A Road Less Traveled*, the first pages tell the reader to accept that life is hard and not fair. Laura hasn't accepted this lesson yet. Laura hasn't accepted her own grown up responsibility to think for herself and act accordingly. Laura whines in the guise of wanting better things for people. She wants the rules that make life safe. When Laura talked about teaching and being underpaid, she had talked about trivial and sublime, she brings it up

again in this chapter. Since she is an English Literature major, one wonders if these two words haven't been substituted for Yeats, Profound and Profane. Obviously Laura sees her calling to teach as sublime or profound and any other part of life as trivial or profane. She doesn't choose the word profane because she euphemizes her speech so she won't offend. She is looking for a secure little world that she can grab hold of and feel secure. Sam has more faith in the world working well if we don't have all the rules. Sam always points out several points of view. His world view is always to assume responsibility for himself and accept the world as it is.

In Chapter Eight, the smoking gun to help take down HealthNet has appeared. The papers who aren't shredded are a piece of the puzzle. The papers and Krauss' attempt to shred them shows how evil the CEO is. This is the stereotypical CEO that Hollywood presents to make a good story. It looks as if Heather will get away with stealing the papers as the chapter ends.



Chapter Nine and Ten pp. 90-107.

Chapter Nine and Ten pp. 90-107. Summary

In Chapter Nine, Laura has a greater part than usual. She happened in the principal's office and saw Sam Gordon's folder on the desk. It had a note that looked as if Sam were going to be fired or could contest the board's decision. Laura couldn't decide how she felt about Sam. He was her total opposite. However, when she saw him in the courtyard reading at lunch time, she joined him at the table. In Sam's attempt to talk of something besides economics, he asked about her plans for her next class. Laura had a poetry class and was reading Tennyson's Ulysses. Laura and Sam discussed the Greek legend and then Laura pointed out that Tennyson was talking about the twilight years of the hero. Laura read to Sam when he asked. The last couple of lines are particularly strong language and thought. /Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will/To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield./ Sam, of course, applauded those lines. This is a hero in the days who heroes who had taken on responsibility for himself and his choices. He will continue to fight the good fight until death has claimed him.

Feeling a little sorry for Sam, Laura invites him to a dinner with her family on the following Saturday night. She knows that Sam's philosophy of life is totally opposite of her family but she thinks, "What can happen at dinner?"

In Chapter Ten, George Sutherland is introduced again. HealthNet has sent him to Mexico to get the new plant up and running. George is sick as he sees the way the Mexicans are treated. There are no safety devices at all. There is little pay. George meets a small plane that bring Rob Blankenship to Mexico with a freelance photographer, Alice. The reader never learns Alice's last name. Alice calls for George to stop the truck on the way to the new building. She moves among the poor people who are living in small huts. The women are hanging clothes out on lines. The children look innocent but so poor. George is embarrassed to tell Rob that some of the people there are supervisors at the plant. Supervisors are lucky to get \$2000 a year. When Alice finishes taking pictures, Rob takes the camera from her. He doesn't want anyone seeing HealthNets new employees.

Once Rob has walked away from them, Alice tells George that he is not only a jerk but a fool. Rob took the wrong camera. George asks for a copy of the pictures that she has taken.

Chapter Nine and Ten pp. 90-107. Analysis

In Chapter Nine, Laura is the main spokesperson. Instead of a lesson in economics for this chapter the reader hears about a hero of the past. Laura is concerned about Sam and his possible firing from Edwards School. When Sam asks about her class, she is able to discuss her hero and his high ideals. She appreciates the hero of the poetry in



his weakened body. She loves the language of the poetry and the strength it exudes even though Ulysses is now old and weak. Her idealism takes her into the past and she enjoys the safety that she finds there. Sam and she agree that the last lines of the poem are powerful but Laura still hasn't seen that Sam is more idealistic than she is. His faith in human nature and adulthood is stronger than her own. His security is in himself much like Ulysses. Laura tells Sam that the power is in the rhythm of the wording—iambic pentameter. She is in love with the words and the sound. She hasn't reached down as far as Tennyson has to recognize the power of a man who owns himself.

