

amity shlaes the forgotten man

Ebook Description: Amity Shlaes' "The Forgotten Man" - A Re-examination

Amity Shlaes's *The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression* is a seminal work challenging conventional narratives surrounding the Great Depression. This ebook delves deep into Shlaes's arguments, re-examining her thesis and exploring its lasting relevance in contemporary economic and political discourse. This isn't merely a summary; it's a critical analysis, contextualizing Shlaes's work within the broader historical landscape and considering its strengths, weaknesses, and continuing impact on our understanding of economic crises and government intervention. The book investigates the devastating effects of the New Deal, arguing that its policies prolonged rather than alleviated the Depression's suffering, focusing on the "forgotten man" – the ordinary citizen burdened by government overreach. The ebook will appeal to readers interested in economic history, political science, and the enduring debate over the role of government in a market economy. This re-examination offers a fresh perspective on a pivotal moment in American history, providing valuable insights into the challenges of economic recovery and the complexities of policy-making.

Ebook Title: Re-examining the Forgotten Man: A Critical Analysis of Amity Shlaes's Work

Outline:

Introduction: Setting the Stage – The prevailing narrative of the Great Depression and Shlaes's counter-narrative.

Chapter 1: The Forgotten Man: Defining the Central Figure – Who was the "forgotten man" according to Shlaes, and how did his experiences shape her argument?

Chapter 2: The Hoover Administration and the Road to the Depression – Analyzing Hoover's policies and their impact on the economy.

Chapter 3: The New Deal: A Critical Assessment – Examining the successes and failures of Roosevelt's policies, focusing on Shlaes's critiques.

Chapter 4: The "Forgotten Man" and the Political Landscape – How did the experiences of the "forgotten man" shape the political climate of the era?

Chapter 5: The Long-Term Consequences – The lasting impact of the Great Depression and the New Deal on American society and economics.

Conclusion: Lessons Learned and Continuing Relevance – Drawing conclusions and discussing the implications of Shlaes's arguments for contemporary economic policy.

Article: Re-examining the Forgotten Man: A Critical Analysis of Amity Shlaes's Work

Introduction: Setting the Stage – The Prevailing Narrative and Shlaes's Counter-Narrative

The Great Depression, a period of unprecedented economic hardship in the United States, has been extensively studied and interpreted. The dominant narrative frequently credits President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs with mitigating the crisis and preventing total societal collapse. However, Amity Shlaes's *The Forgotten Man* challenges this conventional wisdom, presenting a compelling alternative perspective. Shlaes argues that the New Deal, while well-intentioned, ultimately prolonged the Depression by hindering economic recovery and stifling individual initiative. This article will delve into Shlaes's arguments, critically examining her thesis and contextualizing it within the historical evidence.

Chapter 1: The Forgotten Man: Defining the Central Figure

Shlaes's "forgotten man" is not a nameless, faceless entity. She identifies him as the average American citizen, the small businessman, the worker, the farmer – those who bore the brunt of the Depression's economic hardship yet were largely ignored by government policies that focused on large-scale intervention and regulation. These individuals, according to Shlaes, were burdened by increased taxes, excessive regulations, and a stifling bureaucracy, which further hampered their ability to recover from the economic downturn. The "forgotten man" represents the resilience of the American spirit against overwhelming odds, and Shlaes highlights their struggles to survive and rebuild in the face of government policies that, in her view, actively worked against them.

Chapter 2: The Hoover Administration and the Road to the Depression

Shlaes's analysis doesn't solely focus on the New Deal. She also examines Herbert Hoover's administration and the policies leading up to the Depression's severity. While acknowledging Hoover's attempts to address the crisis, Shlaes argues that his interventions were insufficient and often counterproductive, contributing to a prolonged period of economic stagnation. Her detailed account illustrates how Hoover's belief in voluntary cooperation among businesses and limited government intervention ultimately failed to stem the economic tide. This section sets the stage for her critique of the New Deal, emphasizing the continuity of certain economic philosophies across administrations.

Chapter 3: The New Deal: A Critical Assessment

This chapter forms the core of Shlaes's argument. She systematically critiques various aspects of the New Deal, arguing that programs designed to stimulate the economy often had the opposite effect. For example, she contends that the National Recovery Administration (NRA) stifled competition and hindered innovation through price controls and production quotas, harming both businesses and consumers. Similarly, she criticizes the Works Progress Administration (WPA) for creating inefficient and often wasteful projects, while simultaneously raising taxes that further depressed private investment. This section provides a detailed analysis of specific New Deal programs and their alleged negative impact on the "forgotten man".

Chapter 4: The Forgotten Man and the Political Landscape

Shlaes argues that the frustration and hardship experienced by the "forgotten man" during the Depression had a profound impact on the political landscape. The rise of populist and isolationist movements, she suggests, were partly fueled by the widespread resentment towards government overreach and the perceived failure of the New Deal to address the needs of ordinary Americans. This chapter explores the political ramifications of the Depression and connects them to the experiences and sentiments of the "forgotten man," highlighting the tension between government

intervention and individual liberty.

Chapter 5: The Long-Term Consequences

The final chapter extends the analysis beyond the immediate impact of the Depression and the New Deal, examining their long-term consequences for American society and the economy. Shlaes posits that the increased role of the federal government, established during this period, laid the groundwork for future expansions of government power and intervention in the economy. She suggests that the legacy of the New Deal continues to shape contemporary economic and political debates, influencing policy choices and impacting the relationship between government and the individual.

Conclusion: Lessons Learned and Continuing Relevance

Shlaes's *The Forgotten Man* offers a revisionist history of the Great Depression, challenging the conventional narrative and prompting a reassessment of the role of government intervention in times of economic crisis. While her arguments have been debated extensively by historians and economists, her work remains valuable for its focus on the individual experience and its questioning of the efficacy of large-scale government intervention. This re-examination of Shlaes's work provides a framework for understanding the complex interplay between economic policies, individual liberty, and the enduring struggle to balance the needs of the collective with the rights of the individual.

FAQs

1. What is the central argument of *The Forgotten Man*? That the New Deal prolonged the Great Depression by stifling individual initiative and hindering economic recovery.
1. Who is the "forgotten man" in Shlaes's book? The average American citizen, burdened by government policies.
1. What are some of the New Deal programs criticized by Shlaes? The NRA and the WPA.
1. How does Shlaes's book differ from traditional accounts of the Great Depression? It challenges the prevailing narrative that the New Deal saved the country.
1. What is the significance of Shlaes's work? It provides an alternative interpretation of a pivotal historical event.

1. What are some of the criticisms of Shlaes's work? Some historians dispute her interpretations of specific New Deal programs.
1. Is *The Forgotten Man* a purely historical account, or does it have contemporary relevance? It has contemporary relevance for discussions on government intervention and economic policy.
1. What is the overall tone of *The Forgotten Man*? Critical of the New Deal and sympathetic to the struggles of ordinary Americans.
1. What type of reader would find *The Forgotten Man* most engaging? Readers interested in economic history, political science, and the role of government.

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