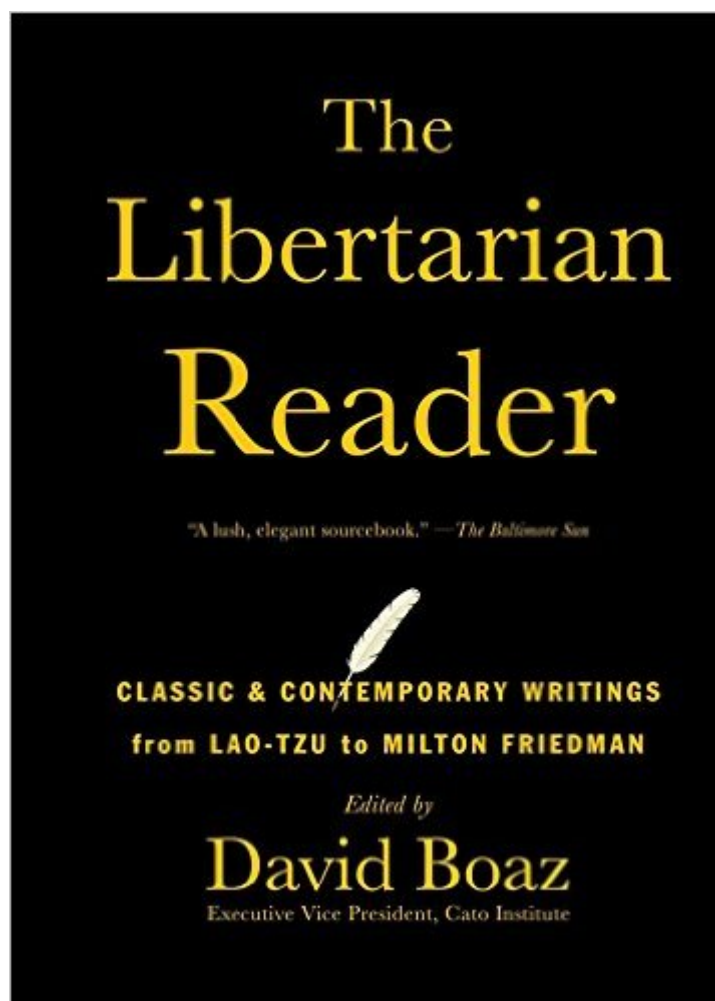


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# The Libertarian Reader: Classic & Contemporary Writings From Lao-Tzu To Milton Friedman



## Synopsis

“The most magnificent collection of libertarian writings ever published” (Laissez Faire Books). An important collection of seminal writings on a movement that is rapidly changing the face of American politics, *The Libertarian Reader* links some of the most fertile minds of our time to a centuries-old commitment to freedom, self-determination, and opposition to intrusive government. This is the first comprehensive anthology of libertarian thought “from the Bible and Lao-Tzu to Hayek and Milton Friedman” to be published in one volume. The 68 selections from great libertarian writers are an intellectual feast, covering such key libertarian themes as skepticism about power, individual rights, spontaneous order, free markets, and peace. For all independent thinkers, this unique sourcebook will stand as a classic reference for years to come, and a reminder that libertarianism is one of our oldest and most venerable American traditions.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

For years now, I have been collecting an assortment of my favorite essays in a handful of binders. Photocopies, internet downloads, you name it. When I came upon a particularly good essay that captured my political philosophy, I stuffed it into my little binder. I always wondered: why doesn't somebody take this collection of essays and put them into a book? Well, David Boaz has apparently beaten me to it in his collection of libertarian thought and philosophy, *The Libertarian Reader*. Not only are many of my favorite essays here, but a couple more that I've never read before. (Apparently, Mr. Boaz has been collecting essays longer than I have.) This book is essential for a

number of reasons. For the curious, *The Libertarian Reader* offers an introduction to the ideas of free markets, private property rights, and individual rights and freedoms. For the veteran, *The Libertarian Reader* puts a nice hardbound cover on years of ideas, allowing people like me to throw away the old mangled binders of paper. The essays in *The Libertarian Reader* are brief and concise. For people looking for a quick introduction to the libertarian thoughts, each individual essay can easily be read in 15-minute sittings. Some of the biggest names in history, literature and economics are included here, including Ayn Rand, Thomas Jefferson, John Stuart Mill, Frederick Douglas and Adam Smith. Whether you're new to libertarian ideas, or an old veteran of liberty, *The Libertarian Reader*, and the companion book, *Libertarianism: A Primer*, also by David Boaz, are must reads for political junkies and lovers of freedom everywhere.

