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1. THE SECOND AMENDMENT

***In Defense of the Second Amendment* – Larry Correia - Easy**

A prolific and successful sci-fi and fantasy author weighs in on guns! As a former competition shooter, gun store owner, and military contract accountant, Correia is very knowledgeable about a variety of topics related to the standard gun control arguments, and writes a very punchy rebuttal to them. This is more of a modern look at media talking points, crime statistics, and internet illogic than a historical or philosophical exploration of the Second Amendment itself.

***The Second Amendment Manifesto* - John Paine - Easy**

The history section is short and too hard on Cromwell... but kudos to the author for recognizing that the often-overlooked Glorious Revolution of 1688 was a major win for freedom. It's a good introduction to the basics, however, and the last section of the book goes as far as to give the reader specific products and manufacturers for the equipping of modern minutemen.

***That Every Man Be Armed* - Stephen Holbrook - Medium**

A more specific historical overview of the development and purpose of the Second Amendment, up to today. Short and scholarly. Holbrook's companion book *The Founders' Second Amendment* is long and scholarly, filled with correspondence of the Founders around the writing of the Constitution and passage of Bill of Rights – everything related to gun ownership and militia.

***Aiming For Liberty* – David B. Kopel - Hard**

Kopel is a 2A lawyer who was instrumental in presenting the *Heller v DC* case. This book is like a collection of separate articles; some good and some not so good. For example, his look at Old Testament Israel's military and militia is excellent – even mentioning Puritan preachers' reliance on these scriptural principles. His chapter on more modern religious application, however, is pretty bad, mostly focusing on weird outliers like Catholic myths and proto-transcendentalists. The chapters discussing gun control and its catastrophic effects in other parts of the world are unique and very useful. A fantastic book for folks that already have a bit of a framework.

Important Note for Section 1:

These books tend to fall into a modernistic interpretation of the America founders' worldview. This assumes a greater emphasis on classical philosophers, like Plato, or humanistic Enlightenment thinkers like Hobbes. However, Plato's Republic prescribes a massive, centralized government, and Thomas Hobbes' Leviathan, demands an all-powerful state with total control over arms, church, the press, and more. Clearly, these were the opposite goals of the drafters of the Constitution and first several amendments.

The traditional positions of the Protestant Reformation and its centuries-old struggle against tyranny was FAR more important to political philosophy in the 1700s than most modern historians usually think, especially in the American colonies. For more context, we recommend the resources in the following section.

2. PRE-AMERICAN LIBERTY & INTERPOSITION

Slaying Leviathan – Dr. Glenn Sunshine - Easy

The broadest overview of Christianity's struggle to support yet limit civil government, and righteously resist tyranny when it arises. This book is a great introduction to many key books and thinkers in the long development of civilization, organized chronologically, ideologically, and geographically. This is a must-read for anyone wanting to clearly understand the development of the ideas that have shaped political thought in the West.

The Christian and the Magistrate - Pierre Viret - Hard

Viret was an early Protestant Reformer from Switzerland. As the Reformation grew from an internal church debate in Germany to a vast cultural movement that shattered the status quo of all Europe, the Reformers had to increasingly engage with and take sides on civil issues. Viret does a masterful job at opening this can of worms and instructing the local magistrate what his responsibilities are.

The Magdeberg Confession - the Pastors of Magdeburg - Hard

As the spread of Reformation began to be opposed by the authorities, the city of Magdeburg was ordered to submit to specific rules and new laws by the Holy Roman Empire. This was their reply, published in 1550, and their justification for refusal.

Vindiciae Contra Tyrannos - Stephen Junius Brutus - Hard

In Latin, this means a vindication or defense against tyrants. It was written by an anonymous Huguenot author in 1579, at the height of France's bloody counter-Reformation. This one goes deeper into the idea of not just disobeying a monarch or head of state who has seized power outside of his jurisdiction, but also justifying the means of resistance.

Lex Rex - Samuel Rutherford - Medium

Another Latin phrase: the law is king. Published in 1644, this is a moral, logical, biblical, philosophical defense of limited government. The law is sovereign, even over the highest office in the land. It expounds upon the idea that a king's jurisdiction is limited, and that a government has strict legal bounds that define what it can and cannot do. It also touches on resistance. Widely read and widely quoted in the American colonies.

