

Ten Economic Lessons from *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*

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Abstract:

The classic movie, *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*, is permeated with an awareness of economic forces. Almost every scene and decision made in the movie has a clearly explained economic logic and the film yields important insights and lessons into the underpinnings of economic success and failure.

With the price of gold having soared to above \$1500 per ounce, here's an investment tip. Spend a couple hours watching a cinematic classic – John Huston's *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. The American Film Institute selected *Sierra Madre* as thirtieth on its list of the best one hundred movies from the first century of American cinema because it showcases fine acting and just the right balance of action and dialogue, suspense and intrigue, sentimentality and cold calculation. But critics have missed another fundamental attraction – this engrossing tale is packed with an unparalleled awareness of economic forces at work. The lessons of *Sierra Madre*, about entrepreneurship, the importance of property rights, the creation of value and a range of other economic issues deserve a very close examination.

The film, based on a novel by the enigmatic B. Traven (1935)¹, tells the tale of three prospectors who trek into the mountains, dodge bandits and laboriously unearth enough gold to make themselves filthy rich – before losing it all. Although it didn't do particularly well at the box office (perhaps because of a bitter streak, the lack of a traditional Hollywood ending and an absence of women in the cast), contemporary critics lauded the movie, which garnered John Huston the 1948 Academy Award for direction and for screenplay adaptation and earned his father, Walter Huston, the Oscar for Best Supporting Actor. In addition, the New York Film Critics picked it as the year's best picture and it won the Golden Globe.

¹ On the book's opening page Traven puts economic considerations at the forefront: "The bench on which Dobbs was sitting was not so good ... Dobbs was too much occupied with other thoughts to take any account of how he was sitting. Just then he was looking for a solution to that age-old problem which makes so many people forget all other thoughts and things. He worked his mind to answer the question: How can I get some money right now?" (p. 1). For all of his insights, Traven also expresses a number of notions that most economists will instantly reject – and many readers will recoil at his fulminations on non-economic subjects.

The film is set in Mexico in 1925, first in Tampico (the hub of an oil drilling boom) and later in the isolated Sierra Madre Mountains of the interior. Fred C. Dobbs (played by Humphrey Bogart) and Bob Curtin (played by Tim Holt) are having trouble finding good work in Tampico. The two naively think about prospecting for gold after an employer tries to stiff them and hearing the stories of a seemingly broken-down old prospector, Howard (played by Walter Huston). After Dobbs wins the lottery, the three pool their resources, form a partnership, buy supplies and head for the mountains to seek their fortune. Howard discovers gold and teaches the mining trade to the others. After months of backbreaking labor in a secret, isolated location, the trio's wealth begins to grow but so does mistrust – especially on the part of Dobbs. The three fend off an attack by bandits and must decide how to deal with an interloper, Jim Cody (played by Bruce Bennett), before the mine's output runs down and they make the dangerous trek with their fortune back to civilization. After Howard saves a boy's life, the local Indians insist that he must stay with them – so he agrees to meet up with the others later. Spoiler alert: At this point, Dobbs gives in to greed and paranoia – and attempts to kill Curtin and take the treasure for himself. Traveling alone, he is overcome by exhaustion and killed by highway robbers, who think the gold dust is ordinary dirt and dump it out on the ground. A storm arises and blows away all the gold dust just before Howard and the injured Curtin arrive on the scene to see the trick that fate and nature have played on them.

Not only is there gold in these hills, there are a slew of economic insights.

Lesson 1: Entrepreneurs Need Not Be Omniscient to Be Successful

When Dobbs and Curtin first encounter Howard in a flophouse, he is expounding on the reasons that gold sells for \$20 an ounce. Howard's variant of the labor theory of value is way off the mark in the eyes of most economists. He argues gold is worth \$20 an ounce because – "A thousand men, say, go searching for gold. After six months, one of 'em is lucky – one out of the thousand. His find represents not only his own labor but that of nine hundred and ninety-nine others to boot. That's, uh, six thousand months or five hundred years scrabbling over mountains, going hungry and thirsty. An ounce of gold ... is worth what it is because of the human labor that went into the finding and the gettin' of it." This analysis, of course, leaves out the demand side and it isn't too accurate on the supply side either. By the late 1800s most gold production came from very *capital* intensive mines using methods much more advanced than those envisioned by Howard and shown in the movie. By the early twentieth century, massive earth moving equipment and chemical processes were the state of the art (Gaggio 2003).²

