
Economic Literacy
for Children
Robinson's Island
BOOK 5
The Chief's Share
The sequel to "Whose Hut Is It?"
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AGES 6–9

PICTURE BOOK

The Chief's Share

The sequel to "Whose Hut Is It?"

THE CHARACTERS

Robinson, a sailor who lives on an island and fishes with his net
Friday, a brave sailor and the best climber on the island
Zachary, the chatty green parrot with the red head
Malu, who makes clay jugs, and her daughter Lani, who weaves mats
Tiko, who builds boats and paddles
Kai, who carves fish hooks from bone
Roko, a newcomer who wants to be chief

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One evening a canoe lands on the island, and out steps a man in a crown of palm leaves. “I am Roko, and from today I am your chief!” he says. “Each of you will bring me a share of everything you make.” But what does the chief make himself?

Remember the little sail at the end of the last story? This is the story of the man who came with it. It’s made up, but this is roughly how many chiefs and kings in history began: they said “I’m the chief” and started taking a share of what other people made.



THAT SAME EVENING, AT SUNSET

A sail at sunset

At Kai's party, the little sail on the horizon grows bigger and bigger. At sunset, everyone hurries down to the beach. A canoe with a big pale sail slides onto the sand, and out steps a plump man with a big grey moustache. He wears a long purple cape and a crown woven from palm leaves.

He blows into a big shell trumpet: tooo-ooot! "I am Roko!" he booms. "I have sailed a long way to be your chief!" Zachary tilts his head. "Our what?" he squawks. "Your chief!" says Roko. "The one who decides." Robinson and Friday look at each other. There has never been a chief on this island.



THAT NIGHT, BY THE FIRE

The chief wants a share

The friends welcome Roko, just as they welcomed Kai. Robinson gives him a grilled fish, and Malu brings him water in a jug. Roko eats and eats. Then he stands up, wipes his moustache and makes an announcement.

“From tomorrow, each of you will bring me one of every three things you make. That is the chief’s share. It’s called a tax!” “And what will you give us for it?” asks Lani. “I will decide things for you,” says Roko, “and I will keep you safe!” Then he goes off to sleep in his canoe, under his big sail.



THE NEXT MORNING

Roko on his rock

The next morning, everyone gets to work, just like every day. Robinson casts his net, Friday climbs the palm trees, Malu shapes her jugs, Lani weaves mats, Kai carves hooks and Tiko makes a paddle.

And Roko? He sits on a big flat rock in the shade and blows his trumpet now and then. Zachary lands beside him. “Everyone is making something. What do you make?” Roko puffs out his chest. “Me? I’m the chief. I don’t make things. I make rules!”



AT SUNSET

The chief's share

At sunset, Roko blows his trumpet. "Bring the chief's share!" Roko is so loud, and so sure of himself, that one by one the friends bring him what he asks for. Robinson caught six fish, so he gives two. Friday picked nine coconuts, so he gives three. Lani, Malu and Kai each made three things, so they each give one: a mat, a jug and a hook.

Tiko made only one paddle. "You can't cut a paddle into three," he says. "It's worth six pink shells, so here are two." Zachary counts the pile on the mat like a teacher. "Robinson had six fish, and now he has four. Roko made nothing, but now he has a whole pile!"



THE NEXT MORNING

A present from the chief

That night, Roko grilled both of Robinson's fish and ate them. In the morning he picks up a coconut from his pile and gives it to Lani with a bow. "A present from your kind chief!" "Thank you!" says Lani, surprised.

But Zachary flutters down from a palm tree. "Wait a moment! Every coconut in that pile is Friday's! He climbed up to get them, Roko took them, and now he's giving them away as if they were his." Lani looks at the coconut, and then at Friday. Roko has given a present, but it didn't cost him anything.



A LITTLE LATER, BY THE SEA

One in every three

Robinson hauls in his net: six fish again. He lays them on a leaf and sits down to think. “Two of these will go to Roko. So out of every three fish I catch, I’m catching one for him.”

“Will you cast your net again this afternoon?” asks Zachary. “I wanted to,” sighs Robinson, “so that I could dry a few extra fish for rainy days. But if Roko takes a share of those too, why bother?” Lani, Malu and Kai are thinking the same. When the chief takes a share of everything, hardly anyone feels like making more.



THAT AFTERNOON

Two ways

That afternoon, the friends sit together in the shade of Robinson's hut. Lani holds up the coconut. "This one is Friday's." "There are two ways to get something," says Friday. "One is to make it yourself, or to make something else and swap it. The other is to take it from someone who made it."

"A swap only happens when both people want it," says Malu. "But nobody wanted to give Roko a share. Only Roko wanted it." "And keep us safe from what?" asks Tiko. "When Kai and I quarrelled, we sorted it out ourselves, by the fire." Kai nods. "Saying the hut was mine didn't make it mine. And saying he's the chief doesn't make Roko chief."



AT SUNSET

No, thank you!

At sunset — tooo-ooot! — Roko blows his trumpet. “Bring the chief’s share!” This time the friends walk over to his rock all together. “No, thank you,” says Robinson politely. “No, thank you,” say Friday, Malu, Lani, Tiko and Kai, one after another.

“But… I’m the chief!” cries Roko. “Who made you chief?” asks Malu. “I did,” says Roko. “I said it very loudly.” Zachary hops onto the rock. “I once said very loudly that the whole beach was mine. It didn’t work for me either!” Everyone bursts out laughing, and Roko’s crown slips and tilts to one side.



