

Gold Rush (1925) Charles Chaplin

P Michell, 2015.

Celebrating 100 years of 'The Tramp'.

Cast : Mack Swain, Georgia Hale, Henry Bergman, Tom Murray, Malcom Waite

Production : United Artists

Synopsis of the film exactly as written by The Chaplin Studios in 1925.

The Lone Prospector, a valiant weakling, seeks fame and fortune with the sturdy men who marched across Chilkoot Pass into the great unknown in the mad rush for hidden gold in the Alaskan wilderness. Lonely, his soul fired by a great ambition, his inoffensive patience and his ill-chosen garb alike made him the target for the buffoonery of his comrades and the merciless rigors of the frozen North.

Caught in a terrific blizzard, the icy clutches of the storm almost claim him when he stumbles into the cabin of Black Larsen, renegade. Larsen, unpityingly, is thrusting him from the door back into the arms of death when Fate, which preserves the destinies of its simple children, appears in the person of Big Jim McKay.

The renegade is subdued by McKay in a terrific battle, and the Lone Prospector and his rescuer occupy the cabin while their unwilling host is thrust forth to obtain food. Starvation almost claims the two until a bear intrudes and is killed to supply their larder.

The storm abated, the two depart for the nearest town, and McKay to his hidden mine, the richest in Alaska. McKay finds the renegade in possession of his property, and in the battle that ensues falls under a blow from a shovel wielded by Larsen, who flees from the scene to be swept to his death in an avalanche. McKay recovers consciousness but had lost his memory from the blow.

Lonely arrives in one of the mushroom cities of the gold trail. He becomes the principal amusement of the village, the bait for the practical jokers – and the provocation of gibes and hilarity from the dance hall habitués. His attention becomes centered on Georgia, queen of the dancehall entertainers, and at first sight becomes enamored with the girl.

In his timid and pathetic way, he adores at a distance and braves the gibes of the dancehall roughs to feast his lovelorn eyes. Every indignity is heaped upon him until as a last cruel jest, Jack Cameron, Beau Brummel of the camp, hands him an endearing note from Georgia. Believing it written for him, the unhappy lover starts feverishly searching the dancehall for the girl, when Big Jim McKay, his memory partially restored, enters.

Big Jim's only thought is to find the location of the cabin in order to locate his lost mine. He recognizes Lonely and seizes him, shouting to lead the way to the cabin, and they both will be millionaires. But his lovelorn friend at this moment discovers the girl on the balcony, and breaking away, darts up to embrace her and declare his love to the astonishment of the girl, as well as the crowd.

Unceremoniously dragged from the hall by McKay, the lone Prospector shouts to Georgia that he soon will return to claim her, a millionaire.

A year has passed and Big Jim and his partner, Lonely, are returning to the States surrounded with all that wealth can provide. Yet the heart-yearnings of the lover will not be stilled. Georgia has disappeared and his search for her has been all in vain.

The fame of the strike of the partners has spread and newspapermen board the liner for interviews. Lonely, good naturedly consents to don his old clothes for a news photograph. Tripping in the companionway, he falls down stairs into the arms of Georgia, on her way back to the States as a steerage passenger.

The reporters sense a romance and ask who the girl is. Lonely whispers to Georgia, who nods assent. Arm in arm, they pose for pictures, while the reporters enthusiastically exclaim: "What a Great Story this will make!"

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Trivia:

The scene where The Lone Prospector and Big Jim have a boot for supper took three days and 63 takes to suit director Charles Chaplin. The boot was made of licorice, and Chaplin was later rushed to a hospital suffering insulin shock. The boot was made by the firm of Hillaby's in Pontefract, West Yorkshire, England; Pontefract is famous for growing licorice and making it into "Pomfret [Pontefract] Cakes". Location filming proved too problematic so [Charles Chaplin](#) shot the entire film on the backlot and stages of his Hollywood studio, including an elaborate reconstruction of the Klondike. His leisurely approach to film-making - and multiple takes - did not suit the demands of location filming.

The "dancing rolls" sequence was so popular with audiences that, in some cases (such as the film's Berlin premiere), projectionists stopped the film and replayed the scene.

Filming was unusual as Chaplin had thought out the entire plot beforehand. (The only film he did so.)