The Great Christian Revolution - Otto Scott - Medium

This book is much more focused on the English Civil War (1642-1651) that followed these writings, its strengths and weaknesses, the different factions of Protestants and Catholics. However, it also provides excellent context for the political and religious trends that led to this event, and the effect that it had on Britain and America afterwards. For those who want a good Cromwell biography, try *The Protector* by Merle D'aubigne.

3. AMERICAN HISTORY

***Of Plymouth Plantation* - William Bradford - Hard**

A direct account of one of the founders of Plymouth plantation, describing in their own words their own reasons for starting their own colony in 1620. Contrary to popular belief, this has little to do with religious freedom, which they had already achieved in the Netherlands, and more to do with political and economic freedom. It also documents the incredible pain and sacrifice they endured to plant the seeds of our nation.

***The Matchlock Gun* – Walter D. Edmonds**

A ten-year-old boy must protect his mother and sisters while his father is off fighting Indian raiders with the local militia. All he has is the heirloom muzzleloader his family brought over from the Netherlands. A dark and serious true story from the French and Indian War. This is technically a children's book, and it won a Newbery Medal in 1942 for "most distinguished contribution to American literature for children," but it's a great depiction of the resolve showed by the early American settlers, and the appreciation that our society still had for them even in the 1940s.

***Paul Revere's Ride* – David Hackett Fischer - Medium**

A fantastic description of the events surrounding the very beginning of the war for American Independence. A detailed look into the different political stances, the relationships and intelligence networks that were created beforehand, and the training and preparation that was put in place before the British raid on Concord. It also gives the best blow-by-blow account of the raising of the militia, and that first response at Lexington—the shot heard around the world that started the war for freedom.

***1776* - David McCullough - Easy**

McCullough has written many great biographies and American history books, but this one focuses on the organization of the militia, its formalization into the Continental Army under Washington, and gives a broader look at the military logistics and actions surrounding the war. A good companion to this book is McCullough's *John Adams*, which is a biography that describes more of the political and diplomatic side to this conflict.

***Origin and Principles of the American Revolution* – Frederich von Gentz - Medium**

Compared with the origin and principles of the French Revolution. This is a book written by a contemporary Austrian diplomat analyzing the different motivations and ideologies of two revolutions separated by only a few short years. He makes the case that, despite their sharing a few slogans and sloganeers, they were opposite movements in their justifications and goals. Interesting note: This book was originally translated from the German into English by John Quincy Adams. Additional interesting note: If France had adopted the principles of *Vindicae Contra Tyrannos* in the 1600s, they would never have had a reign of terror in the 1700s.

4. GENERAL WORLD HISTORY

***The White Horse King* – Dr. Ben Merkle – Easy**

In 871, Æthelwulf and his four eldest sons were dead, unexpectedly leaving the young and sickly Alfred alone to serve as king of the scattered western Shires of England. It was a broken land scourged by war, pillaged by invaders, and divided amongst itself. By the 890s, Alfred was the King of England, a nation that had recaptured its lands, defeated the Danish Vikings, rebuilt their towns and cities, launched a navy, unified around a Common Law, constructed monasteries and abbeys, and led the world in learning. By the year 900, Alfred was dead, but he left centuries of positive momentum, and he will be forever remembered as Alfred the Great.

***Modern Times* - Paul Johnson - Hard**

This is one of the best books to describe the incredibly massive shifts between the old world and the one we live in now. One of my favorite things about Paul Johnson is the sheer breadth of his writing. He has books on most eras of history, so while this section of our reading list is a little sparse, it could be filled out just with Johnson's books from ancient Egypt to contemporary politics, and his biographies on everyone from Socrates to Napoleon to John Paul II.

***One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich* – Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn - Very Hard**

A tremendously sobering reminder of the consequences of communism. Long before the means of production had stalled, the food and money ran out, and national identity had crumbled, communism was already deliberately and effectively destroying the individual. For an even more detailed look at the abusive re-education of Soviet political prisoners, read Solzhenitsyn's *Gulag Archipelago*.

