

# The Nature of History

Art mirrors life.

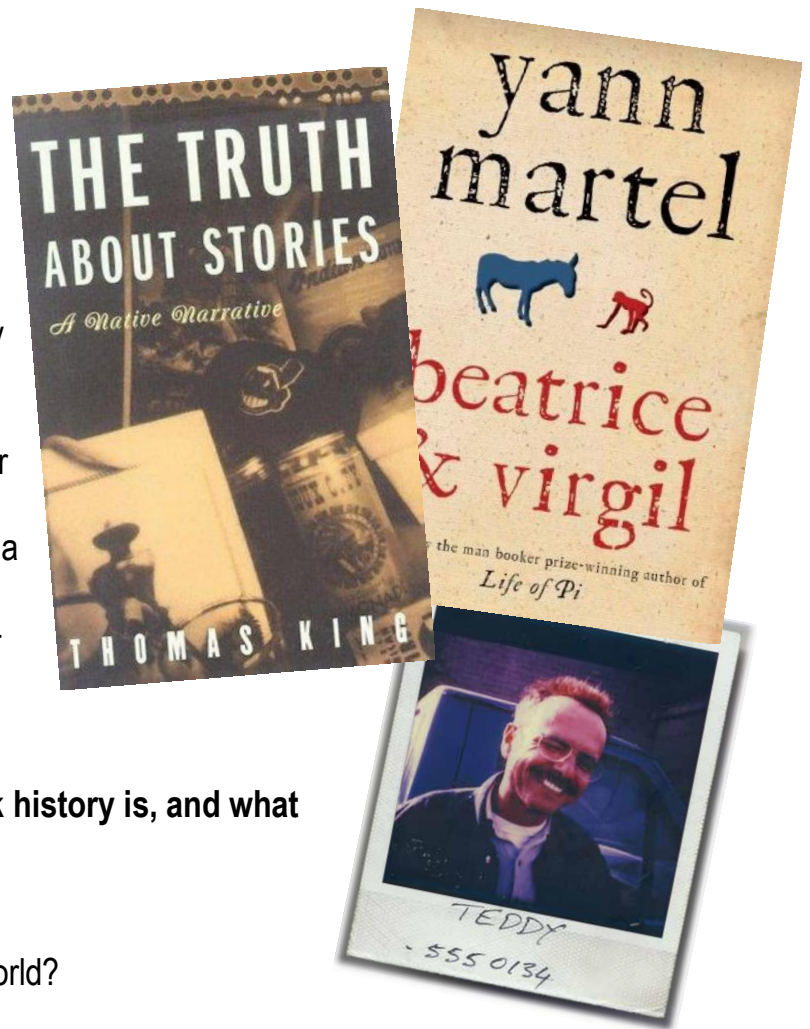
What does a movie like *Memento* tell us about the very nature of history? What does Canadian author Yann Martel or Irish author Paul Murray say about history in their novels?

Looking at the ideas presented in *Memento*, and/or *beatrice & virgil*, and/or *The Truth About Stories* and/or *Skippy Dies* explore and/or “The Danger of a Single Story” and/or any other activities or discussions we have had in class – in 300 words – discuss the very nature of history, including the problems it might create for us as historians.

**Put simply, I want you to tell me what you think history is, and what problems do historians face in studying it?**

Some ideas to ponder . . .

- What is history? What is the origin of the world?
- Is it concrete (factual)?
- What do we do with history?
- What problems can history present us with?



Curriculum link:

## ***Methods of Historical Inquiry and Communication***

Overall Expectation Addressed:

- Interpret and analyse information gathered through research, employing concepts and approaches to historical inquiry

*Even if you get revenge, you're not going to remember it . . .*

*Memories can change the shape of a room, the colour of a car . . .*

*Memories are an interpretation . . .*

*Fiction may not be real, but it is true . . .*

*Don't trust other people's notes and scribbles . . .*

*We are chained to our stories . . .*

*If history doesn't become story, it dies to everyone except the historian . . .*



# Memento



Directed by: Christopher Nolan

Starring: Guy Pearce, Carrie-Anne Moss, Joe Pantoliano

Released: December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2000

Website: [www.otnemem.com](http://www.otnemem.com)

Many medical experts have cited Memento as one of the most realistic and accurate depictions of *anterograde amnesia* in any motion picture. Caltech neuroscientist Christof Koch called Memento "the most accurate portrayal of the different memory systems in the popular media," while physician Esther M. Sternberg, Director of the Integrative Neural Immune Program at the National Institute of Mental Health identified the film as "close to a perfect exploration of the neurobiology of memory." Writing in the journal Science, Sternberg concludes: "This thought-provoking thriller is the kind of movie that keeps reverberating in the viewer's mind, and each iteration makes one examine preconceived notions in a different light. Memento is a movie for anyone interested in the workings of memory and, indeed, in what it is that makes our own reality."

## Synopsis:

A memory inside a memory, Memento is a complicated head spinning adventure. Leonard is determined to avenge his wife's murder. However, unable to remember anything that happens day-to-day due to a condition he sustained, short term memory loss, he has to write himself note after note that still don't mean anything after he falls asleep. The film goes back in time to reveal each little bit of the puzzle as he tries to find out the person who killed his wife and makes the audience feel just as onfused as he is. The narrative closely follows a phone call Pearce has in which he talks about Sammy Jankis a former client of his who he believed had the same condition. The film takes an unexpected twist as the two characters have a lot more in common than is initially put across.