If you are looking for a quick introduction to the principles and practices of the Libertarian Party, avoid this book; a good search engine and some basic research skills are all you need. If instead you're searching for a deeper understanding of the philosophy of liberty, then I can suggest no better starting point. The book itself is a collection of short essays from a wide range of contributors to the libertarian tradition, from political economists and philosophers (such as Locke, Mill, and Adam Smith) to some perhaps more surprising sources (like the Old Testament and the Tao Teh Ching). These essays are grouped around broad themes - "individual rights", "free markets", "skepticism about power" - certainly a boon to students, but also an aid to the casual reader. Should a particular topic or thinker pique your interest, a lengthy essay called "The Literature of Liberty" catalogs the sources as it closes the book. Whether reading this book will convince you to join the Libertarian Party, or send money to the Cato Institute, is a matter open to debate; indeed, some critics rightly point out elements of "big L" Libertarianism that are at odds with "small l" classical liberal thought. My own hope is that reading these essays will give you not only a better understanding of the founder's intent, but also a clearer vision of a better possible future - a freer, saner world. How we get there, if we get there, remains to be seen.

A couple of years ago I got interested in libertarianism and had to scrounge for a reading list. Where to get started? Then this book came out, exactly what I had been looking for. While one might quibble about the choice of authors (e.g. I would have preferred P.J O'Rourke or Dave Barry over the humorless Ayn Rand), it is obviously impossible to put in one volume all the great libertarian thinkers, let alone all the great works. This book does an excellent job, and includes in an appendix a list of further recommended reading for which there wasn't room. This was the signpost that I

needed, and I still refer to it frequently. The companion volume, *The Libertarian Primer*, of which Boaz is author rather than editor, is also good and an easier read. That it came out so late (1997) reflects libertarians' tendency to arrogance, underestimating the need to market their abstract product and educate the populace. The Cato Institute, of which Boaz is vice president, is now rapidly making up for lost time.

David Boaz provides an amazing collection of historical writings which explain the Libertarian themes of life, liberty, and property from diverse points of view. The subjects discussed include history, politics, economics, sociology, philosophy, and morality. This is a great reference book to have on the study of liberty, and makes a great companion to *The Libertarian Mind: A Manifesto for Freedom* (also by Boaz).

This book is an excellent compilation of highly varied readings which speak to the political philosophy of Libertarianism starting with I Samuel 8 pointing out the origin of kings is basically idolatry. That is something to really consider: how can a person of faith or of no faith want or need a king? How can a Christian or other faith based person tolerate a king/president/prime minister, etc when God is supposed to be their leader? How can an atheist refute the existence of a benevolent or malevolent god by their own authority and knowledge and yet submit to a king/president/prime minister or other such oligarch? How do we tolerate someone ruling over us when our "natural rights" as humans is self determination and liberty? Can we live without government? Certainly not because we now number in the millions upon hundreds of millions but I do believe that if we had faith in our god(s) or even just in ourselves we wouldn't allow oligarchs to rule. We would have a smaller, less expensive, much more efficient government that would be in existence only to serve us and provide justice in conflicts. Our leaders would be trustees accountable to the electorate instead of self-indulgent thieves taking the very life out of us and our children because we lack faith in ourselves. This is just the first selection. Books could be written in response to any one of the fascinating readings in this book. It is a fabulous primer for those interested not just in the Libertarian party but also those interested in developing a coherent political philosophy of their own. A thoughtful reading of this book may or may not change your party affiliation but it will wake you up.

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