Audio	Video	Time Min:Sec
Opening credits set to the musical piece "Musica Ricercata II [Mesto, Rigido e Cerimoniale]" (00:00-00:13) by Dominic Harlan.	On a black screen, we suddenly see the main title in white: "Understanding Flashbacks".	**00:00:13**
Audio from each clip is softly heard in background. I start by saying: *To understand the significance of flashbacks, we must firstly define the term "flashback" in cinematic terms.*	Scene from *Rashomon* (00:11:28-00:11:38) where the woodcutter, one of the main characters in the movie, finds the corpse. [Figure 1]	**00:00:23**
Narrator: According to Professor of Film Studies Richard Barsam, a flashback is an interruption of chronological plot time with a shot or a series of shots that show an event that has happened earlier in the plot.	Black screen. The cinematic definition of "flashback" appears. It's in white font. It says "Flashback; An interruption of chronological plot time with a shot or series of shots that show an event that has happened earlier in the plot (R. Barsam)".	**00:00:35**
The flashback is a very important narrative device that brings the viewer back in time to an earlier moment in a character's life to go deeper into the story and give an identity to the characters.	Scene from *Rashomon* (00:31:17-00:31:23) where we firstly see Tajomaru kissing the samurai's wife passionately and then it cuts to a bound Tajomaru laughing almost hysterically [Figure 2]. Then it cuts to *City of God* (00:03:52-00:03:58) where the camera goes around Rocket, the narrator, various times until he transforms into his younger self, playing as a goalie in a football pitch [Figure 3].	**00:00:47**

Audio	Video	Time Min:Sec
Flashbacks are aligned with history since they make the viewer aware of the past. They are both history and story. They are a particular representation of the past because they are personal and because they generally come from people's memories.	Scene from *Oldboy* (01:49:31-01:49:49): Lee Won-Jin, the film's antagonist, suddenly looks worried and then starts looking down. We can see he is holding someone by the hand. Then the scene cuts to his sister holding her brother's hand [Figure 4].	00:01:03
In this documentary we will be looking at four specific films where flashbacks are well targeted and allow us to understand the films better. The four films are 'Citizen Kane', 'American History X', 'Rashomon' and 'Memento'. By having chosen these films specifically I will demonstrate how the use of flashback is not a recent innovation but has been used effectively for decades as well as in different countries.	Scene from *American History X* (00:47:51-00:47:53) where Derek Vinyard shows his tattoo of the Nazi Swastika to Murray [Figure 5]. Then it cuts to scene from *Irreversible* (00:39:28-00:39:32) where Marcus is talking to Pierre and then drinks water from a bottle [Figure 6]. Then cut to *Citizen Kane* (00:02:28-00:02:29) where we see the camera zooming out from a snow globe [Figure 7]. Then it scene cuts to *American History X* once again (00:40:18-00:40:21) where a Nazi-like cross moves like a pendulum over a computer screen [Figure 8]. Then it cuts to *Rashomon* (00:18:07-00:18:08) where Tajomaru is sitting by a tree looking angry [Figure 9]. Then it cuts to *Memento* (00:02:24-00:02:26) where Leonard Shelby grabs a gun with the scene in reverse [Figure 10].	00:01:19
We are going to begin by looking at a very important film that uses flashbacks; this is the iconic *Citizen Kane*.[Audio from clip –	Scene from *Citizen Kane* (00:02:20-00:02:37) where we firstly see the window from Kane's home, then fade to	00:01:36