A LITTLE LATER, UNDER THE FIRST STARS

Roko gives it all back

Roko sits down on his rock and looks at his pile. “If nobody brings me anything,” he says quietly, “I have nothing to eat.” Then he does something nobody expected. He gives the two coconuts back to Friday, the mat to Lani, the jug to Malu, the hook to Kai and the two pink shells to Tiko.

“And the two fish I ate…” he says, looking down at his feet. “I’ll pay you back, Robinson. I just don’t know how yet.” Robinson smiles. “Then tomorrow we’ll find out what you’re good at.”



THE NEXT MORNING

What is Roko good at?

The next morning, Roko takes off his crown and leaves it in his canoe. He tries to catch fish with his hands... splash! The fish slip away. He tries to climb a palm tree... and slides back down, just like Robinson once did. Zachary hides his giggles behind his wing.

Then Friday notices the big basket in Roko's canoe, woven with a zigzag pattern. "Who made this?" "I did," says Roko, "on the long trip here." "My basket is always overflowing with coconuts," says Friday. "Will you swap it for four pink shells?" Roko's eyes grow wide. "You'd give me something... just because you want to?" "That's how swaps work," laughs Friday.



AT NOON

One fish, one shell

At noon, Roko runs over to Robinson and gives him two pink shells. “For the two fish I ate. One fish, one shell, isn’t that right?” “That’s exactly right,” says Robinson. Now Roko has two shells left, earned with his own hands.

Soon Lani wants a basket for her mats too, and Malu wants one to carry her jugs. Roko sits down in the shade and starts weaving, humming as he works. “I’ve never had so much to do,” he laughs, “or been so happy!”



THAT EVENING, AT SUNSET

A real present

At sunset they all have a party on the beach. Robinson brings a big grilled fish, Friday brings coconuts in his new basket, and Malu brings a jug of coconut water. Roko gives Zachary a tiny basket that he wove himself. “A present,” he says. “A real one this time. I made it!”

“So who’s the chief now?” squawks Zachary. “Nobody!” laughs Lani. “Each of us makes things, and we swap when both of us want to.” Roko laughs too. Tiko looks out to sea. Far away, dark clouds are gathering, and the wind is getting stronger... but that’s another story.

The End

The Lesson

At first, Roko made nothing on the island. He just said “I’m the chief” and took a share of what the others made. That share is called a tax. A swap happens because both people want it. But a tax is taken, whether you want to give it or not.

Roko even handed out a present, but the coconut was Friday’s. Whatever a chief gives away, he first has to take from somebody else. And when a share of everything you make is taken, you feel less like making more.

In the end, Roko found the other way: he wove baskets and swapped them, and everyone was glad. Next time you want something, remember Roko’s baskets: when you make and swap, both people are glad; when you take, only one is.

For grown-ups: sources and further reading

WHERE EACH PAGE COMES FROM

- **Page 1, “A sail at sunset”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *Anatomy of the State*, “What the State Is”, ¶3
- **Page 2, “The chief wants a share”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *Anatomy of the State*, “What the State Is”, ¶2 · Murray N. Rothbard, *Anatomy of the State*, “What the State Is”, ¶3
- **Page 3, “Roko on his rock”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *Anatomy of the State*, “What the State Is”, ¶2
- **Page 4, “The chief’s share”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *Anatomy of the State*, “How the State Preserves Itself”, ¶1
- **Page 5, “A present from the chief”:** Frédéric Bastiat, *The Law*, ¶55
- **Page 6, “One in every three”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *Anatomy of the State*, “What the State Is”, ¶2
- **Page 7, “Two ways”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *Anatomy of the State*, “What the State Is”, ¶2
- **Page 8, “No, thank you!”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *Anatomy of the State*, “How the State Preserves Itself”, ¶1
- **Page 9, “Roko gives it all back”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *Anatomy of the State*, “What the State Is”, ¶2
- **Page 10, “What is Roko good at?”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *Anatomy of the State*, “What the State Is”, ¶2
- **Page 11, “One fish, one shell”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *Anatomy of the State*, “What the State Is”, ¶2
- **Page 12, “A real present”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *Anatomy of the State*, “What the State Is”, ¶2 · Frédéric Bastiat, *The Law*, ¶55
- **The Lesson:** Murray N. Rothbard, *Anatomy of the State*, “What the State Is”, ¶2 · Frédéric Bastiat, *The Law*, ¶55 · Murray N. Rothbard, *Anatomy of the State*, “How the State Preserves Itself”, ¶1

FURTHER READING

- Murray N. Rothbard, *Anatomy of the State*, “What the State Is”: Franz Oppenheimer’s two ways of getting what you want, making it and swapping it, or taking it from the people who made it; and the bandit chieftain who proclaims himself king (¶2–3).
- Murray N. Rothbard, *Anatomy of the State*, “How the State Preserves Itself”: why every government needs the acceptance of most of its subjects (¶1).
- Frédéric Bastiat, *The Law*: how to recognise plunder, when the law takes from some people what belongs to them in order to give it to others (¶55).

NOTE

The pictures are illustrations for children, and the story is made up. Robinson and Friday are inspired by Daniel Defoe’s characters (1719); Zachary, Malu, Lani, Tiko, Kai and Roko are invented. The story follows a distinction made by Franz Oppenheimer, which Murray N. Rothbard explains in Anatomy of the State: there are two ways to get what you want, producing and exchanging (the “economic means”) or seizing what others have produced (the “political means”). On our island, Roko gives up as soon as everyone says “No, thank you.” Real rulers usually take by force, so saying no is not so easy; but Rothbard points out that every government needs most of its subjects to accept it. The numbers are ours, so that children can count along easily.

THIS BOOK

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