5. ECONOMICS

***Biblical Economics in Comics* - Vic Lockman – Easy**

This is a book that simplifies almost every form of economics into easy-to-read stories about cartoon cats, mice, and of course, bureau-rats. Simple, fun, and well-rounded. Vic Lockman was an old-school Disney artist way back in the old days when that was still an indicator of quality.

***Economics in One Lesson* - Hazlitt – Medium**

While Hazlitt does manage to squeeze his entire economic theory into a single lesson, he kinda cheats by adding lots of additional material around it to talk about more complicated variables surrounding his free market principles, and to answer common criticisms of Austrian economics.

***Basic Economics* – Thomas Sowell - Hard**

This is a bigger book, but still manages to describe modern economics using layman's language. An excellent way to talk about more advanced financial markets without having to learn a whole new vocabulary. Thomas Sowell is one of the great champions of liberty in academia, and he has documented and defended many key conservative principles across many fields.

6. INDUSTRY & TECHNOLOGY

***Diary of an Early American Boy* - Eric Sloane - Easy**

A fictionalized expansion of an actual journal kept by a boy in 1805. Over a year, his family expands on their home and farm, building structures and making tools that allow them to do more work or be more efficient. It's one of the best depictions of the cumulative effect of work and innovation, not to mention a great introduction to the tools and techniques that built this country and sparked the industrial revolution. Eric Sloane is the definitive historical authority on New England woodworking, tools, and architecture, partly because of his study and research, but also because of his beautifully rendered drawings of the buildings and equipment of the time. The fine craftsmanship of his illustrations helps to emphasize the level of attention and artistry that went into the tools he is describing.

***Wealth and Poverty of Nations* - David S. Landes - Hard**

This is basically an economics book, but my main takeaways from it have been more centered on industry. Why are certain nations richer than others, and why is economic progress uneven over time and across geography? The book looks at climate, culture, natural resources, and more, but the biggest effects on a national economy are based on how well they take dominion over new tools and ideas; whether they are culturally equipped to make the most effective use of compasses, clocks, eyeglasses, and other powerful technologies.

***Connections* - James Burke - Medium**

Another book on how inventions build one upon another, and the compounding benefits of these accumulating tools. He touches briefly on the cultural effects that these inventions have, and the way that culture drives their adoption, but mostly focuses on the tools and technologies, how they are connected. This was also a BBC video series shot in 1978.

***Skunkworks* – Ben Rich - Medium**

This is a “context” book; the sort of writing that I'm always looking for to connect the dots between different things that I'm studying separately. Ben Rich describes his decades-long career at Skunkworks; the top-secret arm of Lockheed that designed and built the U-2 spyplane, SR-71 Blackbird, and F-117 Nighthawk. The book touches on scientific research, engineering challenges, manufacturing equipment, business development, team management, aviation history, international espionage, political intrigue, and military strategy - all across multiple wars and the shifting phases of American foreign policy. It could go in almost any category of this reading list because it provides so much connective tissue to all of these different areas.

7. BUSINESS

The Goal – Eliyahu Goldrat - Easy

This is a fantastic book on production process flow in novel form. It describes a manufacturing shop and was particularly useful to us at T.REX since we are a manufacturing shop, but the lessons can be applied to other processes as well. These business book recommendations are not the be-all end-all for all companies, but materials that we can specifically vouch for through our own experience using them for our own business.

Two Second Lean – Paul Akers - Medium

The Toyota system of Lean manufacturing is even more specific to making stuff than *The Goal* but can still be a handy way to think about getting other work done. Highly recommended as an on-ramp into the gigantic world that is Lean process and study. Also available as a free audiobook on YouTube.

Entreleadership – Dave Ramsey - Medium

Dave Ramsey is mostly famous for his radio show telling people to chop up their credit cards and get out of debt, but he has also created a lot of materials for people building businesses. This is a fantastic entry level book on leadership for entrepreneurs, which we rank highly, along with business leadership books that we've read from guys like Jocko Wilink, Crawford Loritts Jr, and Pat Lencioni.

