



Rashomon

Film Study Guide

Director: Akira Kurosawa

1950 | Fiction | 88 Minutes | Japan | Japanese | Unrated

<https://www.criterion.com/films/307-rashomon>

Synopsis: Rashomon depicts the retelling of a rape and murder from several different points of view, each claiming a different version of who committed the murder. There is the woodcutter, who claims to have witnessed the crime, the bandit, the raped women and the dead man, speaking through a medium. The film is framed with the telling of the tale by the woodcutter and a priest, both present at the inquest, to a stranger while they are all taking shelter in a torrential rainstorm at Rashomon gate. The popularity of the film and the short stories has led to the naming of the “Rashomon Effect or Rashomon Principle” used as a model in anthropology and journalism in measuring objectivity. Kurosawa’s films have inspired numerous homage, rip-offs and remakes in cinema history. For the closest homage to Rashomon, see Pulp Fiction and Courage Under Fire.

Post-Screening Discussion Questions

1. What is a fact? How do you define “truth,” and what is objectivity?

2. How are these issues of objectivity dealt with by journalists, anthropologists and historians?
3. What was the mood of the Japanese after WWII?
4. Whose story did you find most believable and why?
5. How does each version reflect the biases of each person recounting the story?
6. What details are common to all accounts of the crime?
7. What is the role of women in Japan as reflected in the film?
8. What are the metaphors used to show the decline of the Japanese empire?