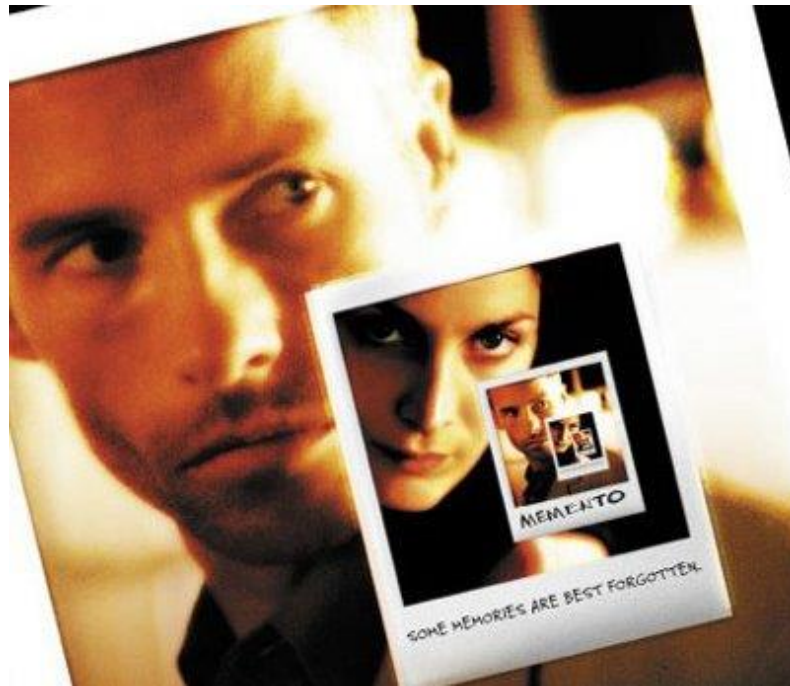


# ***Memento Mori***

In order to fully understand ***Memento Mori*** you ***have*** to know certain details.



## **Understanding a MEMENTO:**

Mementos are *metonymies of time*. Specific objects in our physical world that we associate with specific memories.

A memento can be anything--a teddy bear, a hair brush, an old shirt, a broken pencil-- that triggers a memory of a person, place, event.

**Photographs are a particularly effective form of memento, because they capture in an image an actual past moment.**

**We become attached to certain mementos because they are a means for us to try to stop time--to preserve in our consciousness important moments that are past.**

## MEANING OF “MEMENTO MORI” – THE OXYMORON



Memento Mori is actually **an oxymoron**. It is the Latin imperative which literally means, "**remember to die.**" But how can one remember the future?

People in the Middle ages, developed mementos--objects that would remind them not of their memories, but that they must die.

The dominant "**memento mori**" was the **human skull**, which became a rich subject of Medieval art. The Mexican Day of the Dead, with its skulls and skeletons, is the most vibrant expression of the **continuing human need to remember our future.**

***The key symbol in the story is the bell, which is a Memento Mori.***



## HOW EARL USES MEMENTOS:

- 1) Earl creates a series of mementos as a means of preserving each of the **10 minutes** of present time before that time disappears forever.
- 2) He uses **tattoos and lists** and notes to himself as a way of preserving the significant moments of his experience of time after the loss of his short-term memory.
- 3) By means of his mementos of these brief and transitory periods, he is able to remember enough to plot his escape, to find the man and kill him.



*From left to right (Christopher Nolan and Jonathan Nolan)*

## **NARRATIVE STYLE**

### **Narrative Point of View**

The story is told by two different narrators. A **first-person narrator** writes to a "**you**," who is gradually revealed to **be Earl**.

A **third-person narrator** reports on Earl's actions from outside the story-world.

**Notice the punchline that lets you know what the narrator needs to do:**

*"Sooner or later you'll want to do something about it. And when you do, you'll just have to trust me, because I'm the only one who can help you."*

**The story alternates this narrative switching from the first-person narrator addressing a "you" and the third-person narrator telling about Earl's experiences in a series of rooms from **sections #4 through to section #8**.**

### **AND HERE IS THE TRICKY PART**

*Now, finally, we understand. The first-person narrator is Earl who has been writing to himself. The "**I**" and the "**you**" are both Earl. A lovely little narrative trick. Nolan has misled us into believing that the "**I**", the narrator, is a separate person talking to and about Earl.*

**So what's the point? Why this elaborate deception?**

***It's a perfect means to tell the story of Earl's condition.***



1) The **"I"** who writes notes is the Earl **who is living in his present 10 minutes of passing time.**

2) The **"you"** he is addressing is the future Earl, the Earl who will start the next **10 minute cycle after the Earl who is currently writing has faded away.** As the current Earl says, **"By the time you read this note, I'll be gone."** A wonderful narrative idea.

3) **The Present Earl** writes to a Future Earl of the **next 10 minutes, then disappears.**

4) **The Future Earl** will become the **next Present Earl** who reads what his **past self** has said and then writes more to the **Next Earl.** SOUNDS LIKE A PARADOX.

5) Each **Earl** reads and writes for the **Next Earl** and bit by bit Earl develops a plan for escaping the hospital and avenging the death of his wife.

***ALL OF THIS IS DONE TO GET OUT OF THE HOSPITAL  
AND FIND THE MAN WHO MURDERED HIS WIFE.***

***EXERCISE:***

*Divide the story in **11 sections**. Identify the setting and narration of each section. This is how you will identify what occurs in **Memento Mori***