The fifth highest grossing silent film in history. - US\$5.5 Million (USA)
Cost a huge amount for 1925 - US\$923,000. Say \$12.5 million allowing for inflation. At the time a house was worth \$4000 and a luxury car about the same. A real American Black Bear was used for the scene where the "Lone Prospector" encounters the beast. This was unusual for the time, when it was normal for very phoney-looking costumed men to play large animals.

First film by Chaplin released under United Artists banner.

Analysis of Chaplin:

Buster Keaton & Chaplin based their work on their fictional personalities, but took opposite approaches. Keaton plays a different character every time; Chaplin usually plays a version of the Tramp. Keaton's characters desire acceptance, recognition, romance and stature in the real world, and try to adapt to conditions; Chaplin's characters are perpetual outsiders who rigidly repeat the same strategies and reactions (often the gags come from how inappropriately the Tramp behaves). Keaton's movements are smooth and effortless; Chaplin's odd little lopsided gait looks almost arthritic.

Roger Ebert, 1997

Silent & Sound Notes:

- Made in 1925, then added voice over and orchestral score in 1942. Thus film well preserved.
- Pantheon of great silent film comedies:
- Keaton, - 'The General' ; 'The Navigator', Harold Lloyd 'Safety Last' – clock sequence.
- Chaplin's Tramp:
- At War with Object, Place, Isolation. Not at one as Keaton was.
- Trapped in a situation – cabin entry sequence.
- Girl Idealised – dance club. Mother fixation ????
- Social comment – night club. Poverty. Cinema. Life.
- Surrealism – snow represents isolation, innocence, purity, but is anything but.
- Pathos – dance sequence, food,
- Chaplin was arguably first international superstar. Films being silent were screened in every country of the world with same understanding.
- When he toured Europe he was feted like royalty.
- Devices – lure of gold, girls dancing, wealth, poverty, isolation tc. ;
- News camera – Reference to Chaplin's love / hate with media;
- Permanent Outsider – total isolation in the snow.
- Balletic –
- Referenced by all post cinema.
- Resolved 'happy' ending – though original kiss removed. Unusual for Chaplin film.
- Bisexuality – Thomson claims begins with Chaplin
- Dream sequence – Chicken, starvation
- Involving us – often looks into the lens. Dragging / Inviting us in.
- Chaplin the man, tramp, director, actor, social commentator
- Tramp (little man) puncturing pomposity of upper class. Though Gold Rush is about the 'prospector' in all of us.

Freud's tendentious vs Innocence Comedy:

Tendentious – form of aggression. Seek to satisfy unfulfilled urge. Address issues necessary for repression. What cannot be overtly said. Thus are a safety valve for aggression. Social stabilisers.

Innocence – pure sense of comedy. No threat to the viewer. Complete lack of aggression that disarms us and allows us to partake in fun.

The ruse at the end. Hale only falls for him when he's a 'tramp' once more. Though now artifice. Though fulfilling his promise.

Reviews:

Mark Bourne

Of the thousands of film comedies released since Charlie Chaplin's *The Gold Rush* premiered in 1925, most exhibit all the currency and staying power of time remaining on a parking meter. *The Gold Rush*, though, is something else. Chaplin said that it was the movie he most wanted to be remembered for, and damn if he didn't get his wish.

Images from *The Gold Rush* reliably spring to mind when we think of the Little Tramp. It brought this iconographic character — that Nike swoosh symbol of the downtrodden small man triumphing, however haphazardly, over hardship in a world determined to see him only as a shabby outsider — out of the urban boweries and into a Great White North adventure of grand scope and mammoth production scale. Trapped in a remote Yukon cabin during a blizzard, he dines on a boiled leather shoe, applying to the dubious meal all the refined elegance of fileted pheasant at the Russian Tea Room. The Tramp's rickety cabin, blown to a cliff edge, teeters above a mountain chasm with every move he makes. And here's where you'll find one of movie-making's sublime sequences — the Tramp's "Oceana Roll" dance with forks and buns, a brilliant bit of pantomime that Chaplin imbues with poignancy by placing it at the climax of a fantasy dinner party the Tramp hopes to throw for a woman who, though he doesn't know it, laughs at him when his back is turned. (The "dance of the rolls" was so successful that at *The Gold Rush*'s Berlin premiere the theater owner appeased his clamoring audience by stopping the film, rewinding the reel, and showing it a second time before continuing.)

