

Module C- Representation and Text

Elective 2- History and Memory

**The Rubric**

Consider carefully what you are asked to do in this module.

**MODULE C: Representation and Text**  
`This module requires students to explore various representations of events, personalities or situations. They evaluate how medium of production, textual form, perspective and choice of language influence meaning. The study develops students’ understanding of the relationships between representation and meaning. (Reread English Stage 6 Syllabus, p 52.)

In reading The Fiftieth Gate, you are principally exploring an autobiographical / biographical representation of the Holocaust, from the perspective of the son of Holocaust survivors. You need to think carefully about how these events, personalities and situations are conveyed. It will also be important to deconstruct the language features of your set and related texts so as to explain how the representation creates meaning.

**MODULE C: Representation and Text**

**Elective 2: History and Memory**  
In their responding and composing, students consider their prescribed text and other texts which explore the relationships between individual memory and documented events. Students analyse and evaluate the interplay of personal experience, memory and documented evidence to broaden their understanding of how history and personal history are shaped and represented.

**Understanding the rubric**  
The rubric offers a clear direction for the study of this module. We need to consider the ways in which *The Fiftieth Gate* explores the relationships between the memories (Baker’s parents’, his own and others’) and the official history (documented, archival facts and statistics) of the Holocaust. This will help you to develop an appreciation of how history is shaped and how it evolves – including the greater role and real purpose of history.

You also need to investigate how other texts represent and illustrate this relationship between history and memory.

Consider why the wording of the rubric makes a distinction between history and personal history. History is the greater narrative of civilization, based on social processes and academic method – whereas personal history refers to the specific details and reflections of an individual, based on their own memory.

What do you consider is of greater significance in your own life – official history or personal memory? Does society tend to privilege one over the other? What happens when the two are contradictory? Does this mean they are exclusive, oppositional concepts – or can they work together?

The use of ‘interplay’ concedes a close connection, an overlapping and interdependence, of these two concepts.

At this stage of your study, take some time to expand your definitional understanding of history and memory.

Now compose your own working definitions of “history” and “memory”. Although seen as separate processes, history and memory can be said to serve the same objectives – to make sense of the past, to relate the truth, to explain what really happened and why.

**Theoretical Approaches to History and Memory**

Appreciating some of the theory underpinning history and memory is critical to a deeper understanding of the module.y to develop a reasonable appreciation. In considering this debate, you will learn that the pioneering social theorist Maurice Halbwachs argued that history and memory were contradictory ways of dealing with the past. He valued history over memory, because history is scholarship and universal, while memory is limited to the lifetime and perspective of a particular community.

This view was both shared and opposed by the theorist Pierre Nora, who also saw the two as contradictory, but valued the importance of memory over history. He argued that history is a flawed reconstruction of the past, while memory is truthful.

In more recent times, theorists have challenged the split between history and memory, seeing them as being complementary, both equally an expression of history culture, a term which encompasses both history and memory and acknowledges their interdependence.

*The Fiftieth Gate* is a brilliant expression of history culture, of what can be achieved when history and memory are fused together to create an impression of the past and its connection with the present.

***Activity****Write down the theory most in keeping with your own views about history and memory*

**Quotations about Memory**

Choose three quotes from those listed below and write 2 – 3 sentences explaining what the author is conveying about the concept of Memory.

1. A memory is what is left when something happens and does not completely unhappen. ~Edward de Bono
2. Memory is a child walking along a seashore. You never can tell what small pebble it will pick up and store away among its treasured things. ~Pierce Harris, Atlanta Journal
3. We do not remember days; we remember moments. ~Cesare Pavese, The Burning Brand
4. There are lots of people who mistake their imagination for their memory. ~Josh Billings
5. Memory... is the diary that we all carry about with us. ~Oscar Wilde, "The Importance of Being Earnest"
6. And even if you were in some prison, the walls of which let none of the sounds of the world come to your senses - would you not then still have your childhood, that precious, kingly possession, that treasure-house of memories? ~Rainer Maria Rilke
7. Everybody needs his memories. They keep the wolf of insignificance from the door. ~Saul Bellow
8. Memory itself is an internal rumour. ~George Santayana, The Life of Reason
9. A childhood is what anyone wants to remember of it. It leaves behind no fossils, except perhaps in fiction. ~Carol Shields
10. The past is never dead, it is not even past. ~William Faulkner

[](http://moccc.com.au/uploads/news/id403/AustralianHistoryPic.jpg)**Quotations about History**

Choose three quotes from those listed below and write 2 – 3 sentences explaining what the author is conveying about the concept of History.

1. Until lions have their historians, tales of the hunt shall always glorify the hunters. ~African Proverb
2. The memories of men are too frail a thread to hang history from. ~John Still, The Jungle Tide
3. All the ancient histories, as one of our wits say, are just fables that have been agreed upon. ~Voltaire, Jeannot et Colin
4. History is herstory, too. ~Author Unknown
5. God cannot alter the past, though historians can. ~Samuel Butler, "Prose Observations"
6. A lot of history is just dirty politics cleaned up for the consumption of children and other innocents. ~Richard Reeves
7. The challenge of history is to recover the past and introduce it to the present. ~David Thelen
8. Crimes of which a people is ashamed constitute its real history. The same is true of man. ~Jean Genet
9. History fades into fable; fact becomes clouded with doubt and controversy; the inscription molders from the tablet: the statue falls from the pedestal. Columns, arches, pyramids, what are they but heaps of sand; and their epitaphs, but characters written in the dust? ~Washington Irving, The Sketch Book: Westminster Abbey
10. History is a pack of lies about events that never happened told by people who weren't there. ~George Santayana

**Holocaust Literature**

In the sixty-five years after WWII, the types of stories being written about the Holocaust have changed. A period of relative silence immediately after the war was followed by the emergence of a larger body of works in the 1960s (Bosmajian, *Sparing the Child* xiv). Survivor memoirs dominated for quite some time. More recently, the Holocaust has become the subject of more and more fiction

for both adults and for children and young adults (Sokoloff, Review of *Representing the Holocaust* 443). With the increase in fiction comes an increase in the importance of authenticallyrepresenting history. The consensus has been that although all history is a representation andtherefore cannot present the whole truth, there is still an obligation to represent it in an effectiveway. As time passes, there are fewer and fewer people alive who survived the Holocaustthemselves, and there has been an increase in the publication of memoirs and fictional narrativesfrom the second and third generations. The existence of second and third generationrepresentations brings to light the continuing importance of this historical event. The experience

of the Holocaust through image and narrative and the way it is represented are important both in the past and now, as we live in a world still affected by the events.

