

THE FIFTIETH GATE – **A JOURNEY THROUGH** **MEMORY**

***** REMEMBER TO USE THE FULL**
TITLE OF THE TEXT

PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE

1. The Fiftieth Gate
2. The Buchenwald Ball
3. We Will Never Forget – Auschwitz

(2) HISTORY AND MEMORY

GENERIC INTRODUCTION:

- In most cases, history and memory are recognised as two separate entities. History, at its best, is believed to be an unbiased account of the past, whereas memory is believed to be a highly subjective recollection of previous experiences. However in many cases this perception is overturned, in texts that highlight the duality of history and memory. It is through this interplay and with the use of varied language and visual forms and features that the composers of each text reveal both differing and similar insights that collaboratively act ____ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) ____.

1. Mark Baker's, The Fiftieth Gate,
____ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) ____
2. the SBS documentary The Buchenwald Ball directed by Uri Mizrahi,
____ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) ____
3. and the poem 'We Will Never Forget – Auschwitz' by Alexander Kimel
____ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) ____

TEXT ONE – The Fiftieth Gate:

- Delineating the journey of author Mark Baker as he investigates and discovers the experiences of his mother, Genia and his father, Yossl during the Holocaust, The Fiftieth Gate **highlights the dual contributions of history and memory in understanding the past, juxtaposing archival research and first hand investigation with oral testimony.** ___ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) ___
- The introductory chapters of the text feature Baker torn between being the son of Holocaust victims and an historian. Despite this, he is compelled to side with a chosen medium, constantly quantifying and validating his parents' memories with archival evidence. In imbuing the text with the **clinical, impersonal tone of statistics and archival data** "*In 1657, founded by Bishop Boguslaw...*" (Ch.VI, p. 24) Baker creates a rift in the relationship with his parents. Dismissing Baker's efforts to historically investigate his past, Yossl mocks his son's obsession with facts, emphasised in the **repetition of "fecks, fecks"** (Ch.VII, p. 34) ___ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) ___

- However, as the process continues a transformation begins whereby Baker changes course, *“Does history remember more than memory? Do... I only recognize suffering in numbers and lists and not in the laments and pleas of a human being...”* (Ch. XXIV, p. 139) Through the use of **rhetorical questions**, Baker evokes an emotional response from the reader allowing them to simultaneously make his realisation of the interplay roles of history and memory. **That is, memory humanizes the history** *“I remember, I went to school”* (Ch. XXVI, p. 149) **and history corroborates memory, “a handwritten report card”** (Ch. XXVI, p. 149)
 ___ [INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION] ___

- They **authenticate each other** filling in the gaps and **colouring a factual and emotional depiction**, *“I remember I went to school there for a short time... The episode is recorded by her teacher in a hand written report card. Genia Krochmal...received straight A’s”* (Ch. XXVI, p. 149)
 ___ [INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION] ___

- In addition to proving that history and memory can work together to create a fuller picture, the complexity of this interplay is further emphasised in demonstrating that not all gaps can be filled. Baker’s use of **atypical conventions such as the non – linear chronology including scattered flashbacks of memory throughout the text, replicates the incoherent, fragmented nature of both history and memory**. Baker shows that memory is subjective and partial as it lapses and is clouded by the passing of time and emotion. ___ [INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION] ___ Genia’s **disjointed sentence structure is symbolic** of the isolated fragments of her memory, *“I wish I could remember when war started. I was only a little girl.”* (Ch. IV, p. 16)

- In the same way the novel proves history to be inconclusive.
 ___ [INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION] ___ Baker’s **monotone narrative voice** emphasises his disappointment in the lack of historical information

“...about dates, time, the year” (Ch. VIII, p. 47) of his mothers past.

___ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) ___

- Ultimately the Fiftieth Gate demonstrates how memories are like possessions that history can either validate or obscure. ___ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) ___ Genia’s memories are all that she has; figuratively they are her possession, the things that form her solitary history (lone survivor). However her memories appear obscure due to the absence of history to confirm her memory. This is confirmed in the assertive tone that Genia takes on, ***“It’s all I have memories, just memoirs. Give them to me, let me take them. The hair you can have but the rest is mine.”*** It is clear that Genia is asserting ownership of her memories and in doing so is refusing to let them be obscured by Bakers constant historical evaluations. Furthermore, the use of possessive nouns such as ‘mine’ confirm memory as possession, emphasises her ownership of her memories and creating an even stronger image in the mind of readers.

___ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) ___

- The Fiftieth gate also develops the notion that the past continually impacts on the present as memories of the past affect those who have endured the hardships of historical realities. ___ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) ___ This is made evident in the personification of memory throughout the text, including the use of the emotive language such as: “ And I was his memory.” A And the use metaphoric language in “I mourned the things I had stolen from my father ... his memory.” Again this touches on the notion of memory as possession and allows the responder to understand the real impact that memory can have on one’s life. Memory impacts on the present because it exists in the present this is evident in both quotes as characters describe their memories and their purpose in present context.

___ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) ___

- Holistically, the audience is able to recognise the usefulness of history and memory in understanding the past whilst at the same time making them aware of its fragility, showing that any recollection of the past is never

complete, *“there will always be hidden fragments.”* (Ch. XV, p. 88), thus revealing the complexity of this interplay. [___ \[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\] ___](#)

TEXT TWO – The Buchenwald Ball

- The engaging and uplifting documentary, *The Buchenwald Ball*, tells the story of Holocaust survivors: ‘The Buchenwald Boys’, following them as they gather in Melbourne, Australia, to celebrate the Buchenwald Ball, commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of their Liberation from the brutal Buchenwald concentration camp in Germany.
- Like Baker’s *The Fiftieth Gate*, the film **maintains the dual importance** of history and memory in understanding the past. However, it emphasizes the complexities of their interplay by, **demonstrating the ability of history and memory to shape collective identity.** ___ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) ___
- The introductory scene begins with a **close - up shot** of Holocaust survivor Szaja Chaskiel in the present day stating, “**...as a child of 15 years old I could never imagine and believe that I would be liberated and be a free person**”.
___ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) ___
- The film then **cuts to the next frame**; an archival photograph of the liberation of Buchenwald concentration camp with statistical evidence appearing as a **caption on the bottom of the screen**, directly supporting Chaskiel’s memory, “**In April 1945, US soldiers liberated the Buchenwald Concentration Camp in Germany where approximately 56,000 prisoners had perished. Among the liberated were 1,000 children, most of them orphans**”. ___ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) ___ By **cutting** directly from Szaja’s reminiscence to the factual details of Buchenwald, the documentary immediately establishes the way in which history corroborates memory and memory personalises history; creating both an accurate and personalised depiction for the responder. This structure is consistent throughout the documentary, as in *The Fiftieth Gate*, it continuously affirms

the dual importance of history and memory.

___ [INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION] ___

- The close friendship of ‘The Buchenwald Boys’ becomes more and more evident as the documentary progresses, demonstrating the ability of history and memory to shape a collective identity and have a lasting impact on both individuals and groups of people. ___ [INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION] ___ ‘The Buchenwald Boys’ as a **concept is future orientated** emphasising the present; the journey of migration, of coming to Australia, of building life together. The reoccurring motif of ‘The Buchenwald Boys’ **singing the Buchenwald concentration camp song** in the present day illuminates this shared identity. **Words of the song** including, **“Oh, Buchenwald, I cannot forget you”** and **“You are my present fate”** demonstrate the everlasting memory of their experience, even after sixty – years. ___ [INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION] ___
- Whilst singing, the use of an **aerial shot** of the men bunched together embracing each other with hands on each other’s shoulders, enhances the powerful image of happiness and unity. ___ [INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION] ___ Furthermore, the **song is sung in Yiddish**, authenticating its historical presence and personalising it as part of their cultural and historical identity. ___ [INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION] ___
- The notion of collective identity that stems from history and memory, a notion not as strongly emphasised in The Fiftieth Gate, builds the audiences understanding of the complexities comprised in the interplay of history and memory. ___ [INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION] ___

TEXT THREE - 'We Will Never Forget – Auschwitz'

- Paralleling The Buchenwald Ball, the poem, 'We Will Never Forget – Auschwitz' examines history and memory in its application not to the individual, but to countless Holocaust victims, particularly those in "Auschwitz".
___ [INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION] ___
- Supporting notions found in the documentary and thus substantiating the complexity of the interplay of history and memory, the poem **juxtaposes prolific images of dramatised memory with factual names of places, events and Yiddish**, to walk the responder through the process of entering a concentration camp.
___ [INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION] ___
- The introductory line of the poem, "***We will never forget the selections at Auschwitz***", (1) immediately sets the responder on a collective journey

through memory. ___ [INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION] ___ The use of the **collective noun “we” (1)** indicates the reminiscence of a collective group of people and the connotations of the words **“never forget” (1)** indicate a permanently fixated memory. ___ [INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION] ___

- As the poem progresses, the notion of collective memory continues with the use of **ambiguous nouns that are indicative of all Holocaust victims**. For example; **“mothers”, (7) “fathers”, (10) “babies” (8) and “humanity” (15)**. ___ [INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION] ___ These terms play an important role in not only allowing the audience to gain an understanding of the masses of people involved in the Holocaust, but also history and memory can originate from shared experiences, again emphasising the complexity of insights that stem from the interplay of history and memory. ___ [INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION] ___
- Further demonstrating this complexity, the text resembles The Fiftieth Gate and The Buchenwald Ball, in its ability to illustrate how the past is able to create powerful memories that keep history alive in order to preserve lessons of the past for the present and future. ___ [INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION] ___ The poem uses memories to **fabricate dramatic recreations of the poets Holocaust experiences**. The use of **metaphorical language** in comparing the actions of the Nazi regime to an **“Angel of Death” (5)** and further juxtaposition of **“living and hell” (5)** in the line, **“Works like the Angel of Death, creating living hell” (5)** work to illuminate the experiences of the Holocaust in a way that places emphasis on the sheer brutality of the Nazi Regime. ___ [INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION] ___
- It is through such **prolific imagery** that the poem acts as a warning to humanity to never let such atrocities happen again, revealing another complex insight. The poems methodical structure, replicating the way in which history and memory are discovered in segments further illuminates the poem as a lesson for humanity. ___ [INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION] ___

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- Each of the seven separate stanzas adds to the gradual increase in dramatic tension. ___ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) ___ From the first stanza illustrating *“the selections at Auschwitz”* to the last stanza illustrating the chilling image of Nazi’s rejoicing *“doing the Devils work”*; the poem shows the ability of history to instil memories that remind those in the present of the events of the past, in order for them to learn and move on in a different way. ___ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) ___
 - **Again it is clear that history and memory collaboratively combine to produce a multiplicity of insights.** ___ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) ___
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GENERIC CONCLUSION:

Each of these texts with differing and parallel insights revealed through the interplay of history and memory, such as, **the ability to substantiate one another and illuminate the past, to create a collective identity; allow a text to function simultaneously as a personal memoir and a historical document and to create a valuable lessons about past events for humanity.**

- **The Fiftieth Gate**___ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) __
- **The Buchenwald Ball**___ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) __
- **We will never forget - Auschwitz** ___ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) __

Collaboratively, each text demonstrates how history and memory deliver a multiplicity of insights each acting to emphasising ___ [\[INSERT LINK TO THE QUESTION\]](#) __