Now, whether or not it's his best masterpiece (how many filmmakers, then or now, force us to rank their multiple masterpieces instead of just their films?) is a topic film buffs argue about with a passion rivaling that of Talmudic scholars. His second feature-length film with the Tramp character, *The Gold Rush* doesn't display the polish and emotional candlepower of [City Lights](#) (1931) or the social-commentary experimentation of [Modern Times](#) ('36). It did, though, elevate Chaplin to new heights as a director-writer-actor, and it's so light on its feet that today it feels closer to his classic two-reelers than to the more self-aware (and self-absorbed) features that came later.

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Well before he began shooting *The Gold Rush*, Chaplin was the most famous man in the world. He'd been in show business for more than twenty years, since the English music hall helped the boy escape brutal poverty. In 1914, after two tours of the United States as a \$75-a-week player in Fred Karno's vaudeville troupe, Chaplin joined Mack Sennett's Keystone studio, doubling his wages and exposing him to what "the pictures" had to offer during the [knockabout slapstick days](#) of the Keystone Kops and [Fatty Arbuckle](#). He developed the Tramp during his first year under Sennett, and within four years the character had appeared in dozens of one- and two-reel short comedies directed by Chaplin. The best of these early shorts, such as [Easy Street](#), [The Immigrant](#), and others made for the Essanay, Mutual, and First National studios, remain some of the most age-proof pleasures ever committed to celluloid (not to mention little shiny discs).

In 1918, at age 29, Chaplin was Hollywood's first million-dollars-a-year celebrity. His personal and professional cache allowed him to build his own studio with full creative control of his work. (Chaplin Studios, at La Brea Avenue and Sunset Blvd., is now [Jim Henson Studios](#). Atop its entrance stands Kermit the Frog sporting the Tramp's bowler, outfit, and cane.)

More than any of his contemporaries during the twenties — even the great Buster Keaton — it was Chaplin who lifted screen comedy and made it a form of art. In 1921, his first Tramp feature, [The Kid](#), gave him room enough to expand his ongoing fusing of comedy and pathos, an approach that he developed with such cut-glass distinctiveness that the word "Chaplinesque" was already in circulation by the end of the decade. His next feature comedy didn't arrive for four more years. When he began developing the material that would become *The Gold Rush*, he was determined to make this new picture his most ambitious project so far.

It's difficult to overstate either Chaplin's protean genius or his popularity during World War I and the years up through *The Gold Rush*. Critic Andrew Sarris noted that with *The Gold Rush* in 1925 "Chaplin arrived at his highest plateau of public acceptance, and perhaps the final moment of unclouded adulation." That was the year Chaplin became the first actor to appear on the cover of *Time* magazine. The sheer size and weight of his cultural and commercial pre-eminence worldwide is like nothing we know even in our post-Madonna, *Star Wars*-bludgeoned era. Like Superman, Sherlock Holmes, and Mickey Mouse, the Tramp was (and still is) a universal icon that communicates across boundaries of language and culture. He's an enduring figure that even today is instantly recognized by just his silhouette.

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In his book *The Silent Clowns*, Walter Kerr observes that *The Gold Rush* is one of only two silent-era comedies earning the right to be called an epic. (The other was Keaton's [The General](#).) Early production shooting occurred in the Sierra Nevada

mountains of Truckee, California. When harsh winter weather proved to be both historically accurate and technically problematic, Chaplin completed the shooting in Los Angeles, where a full-scale mining town sunken in tons of "snow" was recreated, to the entertainment of gathering onlookers.

Chaplin used the setting's grim natural environment as both scenery and story. As he said in *My Autobiography*, "...we must laugh in the face of our helplessness against the forces of nature — or go insane." So even for a Chaplin comedy *The Gold Rush* is a dark piece of work. During the 1898 Klondike gold rush, any man trudging up the Chilkoot Pass was more likely to end up dying of starvation or exposure than striking it rich. Chaplin made that reality the floorboards of this tragicomedy. In the first minutes, as hundreds of would-be prospectors hike up the mountain slope like a line of ants, a climber collapses face-first into a snowdrift, ignored by the others and presumably never to rise again. A moment later the Tramp (here called "The Lone Prospector") stumbles across a snow-covered grave. Seven decades before *Fargo*, a wanted killer, Black Larsen (Tom Murray), commits a double homicide in the trackless white wastes. Nature ("a law unto itself") claims a man in an avalanche.