*The Fiftieth Gate, Mark Raphael Baker*

**THE PLOT**

This very personal story is a journey for the author through the experiences of his parents during the Holocaust. Baker has researched the events surrounding the persecution of the Jews in the areas of Poland in which his parents grew up, and from which they were removed during WWII. His father, Yossl, was imprisoned in some of the most notorious concentration camps while his mother, Genia, was forced to hide for several years once the Jews of her village had been murdered. The relationship between Baker and his parents becomes strained at some points during Baker's probing of the past. When the family revisits the villages and death camps familiar to his parents, the emotional pressure for Genia and Yossl becomes intense.

**ISSUES AND THEMES**

• The power of traumatic experience in shaping a person's life.

• The experiences of Jewish refugees in Australia after the Second World War

• The struggle of the children of Holocaust survivors to understand, respect and move on from their parents' experiences.

• The cultural life of Jewish Australians.

• The effect of the Holocaust on Jewish thought, culture and community

• The role of memory and remembrance

**STRUCTURE AND LANGUAGE**

The novel is essentially a biography of Baker’s parents narrated by its author, Mark Baker. As its subtitle, 'A Journey through Memory' suggests, the book is comprised of reminiscences from his parents about their lives and experiences during the 1930s and 1940s. Baker, a Melbourne academic, supplements their stories with material from his own research into the period to paint a more complete picture of his parents' lives. Baker frequently reflects the heavy accents of his parents in his spelling, which forges a stronger bond between the reader and two elderly Jews reliving their horrific Holocaust experiences. The author is involved with and affected by the project at every stage so that there appears to be no authorial distance between Baker and the material he records. Baker includes documents from his research in the book, as well as reconstructions of events, records of his parents speaking about their memories on tape and records of his conversations with them.

**Midrash**

In reading The Fiftieth Gate, it helps to have some understanding of the Jewish religious term ‘Midrash’. Making reference to it will add another level of sophistication to your responses. Generally speaking, Midrash is an ancient Jewish religious method of biblical interpretation, by which ideas can be explored and debated using song, legend, prayer and scripture across the centuries. It is a system that has enabled Jewish communities to bridge the gap between the past and the present with ongoing dialogue about their sacred texts.

Dr. Jacob Neusner explains that the word 'Midrash' is based on a Hebrew word meaning 'interpretation' or 'exegesis'. He shows that the term 'Midrash' has three main usages:

1. The term 'Midrash' can refer to a particular way of reading and interpreting a biblical verse. Thus we may say that the ancient rabbis provided Midrash to Scripture. This does not mean that an interpretation of scripture is automatically true rabbinical Midrash. In fact, most of what people call 'Modern Midrash' has nothing to do with the classical modes of literary exegesis that guided the rabbis. Commentary and Midrash are two different things! In order to get a good idea of what classical rabbinic Midrash really is, one has to actually study it; No two or three sentence definition can accurately define the structure of Midrash.

2. The term 'Midrash' can refer to a book - a compilation of Midrashic teachings. Thus one can say that "Genesis Rabbah" is a book that is a compilation of Midrash readings on the book of Genesis.

3. The term 'Midrash' can refer to a particular verse and its interpretation. Thus one can say that "The Midrash on the verse Genesis 1:1 says that...[and some Midrashic interpretation of the verse would go here].

Dr. Charles T. Davis (Appalachian Statue University, Philosophy and Religion Department, NC) has prepared a [5]summary of the definition and features of Midrash, based on Rabbi Burton Visotzky's "Reading the Bible". This summary says that once a canon (i.e., approved scriptural text) is closed, the problem facing the community is the problem of "searching out" the canon. Midrash is a method of reading the Bible as an Eternal text, and is the result of applying a set of hermeneutical principles evolved by the community to guide one in reading the canon, in order to focus one's reading. The ultimate goal of midrash is to "search out" the fullness of what was spoken by the Divine Voice.

In developing midrash, there are two schools of thought on how to handle the language of Torah. One is that the language is the language of human discourse, and is subject to the same redundancies and occasional verbiage that we all encounter in desultory conversation. The other view holds that since Scripture is the Word of God, no word is superfluous. Every repetition, every apparent mistake, every peculiar feature of arrangement or order has meaning.

Midrash minimizes the authority of the wording of the text as communication, normal language. It places the focus on the reader and the personal struggle of the reader to reach an acceptable moral application of the text. While it is always governed by the wording of the text, it allows for the reader to project his or her inner struggle into the text. This allows for some very powerful and moving interpretations which, to the ordinary user of language, seem to have very little connection with the text. The great weakness of this method is that it always threatens to replace the text with an outpouring of personal reflection. At its best it requires the presence of mystical insight not given to all readers.

***The Fiftieth Gate, Mark Raphael Baker***

**Chapter:** 29,30,31  
**Characters:** Yossl, authors father, Genia, authors mother. **Key quotes:** “My parents remember, the fire, the parchment burning, the bodies burried, letters soaring high, turned to ashen dust.”  
“My mother still possess as instinct  for the intricate strategies to survival.’  
“Tonight , i know, he will not sleep. Not yet. Not until he feels safe enough to once again close his eyes”

**Favorite quote:** ‘you probably have children of your own, and im only a child and please dont shoot me, dont let them shoot me, and if you shoot me, let me run and shoot me in the back so that i don’t see it. please please.’

**Tone:**Despairing, Paranoid, Apprehensive.

***Question: “How is history revealed through memory in Baker’s The Fiftieth Gate?”***

Mark Raphael Bakers *The Fiftieth Gate*exhibits how individuals can be dramatically affected by specific historical events which leave behind fragments of memory that affect those individuals’ every day life. Baker writes***The Fiftieth Gate***based on his Mother Genia and his Father Yossls’ experiences during the Nazi occupation of Poland in World War two. Baker goes through every step trying to discover everything that his parents went through, through their memories and stories which reflect back on history.