Howard brushes off the demand for gold: "Gold itself ain't good for nothing, except for making jewelry with and gold teeth."³ Saying that "gold itself ain't good for nothing, except ..." isn't much different than saying that, say, chairs or haircuts or dogs or DVD players aren't good for anything except Yet gold, chairs, haircuts, dogs and DVD players all have value to humans beyond our biological need for enough food and

² The development of these processes allowed worldwide gold output to rise substantially throughout the twentieth century, rising from about 500 tons per year at the outset to more than 2500 tons per year at the end of the century (U.S. Geological Survey 2007). The best estimates available suggest that the total volume of gold ever mined up to the end of 2011 was approximately 171,300 metric tons, of which around 59 percent has been mined since 1950 (World Gold Council 2013).

³ Oddly, Howard also omits the demand that arose from the fact that gold was the basis of most of the world's money supply in the 1920s.

shelter to survive. They all have value because they are things that help make civilized life worth living.

So, Howard is 0-for-2 – his understanding the nature of both the demand and the supply for the product is lacking. Or maybe he’s 0-for-3, since the determination of the price of a durable natural resource, like gold, is especially complex because the current demand interacts with both the stock in existence and the flow of newly discovered production – as well as expectations about the future supply and demand. 0-for-1, 0-for-2, 0-for-a million. It doesn’t really matter whether Howard’s theories about the value of gold are refined or unrefined.

As Hayek (1945) explained so well, an entrepreneur doesn’t need to know *why* the price is high or low, he merely needs to know *that* the price is higher than his expected costs for it to signal him to enter a business. And costs are a subject that Howard knows quite well, due to a lifetime of experience. Howard turns out to be a very savvy entrepreneur – the lesson is that he needs to know his part of the business; he doesn’t need to know everything.

Lesson 2: Economic Value Arises from Voluntary Cooperation

Like a page out of Coase’s (1937) insightful “The Nature of the Firm,” Dobbs, Curtin and Howard form a partnership when it becomes obvious that they will be more productive working together than separately. There are clear gains from teamwork to be had. Howard has knowledge about how to organize production and plenty of experience; Dobbs and Curtin have strong backs; Dobbs has more capital than the others. Team work

is physically important in several tasks, such as putting the timbers in place in the mine. There are economies of scale, especially in the ability to guard and protect the treasure from bandits. Finally, teamwork overcomes the immense loneliness of going it alone far from civilization.

Dobbs initially dismisses Howard as a potential liability. Fortunately, Curtin realizes that they “might have real use for an experienced guy like that old timer.” The greenhorns initially assume that that it’s a matter of hiking into the wilderness, spotting an outcropping gold, digging it up and heading home. Dobbs naively describes Mexico as a “country where the nuggets of gold are just crying for you to take ‘em out of the ground.” Once they’ve reached the mountains, however, Howard demonstrates that it takes a sharp eye to find a profitable gold deposit. He teaches them that “Gold ain’t like a stone in a river bed. It don’t cry out to be picked up. No, you gotta know how to recognize it and finding it ain’t all – not by a long shot. You gotta know how to tickle it, so she’ll come out laughing.” In other words, you’ve got to know how to get it at the least possible cost.

The three agree on an even one-third split of the output of their joint enterprise. It’s not obvious what the equilibrium division of profits will be in negotiations that involve such a small number of players, each with unique talents and alternatives, each uncertain of how the enterprise will pan out. What is the value of Howard’s knowledge and organizational ability versus the capital each invests versus the labor that each will put in at the worksite? These are very hard to measure and predict. A disinterested analysis might suggest that Howard’s is probably the greatest contribution, but he wisely doesn’t bargain for a larger share. Moreover their productivity depends on one another’s

productivity due to economies of scale and team work. The one-third split seems fair, since the labor input was ultimately a lot more costly than the capital input – and each supplies about one-third of the labor. In addition, Howard isn't in a good position to bargain for a larger share because the others don't initially know the value of his skills and he had already announced his eagerness to get into the business again – his eagerness to go on the treasure hunt.

This division of the spoils works because – even though Dobbs or Howard might be able to argue that his cut should be bigger – the equal shares immediately elicit cooperation among the trio. It's also obvious to Howard, that the other two won't need him as much after he's taught them the trade, so that if he angles for a larger share, they'll probably try to recontract at a more favorable rate later.

