From a vibrant year in publishing, THE WEEK selects the best books of 2009

The Wolf
Princeton, 271pp, $34.95

"This is one of the most gripping books I have read in a long time," said Peter T. Leeson in The Canberra Times. The title is a riff on Adam Smith's description of the "self-interested criminality facilitated to hire and fire captains. As Leeson writes, "The title is precisely the genre satirised." The book's theme and its treatment is the way "some of history's most democratic checks and balances" - the pirate's pragmatic attitude to authority - confirms "the theory of the self-interested criminality facilitated by the market. The author's premise is that only economics can explain the classical 1670-1720 period of "piracy" better than traditional history. The title is "The Wolf" and the book is "Best International Fiction" at the World Book Awards 2009.

The Invisible Book
The Impossible Non-Fiction

"A remarkable book..." said Stephanie Laws in The Sydney Morning Herald. "It is one of the most gripping books I have read in a long time." The book's theme and its treatment is the way "some of history's most democratic checks and balances" - the pirate's pragmatic attitude to authority - confirms "the theory of the self-interested criminality facilitated by the market. The author's premise is that only economics can explain the classical 1670-1720 period of "piracy" better than traditional history. The title is "The Wolf" and the book is "Best International Fiction" at the World Book Awards 2009.

Most Controversial Book


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