Audio	Video	Time Min:Sec
Orson Well/C. F. Kane: Rosebud…]	the snow globe and then to Kane saying "Rosebud" and dying, while the snow globe falls to the floor [Figure 11].	
The story is generally about the life of newspaper tycoon Charles Foster Kane. Different people who had a connection with Kane in some way, such as his best friend Leland, or his second wife Susan narrate the story. Kane's life is therefore the subject of the movie, told through various flashbacks called *character origin flashbacks.*	Scene from *Citizen Kane* (01:00:58-01:01:05) where camera moves from Kane's political poster to Kane giving a speech [Figure 12]. Then cut to screenshot (00:50:05) of an old Leland sitting on a chair [Figure 13] then cut to screenshot (00:15:38) of an old Susan who is about to cry [Figure 14]. All screenshots are 1 second long. Then cut to scene (00:59:41-00:59:45) [Figure 15] where Kane is talking to a young Susan, smiling.	00:01:49
The flashback structure of *Citizen Kane* allows the main character to leap through time and space, without having to follow a strict chronology. This demonstrated how it was an unusual yet effective way to narrate the past since it was very interactive for the audience in the sense that they could rely solely on the character's remarks about Kane, allowing the spectator to help reporter Jerry Thomson into solving the mystery behind 'Rosebud'. Louis Giannetti wrote "Like the hopeful reporter, we too think that Rosebud will unlock Kane's ambiguous personality." According to the *Oxford Guide to Film Studies*, the film	Scene from *Citizen Kane* (01:28:38-01:29:33) where Susan is taking a vocal lesson in the presence of Kane [Figure 16].	00:02:44

Audio	Video	Time Min:Sec
'perfectly unites temporal homogeneity and dramatic unity', highlighting the powerful use of flashbacks. According to Giannetti, many critics marvelled at the intricate puzzle-structure of the movie, one of its many qualities that made it an extremely influential film.		
Citizen Kane, by having a disjointed chronology, makes the audience come up with its own idea regarding Charles Foster Kane and his enigmatic and ambiguous character.	Scene from *Citizen Kane* (00:25:52-00:26:02) where a young and rich Kane is talking to an accountant about his fortune [Figure 17].	**00:02:54**
This is an example of how a flashback from *Citizen Kane* begins. This was a movie made in 1941, so the style of initiating the flashback is still basic, but the structure of it is original nonetheless. These flashbacks, despite being simplistic, have also triggered film noir directors to use them as a way to revolve the plot of a story around a specific investigation, similarly to *Sunset Blvd.* which I will talk about later, where the flashback revolves around solving the mystery of the protagonist's death. [Audio from clip – (Everett Sloane/Mr. Bernstein): Mr. Leland, he was Mr.Kane's closest friend, they went to school together. (William Alland/J. Thompson): Harvard,	Scene from *Citizen Kane* (00:32:19-00:33:03) where Mr.Bernstein talks about Kane, the universities he dropped out of, his friend Leland, and then he starts to narrate on his period where he entered the journalism business by taking over the Inquirer. The scene then fades to the New York Daily Inquirer headquarters [Figure 18].	**00:03:38**

Audio	Video	Time Min:Sec
wasn't it? (Bernstein): Harvard, Yale, Princeton… he was thrown out of a lot of colleges. Mr Leland? Never had a nickel. One of those families where the father is worth 10 million and then one day he shoots himself and it's all nothing but deaths. He was with Mr.Kane and me the first day Mr.Kane took over the Inquirer…]		
Narrator: This way of creating flashbacks can also be identified in the movie *The Thin Blue Line* by Errol Morris. This movie depicts the story of Randall Adams, a man who was wrongly convicted and sentenced to death for a murder he did not commit. Despite being a documentary, this movie includes scenes where the events narrated by the interviewed characters are re-interpreted by the film director.	Scene from *The Thin Blue Line* (00:22:08-00:22:28) where we firstly see Randall Adams narrating of how he met David Harris and then we listen to the audio from the clip on how the two watched a double-feature at the drive-in while drinking beer [Figure 19].	00:03:58
We are now going to look at the use of traditional flashbacks in modern-day filmmaking by analysing the film *American History X*. *American History X* is a story about Derek Vinyard, a man living in Venice Beach, Los Angeles who decides to take part in the American Neo-Nazi movement after his father, a fireman, is killed in action by a black man. Derek finds meaning in this movement, until he goes to jail for the voluntary manslaughter of a black man who was attempting to steal his van. In the	Scenes from American History X start to appear. The first one (00:14:49-00:15:03) shows a young Derek Vinyard taking an interview related to the news of his father's death [Figure 20]. In here we can see it's filmed from a TV screen. The second one (00:22:11-00:22:13) sees Derek's friend Seth grab Derek from his legs [Figure 21]. We can see that Derek is laughing in this sequence. The third sequence (00:55:43-00:55:49) shows Derek being handcuffed	00:05:10