Much of *The Gold Rush's* comedy emerges from this friction between humor and circumstances of deadly seriousness. Inspired by an account of the infamous Donner Party tragedy, Chaplin delivers funny scenes spun from the wheel of privation and cannibalism. That's Chaplin himself, not a stand-in, wearing the hallucinatory chicken suit chased by hunger-crazed and axe-wielding Big Jim, played by chronically splenetic Keystone veteran Mack Swain.

Of course there's a love interest, a beautiful and brassy dance hall gal named Georgia, although she doesn't enter until a third of the movie is done. She's played by Georgia Hale, who Chaplin hired after six months of shooting when his original choice for leading lady, sixteen-year-old — or fifteen, depending on who you believe — Lita Grey had to be replaced on account of director-induced pregnancy. (Grey hurriedly became the second and most notorious of the four Mrs. Chaplins.)

The film's middle section leaves the epic scale behind a while. Instead, it irises in on the lovestruck Tramp's wistful romance with Georgia. These emotionally intimate scenes — especially the dinner party sequence that caps with the dance of the rolls — are devoted to one of the Tramp's inviolable characteristics, his tender sweetness. When viewing Chaplin through the eclipse goggles of unchecked cynicism, it's easy to dismiss this trait as just superannuated sentimentality. Yes, Chaplin did frequently deploy a gooeyness that you have to sop up with a sponge. But in *The Gold Rush* the tendency is restrained. And anyway, to sniff at him for balancing baggy trousers with expressions of love or heartbreak is like dissing Shakespeare for trucking out the iambic pentameter. At our distance generations later, we have no first-hand experience with the fact that his introducing poignancy to movie comedy was a great leap forward for the medium and for audiences alike. Nonetheless, anyone who remains untouched by the Tramp-Georgia scenes probably likes lima beans.

Let's remember too that in *The Gold Rush* alone the no-surrender Little Tramp is brave (contending with a bear, a killer, and the elements, he tackles a frozen wilderness on his own) and gallant (after a dance with his beloved, he defends Georgia by facing down her hulking, abusive suitor). He's willing to play dirty when provoked (as when Black Larsen gets blown out his own back door). He never does anything in timid half-measures (for the would-be candlelight dinner party, he sets the most elegant table for hundreds of miles). Plus he's determined (promising Georgia that he'll "make good," he returns to the icy wasteland for Big Jim's mountain of gold), resourceful (the shoe-stewing scene; working door to door shoveling snow to afford the dinner and gifts for Georgia and her friends), and loyal (returning to the States a millionaire, he affirms his love for Georgia, a steerage passenger on his ship). And through it all he is, as always, a courtly perfect gentleman who never gives up his hold on his scruffy dignity.

It's easy to focus only on the big scenes and narrative-turning events in *The Gold Rush*. A craftsman of lapidarian precision, Chaplin was also a maestro of the small touch. For a performer trained since boyhood on the music hall techniques of big expressions and broad gesticulations, Chaplin had mastered the knack of playing for the camera's intimate closeness rather than for the rowdy drunks in the back row. On film he never mugs or pulls goony faces. Pay attention to the throwaway facial movements and subtle body language — the way the Tramp offers Big Jim a share of the "wishbone" shoe nail, or how he gives the bottom of his ill-fitting waistcoat a perfect tiny *maitre d'* tug as he sets the dinner table. He integrates his face and body so eloquently with the forks-and-buns "legs" during the Oceana Roll dance that the bit, which had been around since at least Fatty Arbuckle did it in 1917's "The Rough House," achieves a beautiful lyricism while still being very funny. Compare the subtlety of his mannerisms to the more traditional, broad work of the actors around him, and it becomes clear just how extraordinary and controlled Chaplin was.

Like any enthusiast, it's tricky for a Chaplin fan (such as yours truly) to not over-gush about the object of one's admiration and affection. For the better part of a century now, he has been dipped in gold so often that his finer details, including his imperfections, are getting lost under the layers. Still, anyone who asks why *The Gold Rush* deserves the attention and dedication showcased in Warner's *The Chaplin Collection* might as well ask why we continue to crack open new editions of, say, Mark Twain, or why we don our headphones for a new CD of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony or George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue*. *The Gold Rush*, like the rest of Chaplin's best films, goes up on your list of things that speak to you, pull you in, and remind you that what's "old" can also be newer and fresher than whatever nitwit comedy — with its deserved memory time equivalent to a dime in a parking meter — is currently playing at the nearest Regal.

The MK2/Warner Home Video *Chaplin Collection* DVDs

In 2001, the rights to many of Chaplin's films became available. Several companies vied to license them. The Chaplin estate chose the Parisian company MK2, which holds the rights to the films for 12 years.

