IN FLIGHT READING

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Category: Reviews

As is my wont, I took a few books out of the library to read while I was travelling. However, the current hand baggage restrictions meant that I couldn't actually take any of the books I had with me and I was forced to buy something at WH Smiths before boarding my flight. Faced with only a short time to buy a book and an array of 'must read blockbusters' on the shelf, I made the mistake of getting Freakonomics by Levitt and Dubner. The cover says that it is a phenomenon, non-stop fun and brilliant. Sorry, it isn't. It is boring, and self-absorbed. The book uses micro economic theory to explore issues such as teachers cheating to give their classes higher marks in standardised tests and why drug dealers live with their mothers. Some of these are the sort of mildly intereting snippits which might occupy a comment section in a newspaper - but never a full book. In fact, the authors clearly realise that this is the case; a good proportion of the book is filled with self congratulaing prose telling you how clever they are and predicting what is going to come up in the next few chapters. By the time you actually get to the detail, you find that you've already discovered everything interesting in one of the introductory teasers. One of the facts that the authors could have picked up on is that if you hype a book enough people will buy it and read it, even if the book has nothing interesting to say. I made that mistake - you shouldn't.