Engaging Gen Z Students with Economic Lessons

Featuring MrBeast

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YouTube dominates the teenage market.

Potential as an educational tool.
What Gen are you?

- **Boomers:** 1946-64
- **Gen X:** 1965-80
- **Millennials:** 1981-96
- **Gen Z:** 1997-2012
YouTube Gen-Z Celebrity

“I am numb to money. I give away so much money now that like a thousand dollars doesn't really feel like much to me 'cos I spend a hundred thousand dollars on those videos.” – Jimmy Donaldson (MrBeast)
24 Year-Old MrBeast Has Built A Media Empire On YouTube

August 2023:
- 29 billion views
- 170 million subscribers
Typical Videos
(large-scale challenges)

Opportunity Costs

Explicit & Implicit Costs

Scarcity & Allocation
YouTube is the streaming & content medium of choice for Gen Z.

Improve engagement
$456,000 Squid Game in Real Life
(360+ million views on YouTube)
Netflix versus MrBeast

If you lose, you die

Winner take all jackpot!

Violent and gory

Lose and go home

Most people get paid

Family friendly
Explicit versus Implicit Costs
What could MrBeast have done with the time & resources he invested in making this video?

Good economists account for the implicit costs.
Calculate his accounting profit and economic profit. Why is one higher than the other?

Assume MrBeast earned $10 million in revenue from the video... but spent $2 million on producing the video and $1.5 million on prizes for contestants. If he didn’t make this video, he could have made a different video that would have cost $1.7 million.
# Accounting vs. Economic Profits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Cost Type</th>
<th>Amount ($)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revenue</td>
<td></td>
<td>$10 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production costs</td>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td>$2 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prizemoney</td>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td>$1.5 million</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Accounting Profits</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$10 million – $3.5 million = $6.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost of making alternative video</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
<td>$1.7 million</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Economic Profits</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>$10 million – $5.2 million = $4.8 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Factors of Production

Foundation #2
What are the factors of production?

- Land
- Natural Resources
- Physical Capital
- Technology
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Abstract
We summarize the application of economic concepts in three viral YouTube videos created by Jimmy Donaldson, known more popularly online as MrBeast. His viral videos are known for expensive challenges and are incredibly popular among Gen Z students. We present three lesson plans based on three different MrBeast videos that include episode summaries, key economics concepts, and multiple assessment questions. The lesson plans focus on core economic concepts and include opportunities to teach concepts such as scarcity, opportunity cost, marginal analysis, business costs and production. With more than 130 million subscribers as of this writing and over 22 billion views, MrBeast’s viral videos offer a unique opportunity for creatively teaching economics to a new generation of students.

Keywords: active learning, media, popular culture, teaching economics, technology, streaming, YouTube

JEL Classification: A20, A22

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