Audio	Video	Time Min:Sec

movie, we can distinguish events that happened in the past with events that happened in the present since flashbacks are seen in black and white and all the other scenes are in colour. This clearly lays out a separation between the past and the present, allowing the viewer to effectively enter into the story in both time frames. The colours outline how the past might be grey and dark and the present is promising, thus showing how the director used flashback as a way to encourage the viewer into believing that Derek has learnt from his mistakes. Film critic Owen Gleibermann wrote that "*American History X* has a jumpy, propulsive, flashback-within-flashback structure that allows Norton to create his character in layers — to show us how Derek Vinyard, a middle-class refugee from a ''normal'' American family, could end up with a Third Reich flag pinned to his bedroom wall". In general, the use of flashbacks in this film allows us greater insight into Derek's character and his juxtaposed efforts to ensure his brother does not repeat his same mistakes. It is a family tragedy where history repeats itself.

It is safe to say, though, that flashbacks are not purely a Western/American phenomenon. For instance, we have the Brazilian film *City of God* by Fernando

	Video (cont.)

by a policeman who then helps him get back up on his feet [Figure 22].
The fourth (00:30:11-00:30:15) shows Derek talking to Daniel through different angles. We can see he is changed by the fact that he has hair and is wearing a long-sleeve shirt to cover the tattoos [Figure 23].
The fifth and sixth sequence (00:56:14-00:56:17 and 00:56:24-00:56:26) show the computer screen with Derek typing [Figures 24]. Then it shows a screenshot (00:36:48) of Derek talking to some people (black-and-white) for 4 seconds [Figure 25] and then it shows another screenshot (01:02:15) of Derek talking to Cameron (colour) for 4 seconds [Figure 26]. Then there's a screenshot (00:53:52, 4 seconds) of Derek holding a gun and grabbing the man who stole his van by the jacket [Figure 27] and lastly it shows a screenshot (00:09:22, 4 seconds) of Daniel sitting in Sweeney's office [Figure 28].

Scene from *City of God* (00:33:48-00:33:57) where Rocket and his friends got to the beach and we see Rocket taking photos [Figure 29]. Then it cuts

Time: 00:05:30

Audio	Video	Time Min:Sec
Meirelles where its use of flashbacks made the movie 'visually alive' according to Roger Ebert. We also have films like the critically acclaimed *Oldboy* by South Korean director Park Chan-Wook where the protagonist Oh Dae Su has to investigate on why was he imprisoned for 15 years. These two films show how flashbacks have been used in different countries to strong critical acclaim.	to scene from *Oldboy* (00:27:34-00:27:45) where Oh Dae Su eats a live octopus at a restaurant [Figure 30].	
There are some films where the flashback takes up the majority of the plot. For instance, movies like *The Man Who Shot Libery Valance* shows only one single long flashback throughout the whole film. The flashback covers the major running time of the film, with Ransom Stoddard telling some journalists of how he met Tom Doniphon. [Audio from scene is heard.] [Audio from clip - James Stewart/Ransom Stoddard: I was just a youngster, fresh out of law school, bag full of law books and my father's gold watch, $14.80 in cash. I had taken Horace Greeley's advice literally: Go west young man, go west, and seek fame, fortune, adventure [sic].]	Scenes from *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* appear. The first one (00:11:10-00:11:27) shows Ransom Stoddard and his friends in mourning over Tom Doniphon until journalists come in [Figure 31]. The second scene (00:13:34-00:14:02) shows Stoddard narrating the story of how he met Doniphon, thus marking the beginning of the flashback [Figure 32].	00:06:15
Narrator: Another similar example is seen in the 1950 noir film *Sunset Boulevard* by Billy Wilder. Similarly to *The Man Who Shot Libery Valance*, the movie is mainly	Scene from *Sunset Boulevard* is shown (00:01:55-00:03:11) where firstly the police arrive to Norma Desmond's villa to find the body of Gillis and then the	00:07:31