With distribution through Warner Home Video, in 2003 MK2 began releasing The Chaplin Collection, two boxed sets containing definitive, authorized editions of Chaplin's feature-length films. Each film receives an exhaustive, features-rich DVD presentation. All have been digitally restored and re-mastered from Chaplin estate vault elements. Volume 1 of The Chaplin Collection includes *The Gold Rush*, [Modern Times](#), [The Great Dictator](#), and [Limelight](#). Volume 2 brings us [The Kid](#), [The Circus](#), [City Lights](#), [A King in New York / A Woman of Paris](#), [Monsieur Verdoux](#), and [The Chaplin Revue](#). Plus, exclusive to the Volume 2 boxed set is Richard Schickel's acclaimed documentary tribute, [Charlie: The Life and Art of Charles Chaplin](#), a highlight of 2003's Cannes Film Festival.

These discs feature, among their many extras, never-before-seen footage, behind-the-scenes glimpses, exclusive family home movie footage, and specially made documentaries in which Chaplin biographer David Robinson as well as world-famous film-makers discuss the films and their personal, professional, or cultural impact.

Starting in the 1940s, Chaplin went back to several of his earlier films and tinkered with them, snipping bits here, changing footage there, and adding his own musical scores for reissue prints. Under the authority of the Chaplin estate, MK2's The Chaplin Collection delivers the films in their final state, "as Chaplin intended." Nowhere was Chaplin's retooling more evident than in *The Gold Rush*.

Chaplin fans have a lot to be thankful for here, because this DVD presents exquisite reproductions of both the original 1925 silent version of *The Gold Rush* (for years available in public domain prints of often questionable quality and authenticity) and the 1942 sound re-release that includes significant re-editing plus Chaplin's own orchestral score and narration. With both versions on hand, this set is as good as striking gold.

The 1942 re-release version of *The Gold Rush*

Presents *The Gold Rush* the way Chaplin re-crafted it for sound-era audiences. For better or worse, this version is the Chaplin estate's officially preferred cut. Chaplin spent \$125,000 refurbishing *The Gold Rush* for a major worldwide theatrical re-release in 1942. He cut more than 20 minutes from the original silent version, removed the title cards, re-edited several scenes, and then added his own sound narration and a new original musical score. He had always been fastidious toward the care his prints and negatives received, and for this print he had plenty of

material to draw from since his films were so popular worldwide that he routinely made four separate negatives. He edited out entire sequences and shortened others, added outtake footage that had been originally cut from the silent version, and often substituted alternate takes shot from other cameras. In the re-release credits, the spelling of Black Larsen's name is inexplicably changed to "Larson." (The history of Chaplin revivals and reissues is so byzantine that the topic receives its own lengthy entry in *The Chaplin Encyclopedia* by Glenn Mitchell, and his entry on *The Gold Rush* offers a detailed breakdown of the differences between the 1925 and 1942 versions.)

The '42 re-release is a tighter film, to be sure, and a few sequences are improved by Chaplin's return to them. Two re-edited scenes in particular, though, cause Chaplin purists to chew their own shoes:

- A pivotal scene near the end involves a note Georgia writes and the Tramp receives. Between the 1925 and '42 versions, the note's intended reader and its contents are different (the '42 version inserts a close-up of a different note). How the Tramp receives it is also changed. As a result, the entire tenor of Georgia's character, motivations, and especially her feelings toward both her caddish suitor Jack and the Tramp are altered, and this alteration sends ripples out through the final scene aboard the steamer heading home. One can make a case supporting either version of events, though clearly Chaplin preferred the later cut. In both versions, however, why the Tramp, once he becomes a millionaire, has to literally stumble across Georgia on the steamer instead of seeking her out while still in the mining town remains a murky point.
- The 1925 version fades out on the Tramp and Georgia sealing their relationship with a long kiss in front of a photographer snapping a shot of the now-wealthy gold prospector. For the '42 reissue, Chaplin cut the kiss and the moment leading up to it, giving an ending that fades out on the happy couple ascending the steps to the upper deck where the kiss would occur. Why Chaplin did so is something of a mystery. Some commentators suggest that Chaplin heeded complaints that the kiss seemed out of character for the Tramp, who heretofore never "got the girl" so spectacularly. It has also been suggested that Georgia (meaning both the dance hall girl and actress Georgia Hale) doesn't appear particularly enthusiastic about the smooch, so the truncated re-edit feels more like an unequivocal "happy ending." (In the Disc Two supplement *Chaplin Today*, Hale gives her recollection of the kiss and her surprise when her director/co-star kept it going...and going...)

