

**MODULE C- REPRESENTATION AND TEXT: 'FIFTIETH GATE'**

Theme/Idea	Theme development	Quote	Techniques
<p><b>Introduction statements:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>History</u> is conventionally observed as a factual, objective perspective of past events which is regarded as being authentic and reliable.</li> <li>- However history can be tainted with personal bias and false assumption which can damage its factual veracity.</li> <li>- In comparison, <u>memory</u> is perceived as a fragmentary perspective of past events which can be painted with personal emotions, opinions and impressions of the past.</li> <li>- History and memory share the similar purpose of representing past events, while on their own neither is reliable; however when used in conjunction they can verify one another which produces a more balanced and humanised account of the past.</li> </ul>		
<p>Memory and Light</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- This is how Baker characterises memory</li> <li>- Memories can be forgotten but then revived again, so can places and objects stir up old memories.</li> <li>-This quote is used at both the beginning and end reflecting the circular motion of the book – how knowledge has been discovered however nothing has actually changed in history.</li> <li>-<b>Memory may have been affected by insight of historical records, but history is not influenced by memory.</b></li> </ul>	<p><i>‘It always begins in blackness, until the first light illuminates a hidden fragment of memory.’</i></p> <p><i>‘Towards the fiftieth gate where light hovers inside the darkness.’</i></p>	
<p>The struggle of the children of</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Baker writes the <i>Fiftieth Gate</i> so that his children might escape the blackness.</li> </ul>	<p><i>‘I had always believed that all documents were burned</i></p>	

<p>Holocaust survivors to understand, respect and move on from their parents experiences.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Baker needs this book for his own personal enlightenment</li> <li>- We learn from his trials and tribulations that he wants to find out as much as he can about his parents childhood.</li> <li>-H &amp; M can consequently be viewed as overpowering</li> <li>- Although Baker shows us that when you learn about the past you are able to understand the present.</li> <li>- History is unshakeable, the facts remain, events don't change; only the perception of them is different.</li> <li>- The power of knowledge and memory are also significant and surpass time's barriers.</li> <li>-Throughout the novel Baker and his parents gain many realisations -----</li> <li>- Baker has matured to the point where he realises the stronger tragedy is not that he has not grandparents, but that his father has no parents alive.</li> <li>-We see his development as a person.</li> <li>- This moment is edifying because through history and memory mark is able to gain true empathy and transcend the present.</li> </ul>	<p><i>along with all people whose lives they portrayed.'</i></p> <p><i>'I realise how deeply buried is his pain. I have always pitied myself for the grandparents I do not have, rarely considering my father's own orphaned state'.</i></p>	
<p>Clash of history and memory</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We can see this when Mark's father remembers things poorly and whilst there is historical evidence of the season being warm, he remember it being cold.</li> <li>-Also Genia has a conflict with Mark about her memories. Mark interrogates his mother and asks her to prove it. This is regarding the 'pitch black' that Genia said that she lived with for years.</li> </ul>	<p><i>'He says it was cold. Winter. But it was warm. Autumn. That's what they all say.'</i></p> <p><i>'I don't believe you...prove it.'</i></p>	

	<p>-In gate XXXIV we find evidence of suppressed memories and painful truths. There is suggestion that her father had another child and that this skeleton in the closet had pained both Raisl and Genia. Elzbita (Polish women who sheltered them) refuses to confirm Leo's other child to her sister, Maria. She does confirm the details of Genia's misconceptions of memory. ----- -----</p> <p>There were no years of blackness in this version or representation of the events of history.</p> <p>-Mark cannot respect his mothers memories as truth.</p> <p>-There is an uncomfortable link between empirical evidence and recollection. . This is particularly confronting because of the personal relationship between mother and son and the strain that it caused.</p>	<p><i>'The wooden house was divided into two main rooms... each of which was lit by two windows and heated by an oven.'</i></p> <p><i>'I doubted her... I only recognise suffering in numbers and lists and not in the laments and pleas of human being.'</i> Pg 139</p> <p><i>'I don't believe you...prove it.'</i> <i>'It was the first time during my mothers story.'</i></p> <p><i>'no institution to which she could pin hr identity.'</i></p> <p><i>'am I usurping her memory'</i></p> <p><i>'does history remember more than memory?'</i></p> <p><i>'so when I had exhausted memory, I turned to history.'</i> Pg 213</p>	
<p>Discovery of the past as a necessary part of the present.</p>	<p>- There must be a point to any discovery in knowledge if it is to have meaning.</p> <p>- For Baker this purpose seems to be to inform his children</p>		