The Advantage – Pat Lencioni – Medium

This is one of the best-selling business books from one of the best-selling business authors, and a lot of the best principles and lessons from *Five Dysfunctions of a Team*, *Death by Meeting*, *Ideal Team Player*, and his other organizational health books are contained here. A great compilation and introduction to his stuff.

Good to Great - Jim Collins - Medium

A basic business book that covers everything from leadership and organizational health all the way down to defining the purpose of a business and clarifying the economic engine and mission of the company. Solid fundamentals.

8. POLITICS

***The Law* – Frederic Bastiat – Medium**

A famous and easy read talking about political theory. Bastiat is standing on the shoulders of giants, and this is well paired with *Slaying Leviathan* and some of the other books in the previous interposition category.

***Parliament of Whores* - PJ O'Rourke - Easy**

A lone humorist tries to explain the American political system. Each chapter delves into a few tiny details of a fraction of one part of the Federal Machine – judicial, legislative, executive, and of course, the endless bureaucracies and agencies – with great wit and insight. O'Rourke is a master observer; bravely traveling to the worst places on earth and then pointing out his direct experiences with the insanities of the late 20th century. Also of note are his books on global environmentalism, *All the Trouble in the World*, and international conflict, *Give War a Chance*. His earlier gonzo stuff is very lacking in insight, and his later libertarian works are a bit lacking in wit, but these three have the perfect mixture of straight-line reporting and serrated-edge satire.

***The War on Guns* - John R. Lott, Jr. - Medium**

A description of American gun control advocacy, in history and today. This isn't so much a justification of the Second Amendment or a defense of guns, but deeper explanations of the use and misuse of arguments and statistics from different eras and administrations.

***The Dying Citizen* – Victor Davis Hanson – Hard**

An examination of the historical concept of citizenship; a role that is dramatically different from subjects, serfs, or slaves. It is a key piece of the larger discussion around the consent of the governed, the responsibilities of magistrates, and the role of the state. He also documents the modern threats to the citizen and the idea of citizenship in the 21st Century.

9. PHILOSOPHY & THEOLOGY

***Live Not by Lies* – Rod Dreher - Easy**

Titled after an article by the forementioned Solzhenitsyn, this book is about “soft totalitarianism,” a cultural state that exists when a people have gone from speaking the truth, to failing to speak the truth, to failing to speak out against lies. The next obvious step is the hard totalitarianism of being a people being punished for not supporting lies.

***Rules for Reformers* – Douglas Wilson - Easy**

A Christian take on Saul Alinsky's book *Rules for Radicals* (see below), it goes over the principles that must be preserved, the theology of resistance, and the lay of the land of our current battlefields. This is a more rubber-meets-the-road book about recapturing lost ground and rebuilding what has been lost.

How Should We Then Live? - Francis Schaefer - Medium

As you have probably gathered from the first few pages of this reading list, we at T.REX ARMS believe that Western Civilization has created strong upwards growth whenever it was building on a Christian foundation... and has been utterly unable to do so without that foundation. This is a historical overview of Western thought and its recent decline. As the world has been redefined by postmodernism and subjectivism and retreated from previously held ideals, there have been, and will continue to be, consequences to the abandonment of the old ideas.

By What Standard? - R.J. Rushdoony - Hard

A Christian theologian dives deeper into this topic from a philosophical angle. Can man live without fixed standards? While Rushdoony has written far more complex and detailed works and commentaries, for example, the multiple volumes of his *Institutes of The Christian Religion*, this short book's focus is more on past philosophers and the logical ramifications of the question posed by Francis Schaefer.

By This Standard - Greg Bahnsen - Hard

And then to complete the trilogy, a detailed Biblical defense of using Christian thought and jurisprudence as the basis for a nation's moral and legal code. Spoilers: Man does require a standard, and not all standards are equal. If you want to go deeper into epistemology, we also highly recommend this author's book on presuppositional apologetics, *Always Ready*.

