

[IZA News](#)[About IZA](#)[Organization Chart](#)[People](#)[Research](#)[Labor Policy](#)[Publications](#)[Discussion Papers](#)[Policy Papers](#)[Standpunkte](#)[Books](#)[Research Reports](#)[IZA Compact](#)[IZA in the Press](#)[Publication Record](#)[Journals](#)[Events](#)[IZA Prize / YLE Award](#)[Teaching](#)[Links / Resources](#)[Press](#)

IZA



Economic History or History of Economics? A Review Essay on Sylvia Nasar's Grand Pursuit: The Story of Economic Genius

by Orley Ashenfelter
(December 2011)

published in: Journal of Economic Literature, 2012, 50 (1), 96 - 102

Abstract:

In this essay I review Sylvia Nasar's long awaited new history of economics, Grand Pursuit. I describe how the book is an economic history of the period from 1850-1950, with distinguished economists' stories inserted in appropriate places. Nasar's goal is to show how economists work, but also to show that they are people too – with more than enough warts and foibles to show they are human! I contrast the general view of the role of economics in Grand Pursuit with Robert Heilbroner's remarkable different conception in The Worldly Philosophers. I also discuss more generally the question of why economists might be interested in their history at all.

Text: See [Discussion Paper No. 6213](#)

[Back](#)