	<p>about their grandparents past, because when the grandparents die, you lose the memory with them, however we get the impression that it is almost another academic pursuit for Baker, This is supported in the way he tries to force the information out of his parents with no consideration for their feelings.</p> <p>- For Baker the need to form part of his own life and his children's through the clarifying of his parent's life before they came to Australia.</p> <p>The references to his children make the connection between his parents world and their own.</p> <p>-A tangible connection is made between the past and the present in the acknowledgements as Baker refers to his parents as -----</p>	<p><i>- 'who pull me back on the path beyond memory, and make me laugh along the way.'</i></p> <p><i>'giving me their memories'</i></p>	
<p>Impact of memory</p>	<p>- The more Baker finds out about his parents, the more he begins to understand. He begins to respect their memories more, particular his mothers lack of historical proof. He grows and changes as a person.</p> <p><b>-The power of memory is viewed as a powerful force that unifies human experience.</b></p> <p><b>-Through this text we continually see the past impacting on the present, as memories of the past affect those who have experienced them.</b></p> <p>Unreliable, but when aligned with history, humanity can come to terms with the past.</p>	<p><i>'I mourned the things I had stolen from my father...his memory.'</i></p> <p><i>'No, I say, not numbers, it's people.'</i></p> <p><i>'I wish I could forget what I remember' - pg 18</i></p>	

History lacks personal experience and empathy		<p><i>‘What are these papers anyway, except echoes of the past’. Dark shadows without screams, without screams, without fear.’</i> Pg138</p> <p><i>‘Each fragment of memory was placed in an archive and catalogued.’ pg 231</i></p>	
Memory is fragmented by nature		<p><i>‘The memories were always broken lie fragments off sacred tablets.’</i> <i>‘All my memories are frozen in black and white images...present the past as a series of frozen moments.’</i></p>	
The power of traumatic experience in shaping a person’s life	- The fragmented nature of memory shows how traumatic experiences can change events.	<i>‘I just can’t disconnect my past...I can’t forget those moments for as long as I live.’</i>	
The past is unchangeable		<i>‘Imagine: the same story, different ending.’ Pg 200</i>	
Identity is shaped by memory not history		<i>‘Don’t steal my memory’, my mother later erupts.’</i>	
Discovery of	-Yossl and Genia also realise aspects of their youth that they	<i>‘Once reawakened, they</i>	

<p>memory and knowledge</p>	<p>have since forgotten-----.</p> <p>-Each aspect that Baker learns about his parents or Poland is part of his discovery. Thus history can be viewed as empowering. To learn about the past is to understand the present. History is immutable, events cannot be changed, only perceptions of them can.</p> <p>-Through the protagonist's journey of discovery he is able to transcend the barriers of time, through the power of knowledge and memory.</p> <p>-The significance of 50 'gates' relates to the Jewish religion where the '50<sup>th</sup> gate' contains access to all knowledge and is a metaphorical tree of wisdom. This relates to the poem in the epigraph – which states that the Fiftieth Gate is “a hidden gate.” It is a metaphor for God's vision, and the knowledge that may come from this gate may be a blessing or a curse</p> <p>-It is significant that the 50<sup>th</sup> chapter does not elude to any new information (or all knowledge) but instead reverts back to where the novel began. It may also be interpreted as not having an ending, and that each generation will continue on and pass on stories.</p> <p>H &amp; M can consequently be viewed as overpowering</p> <p>- Although Baker shows us that when you learn about the past you are able to understand the present.</p> <p>- History is unshakeable, the facts remain, events don't change; only the perception of them is different.</p>	<p><i>never rest again.'</i></p> <p><i>'Munich was the nerve centre of recollection.'</i></p> <p><i>'With the realisation of life grows the knowledge of death.'</i></p> <p><i>'My God, what I remember now.'</i></p>	
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	<p>reflecting the circular motion of the book – how knowledge has been discovered however nothing has actually changed in history. Memory may have been affected by insight of historical records, but history is not influenced by memory.</p> <p>- The power of knowledge and memory are also significant and surpass time’s barriers.</p> <p>- <i>Always</i>: sense of certainty, absolutely positive – dissimilar from memory which is often not entirely certain.</p> <p><i>Blackness</i> = emptiness, nothingness, lack of knowledge or remembrance. This characterises that without memory there is nothing</p> <p><i>Illumination</i>: spark, light, a concept of knowledge, enlightenment</p> <p><i>Hidden fragment</i>: ‘hidden’ links to the concept of the ‘50<sup>th</sup> gate’ as being hidden whilst ‘fragment’ reflects the disjointed, discord and non-linear manner in which memories exist. It reflects how memories portray one aspect, but not necessarily the entire context of an event or circumstance.</p>		
<p>Reluctance to give up the past.</p>		<p><i>‘Don’t turn me into a memory’ my mother</i></p>	