Audio	Video	Time Min:Sec
composed by one long flashback, where the main character, Joseph C. Gillis, explains from the very beginning how he died. [Audio from clip - William Holden/Gillis: You see the body of a young man was found floating in the pool of her mansion, with two shots in his back and one in his stomach. Nobody important really. Just a movie writer with a couple of B pictures to his credit. The poor dope. He always wanted a pool. Well, in the end he got himself a pool – only the price turned out to be a little high… Let's go back about six months and find the day when it all started.]	scene undergoes a flashback of Gillis narrating [Figure 33].	
Narrator: The Man who shot Libery Valance and *Sunset Boulevard* have both showed similar transitions that conventionally show the viewer that a flashback is occurring.	Scene from *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (00:45:58-00:46:00) where Ransom Stoddard, dressed as a waiter, is talking to Tom Doniphon [Figure 34] and then cut to *Sunset Boulevard* (01:38:50-01:38:54) where Max finds Gillis' body in the pool [Figure 35].	00:07:37
In film, the most common transitions to flashbacks are fades and dissolves. These transitions are often followed by a voice-over narration, like the one you've seen from *Sunset Boulevard*.	Black screen, white, Courier New font, size 18, shows the words "Fade" and "Dissolve" in the centre, separated by a space. These words then fade to a black screen.	00:07:46
In a flashback, the image shifts from present [2 second pause] to past.	Scene from *Sunset Boulevard* where we firstly see Gillis in the pool (00:02:26-00:02:32) [Figure 33] and then	00:07:55

Audio	Video	Time Min:Sec
	cut (00:42:21-00:42:24) to scene where Gillis and Norma Desmond are sitting on the sofa, all dressed formally [Figure 36].	
[Music in the background: Dominic Harlan's "Musica Ricercata II [Mesto, Rigido e Cerimoniale]" (0:26-0:40)] The viewer is usually aware, thanks to visual and aural codes, that he or she is in the past; this allows flashbacks to be carefully identified by the audience. And for them to be effective, they need to be capable of completing a story.	Scene from *American History X* (01:10:24-01:10:32) where Derek Vinyard takes his shirt off during out-of-cell time to reveal his Nazi swastika tattooed on his chest to the other cellmates [Figure 37]. Then cut to scene from *Oldboy* (01:16:55-01:17:03) where Lee Soo-ah is riding a bike in school [Figure 38].	00:08:09
We are now going to analyse one of our key films: *Rashomon* by Akira Kurosawa, made in 1950. In *Rashomon*, flashbacks are used in a different way. The majority of the movie is based on the evidence of different characters in the film, from the bandit to the medium ending with the final, true evidence of the crime narrated in the film. These diverse versions of the characters exposes the lies of humans, where their words can be deceivable compared to what the eyes really see, as shown through the woodcutter's confession at the end of the movie. Kurosawa carefully describes how all men are potential liars. [Audio from clip (subtitled in English) – (Woodcutter/Takashi Shimura): It is inevitable to be suspicious	Scenes from *Rashomon* appear. The first one shows the three 'narrators' of the movie, the woodcutter, the priest and the commoner (00:07:06-00:07:11) [Figure 39]. Then Tajomaru is seen while he is testifying (00:20:23-00:20:24) [Figure 40]. Then the medium is seen testifying (00:51:51-00:51:52) [Figure 41]. Then we see the woodcutter's true version of the event (01:04:19-01:04:35)[Figure 42]. Then it cuts to scene (01:25:38-01:25:48) where the woodcutter says "It is inevitable to be suspicious of others on a day like this", where the priest is holding a baby [Figure 43]. Finally, we see the woodcutter leaving with the baby (01:26:58-01:27:15)[Figure 44].	00:09:14

Audio	Video	Time Min:Sec

of others on a day like this.] *Narrator:* While giving some insight about the film, director Kurosawa said, "Human beings are incapable of being honest". David Thomson called it a movie "bursting with a new kind of agnosticism" since the truth is unknown until the very end, allowing us to reveal the lies we tell. This movie thus uses flashbacks in a very original way, where the audience is constantly asking which version of the story is correct. There are four truths, and yet there is still a dilemma. It is therefore a compelling use of film technique.