History is a continuous, systematic narrative of past events as relating to a particular people, country, period, person,etc. Usually written as a chronological account. Memory is the mental capacity or faculty of retaining and reviving facts, events, impressions, etc., or of recalling or recognising previous experiences.

History and memory have a complex bond, one cannot exist without the other. Its is through individuals memory that History is formed. History can be used to clarify the fragmented and often selective aspects of memory. Throughout *The Fiftieth Gate*which Baker wrote as a historian and a son, Baker drills deeply into his parent’s past and uses his historical resources to confirm their experiences.

History is not an accurate collection of absolute truths. History can be seen as the documentation of the past, however there will always be contrasting perspectives and interpretations of any event. Therefore In order to truly understand the past, individuals must try and fuse their knowledge of documented evidence with the personal experiences and memories that fill the gaps that are left out by history. These concepts are portrayed in Mark Bakers *The Fiftieth Gate*, an exploration of the ability of history to validate memory and the power of traumatic experiences in shaping a person’s life.

**In** *The Fiftieth Gate*the traumatic nature of an event such as the Holocaust has a lasting effect on its surviving victims, this is exhibited when Baker father states ‘A disaster! A disaster! How could you bring me back here? For what? So I can have more nightmares?’ (ch:31) when Baker takes his parents towards the Ukrainian-Polish border crossing at Medyka, this shows that his father faces a lot of trouble when brought back to a place that is horrible in his memories. Baker employs sensory imagery in his memoir, such as when he states “my parents remember the fire, the parchment burning, the bodies buried, letters soaring high, turned to ashen dust” (ch:29) in order to reveal memories to be reality, as opposed to the often meaningless impression that is given by history, and to show the eternal power of memories of personal experience. When Baker employs such imagery he creates a medium for the readers to feel a sense of sympathy and pathos for the victims of the Holocaust.



(Image right): one of the cremation pits used to burn the victims of the gas chambers in Auschwitz. These “burning pits” were used mainly in the summer of 1944, when the extermination was going at such a rate that the furnaces couldn’t handle the number of corpses.

Baker communicates that the Yad Vashem archives in Jerusalem is ‘a theme park of memory’ (ch: 30). Here, the metaphor allows reader to become collectively insightful as to the ‘theme park’ of memories, which teaches individuals that an event has more than one story behind it. Each personal memory of this ‘theme park’ is what symbolically makes up the entirety, or collective memory of the Holocaust which is History.

Baker usually wondered if he should tell his children about their grandparent’s lives (ch:30) since they had always been asking about things such as the bar code on their grandfathers arm, which he tells them is a telephone number. Baker knows that they must be told and that ‘only a broken heart yearns to heal the world’.



***(Image above): In 2004, a survivor of the Holocaust, Leon Greenman, displayed the number that was tattooed on his arm at Auschwitz.***

The Holocaust has affected both Bakers parents in different ways since both under took different experiences and struggles at the time. This is shown when Baker takes his parents to Medyka and Yossl starts to scream wanting to leave the place saying he will get night mares, Genia then says to him ‘Yossl youve never been here before you don’t have to have night mares, you’ve got enough to dream about from your own town’(Ch: 31). Therefore both Parents have different experiences and different memories and Baker creates history by listening to both his parents memorise.

Memories are strong and unforgetable especially if they are dreadful, individuals can not escape them even if they attempt to do so. This is demonstrated in *The Fiftieth Gate*When the ukrainians are marching past the market-square in Bolszowce, Yossl screams ‘They’re coming’ and later on states ‘They could have killed us; you dont understand, you weren’t there’ (ch:31) and immediately wants to leave to escape the dramatic moment where his memory took hold of him. Similarly to how Yossl attempt to escape the dreadful memories Genia did too, when Baker is reading out a memoir he found at the Yad Vashem archives in Jerusalem written by a man who landed near Bolszowce. After Baker reads most the memoir he pauses and Genia asks ‘what happened then’ baker replies ‘you tell me’(ch:30), suddenly Genia says nothing, to try and escape any memories from coming up into her mind, even though those memories will never fade away.

This represents how memories are an ingrained attribute of mankind. No matter what individuals do to change personally, they can not escape memory or can forget memory, but must deal with their memory, and this is how history is then gradually revealed.

**History and Memory**

**Memory gives:**

* Appreciation
* Context
* Perspective
* Immediacy
* Empathetic connection
* Defeat of the marginalization of academic (recorded) history

**Memory produces:**

* A fuller understanding of human nature and the impact of events
* Subjectivity is overcome by listening to many voices from the time
* Truth can still be perceived through fictionalized accounts of real people/events – artistic license is an empathetic tool through which we can gain deeper insight and empathy/emotional connection

**Possible faults of Memory:**

* Lapses – trauma, denial
* Selectivity-Different people prioritize details differently
* Interplay between memory and imagination
* Bias
* Age of person when events occurred and passage of time since
* Limited perspective
* Relevant things forgotten
* Irrelevant details remembered
* Variations of the story, differing accounts – which is accurate

Baker’s use of conventional and non-conventional non-fiction techniques offers the perspective of both an historian and son. This triggers ethos and allows historical contextualization as well as subjective and emotional insight into tragic events. Memories buried by 50 years of living are rekindled. “You cannot begin to understand what it means to survive the death of your entire world” remarks Baker’s father. “You don’t know what it’s like to be spared” says his mother. By examining the personal stories of those who endured it firsthand, the objectivity of historical reporting is sensitized rather than sanitized and given human dimension, bridging history and memory.

Characters – our window into the historical enormity of the Holocaust. We empathize through them, thus they become the touchstone of our broader understanding and emotional connection with the tragedy of the era. Understanding the Holocaust and fully appreciating the horror of the marginalization, internment and genocide of Jews is fraught with interpretive problems. History can be cold, detached and clinical while memories, at times unreliable and flawed can provide empathetic connection through the stories of those who endured and survived it. In the process, a richer truth can be revealed giving a unique example of human endurance and triumph.