		<i>screams</i>	
<p>Limitations and problems with history and memory</p>	<p>Delicate fabrication. To suggest this about his mothers fathers life is insulting and shows his distance, just like that of pure history, it cannot emphathise.</p> <p><b>-While history may be viewed as a chronological series of indisputable events, memory of those events is highly subjective and will affect the way those events are perceived.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Self-deceit and forgetting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o (it is possible to deceive yourself about events at the time or events later)</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Repression and half truth <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o (We don't necessarily forget but inside, our subconscious chooses to push unpleasant memories aside. Half-truths occur with admitting some of the truth but omitting parts we don't want to address)</li> </ul> </li> <li>- Delicate fabrication <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o (Lying to ourselves or others or denying facts)</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>Distrust of undocumented memory .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fusion of dreams and fantasies ----- -----</li> <li>o (The way human memory conceives the past depends on the present 'mood' and likewise the interpretation formed about the present situation</li> </ul>	<p><i>'Maybe, I tell my mother, your father reconstructed his life because he could not live with the real one.'</i></p> <p><i>"we had never believed her when she told us that she was once rich" .. "it was too fairytale-ish"</i></p>	

	<p>is determined by the mood an the subjectivity of the moment)</p> <p>History lacks empathy</p> <p>Memory is often unreliable and this is evident when two or more accounts of the same event show some discrepancies.</p>		
<p>Collective and individual memory.</p>	<p>-Baker return to Jerusalem for the third time in chapter 30, which he sees as a “<i>journey that bears toward my beginnings</i>” – it contains collective histories and memories which relate to his past experiences.</p> <p>-The Prime Minister has been assassinated a week earlier and outside his residence is a memorial of lights, “prayers of peace” and the streets contain are ‘eerily silent’ in atmosphere.</p> <p>-Baker’s children do not understand the mourning &amp; think it’s a birthday.</p> <p>-This reflects how age and knowledge may affect the perception of an event and therefore the memory that is created which may be false. Baker also states that “it is their first act of public memory” (p176). The acknowledgement of this reflects the significance of collective, or public, memory to connecting a group of people.</p>	<p><i>‘He shares his rock with his friends and extracts its dormat secrets’</i></p> <p><i>‘Yossel’s was a past written on a page of history shared by other survivors. My mother could not point to anyone.’</i></p> <p><i>‘What do you mean, do I rememeber?...you thought because I wasn’t in Auschwitz like your father that I didn’t suffer? Because I don’t have a number means I didn’t survive?’</i></p> <p><i>‘His memory is not</i></p>	

		<p><i>contained by Wierbnik but expands to include his friends who shared his barracks in Auschwitz and Buchenwald.'</i></p> <p><i>'It takes life to forge a collective identity.'</i></p> <p><i>'from my mothers part of the story; for her there are no witnesses to interview... no means of validation.'</i></p>	
	<p>Mark's discovery of an oral history account of the Aktion's account confirms the story Genia tells of the ghettos. As the account is explained, dialogue spoken by Genia agrees with the narrative – this relates to how memories are sparked by other experiences, but reflects how memory may be affected by hearing the recount of a different person's personal memory.</p>		
	<p><b><i>'What were they like?'</i> - Denise Levertov</b></p>		
Context:	<p>- -In closing, the poem shows the destruction, deaths, the suffering of Vietnamese, and the injustice of the Vietnam War. Because Levertov was strongly anti-war and wrote many war poems, it is safe to conclude that</p>		