During their months of toil, the ultimate payoff is always in the future. Equal shares seems to be a natural equilibrium for maximizing trust and cooperation, although it clearly isn't a panacea – as the look on Howard's face seems to imply when Dobbs and Curtin shake hands to seal the negotiations. The project is plagued by mistrust because the gains from the partnership will come only after the gold is sold and the proceeds are divided – and there's room for strategic behavior at every step along the way.

Lessons 3 and 4: Big Bills Aren't Left on the Sidewalk, Wise Decisions Compare Marginal Costs to Marginal Benefits

In a well-known joke, two economists are walking down the street. One spots a \$100 bill lying on the sidewalk and remarks, "Wow! There's a \$100 bill." The other

assures him, “That can’t be a \$100 bill. If it was, somebody would have already picked it up.” The point is that you are rarely the first one to walk down the sidewalk, rarely the first to enter a market. If so, profit opportunities that are obvious to everyone will quickly be seized and eliminated. Successful entrepreneurs must search for \$100 bills in places others wouldn’t look – down in the storm drain, rather than on the sidewalk – and then try to figure out ways to pick up the hard-to-get bill. They don’t simply *find* hundred dollars, they painstakingly, insightfully *make* them – and get others to collaborate with them in making them.

Why do so few people prospect today, in comparison, say, the days of the California (1840s), Australia (1850s), South Africa (1880s) or Klondike (1890s) gold rushes (Gold Rushes 2013)? Why was prospecting so rare by the 1920s? Simple economic logic suggests that in a field like gold mining, the most accessible sites will be hit first; the “low hanging fruit” will be picked first. Those who come later will have a higher marginal cost of finding ore and/or picking fruit. By the 1920s virtually any area with the potential for gold had been identified and scoured clean of the easy pickings. (The only major subsequent gold rushes have been in the very inaccessible Amazon region.)

Howard knows this. In laying out their business strategy, he uses this economic logic to argue that they have to explore an area far from railroad tracks and civilization – where no construction engineer, surveyor or prospector had yet explored. They have to go where the map shows nothing (neither mountain nor swamp nor desert), because this means that no outsider is sure what’s there – and explored places will have already been scoured clean. The economic logic is compelling: maps are made by people on salary,

and they have no incentive to risk their hides going to places far from railroad routes and civilization. As a shrewd entrepreneur Howard is *happy* to hear tall tales about tigers so big and strong they can climb trees with burros in their mouths. These tales act as barriers to entry, keeping the faint of heart away from their destination and increasing the likelihood that there is still some gold to be found. The prospectors must look in a high cost area and after they've hacked their way through the jungle and braved a dust storm, their climb up into the mountains is a metaphorical climb up the marginal cost curve.

After making this exhausting trek Curtin ruefully says, "If I'd known what prospecting meant, I'd've stayed in Tampico." However, he and Dobbs don't turn back. Their struggles in getting to the gold-bearing area are a sunk cost. They can't be unspent. Their decision to return or forge onward must examine the *marginal* costs versus the *marginal* benefits.

Next Howard uses compelling economic logic in selecting the precise site for their dig. While Dobbs and Curtin celebrate the discovery of fool's gold (iron pyrite), Howard explains that they've already walked over four or five locations with gold. One looked like rich diggings but the cost of bringing water to the site would have been too high; the others weren't promising enough to justify the effort ("there wasn't enough gold to pay us a good day's wages"). Howard is clearly bent on the maximizing profits, selecting the site with the highest expected rate of return by using the common sense of cost-benefit analysis. Finally, he directs them to pitch their camp down the mountain, away from their mine. Again, the economic logic is clear. The extra cost of commuting between the camp and mine is outweighed by the likely benefit of keeping their mine's location secret if strangers shows up.

Lesson 5: Property Rights Are Only As Good as the Property Rights Enforcer

As usual, Howard's decision of whether or not to file a claim is grounded in profit-maximizing logic. Curtin asks, "Wouldn't it be easier to file a claim?" than sneaking into the wilderness and run the risks of digging without any legal authority? Howard replies, "Easier, maybe, but not so profitable. Wouldn't be no time till an emissary of a big mining company would be up here with papers showing we have no right to be here."

