

FILM ANALYSIS WORKSHEET

Watch once for the story. Watch again with this sheet and a pen.

FILM TITLE	YEAR	DIRECTOR	RUNTIME
The Big Short	2015	Adam McKay	130 min
GENRE	VIEWING (1ST, 2ND)	YOUR NAME	
Biographical comedy-drama	2nd watch	Jay Neill	

FIRST WATCH: YOUR GUT REACTION

WHAT STUCK WITH YOU

a moment, image or line

Margot Robbie in a bathtub explaining mortgage bonds. I laughed, then realized I finally understood them.

HOW DID YOU FEEL AT THE END

Angry. The end cards say only one banker went to jail.

WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE

Why do the "winners" look so unhappy when they win?

THE STORY

THE STORY IN ONE SENTENCE

who wants what, and what's in the way

A few outsiders see the 2008 housing crash coming, bet against the banks and win while millions lose.

STRUCTURE

setup, the turn, the ending

Setup: Burry spots bad mortgages. Turn: loans fail but the market won't fall. End: the crash, the payday, the end cards.

MAIN CHARACTER AND ARC

how do they change?

Mark Baum starts furious at the banks and ends sick at profiting from the crash.

CONFLICT

who or what is in the way

Outsiders vs the banks and ratings agencies. Baum vs his own conscience.

LOOK AND SOUND

CINEMATOGRAPHY

shots, angles, camera movement, light

Handheld camera and quick zooms, like a documentary shot in a hurry. It feels real and nervous.

EDITING

pace, cuts, transitions, montage

Hank Corwin cuts to pop culture clips, freeze frames and stills. Choppy on purpose. Oscar nominated.

SOUND AND MUSIC

score, songs, silence, dialogue

Nicholas Britell's score, loud pop and rap under the montages. Burry plays heavy metal alone at his desk.

MISE-EN-SCÈNE

sets, costume, props, actors in the frame

Grey offices and glass towers. Burry works barefoot in shorts. The team meets bankers in a Las Vegas casino.

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Log the key scenes, find the themes, then make your argument.

SCENE LOG

#	WHEN	WHAT HAPPENS	TECHNIQUE	WHY IT MATTERS
1	Opening	Vennett (Gosling) narrates straight to camera	Fourth-wall break	He admits he's no hero, so we doubt the narrator
2	Act 1	Margot Robbie explains mortgage bonds in a bathtub	Celebrity explainer	Makes jargon stick and mocks it at the same time
3	Act 2	Anthony Bourdain compares CDOs to a stew of old fish	Metaphor	Turns a finance trick into something you can smell
4	Act 2	Selena Gomez and Richard Thaler at a blackjack table	Celebrity explainer	Side bets on housing shown as a casino game
5	Act 2	A character says the real events went differently	Fourth-wall break	Admits the film bends facts, so we trust it more
6	Act 2	Baum's team at the Las Vegas conference	Location	The whole market is a casino
7	Act 3	Rickert (Pitt) scolds the young traders for celebrating	Tone shift	The jokes stop. Real people lose homes
8	Ending	Black cards list what happened next	Text on screen	Plain facts hit harder after two hours of jokes

THEMES AND CONTEXT

THEMES what is it really about?

Greed, and a system that rewards it. Being right about a disaster doesn't feel like winning.

SYMBOLS AND MOTIFS what repeats?

Pop culture montages: the noise that kept everyone distracted. Burry's drumming and metal: the outsider alone.

CONTEXT when, where, why it was made

Based on Michael Lewis's 2010 book. Released in 2015, seven years after the crash.

YOUR ARGUMENT

THESIS one claim about how the film works, not whether it's good

The Big Short uses comedy tricks, like celebrity explainers and fourth-wall breaks, to keep us laughing just long enough to understand the crash. Then it drops the jokes so the anger lands.

EVIDENCE 1 a scene from your log

The bathtub scene makes mortgage bonds simple and makes fun of the jargon.

EVIDENCE 2

The fourth-wall breaks tell us what's true and what's been changed.

EVIDENCE 3

Rickert's speech and the end cards stop the comedy cold.

COUNTERPOINT what might someone argue back, and your answer

The jokes could make the crash feel like entertainment. The end cards push back on that.