

[Ayn Rand's birthday](#) [1]

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Ayn Rand, author of the novels [The Fountainhead](#) [3], [Atlas Shrugged](#) [4] and books on the philosophy of capitalism like [The Virtue of Selfishness](#) [5] and [Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal](#) [6], was born in Russia 107 years ago today. Rand is a divisive figure, often misunderstood, but her writings have served as the "gateway drug" into libertarianism for many people. (There's even a book called [It Usually Begins With Ayn Rand](#) [7]!) Most recently, her magnum opus *Atlas Shrugged*, which tells the story of a crumbling dystopian world in which creative people have gone on strike, has been enjoying a [resurgence](#) [8] in popularity in these troubled times.

What's special about Ayn Rand is how, unlike economists like Mises, Hayek and Friedman, she gave a moral foundation to the capitalist system. Not only does a capitalist system enrich the lives of its inhabitants by making efficient use of resources, Rand said, it allows them to flourish by living productive, independent lives. There's something very appealing about that view of humanity ? that, absent the slaver's whip and the taxman's calculator, men and women can better themselves by thinking, creating and producing new things, by remaking the world as they want to.

Many of Rand's critics focus on her personal failings, ignoring her deeply humanistic philosophy, which cherished ideas and creative people. On her birthday, it's worth reflecting on what makes Ayn Rand so important to so many people, and what her writings have to offer us at a time when bold creators and new ideas are sorely needed.

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