Why doesn't the team file a claim on the land? Perhaps the most important reason is that in such a location one would only file a claim if he already knew there was gold to be found. The filing would alert others to the gold's location, making the claim worthless and insecure in such a lawless, remote location. When property rights are difficult or costly to enforce, people will have little incentive to claim them, instead they will try to hide the property. Perhaps Howard, Curtin and Dobbs *are* squatting on someone else's claim. More likely Howard's worry is that if the land's value becomes known someone more powerful would take a legitimate claim away from them – someone who controls the government and court system. (Traven's book is full of tales in which those with a legitimate claim to gold are cheated by representatives of the state.) A property right is only as secure as the integrity and power of the right-granting government and the Mexican government in this period wasn't known for its integrity.

Gavin Wright (1990) argues persuasively that the rapid economic development of the U.S. in the late 1800s and early 1900s was driven by the ability to develop its natural

resource base. By the eve of World War I, the U.S. was the world's number one producer of petroleum, natural gas, copper, phosphate, coal, zinc, iron ore, lead, silver, and tungsten – and was number two in bauxite (the raw material for aluminum) and gold. In fact, it produced an astounding 95% of the natural gas, 65% of the oil, and 56% of the copper. But, as the twentieth century unfolded it was learned that massive valuable reserves of these natural resources were scattered all over the globe. The U.S. had simply discovered the immensity of its resources first – and systematically harnessed them. Wright argues that industries like iron, steel, machinery, and later automobiles bloomed first in the U.S. because of institutions with long roots in American history. These included the world's largest free trade zone, which encompassed much of a continent, and a process whereby the government impartially aided entrepreneurs and growing multinationals (not just political cronies) in the often-risky process of finding natural resources (e.g. systematic surveys by the U.S. Geological Survey), putting them into private hands so that they wouldn't sit idle or be wasted, building infrastructure (like railroads) to reach them, mobilizing a labor force (via open borders) to work them and tapping into the rising wealth of investors (many from overseas) with sensible, impartially applied legal rules that allowed funds to be creatively and efficiently pooled to launch these projects – and thereby fuel a virtuous cycle of economic growth.

It's fitting that this movie's title was *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* and not, say, *The Treasure of the Sierra Nevada* – a story about inefficient property rights rules and enforcement made a lot more sense in south of the border. The economic inefficiencies in the story (especially the negative-sum predation) arise because property rights can't be securely and fairly enforced in the Sierra Madre Mountains.

Lesson 6: Trust Isn't Simply a Matter of Moral Character

Once their pile of gold reaches \$5000 (the Consumer Price Index suggests that 1925 dollar values should be multiplied by about 13 to convert into year 2013 dollars),⁴ the miners decide to divide it up each day and let each man be responsible for his own goods. If the men completely trusted each other, this decision might not have been made. Could any set of three strangers trust each other enough in such a situation? Were there surer ways of aligning incentives so that they wouldn't rob each other?

Howard makes some compelling points about the economics of trust. Trustworthiness isn't tied only to one's moral character but also to the constraints faced. He argues that the most "trustworthy" is the one with the highest opportunity cost of being dishonest and that he is the most trustworthy because he'd pay the greatest price if it was learned that he cheated – he's not "quick on his feet any longer," so he couldn't elude the vengeance of the others.

As the plot unfolds, the economic value of trust becomes more and more obvious. Knowledge and trust are two of the most valuable economic resources. When people don't trust each other, they become much less productive – using their resources to protect their property rather than using it productively. Amoral people (such as Dobbs) are especially difficult to do business with, so this makes fewer people want to do business with them and harms them economically.

⁴ However, the CPI is believed to overstate inflation, see Costa (2001).

Lesson 7: Costs and Benefits Dictate When It's Time to Quit

After earning “upwards of \$35,000 a piece,” (roughly \$460,000 at today’s prices) the miners decide it’s time to close down the operation. They don’t appear to be target earners (despite earlier musings and a supposed goal of \$40,000 each); instead the decision is made when the value of the daily haul has dwindled below the cost of additional labor. Before setting off to the mountains, this economic logic wasn’t so obvious to Curtin and Dobbs. Rather the novices speculated on how much gold a prospector would be “satisfied with.” Ultimately, the logic of marginal analysis prevails over these speculations, as the three prospectors conclude their operations when the output of the mine dwindles so that the opportunity cost of a day’s labor exceeds the expected benefits.