James Agee in *Time* hailed the '42 edition as "a sight for sore eyes, for old-style Chaplin fans and novitiates alike." However, today, more than sixty years later, it validates Chaplin's own contention that talkies were "spoiling the oldest art in the world — the art of pantomime. They are ruining the great beauty of silence." While it's too much to claim that *The Gold Rush* was "spoiled" by Chaplin's addition of an

audio track with narration, it's easy to make the case that the original silent version has aged better.

His 1942 orchestral score fits the imagery with its composer's fanatical attention to detail. But like a double-breasted suit that had once been the height of fashion for your grandfather, the score's style now locks this version solidly into the 1940s. Although it's listenable, with some catchy melodies, its dated orchestration and motifs too often reach for the overwrought or the "precious."

More irksome is Chaplin's own voice-over, which replaced the original title cards with scene-by-scene storybook narration. Full of rolled *r*'s and theatrical bombast, his rather prissy vocal flourishes are arch and mannered to the high-twee hilt. Worse, when the narration isn't voicing the thoughts of "the little fellow" and other characters, it merely describes the obvious. "With cheerful optimism our little Columbus descended into the vast uncharted waste — then stopped, stepped, slipped, and slid," we hear while we watch the Tramp doing exactly that. It's too much of a muchness, robbing the movie of its subtleties. It reminds us of why for the great silent artisans the human voice was not just unnecessary, it was also a hindrance.

Having suffered the vicissitudes of time in ways that the silent version will always be immune to, the 1942 version of *The Gold Rush* helps us understand what Chaplin meant by "the great beauty of silence."

A Differing Point of View –

An Examination of Congruity in "Gold Rush"

After reading several sources on the history of American cinema, I came to the conclusion that "Gold Rush" is hailed as one of Charles Chaplin's best films, and even Chaplin referred to it as "the film I want to be remembered by." (Giannetti, p 88.) Having viewed the film several times, I have laughed with its humor, marveled at its effects, felt sorry for and cheered the Tramp, and even put myself in his place for parts of the movie, understanding what the Tramp must be feeling. Despite its charm, humor, and obvious professionalism, there is one important thing lacking from the film which denies its ability to narrate any kind of story to the viewer, and that is a concrete plot. Although the movie has a beginning, middle, and end (two, actually), and even a (hidden) moral, it does not tell the audience a story; or rather, it tells the audience two stories, one inside the other, very loosely tied together by the characters which span the "sketches", or sections of the film. Instead of being his "greatest work", it comes across as being merely a collage of comical expression, and in that loses much of the power and meaning it might have had.

The film "Gold Rush" opens with the introduction of the Tramp character, and the audience quickly meets Big Jim, the prospector, and Black Larson, the outlaw. Thus, the audience is clued in to the characters which will take them through the first half of the film. The first 5 minutes of "Gold Rush" begins with the introductions of the three individual characters, and ends with their meeting and staying at Black Larson's cabin. The next 20 minutes deals exclusively with the three (and the three

becoming two). The starving trio sends Larson out to find food, which he does without any inclination of going back to the Tramp and Jim, who continue to starve. They eventually find food and part company as good friends, ending the first section of the film. Once the main characters (the Tramp and Big Jim) are separated, the entire focus of the film changes, from survival to romance, as the Tramp falls in love with a dancer (Georgia) in a gold rush town. Eventually, the Tramp and Jim meet up again in the town, and the Tramp helps Jim find his lost gold mine, again spinning the focus one hundred and eighty degrees, from romance back to survival as the two get trapped in a cabin teetering dangerously over the edge of a cliff. Once the lost mine is found, the two become rich and the film makes a major jump in time and space to a boat which is where the film finishes up without any overall congruence to the rest of the film except to bring back the romance character (Georgia) and the conflict character from the gold rush town, Jack, who thinks the Tramp is a stowaway and wants to arrest him (before he is rescued by Jim and the media), while Georgia is now in love with the Tramp (for reasons unknown to the viewing audience).