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| Italicization of remembered scenarios/stories | Distinguishes memory, contributes to authenticity. Fallibility makes them real. |
| Factual items/ *historical documents* | Accuracy |
| *Poetic language/ items* | Empathy |
| References to Jewish culture/ tradition | Contextualization |
| *First person narrative accounts* | Empathy, psychological insight |
| *Alternating narrative voice* | Perspective allowing historical investigation, engagement and empathy |

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| **Type of History/Memory** | **Example from text** |
| **Oral History:** relies on techniques such as interviewing a subject. | Baker Interviews Yossl and Genia throughout the book e.g. in Gate V Mark Interviews his father about his experiences in Auschwitz |
| **Historiography:** Involves the critical examination of sources, selecting specific details from authentic material and synthesising them into narrative. | Baker critically examines his video footage of his interviews with parents. |
| **Constructivism:** View that historians make history and therefore history looks at the past from the perspective of the present. | The text as a whole could be considered an example of constructivism as Baker combines information of the past to create a representation of history from the perspective of the present. |
| **Cultural/Collective Memory:** Memory of groups, classes or nations rather than of individuals. Lacks disciplinary rigour | Remembrance in Jewish Faith e.g. Baker’s reference to prayers for those who were killed, lighting of the candles, memorial book etc. (ANZAC day is a good example of collective remembrance in Australian culture) |
| **Individual memory:** Called up by emotions, associations and sense – unlike archival material | Genia’s individual memory of her experiences during the Holocaust is referred to throughout the text, as there is little official evidence of her experiences. For example gate XXXII Genia tells Baker the story of her survival. Mark finds it difficult to rely on his mother’s memory without any archival evidence. |

50th Gate quotations

“The key is the broken heart, the murdered prayer, the death of memory. It opens the blessing or the curse. Come and see.” (before p1)

*1. Symbol and cliché*

*2 oxymoron*

*3 polarity*

*4 direct address: invitation to enter chaos*

*1 high modality; sense of repetition of the dark birth*

*2. Allusion to creation of world*

*3. fragment: hard-sounding word; visual imagery of a jagged thing even though memory is abstract*

*1. confident personal account – high mod. Of adverb ‘always’*

*2. apprehensive: adj, more formal than ‘nervous’, a considered kind of paranoia*

*3. hyperbole, generalisation*

*1. 1st person possessive pronoun + “all” to emphasise scope of the ownership*

*2. nostalgic tone, visual image; innocence of gir/woman*

*3. hair: become symbol of health and freedom*

“It always begins in blackness, until the first light illuminates a hidden fragment of memory.” – p 1

“We have always known him to be apprehensive, forever warning us that if we did this or that then this or that terrible outcome would emerge.” Page 4 Gate 1

“’Mine.They’re all mine.’ My mother is dancing in the fields and the snow is falling onto her hair.” P7, Gate 2

"The ruins...began then. Then, we knew, was the key to everything; the....story, the core that could not be clothed or cast away." p 21 ch5

“This first ablution has since become a ritual in our family, a task she insists on performing for each of her grandchildren.´ Page 25 Chapter 25 (reference?)

“The thought of pain triggers an early memory.” p25

“My father was hiding at a friend’s place, and they were drunk and hitting us, harder and harder. I called out in German, ‘I don’t know where he is, I don’t know,’ but they only beat me more. They didn’t believe me.” – Yossl, page 88

“Do you know when he went to the toilet? The colour of the gatkes he wore under his pants? Maybr you can tell me when I last showered or what I did everyday in Auschwitz?” – Yossl (p95)

“I always thought of myself like Anna Karenina, a poor deprived little child…If Tolstoy could tell my story, Karenina would have thrown herself under a train much earlier in the book.” PP97-98

"Perhaps it all ends when i return memory to them...first i must give in order to take." p100 ch16

“perhaps all those of my generation, the sons and daughters of survivors, bear the wounds of unresolved guilt” p100 ch 16

“I was a slave to the SS and I had committed myself to these things with part of me saddened and with inner torment. What we did was brutal, cruel and inhumane.” p110

“A guard calls out to the child. She raises her head. She is dragged to an arch at the southern entrance to the square. He throws the child against the gate. He smashes her head.” – Pages 121-122

"It gnawed at me, the feeling that my father's narrative had surrendered to forgetfulness." p 124

“he says it was cold. Winter. But it was warm. Autumn.” P124 ch 22

“Two lost years, unlived but made possible at the moment of birth, recorded on a certificate registered by his father, and further witnessed by two friends.”—pg 125, gate 22

"she alone held the key to those stories...his was a past written on a page of history." p 136 ch24

"What are these papers...echoes of the past, dark shadows  without screams, without smells, without fear." p 138 ch 24

“There was still one missing piece from the puzzle of his two-year bondage at the Great Furnace” – p 144

“My father would not have confused anything. He had a brilliant mind, and a memory to match. The Russians must have got it all wrong. It was such a long time ago.” p150

“Don’t interrogate me. I’m your mother, not your prisoner.” P151 ch 26

"The final moments can never be retrieved by history. Nor by memories: for every life, there are countless other deaths." p 156 ch27

“But Dad”, we both insist. “There was no other place they could have taken you to. All the trains stopped here for the selection.” / “No. I don’t remember this. His fingers are tapping on the edge of his mouth. Tap tap tap.” – p 160

“You arrived on 16 June 1944.” I tell him, “and stayed till 18 January.” I had become his calender, making sense of time for him when days, months and even years meant nothing. – p 161

"It goes something like this, his life: Wierzbnik, a child. Stop. The war. Stop. No father. Stop. No mother, sisters. Camp. Starchowice. Stop. Auschwitz. Stop. Bunchenwald. Stop. Start." pg 125

“Jews remember with words; with the Word, which is studied by the living, in the name of the dead, daily, in a yearly cycle, which once ended begins again.” Page 114 Gate 20

"the air is thick from chilly frost of early spring, but my father can see everything today. Through the fog and mist he hugs scarred memories to his chest, whispering bitter secrets unearthed from their hibernation."‬‬ p

"He peers through a space in the wire, crouching down to see if he recognises a familiar building, a path, a sound, just any fragment form his last visit. I can see that he is frustrated, angry at his memory again, failing him first at Wierzbnik and now here." p163

"My father tells them that the tattoo on his arm is a telephone number, but they (the grandchildren) already know." pg 177

“I was never a child. I had the instincts of a child that I could never have. But I was talked to like an adult and I had to respond like one” – Genia (p184)

" You've got enough to ream about from your own town" p187

"Pitch black. Pitch black, that's how I was for years." p193

"For every alternative there is an alternative to the alternative." pg 200

This is what my mother’s rescuers remember today: ‘She was so scared and timid; a small Jewish girl, with dark hair and big black eyes.’ … Once the Ukrainians came to our house, and we quickly threw a blanket over her and hid her in the space behind the oven.” p210

“For her it is not only time lost, but time that never was. ‘ I never had a childhood,’ she says.” p228

“This was not his life, at least not as my history and my mother’s memory had reconstructed it.” p239

“‘Mameh,’ Marta whispers. ‘Where is Yenta?’