Then, Howard does something surprising. Sounding a bit like a modern environmentalist, he says, “We’ve wounded this mountain. It’s our duty to close her wounds. It’s the least we can do to show our gratitude for all the wealth she’s given us.” He announces that he’ll do it alone, if the others won’t help. Can this be explained in economic terms? The costs are clear – an extra week of labor – but the benefits are apparently all non-material. One partial explanation is that the miners are all wealthy now and can more easily afford such generosity – charitable giving is a normal good. More sensible is the logic in Traven’s book – a logic that the film unfortunately ignores. By repairing the mountain, Traven explains, the miners are covering up their own tracks

– keeping any remaining gold safe in case they ever run out of money and feel the need to return.⁵

This abundance of riches could also explain why Howard and Curtin (but not Dobbs, whose utility function seems only to include his own material well being) are willing to give a one-fourth share to widow of the interloper Cody, who died helping the trio defend themselves from bandits. Dobbs, a parody of “economic man,” cannot comprehend such altruism.

Lesson 8: The Value of Trust Disappears If Others Don’t Trust You

The journey from the mountain back to civilization in Durango (where they can sell their gold) progresses uneventfully until a group of Indians implore Howard to help them. After Howard resuscitates the half-drowned Indian boy, the natives virtually force him to stay with him as their guest. Theirs is clearly an economic calculation, although involving a supernatural component. They believe that they are in debt and that the saints in heaven will punish them if they don’t pay off the debt – and the debt seems to be collective, since Howard receives gifts (fruit, tobacco, alcohol, a bird, a piglet, friendly service) from many people in the village.

This brings us to a potential (and perhaps subtle) plot hole – a hole that may be big enough to drive a string of burros through. When the natives insist that Howard stay with them the partners quickly decide, with virtually no deliberation, that Dobbs and

⁵ “Howard had a good reason for doing everything so carefully, ‘Suppose one of you guys gambles his earnings away or loses them some other way, he may return, and he can still make his living here. So let’s hide the place as well as we can to keep it safe for any one of us who might be in need’” (Traven 1935, p. 182).

Curtin should go on ahead. Howard will catch up to them later. If the miners had been willing to spend a week fixing the mountain (after so long away from civilization), why aren't they willing to wait a week and enjoy the hospitality of the Indians? The Indians clearly believe they are in Howard's debt. Isn't it likely that they will treat his friends well and may be even willing to escort the trio back toward Durango? This plot device is obviously necessary to complete the action of the movie. It wouldn't be a classic without its denouement. However, Howard admits the plot hole afterward: "The big mistake was leaving you two fellers out there in the depths of the wilderness with more than a hundred thousand between you."

Finally, a deadly economic game plays out after Howard leaves Dobbs and Curtin alone. The cooperative solution to the game of how to bring the gold to market seems to be jointly optimal, but cooperation doesn't arise. Dobbs simply doesn't trust Curtin. The disinterested viewer trusts Curtin – after all, earlier in the movie Curtin saved Dobbs' life after the mine collapsed. But, Dobbs projects his own set of values onto Curtin. He knows that Curtin shouldn't trust him, so he doesn't trust Curtin. In his paranoid state, he misreads all of Curtin's benign actions and forces Curtin to forego the trust option. Instead, Curtin and Dobbs – natural allies in a hostile wilderness – turn into enemies because they are in a classic prisoners' dilemma, where the dominant strategy of the one-shot game is to mistrust the other. And, in classic prisoners' dilemma fashion, the outcome of the game is abysmally suboptimal.

The Most Important Lessons:

Lessons 5 and 9: Property Rights (Again) and Recognizing Value

Dobbs learns the value of trust and a partner too late, when he is alone and waylaid by the bandits. Clutching for straws, he asks if the bandits would like to work for him, bringing the burros to market. Gold Hat (played by Alfonso Bedoya) – who earlier in the movie delivers the iconic, but often misquoted line telling the miners “I don’t have to show you any stinkin’ badges” – thinks the question is funny, eventually claiming in broken English: “We can sell those burros for just as good as price as you can.” It turns out, however, that he is *wrong*. The identity of the seller can affect the sales price of many goods, even donkeys. When the bandits come into town with the stolen burros, they find that they *can’t* sell them. Because they are dressed in rags (except for the boots and other garments they obviously stolen) and don’t look or act like they are the rightful owners of the goods, the people in the town know that the burros are stolen and won’t buy them. The lesson is that value of a good is explained by more than the physical characteristics of the good itself, but also by the legal rights surrounding it. Hot goods aren’t as valuable, because the title to them isn’t as secure. Even though the dialogue between the bandits and the townsfolk is in Spanish, the economic logic of the situation let’s non-Spanish speakers know exactly what’s going on.⁶