In Chapter Ten, the reader sees the big bad corporation again. George Sutherland is a supervisor in Mexico getting the cheap warehouse running. He complains but he doesn't look inside himself or to his future and figure out another way to live. George will be one of the whiners. He wants life as it has been but life has moved on for him and his town. He would like to put things back as they were. He will always live in his past and always make life even harder because of it.



Chapter Eleven and Twelve pp. 108-129.

Chapter Eleven and Twelve pp. 108-129. Summary

Chapter Eleven is a description of a dinner party. Laura didn't intend to set Sam up as a target but her brother obviously had heard some of Sam's views and wanted to pay a one-upmanship game in front of Laura. Andrew attacked Sam and Sam's beliefs. His lack of manners to his sister's guest is incredible. Unfortunately Laura doesn't have the strength of character to stop her brother's bad behavior. Obviously Andrew believes he is God's gift to the world. He is the one with all the answers. He feels free to criticize anyone who doesn't agree with him. Andrew let the meal begin without a problem but as they approached dessert, Andrew couldn't keep from attacking. Sam decided to leave before the fighting really broke out. Sam left after an apology to the hostess and before dessert.

Sam was home for a bit when there was a ring of the doorbell. Someone slipped him a note with receipts that put a congressman places he didn't belong. Someone wanted Sam to fight for his job.

Chapter Twelve is set in a hearing room in D.C. Krauss is up first and he lies about the way HealthNet is operated in Mexico. He attempts to stop the bad publicity and all the facts about HealthNet. After Krauss has spoken, George Sutherland comes forward to testify. George has photographs of the poor people to work for HealthNet. George speaks for the poor Mexicans who work for eight and ten dollars a day. The corporate monster is in charge of the CEO. Erica has been found another witness to the problems that the HealthNet is going down.

Chapter Eleven and Twelve pp. 108-129. Analysis

Chapter Eleven features Laura's brother, Andrew. Roberts has made it clear throughout that economists have a difficult time socializing with others. In this chapter, Andrew is the one with no manners. Andrew appears to be jealous of Laura's regard for Sam's ideas. Andrew seems to believe that he knows all the answers and no one can be correct but him. Sam must threaten Andrew on every level since Andrew can't leave him alone. Sam's choice to leave Andrew to his own lecturing and attempting to force his views on everyone at the table, the evening ends. It is disappointing that Laura didn't leave with Sam. Laura hasn't accepted her responsibility for the night.

Throughout the book, Sam believes that free will and accepting responsibility will make the world a better place. Sam's lectures as he shares his beliefs make the reader think of the good in people. However, Krauss and Andrew are both poor examples of people who can't allow people to accept their own free will. Krauss takes on the responsibility of the corporation and Andrew tries to take over responsibility for Sam. Bullying and intimidation is the ultimate for these two men.



Chapter Twelve illustrates the bullying power of the CEO of a big corporation. Krauss believes he can bully his way through a congressional hearing and he attempts to bully his way through before the public. Krauss' lack of care for the public and the shareholders in his company as well as his employees are exaggerated. Krauss is evil and the villain which proves that corporations need to be regulated. Sam's argument sounds good but then Roberts throws in a bad example of the evil some men do. There is much here to argue.



Chapter Thirteen and Fourteen pp. 130-149.

Chapter Thirteen and Fourteen pp. 130-149. Summary

In Chapter Thirteen, Laura has an opportunity to overhear Sam teach his elective class. He made his class think by playing a game of having each student come up with one rule that would make the world better. As a rule was suggested, Sam and other students explored how the rule would work in the world. Finally the students wanted to know Sam's rule. Sam would like to see the end of television. He discusses the addiction characteristics that television has. People don't think but use the television like it was alcohol or drugs. For hours a person roams around on the TV and with their thinking stopped they believe their life is okay. Television doesn't expect honesty of the people watching it. It is a soothing pacifier for the lonely or unhappy. Sam wouldn't pass the rule of no TV because he believes that people still have the right to do as they like in their lives. Just because the TV is not present, doesn't mean that the person is reaching out for more life.

