

The Best Books I Read in 2017

I talked about some of my favorite books in a [recent podcast episode](#) but wanted to put them down here just to keep with tradition since I have done so every year since I started this blog (plus there are a few I missed).

These were my favorite books I read this year:

Non-Fiction

[Deep Survival by Laurence Gonzales](#)

The best book I've read in a number of years. I can't recommend this one highly enough. The book explores how people get themselves into trouble in various situations -- lost at sea, lost in the woods, injured or killed while mountain climbing, etc. -- and the attributes the survivors share. There are many parallels to business and investing in this book.

See [this post](#) I wrote using a passage from the book.

[How We Got to Now by Steven Johnson](#)

Network effects is a huge buzz phrase in business and tech these days and this book does an excellent job of explaining how this idea applies to innovation. The six innovation Johnson covers -- glass, cold, sound, time, clean and light -- are somewhat counterintuitive but it all makes sense when he explains how these things have shaped the modern world. This book was excellent.

See [this post](#) I wrote using a passage from the book.

[The Rise and Fall of American Growth by Robert Gordon](#)

I'm a fairly optimistic person about the future but this book says our best days in terms of innovation and economic growth may be behind us. I don't totally believe this but the author makes some compelling arguments backed up with a truckload of stats and anecdotes. It's a tad long but easily skim-able depending on what you're looking for.

[Hit Makers: The Science of Popularity in the Age of Distraction by Derek Thompson](#)

Thompson is one of the sharper minds of the younger generation in media these days and this book shows why. It's an intelligent look at what becomes popular and why in music, movies, TV, pop culture and more.

See [this post](#) I wrote using a passage from the book.

[Shoe Dog by Phil Knight](#)

I'm usually not a fan of biographies (most are too long and filled with minor details that bring nothing to the story) but this was by far the best one I've ever read from the founder of Nike.

See [this post](#) for some lessons learned.

[Selling the Invisible by Harry Beckwith](#)

Each year that goes by makes me realize more and more just how important the ability to sell is for people in any number of career paths. Everyone is in sales when it really comes down to it and this book explains how to think about selling in a service business better than anything I've read.

See [this post](#) for more on why selling ability is so important.

And a few more for the speed round:

- [Masters of the Word: How Media Shaped History](#)
- [Bull: A History of the Boom and Bust, 1982-2004](#)
- [Simple Rules: How to Thrive in a Complex World](#)
- [Streaming, Sharing, Stealing: Big Data & the Future of Entertainment](#)
- [The New Retirementality](#)

Fiction

Earlier this year I asked my Twitter followers for some fiction recommendations. Some of those recommendations follow here but the list of recommendations in the replies to this tweet is worth reviewing for those looking for something new to read (click through to read the replies):

[Vicious Circle by CJ Box](#)

By my count this was the 17th book in the Joe Pickett series. It's about a game warden and his family in Wyoming and the trouble he always seems to unwittingly stumble upon. This author and the characters he's developed throughout this series have slowly risen to the top of my all-time fiction list. If you're looking for a good collection of books where you can get to know the characters and see them evolve over time, this is one of the best I've found.

[The Orphan Master's Son by Adam Johnson](#)

I wouldn't call this book heartfelt or even enjoyable in the traditional sense, but I couldn't put it down once I got into it. It's the story of a man's trials and tribulations in North Korea. I'm not sure how accurate the portrayal is but the description of what life can be like for people in that country was eye-opening and made me want to learn more.

[Fate and Furies by Lauren Groff](#)

This was another one I had a hard time putting down and it was also a bit different from the fiction I usually read. It follows a love story between a married couple over a number of years from each person's perspective (which can be much different as you would imagine). I was waiting for a huge twist ending that never came but this was still an engrossing novel.

[The Rosie Project by Graeme Simpson](#)

I usually don't find myself laughing too often at the books I'm reading but this one was an exception. This one is off the beaten path for my usual reading tastes, as well, but I love the main character, Don, and all of his flaws. Supposedly this one is getting made into a movie with Ryan Reynolds but the book is well worth a read for something on the lighter side that will make you laugh.

Further Reading:

[The Best Books I Read in 2016](#)

[The Best Books I Read in 2015](#)

[The Best Books I Read in 2014](#)

[The Best Books I Read in 2013](#)