	"What Were They Like?" is a protest against the Vietnam War.		
Past and present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Just like Baker parents were prone to forgetfulness so too is the speaker in the second stanza.</li> <li>-The soldier is hesitant and shy at time, maybe the soldier doesn't want to remember what it used to be like.</li> <li>- We can't help but assume that the soldier fought in the civil war but we cannot guess which side he was on.</li>   <li>-The poem has a bitter tone throughout, the soldier seems resentful for what has occurred but it aware that the past cannot be changed.</li> </ul>	<p><i>'It is not remembered'</i></p> <p><i>'laughter is bitter to the burned mouth.'</i></p>	Bitter tone
History and memory	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-The speaker in the first stanza represents history.</li> <li>- The questions are asked quickly and impatiently, typical of a search for information.</li> <li>- He is the interrogative, just like Baker, however a difference between the two texts is that we are not informed on the speakers reasons behind this interrogation compared to Baker who tells us straight away why he is doing this.</li> <li>-The first stanza is laid out in a series of questions. The language is conversational in tone and direct in style which suggests the removal from any emotional connection.</li> <li>- The questioner just like Baker, seems to know very little about the impact of the war on the Vietnamese people.</li> <li>-While at the start of the novel Baker is very much removed as he is playing the historian, towards the end of the novel he begins to form an emotional attachment to his parents memories.</li> <li>-However the interrogatives are used to make the reader</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Conversational language tone</li> <li>-Direct style</li>   <li>-Interrogatives</li> </ul>

	<p>consider particular subjects. The cannot help but adopt the role of the interrogative as we become intrigued to find out more.</p> <p>-The soldier is being asked the questions, but so too are the readers of the poem. Even the title itself is a question.</p>		
Impact of memory	<p>-The final answer of the poem presents a beautiful image of moths flying in moonlight, which represents peace and hope. However, it also states in line 27 that "There is an echo yet." This line presents a paradox in a convoluted way, because it really says that the echo of the past haunts the present - meaning war will always exist.</p> <p>- 'Fiftieth gate' looks at the impact of the past on three main people whereas the poem looks at the impact on a large group of people.</p>	<p><i>'the flight of moths in moonlight'</i></p> <p><i>'There is an echo yet'</i></p>	-Paradox
How peoples lives can be destroyed by war	<p>-The fact that the questions in the first stanza are all in the past tense immediately leads us to feel that this race of people has now died out.</p> <p>-In the first section, the questioner asks six questions about the culture, character and art of the Vietnamese people. Denise Levertov cleverly selects the finest aspects of traditional Vietnamese life as the subject of the questions. This is her way of reminding her readers about what has been lost, due to war.</p>	<p><i>'Did...were...had'</i></p> <p><i>'Had they an epic poem?...when bombs</i></p>	

	<p>-To answer a question about their epic poems [poems that celebrate the past] the speaker says the war has wiped out memory. She points out that the people of Vietnam lived peaceful rural lives, growing rice in a beautiful countryside. The water in the paddy fields mirrored the sky. She blames the American bombs for destroying their agricultural way of life and their family structure.</p> <p>-The poem ends with ‘<i>It is silent now</i>’ which suggests that due to the war wiping out memory of their past culture nothing now remains. Memory is vital to keep something living and alive.</p>	<p><i>smashed those mirrors there was only time to scream.’</i></p>	
	<p><b><i>Monument (Odessa)1989-2003- Christian Boltanski</i></b></p>		
<p>Loss and death</p>	<p>- Boltanski explores the themes of loss and death through the prism of memory.</p> <p>-The past may be remembered, but it is still just the past, something that once happened.</p> <p>- These installations memorialize unknown persons and gives the victims an identity, something that they were denied when in the death camps.</p> <p>-Looks at how lost memories can be revived.</p> <p>-He uses children to represent innocence and the irrevocable loss of life reclaimed only by memory.</p> <p>-The works are presented in semi-darkness which alludes to the mystery surrounding their unknown death.</p>		

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Links/ similarities

- It is only once you discover the past that you are able to understand the present
- Both poems look at the damaging aspect of war