‘Sha, sha.’ I stroke her bare head, hoping the caress will send her to sleep, but the deafening screams rise”. p273

A young boy is shouting for his mother as his head rubs against the ceiling of the train, until it falls back limply. … A mother screams that her baby is dead, singing to its broken innocence until she throws it beneath her feet.” p263-264

“ Marta is dancing, reaching with her fingertips for the dark clouds. Her shaved crown glistens … Three musicians play … I recognize it as a nightly lullaby my mother sang as she stroked my hair until my eyes would close in sleep. … her hands are performing lyrical movements in the air” p271

“He turns towards a young child, no more than four years old, and tears her from her mother’s arms. He raise the infant above his head like a sporting trophy and throws her into the ground. She does not move. I am careful to step over her body when I pass, bending down to touch her warm hand.” p271-272

“We have bonded again into a single shape, a fleshy creature with writhing hands, arms and legs, dancing in contortions.” P273

“Bulging eyes peering through keyholes…stone letters turning locks; limp bodies lying in a room larger than the world. The point of light pouring through the fiftieth gate.” p274.

“My father can walk past each fragment of Poland and remember someone from his youth. His memory in not contained by Wierzbnik, but expands to include his friends who shared his barracks in Auschwitz and Buchenwald” – Baker p280

“It would have been better if God had not created humanity, but now that the deed is done, let us examine our own deeds and repend.” p293.

“My mother is frightened of elevators; she prefers to shop using escalators. My mother despises houses without windows. She slides the curtains open before consuming her morning coffee. At night, my parents leave a small light on outside their bedroom” p295

“Insanity. My only surviving grandfather, Leo Krochmal, lost his mind before he died…he was hospitalised under constraint where only his mind was free to wander. Visitors and nursing staff would be greeted with a torrent of abuse: ‘Nazi whores’.” p297

“It’s all I have,’ she says. “Memories. Just memories. Nothing more.” P308 ch 48

“It’s not all of it, only a bit of my life story; there is a lot I don’t remember. I can tell you one thing, that I hope we will all live to dance, there is still a lot of dancing we have to do. And one day, when we’re not here, listen to this story with your children and say to them, “You had a grandmother, you had a grandfather who …” pp314-315

“It always begins in blackness, until the first light illuminates a hidden fragment of memory” p 1 ch 1 and p 316 ch 50

“I know it’s time to leave. To let go of my pain so I can reclaim it for someone else; to look beyond the fire so I can walk, again, through the field, where bushes burn without a trace of ash.   
Towards the fiftieth gate where light hovers inside the darkness. Inside the broken hearts.”

“’It’s all I have,’ she says. ‘Memories. Just memories. Nothing more.’  
‘Give them to me,’ I plead. ‘Let me take them.’  
She shakes her head and walks away.  
‘The hair you can have. The rest is mine.’”

“Freedom is not a happy ending. it is a flame that dances in the remembrance, inside the blackness”

"...Approximately 18 million inhabitants of which 72% are Poles, 17% are Ukranians and 0.7% are Germans./ Where have the millions of Jews gone?”

P 133, Gate 24, “Unlike my father, she could never show her children the scars on her arm; hers were invisible, numbered in the days and years of her stolen childhood.”

P133, Gate24, “There was no label for her torment, no institution to which she could pin her identity, saying, ‘See, I am a survivor, too’”.

P139, Gate 24, “Does history remember more than memory?”

P138, Gate 24, “What are these papers anyway except echoes of the past, dark shadows without screams, without smells, without fear.”

P261, Gate 42, “here in this carload/ i am Hinda/ tell him that i…”

P. 101

'What Colour underwear?' he wants to know. 'What kind of face?' I want to know."

P.228 "'I never had a childhood,' she says. 'I was always an adult - a poor, little adult hiding in a black hole.'"

P.175, "It is a theme-park of memory, a landscape that expresses Israel's troubled relationship with the Holocaust out of which the Jewish state emerged. "

P.92, "underlined and followed by an emphatic exclamation mark accompanied by a score of cane lashes to his backside."

p. 99, "In the absence of a Holocaust, I was compelled to create my own… I turned my own bedroom into a horror-house of memories."

P. 1 Gate 1: “It always begins in blackness, until the first light illuminates a hidden fragment of memory”

P. 120, Gate 11: “Left. Right. Left. Right. No, left” (repeated)

P. 130, Gate 14: “Does history remember more than memory?”

p. 276 Gate 43: “A child is born... With infinite memory”

P.119 Gate 20: “Wierzbnik’s first Jewish victim... Ashes to ashes, dust to dust”

Page 273: Chapter 42: "We have bonded again into a single shape, a fleshy creature with writhing heads, arms and legs, dancing in contortions."