As the class ends, Laura sees the students gathered around. She notices Amy who is a senator's daughter. Laura wonders if Amy's taking ideas home to her father might be the cause of some of Sam's problems in school.

Chapter Fourteen returns to Erica and Krauss. Erica wants to discover what the spreadsheets mean that she received. There is a short scene between Krauss and Cantrell. Krauss assures Cantrell that the problem results have been destroyed. Krauss is sure that there will be no more trouble. The scene flips back to Erica who has called an expert in results from the tests. Erica is ready to really search for the answers that she needs.

Chapter Thirteen and Fourteen pp. 130-149. Analysis

Roberts uses this chapter with Laura listening in to make his points about people thinking. He has his pupils think of one perfect law that could be passed to make life the best it could be. Showing that they can't find one law that will make the world perfect, he shows that no law can make everything good. Sam goes on to his law and it is about television. Sam doesn't comment on sex or celebrating less than moral things on television. Sam talks about the addiction. Television acts like a sedative to make the viewer stop thinking and stop acting. Television is not a good thing for the good of all. Sam, of course, will not pass a law because of his belief in free will. Laura finally sees what a good teacher he is.

In Chapter Fourteen, Robert uses short scenes which include Krauss and Erica. Each is working toward having things in the corporation the way they see that it would be best.

Erica wants more regulation and Krauss wants none. Krauss does not want any self-regulatory ideas included in his corporation.



Chapter Fifteen and Sixteen pp. 150-185.

Chapter Fifteen and Sixteen pp. 150-185. Summary

In Chapter Fifteen, Laura has invited Sam to dinner at her apartment. She cooks Chinese and they have their usual debates. Most of the discussion centers around welfare and if it should be a government thing. Sam would rather have private charities that meet people in need on a one-on-one basis. Welfare has taken the big chunk of people who are treated alike. Usually welfare does not teach a man to become independent. Sam tells Laura of several of his heroes who have discussed ways to give to the poor without making another feel like they have taken on a debt. The giver and the receiver both are valuable parts of the whole system. After much discussion about helping those who need help, Sam washes the dishes and gets ready to go. Laura has asked Sam to come for a friendly get together and promises it will be fun. As a last moment, Laura asks if Sam has been fired. Sam promises to tell her all about it after it is all over. Sam still hasn't decided if he will fight the loss of his job.

In Chapter Sixteen, Erica believes she has enough to hang HealthNet. She calls her expert, David Levine, and discovers that he has grown cold to her questions. They have been friends for years and now he suggests that her information might be a leak in her own office. He doesn't want to testify. Erica can't imagine who could have leaked the information that Erica's office has received. Erica will go back and hunt for another way to stop HealthNet. In the meantime, Heather was riding her bicycle and not thinking of HealthNet when a car comes up and crosses into the bicycle trail and pushes her off the trail.

Chapter Fifteen and Sixteen pp. 150-185. Analysis

Roberts moves the romance back onto track. Once Laura has overheard the class that Sam was teaching, Laura looked up Sam again and invited him to dinner at her home. Roberts tells us in a sentence or two that Sam is interested in Laura. He hopes she is interested in him. Once he arrives at the house, Sam tries to keep off dangerous subjects. However, Laura heard the welfare question during his class and she wants to discuss it. As they talk they find that they both want to be of help to the poor. Sam doesn't want the help to be a government project. Sam continues to want each person to be independent. The conversation is less of a debate of pro or con and more of a discussing ideas of how to make charity work for the good of all who need it.

Roberts has Laura stick her neck out again and ask Sam over for an evening with friends. She also takes the risk of asking about the possibility of his being fired. Sam does tell her that he will tell her about his job after the problem has been settled.

In Chapter Sixteen, the CEO of HealthNet has apparently ordered a hit. It looks as if he has planned to get rid of Heather. He obviously has threatened David Levine and it looks like he will win the conflict that he has with Erica.



Chapter Seventeen and Eighteen pp. 186-227.

