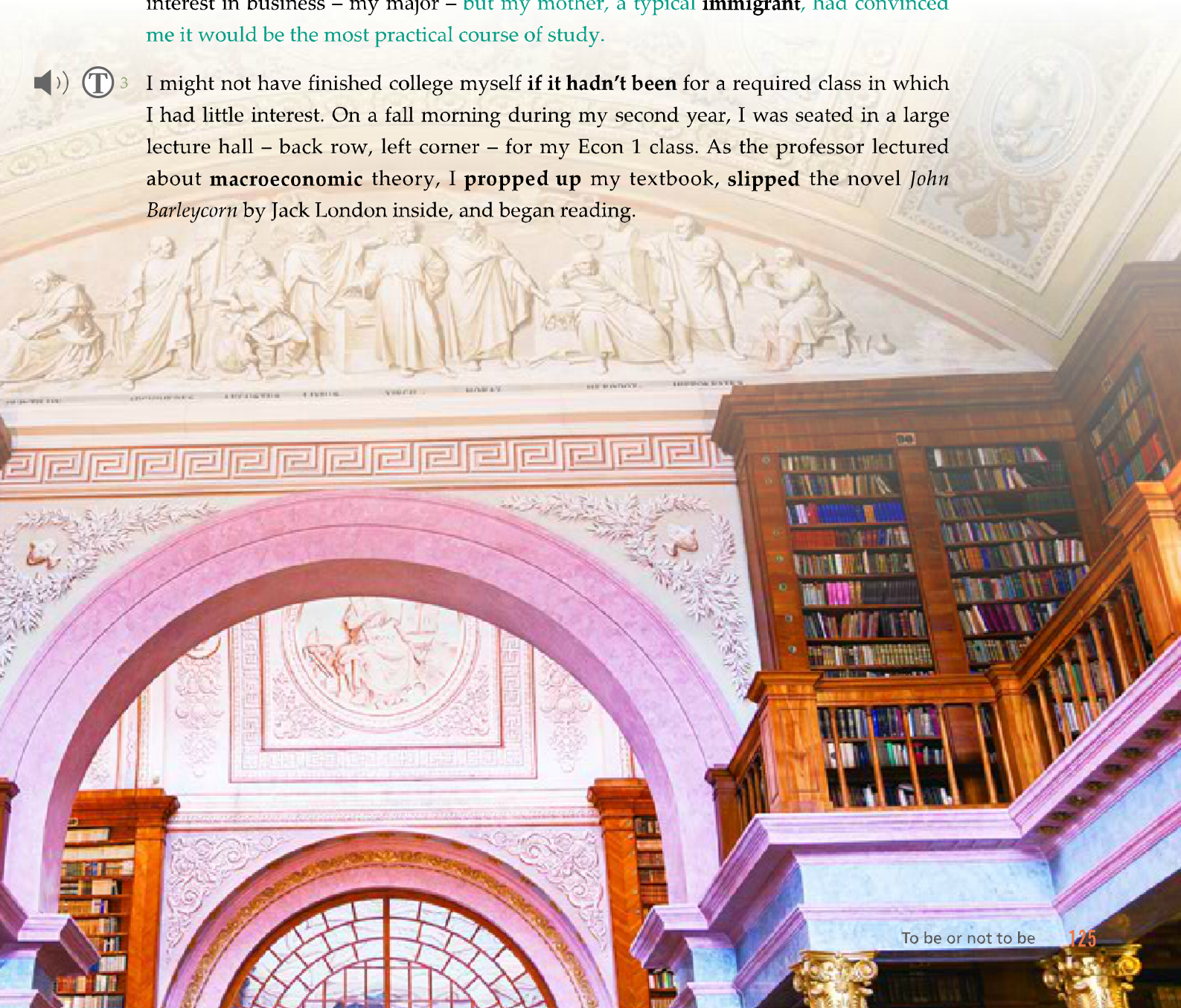


🔊) How an economics professor taught me a life-changing lesson – in literature ✍

🔊) (T) ¹ Every spring, during college **graduation** season, I think about a former professor who **uttered** two **astounding** sentences that changed the course of my life.

