A short list of really good books on a variety of topics:

**Travel**

- The Life of Birds, by David Attenborough (1998)
  - David Attenborough communicates well the amazing adaptations of birds around the world; really makes you want to experience some of these for yourself.

- Richard Halliburton's Complete Book of Marvels (1941)
  - Richard Halliburton led an amazing life and he wrote with verve and simplicity of style that is truly enchanting.

  - These 50 trips really take you there.

**Long run prosperity**

  - An intriguing and insightful view on why nations experience decline.

- "Plagues and Peoples", by William McNeill (1977)
  - Characterizes history as a biological process, where aggregate outcomes are heavily influenced by macro- and micro-pathogens. Fascinating.

  - Some intriguing hypotheses on geography's role in economic development.

- "The Elusive Quest for Growth" by William Easterly (2002)
  - What we've learned from the last 50 years of studying and trying to help developing nations achieve faster economic growth. The record is unambiguous - there are very few success stories. Major theme: people respond to incentives.

- "The White Man's Burden: why the West's efforts to aid the Rest have done so much ill and so little good" by William Easterly (2006)
  - Why most aid programs have failed, are failing, and will continue to fail. Easterly is not against helping the needy; he simply notes that most efforts have done more harm than good. The reasons will probably surprise you. This book is a must read.

**History, Politics, Current Events**

- "The Day the Universe Changed", by James Burke (1995)
  - Enlivens world history by isolating particularly pivotal events that changed the course of history.

- "American Caesar", by William Manchester (1978)
  - Biography of Douglas MacArthur. Especially riveting account of MacArthur's role in the Pacific theater of WWII.
• "From Beruit to Jerusalem", by Thomas Friedman (1989)
  o A good introduction to the history of Israeli-Palestinian 'issues'.

• "Longitudes and Attitudes", by Thomas Friedman (2002)
  o A collection of Friedman's New York Times columns about the U.S. and Middle East developments in the two years immediately following 9/11/01.

Finance & Economics

  o Krugman does a good job of showing how a few powerful ideas can go a long way in understanding the economics behind events; an excellent telling.

  o This is a terrific book. Its economics in plain English by an excellent writer (Wheelan is an erstwhile correspondent for The Economist). He divides the book into chapters reflecting really the important ideas in economics (the power of markets; the importance of incentives; good (& bad) government; productivity and economic growth; information; politics; finance; monetary policy; and trade and globalization). Some great one-liners: the S&L executives being members of the 3-6-3 club (borrow at 3%, lend at 6%, and arrive at the golf course at 3pm); macro forces are like the tides, micro forces determine the quality of the boat you're in; Glenn Loury explains why affirmative action generates feelings of reverse discrimination way out of proportion to reality.

Good, but not quite in the 'really good' category:

• "Freakonomics", by Steven Levitt and Stephen Dubner (2005)
  o Good book; dumb title.

• "Stocks for the Long Run" by Jeremy Siegel (1994)
  o A good description of the equity premium puzzle in the 1st chapter.