Chapter Seventeen and Eighteen pp. 186-227. Summary

Sam awakens in the midst of a nightmare at the beginning of Chapter Seventeen. He is nervous about meeting Laura's friends and perhaps saying the wrong thing again. Sam calls his sister and asks her how to handle himself. His sister advises him to swim with the tide. Smile and agree. These people aren't important to him anyway. When Sam reaches Laura's home, he enjoys himself for the first hour. Someone yells out the time and everyone moves to the television to watch a night soap that they have been following. As it happens the soap is the story that Roberts has been using to prove the need for regulations for the corporate world. Sam gets more and more uncomfortable but keeps his temper. No one knows him but Laura so he keeps his mouth shut and goes along with the crowd. He is grateful as the evening ends and he has kept calm and hasn't embarrassed Laura this time.

After Laura's friends leave, she yells at him. She doesn't like it that he didn't talk to her friends about his beliefs. Sam stops her and explains how she would feel if the show had been about a teacher and rolled all the bad characteristics into one teacher. They battled it out and came through understanding each other better. Laura still can't decide how she really feels about Sam. She can't stop herself from wondering if he will be able to keep his job. She wonders if he will relocate.

Sam goes to his last class in chapter eighteen. The students are all quiet and the attitude is somber. No one knows for sure that Sam is leaving but rumors have traveled the school. Sam tricks the class with his approval of environmental regulations. He discusses how wildlife disappears when people aren't required to take care of the environment. He discusses how we cease to see something that lived in one time. He uses Yellow Stone National Park as an example. Beavers have disappeared but the elk are abundant. Everyone sees the elk but doesn't realize that the beavers are missing. He discusses how some regulations have brought people into line with rewards for doing things right. Once again it is an aspect of self-interest. He offers the example of criminals being shipped to other countries from England.

When the peoples' passages were paid when they arrived alive, fewer travelers died during a voyage. The captain was keeping them alive for his self-interest. Sam says good-bye to the kids. He did ask Amy to stay for a minute. He returned the receipts she had left for him so he could fight for his job. He told her that he really didn't belong at Edwards. Philosophies were too different.



Chapter Seventeen and Eighteen pp. 186-227. Analysis

Roberts has Sam call his sister and ask for advice. He willingly admits that he doesn't understand women or even know how to talk to them. Roberts has his sister tell him to not be aggressive and keep out of the argument. He doesn't have to explain his beliefs to everyone. He isn't like Andrew who knows a better way (his way) for everyone.

Sam is sure he doesn't understand women as Laura becomes very angry when he didn't argue with her friends about the television show. She wished Sam wouldn't argue with Andrew and they parted for a while because of it. Now she is just the opposite. She wants Sam to take his stand with her friends. As Sam uses the television show to make his point by substituting a teacher for a CEO, Laura and Sam become closer.

Roberts surprised the reader with this chapter. Krauss and Baldwin had been real people throughout the book as the reader moved through it. The real life situations of the show made Sam's points or Laura's. Roberts took the stereotypical economist, CEO, regulatory office, and poor people and brought them to life. As Roberts has Sam discuss teacher/CEO, the reader sees how the television is a secret addiction. As people watch the dramas on television they get more and more accustomed to murder and other violence. The television watcher believes what he sees.

In Chapter Eighteen, Robert finds one thing that he believes needs to be government regulated. It is wildlife and environment. The animals do what is natural. They don't learn to guide their lives through self-interest as people do. Sam does use examples of regulating by reward rather than punishment. Praise will bring about a better result. Sam finally says good by to his students. His last discussion is with Amy, the senator's daughter. He hopes as she gets older and looks at life she will still agree with him.



Chapter Nineteen and Twenty pp. 228-251.

Chapter Nineteen and Twenty pp. 228-251. Summary

In Chapter Nineteen, Laura and Sam go to the Jefferson Memorial for lunch after they have turned in their grades. Sam tells Laura about the problems he has had with the board. He also tells her that he has decided that he doesn't fit in with the school. Sam's philosophies are too far in the opposite direction from the school board and principal. He feels that the school has a right to release him just as he has the right to quit. Laura wishes he would fight and suggests a discrimination suit. Of course, that grows into another long discussion between Laura and Sam. As they move from one subject to another, they finally decide that they have come a long way. They can talk without yelling about their disagreement. They might be ready for other conversations. Sam asks for a date and Laura suggests they go to the closing school night skits.