Page 124, gate 22: "He says it was cold. Winter. But it was warm. Autumn."**David**

**History and Memory notes:**

**Mark Baker’s *Fiftieth Gate***

**Key: *“Quotes”***

Normal text

Interesting text

* History and Memory are complex representations of the past influenced by different perspectives.
* History is based on documented facts, historical research and formalised written records of past events.
* Memory is based on personal recollection, it is subjective and experiential.
* Both documented history and memory are coloured by
  + Silences and gaps
  + Selectivity
  + Omissions
  + Perspective and interpretation
* Neither history nor memory are infallible representations of the past. Each one is imprecise because of the influence of:
  + Purpose
  + Perspective
  + Context
  + Mode of communication
* When considered together, history and memory combine to give a more complete picture of the past than is possible when considering either one independently.
* History and memory are complementary. History validates memory, while memory adds depth to history.
  + *“This was the deal: I would give them my knowledge of history; they would give me their memory.”*
* In the book, memory is characterised by emotive tones and language.
  + *“…what I remember now. What can I hear? Feel. Alone. Crying. ‘Run’ she said ‘Run’ From there. Where the church is.”* (Genia)
* History can explain what happened. Memory explains what it felt like.
  + *“Does history remember more than memory?”*
* *“Fecks, Fecks…”* Bakers father *“…dismisses my efforts to extract facts from the past.”* Facts add validity to memory, they help confirm and verify the past. But documented facts are described in the book as or *“bits and pieces of paper from an unedited life.”*
* *I share my discoveries with my parents, throwing facts into their stories based on documents drawn up under the obsessive gaze of Polish overlords.*
* The recording of History and the Recalling of Memory may be a misrepresentation of the past due to deliberate omissions and falsifications.
  + *“Be careful what you say, it’s forever.”*
* History reflects the perspective of the documenter.
  + For instance, in gate 20, the letter from the Camp Commandant mentions only the barest details about the prisoners. *“Going – 11, Coming – 2”*. Similarly, the SS Mayor of Wierznbik’s report is devoid of emotive detail.
* Similarly, Memory reflects the the purpose and perspective of the individual.
  + The contrast evident between gates 18 and 19 highlights the complexities of the interplay between history and memory. Genia’s memory is presented as a raw emotional recount of the Aktion in Bolszowce. Müller’s account on the other hand, although it seems remorseful and emotional at times, is clearly a selective fabrication. Its purpose is to hide his guilt and portray himself as a *“...slave to the SS”* In contrast to his stated victimisation, documented history describes his *“...rise within the ranks of the SS…”* as *“…rapid and meteoric…”*
* *“Does history remember more than memory?”*
* In contrast to Genia’s individual memory, backed up only by a hand scrawled note in Russian mentioning that her parents were the only survivors from her town, and another note by her father documenting an alternative version of reality which also omits her name, Yossl’s memory is supported by the collective memory of the Buchenwald boys, along with verifiable *“fecks”* in formal records like the Memorial book.

Initially Genia and Yossl have conflicting views to Baker regarding History and Memory.

Yossl and Genia initially feel that history should be left in the past. The *“Fecks, Fecks…”* are like *“...shopping lists”* – having no real meaning when disconnected from personal experience. Baker on the other hand, feels initially that memory, no matter how interesting and important, cannot be regarded as fact without historical verification. Gradually, both parties begin to realise the importance of joining history and memory to create a better representation of the past. *“… It always begins in blackness, until the first light illuminates a hidden fragment of memory...”*

History is written with a certain purpose and perspective. Historical records are usually written with a disconnected tone, as evident in the *“Proceedings and examination records on the atrocities of the Nazis in the Bolszowce District…”*: *“...On the first day of occupation, they began exterminating the peaceful population…”* While this statement documents the atrocities of the Nazis, it does nothing to convey the sense of fear and panic associated with it. This can only be explained through the experiential aspects of memories such as Yossl’s and Genia’s. *“Were you there?” “What do you know about Aktions? … Screams, crying. A massacre of weeping lambs.” “You think that because you’ve read a few pieces of paper that you suddenly understand everything?” “You read, you read. Books, books, everywhere. But do you know how it feels?”*

Both history and memory are fallible.

The formal authoritative tone of the Geographical Dictionary of the Polish Kingdom provides the facts about Genia’s town but communicates no understanding of the people, their lives and experiences.

*“BOŁSZOWCE: Bułszowce, originally Bohuszowce, a small town in the Tohatyn district, situated on the Dniester plains; 1 mile from Halicz and the River Dniester; 15 miles from Lwów to the South East. This small town is spread over the marsh plain along the river Zgniła Lipa which, in its turn, falls into the Cniester, and along the streamlet of Narajówka. The locality, together with adjacent villages, is in the possession of Kornel Krzeczunowicz, member of the Galician Parliament and…”*

*“What are these papers anyway except echoes of the past, dark shadows without screams, without smells, without fear?”*

The book *History and Memory* is written to reflect the structure of memory. It is disjointed and non-linear. However, in an ironic twist, Baker’s documentation and recording of his parent’s memory takes it partway into the domain of history. “…it is forever…”

OTHER QUOTES:

Genia:

* *“… the Polish Count’s palace – what was his name? I’ve forgotten, but it will come back to me.”*
* *“What would you remember before you were eight?”*
* *“I wish I could forget.”*
* *“When the war started – like yesterday.”*
* *“Don’t interrogate me–I’m your mother, not your prisoner.”*
* *“Do you think your little children will remember where they used to live before they were five?”*
* *“…What I remember now. What can I hear? Feel. Alone. Crying. ‘Run’ she said ‘Run’ From there. Where the church is.”*
* *“Screaming, the sound of shots, mothers separated from their children.”*
* *“… Shooting…” “… a hole in the wall unit…” “… dark… stuffy, crowded, frightening…”*
* *“… they were screaming ‘Juden raus! Jews get out!”*
* *“I’m still scared of darkness…”*
* *“I can feel it, how it happened.”*
* *“‘Genia you’re not allowed, you’re not allowed to say anything…’”*
* *“I can’t forget these moments for as long as I live.”*
* *“I was the only young survivor from Bołszowce.”*
* *“… who is going to write such a book?”*
* *“… the village burned. I couldn’t walk…”*
* *“His [Genia’s father’s] feet were bundled in rags.”*

Yossl:

* *“What for do I have to remember this?”*
* *“Fecks, Fecks…”*
* *“This I didn’t know.”*
* *“… they started to hit everybody, my sisters, me, they hit us all.”*
* *“We didn’t even know if he was alive.”*
* *“All I remember is that it came to us, a little box with ash, and also his clothes, sent to our home. Was it him? We didn’t know.”*
* *“Then they buried the ashes. That was it. I had no father.”*

Letter from Koch:

