

Film guide

The Big Short

US | 2015 | Cert.15 | 130 mins

Director: Adam McKay

In the mid-2000s, a disparate group of four outsiders in the finance industry noticed something that the banks, media and government all failed to spot: the looming collapse of the U.S. housing market and global economic crisis. Armed with this information, they came up with a plan dubbed 'The Big Short', taking on the supposedly infallible institutions, even though nobody took them seriously.



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You will like this film if you liked

Moneyball (2011, 12)



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Watch next

Margin Call (2011, 15)



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Talk about it

What do you know about the 2008 global financial crisis? What approach do you expect a film about those events to take?

The film opens with Mark Twain's quote "It ain't what you know that gets you into trouble. It's what you know for sure just ain't so." What do you think this quote means? Reconsider this question at the end of the film.

Discussion points

- How does the camera help establish the atmosphere around Wall Street at the time? What does this add to your understanding of events before and after the financial crash?
- What techniques are used to explain complicated financial processes to the audience? Why does the film use frequent high-speed montages of random aspects of popular culture? Are these approaches effective?
- At various points the action stops and a character directly addresses the camera and explains that a particular scene is fictitious. Why do you think the filmmakers did this? What is the difference between narration and talking to the camera?
- The film presents finance as a predominantly male world. Could the film, or any of its characters, be described as chauvinistic? Are any of the protagonists heroes?
- Has anything changed in the finance culture by the end of the film?

Write about it

Bring your ideas together in a review and share it on our Into Film clubs' website. You could include a summary of the story, mention other films that it's similar to, describe what you particularly liked or disliked and give it your star rating.

Extension Activities

Hold a debate around the purpose of satire, dividing the group into for and against. Is it an effective way to tackle serious historical events which damaged the lives of a lot of people?