In Chapter Twenty, Laura and Sam go to the senior last talent night before graduation. After the usual satires and skits, Laura was called to the stage and thanked for her part of the show. The kids did a parody of The Scarecrow's song from the Wizard of Oz. They praised Sam as a teacher and wished the board who had let him go "only had a brain."

Chapter Nineteen and Twenty pp. 228-251. Analysis

Roberts tells Laura the true story about his leaving Edwards. He is true to his beliefs and moves on without a fight. He knows that he doesn't fit into the Edwards philosophy. He knows he will miss the kids. He will miss Laura. They don't discuss seeing each other again. Sam has to take responsibility for his own life and find a job and a way to keep a wife if he wants to get more serious about Laura. Laura offers ideas he could have used to fight for the job but Sam had made up his mind to leave.

In Chapter Twenty, Roberts gives Sam the praise his deserves for being a good teacher. The kids illustrate their love for Sam by putting on a parody of the Scarecrow's song.

Chapter Twenty One.

Chapter Twenty One. Summary

In September, Sam surprises Laura at the Metro Station with a can of V-8 for Fast Eddie. They haven't seen each other since the senior night. Laura had written to Sam but he had just gotten her letter. As they got on the subway together, Sam quoted some poetry and admitted he had been reading poetry instead of economics all summer. He wanted other things to talk about. Their relationship is now a romance.

Chapter Twenty One. Analysis

Roberts wraps up his story. He has covered many of the economic subjects that he wanted to write about. He gives the reader a bit of romance to hope for as it ends.



Characters

Sam Gordon

Sam is tall, lanky, and laid back. He believes in enjoying life and he enjoys teaching. He wants to let creativity grow and prosper. He believes that if the person is allowed to find their own selves with no interference from rules and regulations, the world will be better. Once he begins talking of a subject that he believes in, he becomes more and more passionate. He doesn't see the conversation as an argument but as simply an exchange of ideas.

Amy

Amy is the student in Sam's class who thinks for herself more than the others. The other students are eager to guess at an answer to fit into the little group of learners that they believe is the "right" behavior for a classroom.

Laura Silver

Laura comes from an elitist background and agrees with her parents and friends politically. She believes in coloring in the lines and adding more rules to make things work as she thinks they should. Teaching English Literature at Edwards is her very first job. Instead of butterflies, she has bats floating around in her stomach. She is dressed very conservatively and does not wear any makeup. She has her idea of what a teacher should look like.

Kim

Kim is the named thinking student in Laura's class. Kim is a secondary character who keeps the introduction of both classrooms in balance.

Charles Krauss

Krauss is a fat-cat type. He drives the expensive car, wears expensive clothes, and adorns himself with expensive jewelry. He reminds the reader of Michael Douglass in Wall Street. He walks into his company and ignores all the little people who snap to attention when he appears. All his employees have a healthy fear of the man.



Erica Baldwin

Erica is a go-getter who is up early to exercise before going to work. She is a red head who works hard at everything she does. She is ready to catch the corporation in the act of doing something illegal to make money and steal from the little guy.

Fast Eddie

Fast Eddie is a homeless man who sat at Woodley Part Metro. Everyone knew him. He was always known for being polite.

Howard Cantrell

Director of Research for HealthNet. Cantrell finds a problem in the results of the tests for the new drug. He is very afraid of Krauss.

Marshall Jackson

Marshall works with Erica Baldwin. He is one of the two African-American men in the office. Marshall has his MBA from Wharton and graduated from Harvard. Erica believes he will be important to the office in bringing HealthNet down.

George Sutherland

George is the supervisor of a plant that HealthNet is moving to Mexico. George has lived in the community all his life and planned to retire there. He and the people of the town are in real trouble since their one major employer is moving. George is sick about the closing of the plant.

Rob Blankenship

Rob is the Director of Corporate Communications. Rob is forced onto the golf course with Krauss so Krauss can order him to stop all bad publicity about moving out of Ohio. Krauss uses his golf game as part of his way of intimidating his employees.

Heather Hathaway

Heather works for HealthNet as a receptionist. She is able to slip some of the information that Krauss wants shredded out of the office.

