# The Invisible Hook: The Hidden Economics of Pirates

Pirates have long fascinated us with their tales of adventure, treasure, and freedom. But what many people don't realize is that pirates were also incredibly savvy businessmen. In this article, we'll explore the hidden economics of piracy, from how pirates financed their expeditions to how they divided the spoils of their conquests.



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by Peter T. Leeson

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### **How Pirates Financed Their Expeditions**

Contrary to popular belief, most pirates did not have access to vast sums of money. In fact, many of them were poor fishermen or sailors who turned to piracy out of desperation. As a result, pirates had to find creative ways to finance their expeditions.

One common way for pirates to raise money was to attack merchant ships. They would then sell the captured goods for a profit. Another way for pirates to make money was to kidnap wealthy individuals and hold them for ransom. Pirates would also sometimes extort money from coastal towns and villages.

In addition to these sources of income, pirates also relied on the support of wealthy patrons. These patrons would often provide pirates with ships, supplies, and weapons. In return, the pirates would give the patrons a share of the profits from their plunder.

### **How Pirates Divided the Spoils of Their Conquests**

Once pirates had captured a ship, they would divide the spoils among themselves. The captain typically received the largest share, followed by the other officers and crew members. The amount that each person received depended on their rank and experience.

Pirates also had a number of different ways to divide the spoils. One common method was to use a system of "articles." Under this system, each pirate would sign a contract that specified their share of the plunder. Another method was to use a system of "prizes." Under this system, the pirates would auction off the captured goods and then divide the proceeds among themselves.

#### **The Hidden Economics of Piracy**

The hidden economics of piracy are complex and fascinating. Pirates were able to operate successfully for centuries because they were able to develop a system of financing and profit-sharing that was both efficient and fair.

The economics of piracy also provide insights into the nature of capitalism. Pirates were essentially private entrepreneurs who operated outside the law. They were able to accumulate wealth and power through their own ingenuity and hard work.

The hidden economics of piracy are a reminder that there is more to history than meets the eye. Pirates were not just swashbuckling adventurers. They were also savvy businessmen who played a significant role in the development of capitalism.

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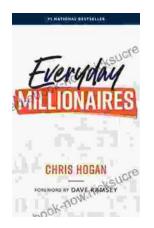


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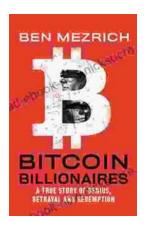
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