* *“In spite of having given him the best medicines, it was unfortunately not possible to save the patients’s life.”*
* *“Prisoner Number 5503”*

Müller:

* *“I was a slave to the SS and I had committed myself to these things with part of me saddened and with inner torment.”*
* *“I was white as chalk…”*
* *“Because I was the SS commander I couldn’t run away.”*

Eyewitness contradictions of Müller:

* *“… he [Müller] remained and kicked a baby…”*
* *“Müller did not merely watch. On one occasion he reserved for himself the privilege of shooting three young naked Jewish women.”*

Baker’s historical contradiction of Müller:

* *“… Müller’s rise within the ranks of the SS was rapid and meteoric.”*
* *“His contributions to the party were rewarded with promotions and the prestigious golden insignia – the Death’s Head ring and the honorary dagger of the Storm Troopers.”*

Baker:

* *“I want to break the silence for him… to force him to look back.”*
* *“It always begins in blackness until the first light illuminates a hidden fragment of memory.”*
* *“The light forms a tunnel which guides our eyes...”*
* *“Throwing facts into their stories”*
* *“Seeking signs of intimacy with fragmented moments from his childhood.”*
* *“Not even your birth certificate – your year is missing from the town registry.”*
* *“He never spoke of his mother and father; they are faceless and nameless.”*
* *“I can show you what your father wore when he arrived in Buchenwald.”*
* *“When I return memory to them – only then can I assume responsibility for their stories.”* (gives a sense of survivor guilt.)
* *“‘What kind of underwear?’ he wants to know. ‘What kind of face?’ I want to know.”*
* *“His [Müller’s] contribution to the party was rewarded with promotions and the prestigious Death’s Head ring.”*
* *“His [Müller’s] rise through the SS was rapid and meteoric.”*
* *“I had always believed that all these documents were burned along with the people whose lives they portrayed. Himmler himself had communicated his desire to erase the past so that it would be buried as a ‘page of glory never to be written.’”*
* *“For my father, the rivers have not thawed until now, when his words break out from their glacial silence, releasing a torrent whose flow runs backward into his darkest nights.*
* *“Sixty thousand Jews walked out of the European concentration camps. Within a week twenty thousand had died.”*
* *“It’s true. I mean I believed you, but it’s really true.”*
* *“… a silence we thought we understood, but could never flesh out.”*
* *“How does one measure these things?”*
* *“Each detail was embellished by the use of her hands…”*
* *“Perhaps she sensed that she alone held the key to those stories.”*
* *“My father’s fate was not possessed of the same urgency as hers. His was a past written on a page of history shared by other survivors.”*
* *“My mother could not point to anyone…”*
* *“Who will remember for my mother?”*
* *“Where is your memorial book?”*
* *“There are 896 Memorial Books in the Yad Vashem library… none of them recognise my mother’s town as a place which was also transformed into a city of slaughter.”*
* *“What are these papers anyway except echoes of the past, dark shadows without screams?”*
* *“Does history remember more than memory?”*
* *“They recall a little girl staring endlessly out of a window. My mother recalls a little girl hiding in a dark cellar.”*
* *Maybe, … [Genia’s father] reconstructed his life because he could not live with his real one…”*
* *“… narrating a new story.”*
* *“It was not the facts that were under suspicion, but her credibility as a survivor.”*
* *(Russian note) “Among 1380 people, one family survived by chance. They were Leo Krochmal and his wife Rosa.”*
* *“The chairs were filled with old boys gesturing wildly and chattering in Yiddish.”*
* *“Through this gate all other gates may be seen.”*
* *“It always begins in blackness until the first light illuminates a hidden fragment of memory.”*

Recorded History represents a more formally documented version of past events. BUT it is a construct reflecting the perspective of the documenter.

Conflict between different historical reports:

Gate 14:

SS Mayor of Wiersbnik:

*“The Jewish Council of Elders is ‘always finding ways and means not to carry out directives and to circumvent them.’”*

*“The Jewish Council of Elders is obliged to provide the Mayor every Monday with a written report on Jews moving in or moving out. Despite repeated warnings, these reports do not arrive within the determined time.”*

*“When the Jews were relocated here from Litzmannstadt (Łódź), I delivered 1306 portions of food upon the request of the Jewish Council of Elders. The sum of 326 zloty per portion was to be paid back by the Council of Elders. Despite the fact that I divided the payment into instalments of 50 zloty per month, up to today nothing has been paid.*

In contrast to these reports, the Jewish Elders had this to say.

*“Over the last few weeks we have been attempting to travel to Warsaw with the aim of seeking financial help from you for the poor people of our town. However, we are unable to get out of here.*

*As a result of the exceptional situation in Wierzbnik, our trip has been impossible. Recently we tried to get out via Radom, where we stayed for a few days, but because of heavy snowfalls, we were unable to travel.*

*The situation of the Council whose responsibility it is to look after the people here is simply tragic. All of our hands fall down as we can no longer assist those calling for help.*

*An even greater misfortune for our town is the ever-increasing wave of deportees from Łódź and its surrounds, whom we have to provide with food and accommodation.”*

A later letter stated the following:

*“… we have still not received the money, during which time our situation has worsened considerably. We find ourselves on the threshold of a great catastrophe – all the men of the town, and part of the women, are* daily *employed in* unpaid *forced-labour works, which makes it impossible for them to earn money.*

*It is a burning issue now, our request for help, otherwise we face the threat of the destruction of our people.*

*We turn to you in desperation, hoping you will understand our tragic predicament. We ask for speedy help – if it does not come immediately, it will be too late.”*

In contrast to the perspective of the Jewish Elders, the SS Mayor complains that the Elders are not doing their job.