David Levine

David is the expert for medical testing. He and Erica have been friends but this time he refuses to testify against HealthNet.



Objects/Places

Edwards School

Sam and Laura teach at Edwards, a private school for the upper society in Washington, D.C.

HealthNet

This is a big chrome and glass company that has Krauss as its CEO.

Office of Corporate Responsibility

This is a government office that checks on corporations. The Big Brother who watches them.

Woodley Park Metro

Sam and Laura meet when Sam gives the beggar money instead of something to eat. Sam thinks the beggar has a right to get what he wants. Laura wants to take care of him and give him fruit juice or something healthy, Woodley also appears at the end of the book.

Prostol

This is the new medicine that should make HealthNet lots of money. Cantrell has discovered a problem with the results of the tests.

Private golf course

This is the golf course is one of Krauss' ways of intimidating his directors of HealthNet.

committee room on the Hill

This is the room where Baldwin and Krauss meet before a committee to discuss regulations for HealthNet.

Lincoln Memorial

Sam and Laura eat lunch here after school is over.



Jefferson Memorial

Sam and Laura enjoy the feeling of our founding fathers and read the inscriptions on the memorial.

Beauty and the Beast

This is the name of the television soap that hooks in all the young adults. Krauss is the bad CEO on the program.

Themes

Freedom requires responsibility.

Sam discusses responsibility throughout the book. If a person hasn't taken responsibility for his life, he owes someone something. If a person owes someone, he can't be free. He may be obligated to live his life in a way he doesn't choose. He may have to find a way to make more money to pay a person back. Being concerned about living a life that isn't a person's choice kills creativity. When responsibility is not accepted, the person is living more as a child with someone taking care of him rather than a free adult. Sam doesn't want to be a member of society that always remain a child. He doesn't need to have guidance at every turn in his life. Too many people run from their responsibilities. Some turn to drugs or alcohol. Some turn to other escapes. Sam calls television a secret addiction. Watching television isn't considered a "sin" and so most don't see it as an addiction.

Too much government regulations makes a country weak.

Government has to have certain rules that can fit almost any one. Everyone becomes like a flock of sheep following after everyone else with the same rules. No one is an individual. Creativity is squashed and everyone becomes just one more person trying to survive. Everyone is learning the system so they will be taken care of. The creativity that could be used to improve the world has become creativity to beat the system. Many times the ones taken care of think they should have more handed to them. They learn to feel entitled. These people are looking for ways to cheat the system. When welfare checks are handed out to so many, the person isn't encouraged to change his life and look for another way to get what he wants. The welfare system has become their god to them. They are the source of their life.

Life moves on. New discoveries are made and the new replaces

The example of the slide rule was a good example of new replacing the old. A small calculator which will do all types of mathematical functions right at the fingertips is a valuable tool. If the calculator couldn't have progressed as it did and been made smaller. The new has to work well before it will replace the old. The new tool has to have benefits that are obvious to the customer. If the tool works as it is supposed to the price and the color won't matter. If the benefit is clear and can be used by the customer to save time or trouble, the customer will move on with the new, improved edition. Some don't work and fall to the wayside. The biggest failure in our times was the New Coke attempt. No one was ready to move away from the Coke Classic. The customer liked

the way it tasted. It refreshed the consumer as it expected it to refresh. Coke did a hurried turnabout on it. Life is always in flux and a person has a better life when they accept that. Anything repeated again and again quits being a fun thing to do. Anything can get old. We eventually move on no matter how much we hate change.



Style

Point of View

For most of the book, Roberts uses a third-person perspective with Sam being the narrator. Since the chapters jump from one group to another, the point of view while a third person the narrator can change. Baldwin and Krauss both are narrators when their scenes appear. Roberts separates the scenes so there is no confusion about who is talking. Sam carries the story since he is sharing his economics theories.

Sam comes across as a teacher in his dialogues. He has used this clever way of having two people fall in love as they discuss their differences in their worldviews. Can the two people find a like path to follow so they can get along? Can differences like these come to a comprise? Sam's dialogue helps a reader to see how they can be alike as well as different.