At the climatic end of the movie all the gold blows away, *but* the prospectors get their burros back. To me, this is the most profound lesson of the movie – a powerful demonstration of the importance of property rights. The prospectors’ property right to the burros is very clear and relatively easy to enforce. Everyone knows the burros are theirs because the “vehicle identification number” (i.e., brand mark) has been registered

⁶ Price can also send a signal about the “quality” of goods. In Traven’s book a potential buyer of the burros says, “The price is not high. We only wonder how it is possible that you men can sell burros of this good quality for so little money” p. 284.

with the local authorities. Proving and enforcing ownership of the gold is virtually impossible. There is simply no way they can register their ownership of it or secure their rights to it in this dangerous region – although a powerful or politically-connected business would probably have found a way to protect its property right if it owned the gold. I know of few other cases that can as dramatically and effectively demonstrate the value of property rights – an institution which is crucial to understanding by some societies are rich, while others aren't.

Moreover, everyone immediately recognizes the value of the burros. At the key moment, however, the bandits don't recognize the value of the gold; mistaking it for mere dirt, they dump it on the ground.⁷ This drives home the point that wealth is only wealth in an economy if it is recognized as valuable. There are many resources that historically haven't been recognized as valuable, but which became valuable after people made discoveries about their usefulness – such as oil and bauxite. In the film the wealth is dissipated because it isn't obvious to the untrained eye.⁸ Finally, the last half hour of the movie makes clear the economic lesson that wealth is only wealth if it is in the right location. The gold is virtually worthless on the mountain and only gains value when it is brought securely to the market.

Lesson 10: Greed Is Bad

⁷ Traven describes the gold as: “small grains, dirty-looking sand, gray dust, wrapped in old rags” p. 212.

⁸ One might ask how the bandits could have been this stupid. Would anyone really think that this “sand” was being transported to add weight to the hides? The fact that it was being transported should have tipped them off to its value. But, the decrepit condition of the bandits is a clue that they aren't too bright. If the bandits had realized the identity of the gold, who would eventually have gotten it?

The crux of economics and of *Sierra Madre's* plot is first lesson of Intro to Econ – scarcity exists because our wants exceed our resources. Unfortunately human wants seem never to be satisfied – especially when it comes to gold. As Howard puts it before their trip, “I know what gold does to men’s souls.” Rarely has the human compulsion to want too much been depicted as effectively as in Bogart’s portrait of Dobbs’ paranoid avarice. At root, the final lesson of the movie is that greed – for we don’t lack a better word – is bad. Greed is best defined as the *excessive* desire for earthly goods or success. Taking prudent risks is wise, so the risks and hardships that Dobbs, Curtin and Howard take in pursuit of the gold isn’t greed. Howard plans to use his new-found wealth to buy a small retail business, like a hardware or grocery store. This has a prudent economic logic. Such a business is capital intensive and doesn’t demand a lot of physical labor. Howard will soon be able to buy the capital but is getting old and wants to effectively retire on the job. A store could be a relatively safe pension. Curtin wants to buy land with his wealth – another prudent investment. Dobbs speaks only of consuming his pile (spending it on fine clothes, good food, and women). Greed arises when these desires get out of control, consume the man and lead him to trade what’s truly valuable (leading a meaningful life, treating others with the respect and dignity they deserve, giving more than you take, finding a good wife) for something less valuable – as Dobbs does in the end.

Conclusion

I hope that I've showed that *The Treasure of the Sierra Madre* demonstrates a canny grasp of economic principals – and whetted your appetite to watch (or re-watch) the movie. In these scenes and others, the film examines altruism; bargaining and negotiation; barriers to entry; creation of capital; capital constraints; compensating wage differentials; contract enforcement; corruption; cost-benefit analysis; credence goods; debt payment; deferred compensation; economies of scale; efficiency wages; entrepreneurship; exchange rates; externalities; fairness; the nature and organization of the firm; framing effects; game theory; gift exchange; incentives; formal and informal institutions; investment strategies; job search; the value of knowledge; labor market signaling; selecting the optimal location; marginal benefits and costs; the marginal product of labor; natural resource extraction; opportunity costs; partnerships; price and wage determination; property rights and their enforcement; public goods; reputation; risk; scarcity; secrecy; sunk costs; supply and demand analysis; team work; technology and technological change; the theory of value; trade; trust; unemployment; and the creation and recognition of value and wealth.

Can any other movie offer more?

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