🔊) (T) ² I was not a happy student, attending community college because I didn't have the grades, the money or the motivation to attend a four-year university. I had no real interest in business – my major – **but my mother, a typical immigrant, had convinced me it would be the most practical course of study.**

🔊) (T) ³ I might not have finished college myself **if it hadn't been** for a required class in which I had little interest. On a fall morning during my second year, I was seated in a large lecture hall – back row, left corner – for my Econ 1 class. As the professor lectured about **macroeconomic** theory, I **propped up** my textbook, **slipped** the novel *John Barleycorn* by Jack London inside, and began reading.



- 4 After about 20 minutes, the professor pushed aside his notes and began walking toward my side of the classroom. Every student but me, I was told later, watched him walk toward the back of the lecture hall. I was lost in the novel.
- 5 When he reached my desk, he slipped behind me, leaned over and **snatched** the book from my hands. I suddenly realized that every single student in the class was staring at me. I felt shame. My **throat** went dry and I could hear my heart **pounding** in my chest.
- 6 The professor **leafed through** a few pages of the novel. The absolute silence in the classroom was terrifying.
- 7 Finally, he held the book above his head, waved it and announced in a very loud voice: "This student won't be spending the rest of his life studying columns of **debits** and **credits**. He's interested in literature." He pronounced the last word with **genuine reverence**.
- 8 He handed the book back to me, **strolled** back and **resumed** his lecture.
- 9 I was so **stunned**; I spent the rest of the class in a **daze**.
- 10 During the next few weeks, I **pondered** his reaction. If an economics professor valued literature as much as or even more than economics, perhaps there was some real value in all the reading I was doing outside of class. Maybe reading novels wasn't just an escape and a **diversion**. Maybe the study of literature would be a **worthwhile pursuit**. And if I could succeed as a literature student, maybe this would lead me in a direction that might enhance my career prospects. I had no idea what career this would be, but I hoped that by the time I finished school, I'd find out.
- 11 I changed my major to English, raised my grades and **transferred** to UC Santa Barbara. I appreciated school for the first time, and I discovered that a love of reading translated to a love for writing. I attended graduate school in **journalism** and **embarked on** a career as a newspaper reporter, including two decades at the *Los Angeles Times*. I eventually left daily journalism to write books.
- 12 Last month, after telling this story to a group of college students, I decided to give the professor a call. I could only recall his last name, so I contacted a member of the **faculty alumni** association. He put me in touch with David Kaplan, who is 83; he retired 14 years ago.
- 13 The first thing I asked Kaplan was whether he remembered our encounter. He did not.
- 14 "But it doesn't surprise me that I'd respond like that," he said. "It reflects what I was thinking about at the time and what I was going through, personally."

- 15 After **obtaining** bachelor's and master's degrees in economics at UCLA and teaching the subject for a decade at Santa Monica College, Kaplan had come to the conclusion that his education was narrow and incomplete. He began taking literature classes at UCLA and reading widely on his own.
- 16 Kaplan continued teaching economics, and to **believe in** the need for practical majors such as business. But he also began to think that university officials who de-emphasized the humanities, and students who **dismissed** their **significance**, were **misdirected**.
- 17 Economic theory is important, he told me, but reading authors such as Tolstoy, Chekhov, Dickens, Shakespeare and Wordsworth has a different and equally important kind of worth, shaping students' values and **deepening** their understanding of life. The writing, critical thinking skills and appreciation for **creativity** that students learn as **liberal arts** majors, Kaplan said, will enrich their lives and also serve them well in a variety of careers, including business.
- 18 "I probably reacted to you the way I did because I believe that reading a novel is as valuable as a dry economics lecture," he said, "and the themes might **resonate** more and, ultimately, have a greater impact on your life."

CULTURE NOTES

Community college: In the United States, a community college usually refers to a two-year public educational institution that provides lower-level higher education. After graduating from a community college, some students choose to transfer to a four-year college or university for two to three years to get a bachelor's degree.

Econ 1: The coding system for Economics courses varies in different colleges of different countries. In the United States, Econ 1 can be the course "Principles of Economics" (经济学原理), "Microeconomics" (微观经济学), or "Macroeconomics" (宏观经济学). It is the prerequisite course (先修课程) for other economics courses.

John Barleycorn: Published in 1913, it is an autobiographical novel (自传体小说) by Jack London, American novelist and short-story writer. This novel discusses masculinity (阳刚之气), male friendship, and also various life experiences the author has had with alcohol and at different stages in his