10. THE ROGUE'S GALLERY

The Prince - Niccoli Machiavelli - Medium

In the 1530s, while the Reformers were first defining the responsibilities of magistrates and the consent of the governed, Machiavelli already had his own political theory ready to go. He describes a cruel "New Prince" who gains his power through crime rather than virtue, will be feared rather than loved, and his subjects will submit in fear of punishments rather than agreement with principles.

The Communist Manifesto - Marx & Engels - Medium

It's important to know what your enemies believe and what they plan to do. While Karl Marx and Frederick Engels borrow heavily from previous humanist thinkers, and their envy-based class warfare isn't much different from the Jacobin's of the French Revolution, they did nevertheless codify the political theory with the highest body count in human history.

Rules for Radicals - Saul Alinsky - Easy

This is a literal operational playbook of Marxist community organizers today, based on Alinsky's community organizing back in the 1960s. If you want to read the enemy's playbook, it's readily available, and it goes over basic thinking and tactics. Some of this stuff is painfully obvious, and some of it is stuff you've never thought about. Some of this stuff is usable by non-Marxist community organizers, but a lot of it is purely destructive and cannot be used to build.

11. MILITARY STUDIES

***Counterinsurgency Warfare* - David Galula - Hard**

This section of the reading list will focus on more esoteric topics. There are plenty of military reading lists that already mention Sun Tsu, Von Clausewitz, and specific wars and conflicts, and those are all great. But we are fascinated by some of these lesser-known works, and we sometimes get into lesser-known topics. This is a fantastic overview of counterinsurgency in general, but it gets all the way down to the nitty gritty of practical application.

***Tactics in Counterinsurgency* - US Army Manual - Medium**

This one is equally detailed, but far less controversial since it is published by the United States Department of Defense itself. That means it's okay to promulgate.

***Americans at War* – Stephen Ambrose - Easy**

We're probably all familiar with Steven Ambrose's book *Band of Brothers*, his history of D-Day, and other veteran accounts of WWII. This book focuses specifically on America's armies throughout history, and our uniquely citizen soldiers. Our nation's hesitancy, until recently, to maintain a large standing army, and the way that our civilian population has been ready to do war, is an interesting phenomenon to unpack.

***Hazardous Duty* – Maj. Gen. John K. Singlaub - Medium**

The autobiography of a fighting man who shaped US Special Operations doctrine from WWII to Korea to Vietnam, and then continued the fight against communism on his own terms. His long military experience gave him a unique insight into changes that came to the US military and brought him into direct conflict with powerful political enemies. A fascinating perspective.

***War in Peace* – Marshall Cavendish - Hard to Find**

An increasingly rare, full color illustrated encyclopedia of all the armed conflicts which fall in the peaceful gaps between the big wars of the late 20th Century. It is a depressingly enormous collection of books, documenting the politics, players, weapons, and results of thousands of bloody interactions too small and sad to be called wars by the powers that be.

12. FICTION

***Robinson Crusoe* - Daniel Defoe - Easy**

One of the earliest and best novels in the English language. The most classic tale of an adventurer shipwrecked on a desert isle and forced to hunt, explore, build, farm, and fight, just to survive. But he accomplishes more than mere survival; he cultivates crops, domesticates animals, builds fortifications, and makes allies. You have probably noticed a theme in this book list; descriptions of cultures building on what came before, tools creating the capability to create better tools, economic development enabling further economic development, and so on.

Animal Farm & 1984 – George Orwell - Medium

I'm not a fan of Orwell, but anyone in the 21st century should know of these works. The first is an animalized satire of the Soviet Union of the 1940s, and the second depicts a dehumanizing technocracy of the future. Literary critics have always claimed that these books are vaguely critical of some random right-wing threats, but Orwell was clear that each book deliberately describes aspects of Stalin's government. 1984's mass surveillance, forced redefinitions of words, deletion of the historical record, and government control of media certainly do fit the Soviet regime, but they remain chilling to this day, for some reason...

The Screwtape Letters - CS Lewis – Medium

Never mind the wardrobes, this is Lewis's best piece of fiction. A kindly old middle-management sort of demon instructs his young nephew on the kindest and gentlest ways to accomplish the total corruption of mankind. The smiling subtlety is particularly chilling to read in our 21st century world of benevolently controlling bureaucrats. Of note is also his surreal allegorical Space Trilogy, which is equally prescient about transhumanism.