The film is really two separate stories trying to be told at the same time. First the audience is shown the Tramp-Jim story (Story #1), which includes the starving trio and the eventual finding of the gold mine, and the Tramp-Georgia story (Story #2), the romance. The format of the whole film is Story 1, Story 2, Story 1, Conclusion. Each Story has its own beginning, middle, and end, and could very easily have been 2 separate shorter films by themselves had Chaplin not merged them. The fact that there are two definite stories being told, not in sequence but inside one another, leads to confusion by the viewing audience. First they are fearing for the Tramp's life, then they're feeling sorry for him, then fearing for his life, and finally, in the Conclusion, they are fearing for him again (not whether he will live or die, but whether he will be rescued or thrown in jail). This is merely the first cause of audience confusion.

The second cause is the humor which is constantly thrown in, no matter what the audience should be feeling. We are afraid that the Tramp might fall with the house off the cliff, but we are too busy laughing at his attempts to escape to worry too strongly about his predicament. The audience is forced to forget about the Tramp's plight, and find his immediate demise humorous, completely contrary to the audience's common sense. The third source of confusion is the jump from story to story. The audience is totally immersed in Big Jim and the Tramp until they part ways. Immediately, the audience must forget Jim and Black Lawrence and concentrate on Jack and Georgia and the new story unfurling. For all the audience knows, they'll never see Big Jim again - the Tramp and the snow are the only things which tie the two stories together. When Jim is introduced into the middle of Story 2, the audience loses its focus on Story 2, wondering what new events will take place concerning Jim. At the end of Story 2, when the Tramp and Jim go off to find the lost mine, the audience jumps back into the ending of Story 1 (although not completely unprepared due to the reintroduction of Big Jim). Finally, in the Conclusion, the two stories are merged completely when the Tramp meets Georgia and Jack again, and

the audience is left with many questions, not only concerning what will happen to the now rich Tramp, but concerning Georgia and Jack - why are they on the ship, where are they going, what has caused Georgia to change her mind about the Tramp? Too much is left out for the audience to feel confident in following the story, so instead they just wait for the next gag.

Because of the lack of congruence between the two stories, and because of the actuality of there being two separate stories, the audience cannot completely comprehend what the film is trying to say because they cannot completely follow the film. The film is really telling two stories, but it's trying to tell them as one longer story - that of the Tramp exclusively. If the Tramp's story (or stories) was completely unrelated to the other characters, it would be easier to view the film as one long narrative. But the extra characters (with the exception of Black Lawrence, who is completely unnecessary in the film) become part of the story the audience is watching. When the characters are swapped so blatantly, the continuity of the story is broken. When it is done many times, as during "Gold Rush", the narrative is hopelessly separated between the two stories.

The narrative has been replaced by two separate narratives, loosely brought together in the very end of the film. The confusion that the film creates distracts the audience from seeing deeper into the film than just what's on the surface - the Tramp's comedy, Black Larson's malice, Big Jim's friendliness, Georgia's beauty. Whatever meaning the director intended is lost to the audience - as they try to follow the story from jump to jump, they don't have time to comprehend the deeper meaning behind the images they're seeing. The comedy of the film also blocks a more thorough understanding of it. The humor of watching the barrel of the rifle follow the Tramp all around the cabin as Jim and Larson struggle overshadows a message of the danger of human conflict and its effect on innocents (the Tramp in the aforementioned scene). Chaplin is trying to evoke two different emotions with his comic scenes - humor and understanding - but the lasting effect is the humor - the more positive sensation, that which the audience wants to remember. Chaplin's underlying theme gets lost behind his comedy, except to those who are deliberately looking behind the comedy, which, at least in today's society, is a tiny minority of the movie viewing audience.

"Gold Rush" is indeed a funny movie, which is probably largely the factor that makes it such a popular movie. But that comedy that makes it fun to watch also masks the points that Chaplin was trying to make with the film. His scenes describing the problems of human conflict or suffering are invariably infused with slapstick, forcing the audience to read much deeper into the scene to discern the message behind the scene. Making it even more difficult to decipher is the complexness in which Chaplin directs and edits the film, with its multiple concurrent narratives, jumping back and forth between them, the many layers of meaning - the surface, where Black Larson is an evil outlaw, and the understanding, or what Larson represents in society - and the multiple emotions that a scene can elicit from an audience. Because of this complexness, Chaplin loses the true meaning of the film as

social commentary, and instead it becomes a funny movie to watch. Chaplin's social efforts are disguised by his cinematic style, making his "greatest work" merely a slapstick comedy for most of his audiences.

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