

Memento

Author/ Director	Christopher Nolan
Released in	September, 5, 2010
Price	~ 9,50€
Language	(American) English
Length	109 Minutes
Summary	<p>Memento is set in Los Angeles and portrays the life of a man who lives his life on a day-to-day basis. Leonard Shelby, a former insurance investigator, suffers from anterograde amnesia, short-term memory loss, and is therefore unable to make new memories. Leonard cannot remember anything that has happened more than ten to fifteen minutes ago. As a consequence, Leonard has been thrown into an empty world of confusion and cluelessness, as he is unable to create explicit short-term memories. He is uncertain about the very moment - what has happened and in which situation he is and it feels to him as if he has just woken up. His last memories concern the events of his head injury while trying to stop the rape and murder of his wife in their home. Leonard's life is driven by this dramatic loss, as the sole purpose in his life is to find the murderer, the elusive John G., and kill him in order to avenge his wife's death. Leonard uses alternative ways in order to create memory and to manage his life. He takes Polaroid pictures of people he encounters and takes notes of his thoughts underneath them before he forgets them. Hence, important facts are tattooed on his body and tattoos like "Find him and kill him" constantly remind him of what the purpose of his mission is – the quest for revenge which has become the main center of his being and which gives his life any meaning.</p> <p>Throughout the film, Leonard mainly interacts with two other characters: Teddy, a corrupt police officer, and the bartender Natalie. In one sense both of them seem to help Leonard, however, both of them are using and manipulating Leonard for their own purposes. Leonard Shelby is a time bomb - a man without memory in the search of a murderer and willing to kill. The way Memento is narrated puts the audience in the same epistemic position as Leonard – we neither know what has happened before nor who Leonard is. As the plot unfolds itself we begin to question and suspect Leonard and the created system of facts deriving from his Polaroid pictures, notes and tattoos. In the end, Leonard creates his own reality based on his "facts" and kills Teddy.</p>
Structure	Nolan makes use of an unconventional non-linear narrative structure with multiple plot lines interwoven into each other and assembles them in montage editing. Nolan also establishes tension between subjective and objective narration and allows the audience to perceive the world through Leonard's eyes.
Characters	<pre> graph TD A[Jimmy Grants and Dodd] --- B[Leonard Shelby] B --- C[Tedd] B --- D[Natalie] </pre>
Topics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Distortion of memory and construction of personal identity • Quest for vengeance

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-deception • Subjective perception of the world
Helpful Secondary Literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bragues, George. "Memory and Morals in Memento: Hume at the Movies", <i>Film-Philosophy</i>, 12,2 (2008): 62-82. Print. • Content, Rob. "Review: <i>Memento</i>". <i>Film Quarterly</i> 56.4 (2003) 36-41. Print. • Eyes on Cinema. "18-Minute Analysis by Christopher Nolan on Story & Construction of 'Memento'". Online video clip, YouTube. 19. Sept. 2014. Web. 8. Apr. 2015. • Smith, Basil. "John Locke, Personal Identity and Memento." <i>The Philosophy of Neo-Noir</i>. Ed. Mark Conrad. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2009. 35-46. Print. • Runge, Indra. Zeit im Rückwärtsschritt. Über das Stilmittel der chronologischen Inversion in MEMENTO, IRRÉVERSIBLE und 5 X 2. Stuttgart: ibidem-Verlag, 2008. Print. • Zahn, Manuel. <i>Zur Zeitlichkeit des Films und seiner bildenden Erfahrung. In Raum, Zeit, Medienbildung Untersuchungen zu medialen Veränderungen unseres Verhältnisses zu Raum und Zeit</i>. Editors: Gerhard Chr. Bukow, Johannes Fromme, Benjamin Jörissen. VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften. 67-100. 2012. Print. •
Language	The language and dialect is not very difficult to understand as dialogs are spoken clearly and the characters do not talk very fast nor do they have a heavy dialect that could cause problems.
Suitable Age	Grades 10-12
Activities	<p>Literary aspects of the film</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plot, Characters, Motifs • Narrative and Editing • Dramatic structure of the film <p>Film analysis</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction of technical terms (camera work, editing, stylistic devices,...) • Analysis of key scenes • The unreliable narrator/subjective narration and how Noland realizes that <p>Beyond the Film</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memory, subjective perception of reality and manipulation • → The reality of social networks like Facebook as a communication medium and its problems - manipulation and trust • Film noir genre, classic film-noir productions of the 40s and 50s
Teachability Pros	<p>+ thrilling story about a serious topic. Film tells the story of an emotionally disturbed man who suffers from anterograde amnesia and is driven by the quest for revenge.</p> <p>+ Very interesting narrative structure and subjective narration</p> <p>+ Language not too hard to follow; offers insight into American English; use of metaphors</p> <p>+ offers various topics for lively discussions (memory loss, personal identity, human morality, manipulation, trust,...)</p>
Teachability Cons	- narrative structure (might be confusing for some students)

Overall Evaluation	The neo-noir Memento is a great film and I think it is highly suitable for teaching in school. The film offers a wide range of camera work, editing and stylistic devices to work with and therefore contributes to the media literacy of students. The non-linear narrative structure might either fascinate or confuse students, but either way, it is a great basis for a discussion in a lesson as students are motivated to talk about the film. The film is thrilling to watch and the students get to know a different film genre.
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