The Lord of the Rings - JRR Tolkien – Hard

The perfect blend of the bloody old myths and hope of Christendom, the dread of powerful enemies and the celebration of selfless sacrifice, the burden of constant vigilance mixed with the joy of battle, the tightrope walk between hope and peril, the interplay of the ancient and noble with the small and humble. This trilogy's imaginative world-building has influenced countless fantasy imitators, but its staying power comes from its strong foundations and real-life themes which have resonated with readers for decades.

13. CHILDREN'S BOOKS

We have had a lot of requests for stuff in this category, especially for books that emphasize real virtue, and take place in the real world. Also, the children's category is where old books disappear most quickly, and new books get worse most quickly.

The Ox Cart Man – Donald Hall, Barbara Cooney

A man packs up all the crops, materials, and products that he and his family have produced over the past year, and carts them into town to sell. He then uses the money to buy things that they cannot make, including tools that will make them more productive, and heads back so they can get to work on next year's projects. A fantastic look at a family-based economy, and early American culture, in a simple book with nice illustrations.

Sam the Minute Man – Nathaniel Benchley, Arnold Lobel

The Battle of Lexington, as experienced by a boy who is just old enough to participate. He and his father answer the emergency call to go fight Redcoats on the town square, and begin the battle for American Independence. This is an easy reader book, great for kids who are ready to read their own stories.

The Little House Books – Laura Ingalls Wilder

This series has been banned in schools and canceled in modern culture, but only for its accurate descriptions of life on the expanding frontiers of late 19th century America. However, I think it is worth keeping around precisely for those frank and sometimes brutal descriptions of grueling manual labor, lost crops, hard winters, and of course, conflict surrounding Native Americans.

Little Britches Series – Ralph Moody

Another autobiographical series about frontier homesteading. This one is set in 1900s Colorado, and leans more heavily into cattle ranching, cowboys, and the change from the old world to the new. As the series progresses, Ralph goes from a boy working on farms and ranches alongside old Indian fighters and Indians alike, to a young entrepreneur working with cars, towns, and movie companies.

Two Little Savages – Earnest Thompson Seaton

The first few chapters are slow going, but eventually the main characters end up camping in rural Canada, trying to master as much Indian woodlore and fieldcraft as possible. The book is even-handed in its descriptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the northern tribes and documents much of their culture and skills observed by the author. Earnest Thompson Seaton was an explorer and naturalist who traveled widely through America's last wildernesses and was a co-founder of the Boy Scouts in his later years.

My Side of the Mountain – Jean Craighead George

The story of a boy who leaves New York City to live off the land in the Catskills. Fictional, but emphasizes real wilderness survival skills, particularly foraging and gathering. Well written and immersive, unlike the two sequels; one is pointless and the other is basically a repackaging of the aforementioned *Diary of an Early American Boy*. Read that instead.

Bored Nothing to Do - Peter Spier

Two boys build and test a working airplane. But where a lesser kid's illustrator would have gone full whimsy and drawn some goofy flying contraption made of bathtubs and umbrellas, Spier shows how actual wooden frame airframes were built, how control surfaces work, and the power-to-weight decisions behind engine selection. It's not exactly a DIY aircraft manual, but it is far more grounded than other books designed to spark the imagination, which is probably why it is currently out of print. Spier's other books also offer equal attention to detail. Whether inspired by simple children's rhymes or basic folk songs, he expands on the material with brilliant artwork that depicts all the practical working pieces of a farm, or a circus, or the first New England canal system, or the rescue boats of the Netherlands. Truly one of the greatest watercolor illustrators ever.

What Do People Do All Day – Richard Scarry

The Richard Scarry franchise has been tainted by a bunch of terrible animated TV shows and the posthumously-extended Scarry Cinematic Universe, but his original books are wholesome and fun. This one talks about all the interconnected jobs that need to be done to keep Busytown running. Early versions of the book contain a fantastic chapter on the importance of stay-at-home moms, but of course it has been omitted from more recent reprints.