

The inconvenient truth about Gore's movie

By Joshua Gans, economist and CoRE economics blogger

I took my seven-year-old daughter to see *An Inconvenient Truth* this weekend. For a movie billed as “The most terrifying film you will ever see” you might think that I was being somewhat irresponsible. But I had read the reviews (including the family oriented ones) and decided that there was a good chance that it had been poorly sold. And I was right.

This is a movie at the level of nine to 14-year-olds. For everyone else, there is not a lot new. The basic facts of global warming are in the scientific journals: the idea that it may cause damage to ocean currents is out there and the experience of the last two years in storms and heat cannot be ignored. You don't need to see this movie to make yourself more aware. What you need to do is take your children to see it. And when I arrived at the movie theatre this weekend, my daughter was the youngest person in the room (that shouldn't surprise you) but I was pretty much the second youngest (and that surprised me). Think about it. The theatre was filled with people who would not be around to see the full consequences of it and, in reality, were likely to be in the least favourable position to do something about it.

Here is why it is good for kids. First, Al Gore — appropriately assisted by Keynote (on a Mac) — is a great lecturer. Essentially, the movie centres around a lecture and the presentation of the facts is clean, graphical (including *Simpsons*-like cartoons), non-technical and decidedly non-sensationalist. Second, it presents a nice view of the world we live in. It shows how connected we are and it shows how things are changing. Finally, it doesn't preach. Hardly a suggestion as to what people should do. Although there is a suggestion as to what governments might do and, as it turned out, this resonated. It is a tad long for a seven-year-old but add a few years and that shouldn't be a problem.

And the impact, well, it was interesting. It stimulated a good dinner conversation, aimed at filling in the bits. And it started her asking a lot of questions. The main one was one I didn't really have a good answer for — at least for a seven-year-old. The question was why Australia stood out as a country that had not agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. So then we discussed who might answer it and my daughter decided to write to the PM directly. Originally, I had thought about a letter but was told, convincingly, that an email would be better. We wouldn't waste paper that was coming from the much-needed trees.

Finally, let me end by complaining bitterly to the marketing and distribution people of *An Inconvenient Truth*. The selling of this as something sensationalist is wrong on every level, given what the movie is. The movie's point is that climate change is anything but sensationalist but actually remarkably pedestrian. To provide that kind of marketing diminishes that point and what is more, drives away those who ought to be seeing it (families) and does nothing to attract others. Terrifying movies only do that when they are not real.

For the post in full, click [here](#).

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