



Economic Literacy
for Children

Robinson's Island
— BOOK 4

Whose Hut Is It?

The sequel to "The Pink Shells"



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AGES 6-9

PICTURE BOOK

Whose Hut Is It?

The sequel to “The Pink Shells”

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
Tiko, who builds boats, paddles and now a hut
Malu, who makes clay jugs, and her daughter Lani, who weaves mats

Kai, a young man who carves fish hooks from bone

Tiko built his hut on the hill with his own hands. One evening he comes home and finds somebody else asleep inside! “It was empty, so now it’s mine!” says Kai. So whose hut is it?

Remember the pink shells? At the end of the last story, Tiko said he would build his own hut up on the hill. This is the story of that hut. It’s made up, but this is roughly how people work out what is “mine” and what is “yours”.



THE NEXT MORNING

A hut on the hill

Remember what Tiko said at the moonlit party? The very next morning, he climbs the hill above the beach. Nobody has ever built anything up there. The hill is covered in thorny bushes and tall grass, and only Zachary goes up there now and then to enjoy the view.

Tiko pulls up the bushes and cuts straight poles in the forest. For days and days he digs, ties and weaves. Lani makes him a mat for the floor, and he gives her two pink shells for it. At last the hut is ready, with a roof of palm leaves and a little door. "The finest hut on the island!" squawks Zachary.



ONE MORNING

A raft on the waves

One morning, Friday spots something bobbing on the waves. “A raft!” On it sits a young man, tired and soaked, holding on tight to a woven bag. The raft bumps onto the sand, and he climbs off on wobbly legs. “I’m Kai,” he says. “The wind blew me a long way from home.”

Malu brings him water in a jug, and Robinson gives him a grilled fish. Kai eats and eats. Then he opens his bag and shows them what’s inside: little fish hooks carved from bone, smooth and sharp. “I make these,” he says proudly. “With one of these, you can catch fish without a net!”



THE NEXT DAY

Someone in the hut!

The next day, Tiko goes out fishing in his boat. In the evening, he climbs the hill, tired and happy... and stops dead. Someone is snoring in his hut! Kai is fast asleep on Tiko's new mat, and his bag is hanging from the roof.

"Hey! That's my hut!" says Tiko. Kai sits up and rubs his eyes. "Your hut? It was empty when I found it. There was nobody inside. So now it's mine!"



A MOMENT LATER

Whose hut is it?

Tiko pulls one end of the mat, and Kai pulls the other. "It's mine!" "No, it's mine!" Zachary flies round and round the roof, squawking: "Whose hut is it? Whose hut is it?" The others hear the shouting and hurry up the hill.

Friday calmly raises his hands. "Shouting won't tell us whose hut it is," he says. "Come down to the fire. Let's sit and talk it over." Tiko and Kai look at each other, still cross, but they follow him down.



THAT SAME EVENING

Who built it?

Around the fire, Kai says it again: “I found it empty.” Lani thinks for a moment. “But who pulled up the thorny bushes on the hill?” she asks. “Who cut the poles and tied the roof?” Tiko holds out his hands. They are covered in scratches and blisters.

“We all saw him,” says Malu. “He worked up there for days and days, from morning till night.” Kai looks at Tiko’s hands and goes quiet. He didn’t know any of that. By the time he got there, the hut was already built.



BY THE FIRE

Robinson's net

Robinson gets up and holds up his net. "When I leave my net on the rocks to dry, it's empty too. Does that mean anyone can take it?" "Of course not," says Kai. "It's yours. You made it."

"It's the same with the hut," says Robinson. "Before Tiko, nobody had ever used that hill. He was the first to clear it and build on it, with his own hands. Just because something is empty, that doesn't mean it belongs to nobody." Kai scratches his head. "I see," he says. "I never thought of it like that."



BY THE FIRE

Zachary's beach

Suddenly Zachary hops onto a rock, puffs out his chest and squawks: "Mine! The whole beach is mine! I said it first!" Everyone bursts out laughing. "And what have you done with it?" asks Friday.

"Well... nothing," says Zachary. "I just said it, very loudly." "Shouting 'Mine!' isn't enough," laughs Lani. "Tiko didn't just shout. He cleared the hill and built the hut. That's why it's his." Zachary tucks his head under his wing, a little embarrassed.



LATE THAT NIGHT

Do we need a chief?

Kai has another idea. "Maybe we need a chief," he says, "to decide who gets each hut." Malu shakes her head with a smile. "Why? We all know who built the hut. Nobody needs to decide that for us."

Kai gets up and goes over to Tiko. "I'm sorry I slept in your hut," he says. "I'll take my bag and go." Tiko smiles and shakes his hand. "Stay there tonight, it's late. Tomorrow we'll find you a place of your own."