Rashomon clearly shows how the director manipulated flashbacks well enough to create an effective way of narrating a story.

Stills from the movie are seen. They all appear for 2 seconds each. The first one (00:51:34) shows the medium getting ready to testify after its esoteric performance [Figure 45]. The second one (00:54:16) shows Tajomaru confronting the bound samurai [Figure 46]. The third one (00:15:16) shows a sick Tajomaru on the seashore [Figure 47]. The last one (01:17:11) shows Tajomaru getting ready to fight the samurai [Figure 48].

00:09:22

We are now going to explore another key film: Memento by Christopher Nolan. Memento is a crime mystery film about Leonard Shelby, a man with anterograde amnesia who tries to investigate on the rape and murder

Scene from *Memento* (00:33:10-00:33:24) where Leonard Shelby is arguing with Natalie about Doddy [Figure 49].

00:09:36

Audio	Video	Time Min:Sec
of his wife. Similarly to *American History X*, the film is structured into two timelines; one in colour and one in black and white. These sequences alternate each other, except that the black and white ones are shown in chronological order and the coloured ones are ordered in reverse. Therefore, chronologically speaking, the black and white sequences come first and the coloured ones come next.	Screenshots from *Memento* are seen. Each sequence is seen for 2 seconds. The first one (00:27:20) shows Leonard Shelby at Sammy's house next to Mrs.Jankins [Figure 50]. The second one (00:45:11) shows Shelby on the phone in his hotel room [Figure 51]. The third one (00:23:40) shows Shelby talking to Teddy [Figure 52]. The fourth one (01:07:16) shows Teddy talking to Shelby in Shelby's car [Figure 53]. The fifth one (01:35:50) shows Teddy's Polaroid photo [Figure 54]. Then cut to scene still from *Memento* (00:40:31-00:40:44) where Shelby is about to wake up in a motel room, all confused [Figure 55].	00:09:59
The way of portraying flashbacks in this movie is very peculiar in the sense that we don't see the dissolve or fade from *The Man who Shot Libery Valance* [4 second pause] or the blackness separated by every scene for example in Gaspar Noé's *Irreversible*, [3 second pause], which also shows an ante retrograde chronology since it starts at the end and it ends at the beginning. In this movie though it's almost as if we have two separated stories that were made to intersect.	Screenshot from *Memento* (01:14:45) where Shelby is talking to an agitated Natalie [Figure 56]. This screenshot is seen for 2 seconds. Then cut to scene from *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (01:54:03-01:54:07) where the scene fades from Doniphon walking past some political posters to an old Stoddard [Figure 57]. Then cut to scene from *Irreversible* (00:24:01-00:24:04) where camera moves from Pierre to Marcus lying down before showing black [Figure 58]. Then cut to scene from *Memento* (00:06:29-00:06:36)	00:10:15

Audio	Video	Time Min:Sec
	where Shelby looks through the drawers only to find a Bible [Figure 59].	
Now that we have looked at the four main films, we are going to talk about understanding flashbacks in film.	On a black screen, we see the word "Flashback" fade in and then fade out.	00:10:21
As you probably identified, a flashback is a disruption of the spatial continuity. It gives the spectator an impression of reality and of unitary vision. When the spectator looks at the flashback, he or she thinks that the story and its meaning is all there in front of them. This gives a sense of importance and supremacy over the studied subject.	Black screen again, with the same type of font, although now the size of the letters is 14. We see the words "flashback" and then, on bullet points, the phrases "disruption of spatial continuity", "unitary vision" and "meaning".	00:10:38
In the past flashbacks were separated by dissolves, wipe cuts or fades. Today, these types of transition devices have been replaced by direct cuts.	Scene from *La Jetee* (00:10:08-00:10:24) where the protagonist/narrator explains how in the first days of the experiment he starts to remember images of his past [Figure 60].	00:10:54
Although it may sound simplistic, editing is the way to create flashbacks. Through editing, filmmakers build the structure of a movie by arranging its shots, therefore they are responsible for adding flashbacks within a film.	Screenshots/photos regarding editing appear. They all appear for 2 seconds each. The first one shows Eisenstein looking at a filmstrip [Figure 61]. The second one shows a technician editing a film [Figure 62]. The third one shows a man with glasses editing a film [Figure 63]. The fourth one shows another film editor while working in a dark room	00:11:04