Setting

The scene is set in Washington, D.C. The Edwards School is a prestigious that fits right into the senators' and congressmans' children. There are a few scenes set in the properous homes of Laura's family and her own home. There are scenes which happen around Washington in view of the memorials. Sam and Laura love America and the monuments that mark the history. The love of government even as Sam doesn't appreciate its interference is apparent.

Language and Meaning

The language and meaning of Robert's writing is good prose. The language is used correctly and used with a economy of language. His dialogue is clear and he describes things throughout the book very well. Sam can paint pictures with his own words. Laura has her own voice throughout the book. She is still borrowing from others in her language just as she does in her philosophy of life. Sam has his own voice which is strong and definite. As Sam speaks on his economic beliefs it reads like an outline. He doesn't jump all over the place as he discusses one topic at a time.

Sam has a very good vocabulary. He knows how to use the correct word each time. He shows his intelligence as he mentions Greek mythology and other subjects besides economics. He keeps insisting that he only knows economics but his mouth and words prove that isn't quite true. Sam is one smart man.

Structure

The book is set up as different sections. The sections are intermingled with Sam's and Laura's discussions. Sam's section is filled with his lectures on his beliefs. Also intermingled are sections which have Krauss and Baldwin. Sam puts his best idea for a free market place while the sections show the worse of the big corporations. Baldwin is another section to watch how the government works to break up the big corporation and some of their bad practices. There is also the section with Sutherland and the closing of the Ohio plant. All different aspects of the big government and big business is shown throughout the book.



Quotes

"Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers" (Chapter 1, p. 8).

"How could a man reward greed, yet honor a movie dedicated to the principle of people before profits" (Chapter 1, p. 13).

"But the more you limit people's choices, even in the name of helping them, the more responsibility you take away from them" (Chapter 3, p. 26).

"Part of the essence of being human is making choices. It's anticipating the future and being aware of the costs and benefits of our actions" (Chapter 3, p. 29).

"But when we start treating adults like children, we start taking away the essential human challenge of coping with uncertainty and making decisions" (Chapter 3, p. 30).

"Teaching, despite a widespread belief to the contrary, takes a lot of energy. Especially if you want to do it right" (Chapter 5, p. 42).

"It's easy to blame the system, but it's in your hands. Unless you want to have your cake and eat it too. That the system does not allow" (Chapter 5, p. 48).

"Meaning what you say, keeping your word, and serving others without resentment are probably more valuable in the business world than elsewhere" (Chapter 7, p. 75).

"Competition combines with self-interest to serve you—without anyone being in charge. And it works so flawlessly, we never even notice it" (Chapter 7, p. 79).

"There's a certain style in Washington that the men and women acquire. It's a look of certitude and grace, a look that says my time has come or will be here soon. It's a way of walking, of talking, or careless laughter" (Chapter 11, p. 109).

"Watching television is a total waste of time. It's the secret addiction. It saps everything from us that is human. It turns us into zombies, flitting from channel to channel to escape reality" (Chapter 13, p. 135).

"Capitalism involves struggle, but it has an invisible heart beating at its core that transforms people's lives" (Chapter 15, p. 170).



Topics for Discussion

Did you understand Sam's discussion of responsibility of each person as he grows up? Do you agree that creativity is crushed when someone takes care of an adult?

Do you have trouble with change? Do you have friends who do? Do you believe that a great number of people have difficulty with change? Can someone make another person change?

What is your opinion of welfare? If you think of the chapter where Laura wants to only feed the children of those on welfare so that the adults would have to find jobs and ways to make money, what are your thoughts?

Did you agree with the V-8 can that keeps the homeless from using any money they get in the "wrong" way? Did you agree with Sam? Why?

What changes in products have you seen in your life time? Has something completely disappeared? Name three new things that you believe is better than the old and why.

What government regulations do you believe are necessary for the good of the people of the United States?

Who should decide about regulations for the individual? Who would you trust to make decisions for you?

Do you believe the regulators need regulators?

Would you like to vote for regulations for others? Are there certain beliefs that you believe could be better decided by you?

Can you understand Sam's point of view? What parts do you agree with and what do you disagree with? Why?