THE NEXT MORNING

A clearing for Kai

The next morning, Friday takes Kai to a clearing by the stream, on the other side of the island. It's full of tall grass and wild flowers. "Nobody uses this place," says Friday. "Nobody has ever built anything here."

"So if I clear it and build my hut here, it will be mine?" asks Kai. "Yes," says Friday, "just like the hut on the hill is Tiko's." Kai gives a big grin and pulls up the first clump of grass straight away.



THAT SAME DAY

Hooks for help

But Kai has never built a hut before. He doesn't know how to tie a roof that keeps the rain out. So he goes to Tiko. "Will you show me how, and help me with the roof? I'll give you six fish hooks." "It's a deal!" says Tiko, and they shake hands.

Robinson wants some hooks too, so he gives Kai six pink shells for three of them. With two shells Kai gets a mat from Lani, with three he gets a jug from Malu, and he still has one left over. Nobody makes anybody do anything. They each give something they have for something they want more.



DAY AFTER DAY

Mine and yours

Day after day, Kai's hut grows beside the stream. Kai puts a row of white stones around his little garden, and Tiko does the same on the hill. "Now everyone can see where your place ends and mine begins," says Kai.

Even Zachary builds a nest in the big palm tree, from twigs he gathered himself. "This nest is mine," he squawks proudly, "because I made it!" This time nobody laughs. "That's right, Zachary," says Lani, clapping her hands. "That nest is yours."



ONE AFTERNOON

A party at the new hut

When the hut is finished, Kai invites everyone to a party. Malu brings a jug of coconut water, Robinson brings grilled fish and Friday brings bananas. Tiko puts his arm around Kai's shoulders. "Now we're neighbours," he says, and they both laugh.

"Who decided whose hut is whose?" asks Zachary. "Nobody had to decide," laughs Lani. "Each hut belongs to the one who built it. And when we all know what's mine and what's yours, there's nothing to fight about."

The End

The Lesson

Nobody had used the hill before Tiko. He was the first to clear it and build there, with his own hands. That's why the hut is his. Finding something empty, or shouting "Mine!" like Zachary, doesn't make it yours.

Kai didn't take the hut by force. He found a place that nobody was using and made it his own with his work. And when he needed help, he swapped: hooks for help, shells for a mat and a jug. Everyone agreed, and everyone was happy.

When everyone knows what's mine and what's yours, there's nothing to fight about. No chief was needed: the friends on the island worked it out for themselves, around the fire. A clear "mine and yours", and swaps that everyone makes because they want to, keep the peace.

For grown-ups: sources and further reading

WHERE EACH PAGE COMES FROM

- **Page 1, “A hut on the hill”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, ch. 2, “Property Rights”, ¶19
- **Page 2, “A raft on the waves”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, ch. 2, “Property Rights”, ¶18
- **Page 3, “Someone in the hut!”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, ch. 2, “Property Rights”, ¶15
- **Page 4, “Whose hut is it?”:** Frédéric Bastiat, *The Law*, ¶5
- **Page 5, “Who built it?”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, ch. 2, “Property Rights”, ¶19
- **Page 6, “Robinson’s net”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, ch. 2, “Property Rights”, ¶23
- **Page 7, “Zachary’s beach”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, ch. 2, “Property Rights”, ¶23
- **Page 8, “Do we need a chief?”:** Frédéric Bastiat, *The Law*, ¶5
- **Page 9, “A clearing for Kai”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, ch. 2, “Property Rights”, ¶18
- **Page 10, “Hooks for help”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, ch. 2, “Free Exchange and Free Contract”, ¶4
- **Page 11, “Mine and yours”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, ch. 2, “Free Exchange and Free Contract”, ¶1

- **Page 12, “A party at the new hut”:** Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, ch. 2, “Free Exchange and Free Contract”, ¶4
- **The Lesson:** Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, ch. 2, “Property Rights”, ¶19 · Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, ch. 2, “Property Rights”, ¶23 · Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, ch. 2, “Free Exchange and Free Contract”, ¶4 · Frédéric Bastiat, *The Law*, ¶5

FURTHER READING

- Murray N. Rothbard, *For a New Liberty*, ch. 2: how someone comes to own a thing that belonged to nobody, by being the first to use it and work on it, and why free swaps between owners keep the peace (sections “Property Rights” and “Free Exchange and Free Contract”).
- Frédéric Bastiat, *The Law*: property does not exist because people made laws; laws were made because property existed first.

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 and Kai are invented. The story follows an old idea that Murray N. Rothbard explains: a thing that belonged to nobody becomes yours when you are the first to use it and work on it, and from then on it only changes hands if you choose to give it away.

THIS BOOK

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