Audio	Video	Time Min:Sec

	[Figure 64] and the fifth and last one shows two editors at work [Figure 65].	
As filmmaking techniques have developed, flashbacks have been overused; the spectator would tend to see the usual close-up in the character's eyes, the camera slowly going out of focus, the voice-over narration and the transition revealing the flashback. This technique has changed with films like *Irreversible* and *Memento.*	Scene from *Citizen Kane* (00:51:40-00:51:56) where an old Leland talks about Kane's first wife, and then a flashback takes place [Figure 66].	00:11:20
But flashbacks aren't just editing techniques and types of transitions. They are a separation from the chronological story, or *fabula*, to the organized series of events that occur in the movie, called *syuzhet*. This was a concept developed in the narrative theories of Russian formalism, which was later used in film flashbacks. The *syuzhet* is the order of actions as how they appear on the screen whereas the *fabula* is the whole chronological story. Knowing this in mind, we can identify how movies like *Memento* mix up the *fabula* together with the *syuzhet*. This shows how flashbacks are important from the narrative point of view.	A black screen, with the same type of font mentioned before. It shows the words "story" and "events" for 6 seconds, then it shows the word "fabula" for 6 seconds. Then it shows the definition "syuzhet- order of actions as how they appear on screen" for 5 seconds then another definition "fabula-the whole story in chronological order" for 4 seconds. Then cut to scene from *Memento* (00:22:50-00:23:01) where firstly Shelby is talking on the phone with someone (black and white) and then cut to scene where Shelby is driving a car (colour) [Figure 67].	00:11:52
Flashbacks are like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle that need to be put together to comprehend the story. Thanks to them, we can understand the plot, the characters and the	Scene from *Rashomon* (01:04:15-01:04:25) where the woodcutter gives a second version of what happened in the woods with Tajomaru, the samurai and his wife	00:12:02

Audio	Video	Time Min:Sec
themes within a film. That is how, for instance, we can understand Joel and Clementine's complicated love story before they have been brainwashed in the movie *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind.*	[Figure 68]. Scene from *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (00:44:42-00:44:51) where Joel, while he is being brainwashed, remembers a time where he was in bed with Clementine [Figure 69].	**00:12:11**
Thanks to flashback, we can understand the complexities of science-fiction stories like *La Jetee* where the narrator recalls his past in mesmerizing and melancholic ways after a Third World War broke out.	Scene from *La Jetee* (00:13:08-00:13:18) where the narrator recalls how he met a woman, before the war [Figure 70].	**00:12:21**
It's thanks to flashbacks that we can understand the reasons why Oh Dae-Su has been held prisoner for 15 years by digging further and further into his past.	Scene from *Oldboy* (01:19:33-01:19:43) where we see Oh Dae-Su looking around his old school, while he sees himself young again there, almost as if he was experiencing a real-life flashback [Figure 71].	**00:12:31**
[Music plays, "Musica Ricercata II [Mesto, Rigido e Cerimoniale]" (00:00-00:18) by Dominic Harlan.] Narrator: So flashbacks are not only part of the story, they make the story. Without them, the audience would be lost; they would not be able to relate to the characters and the themes. This is how flashbacks are important and this is how we have to perceive them.	Scene from *Rashomon* (00:20:30-00:21:18) Where Tajomaru recalls when he was running in the woods right before finding the samurai walking along the path with his wife. When Tajomaru finds them, the samurai questions him at first but Tajomaru is seen ignoring him and sitting down on the road [Figure 72].	**00:13:19**

Audio	**Video**	**Time** **Min:Sec**