*“According to directives, the Jewish Council of Elders is obliged to take care of members of its religion who are in need of help. Despite my admonition I have ascertained that homeless and mentally deranged people wander about on the streets in completely ragged clothes, barefoot, etc.*

The recording of History and the Recalling of Memory may be a misrepresentation of the past due to deliberate omissions and falsifications.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Representation Methods and Techniques: The Fiftieth Gate** | | | | | |
| **Atypical** | **Support** | **Impact** | **Typical** | **Support** | **Impact** |
| Motif | 50th Gate: (structure) The gate motif refers to the change & transformation occurring within the book for the parents (fear🡪acceptance/drive) and Baker (“*people’s investigator*”🡪recorder of mem. and his.). | Structure; the book, via it’s 50 explorative gates, encroaches on the opening and closing sentence: *it always begins in blackness, until the first light illuminated a hidden fragment of memory*  Revelatory nature of the book | Evidence Based | - transcript of tapped conversions  - Muller’s letters  - notes from the Judenrat to various committees  - chapter/gate X  - statistics “*one in ten adult males*”, “*He is one of three hundred ad eight thousand Jewish survivors from Poland… One, left over from three million Polish Jewish victims*” 236  - Birth/death dates  - Nazi fatality rates p 116-7 | 🡪Audience’s passive acceptance of historical data as truth;  🡪Grounding of memory into a bigger picture understanding  🡪 validate and authenticates memory |
| Symbolism | Stones; graves/deaths  🡪“*the stones protrude from overgrown grass, leaning against each other like a family cowering before an ominous threat*” 55  🡪“*this field of memories*” 56  🡪“*it is an empty and chaotic landscape of death*” 56  🡪 “*I begin my search amongst these scattered stones*” 12  🡪 “*Jews remember with stones*” 114  River of Memory  “*For my father, the rivers have not thawed, until now, when his words break out from their glacial silence, releasing a torrent whose flows run backwards into his darkest nights*” | Cultural significance  More readable for audience’s not used to typical non-fiction  🡪 accurate representation of the process of unlocking memory with knowledge | Historical foregrounding | - use of dates, especially in the father’s story, to maintain the movement of the story  - able to incorporate big picture happening in WWII to the events in fathers life.  E.g. the move to Buchenwald in 1945 is a result of the German encroaching defeat | 🡪 maintain the story, movement, pace. |
| **Atypical** | **Support** | **Impact** | **Typical** | **Support** | **Impact** |
| Changing tense | Non-fiction usually deals in past-tense: *and then in one second everything changed for us* 88  Present tense (reconstruction): “*I can show you what your father wore when he arrived at Buchenwald*”  “*My father, grown older by half a century, speaks in the present tense as if time has not passed*” 225  “*My father still speaks of his past without consciousness of its pastness*” 22 | A historical overview, dealing with the emotion and memory of now  The use of present tense creates the situation and emotion of the people involved. E.g. Baker’s grandmother’s death chamber scene | Chronological | - although the story is fragmented by pieces of confused memory, the history is capable of grounding these fleeting gaps into context  - chronological order allows a sense of continuation and movement | - maintains the order and movement of the text to ensure that it doesn’t slow or focus on a single event  - “*I had become his calendar, making sense of time for him when days, months and even years meant nothing.*” 161 |
| **Atypical** | **Support** | **Impact** | **Typical** | **Support** | **Impact** |
| Language Choice | Emotive: “*you will never understand. You will never understand what it means to be a young child, a poor little girl, standing here on her own*” “*My God, what I remember now.*” 49  Inclusiveness: “***we*** *commence* ***our*** *search…*”  Imagery: (sensory) “*we could* ***hear*** *the footsteps, the shots, the screams.*”23  “*I can* ***smell*** *it but I can’t remember what we called it*” “*the* ***smell*** *of special cakes with blackberries from the forest*” “*he allows the* ***smell*** *to carry him through his house*” 26  Similes “*the memories were always broken like fragments of sacred tablets*”, metaphor rover of memory  Onomatopoeia “*Zhiip*” 168 “*Wshhh*” 171  Word inversion: “*underground all day. All day underground*” 192 | 🡪 Allows the audience to empathies with the situation.  🡪 The scars of personal suffering which still exist  🡪 Evidence that memory can be triggered by the senses  🡪 Some memory’s are more instinctive  🡪 realism  🡪 added impact | Integration of languages/ cultural phrases, i.e. Polish, Yiddish,  German,  Russian,  Jewish | Judenrat (Jewish Council)  Aktion (action/ raid)  Barmitzvah (Jewish confirmation)  Jude (Jew)  Zyd (Jew)  Mameh (mother)  Nu? (so? Well?) | Validates, authenticates storyline.  Primary evidence  Not altering what his parents are saying 🡪 faithful record |

**MORE QUOTES**

***Triggers:*** “*it begins where it ends, and ends where ut begins: with my parents’ stories*” xi

“*I would given them my knowledge of history; they would give me their memory. An exchange of pasts*” xi

“*All my memories are framed in black and white images like this one, channeled through snapshot portraits which present the past as a series of frozen moments*” 32

“*I collect my memories in colour-coded albums, each thematically divided into phases of my parent’ life*” 32

“*So instead I try narrating the stories in his own style, dramatizing the conflicts and scandals in his community as if I were preparing a script for a television soap-opera*” 37

“*They do not remember, so I remind them*” 62

“*My mother’s survival was random. Nothing makes sense of her miraculous fate*” 69

“*Me? Was this some cruel joke she was inflicting on me for my constant interrogation of her past 251*”

***Survival:*** “*His unquenchable instinct for sociability, I have always thought, was instilled in him in Auschwitz, where intimacy and friendship were tools of survival*” 37

“*His Jewish world was a shell which protected him*” 39

“*They forced the Jews to appoint leaders to the Jewish Council to negotiate with the Nazis. Times were different then.*” 41

“*She had always regarded this fact about her father’s recruitment into the Judenrat… as a source of embarrassment. At the same time, it was the reason for her survival.*” 41/42

“*My father turned and ran; my mother looked right through me*” 51

Qualities: Chapter/Gate 9; “luck” “courage” “alert” “cunning” “strong and obstinate” “tough”

“*the Jewish council in his town was neither good nor bad. It simply did what had to be done*” 73

“*I identify him as a survivor – a parent with a tragic past – but not parentless… I realize how deeply buried is his pain.*”

>“*what, all these years 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*” 194

“*Everyone wanted to save their lives and people did many unusually things that today would not be accepted*” 208

“details, details. Fecks, fecks”

“*She is more consumed by the past; there are no girls to grow old with*” 228

“She *has always been a lone survivor, an ageing woman longing for a childhood buried in a distant sepulcher*” 228

>> the death of her childhood has caused the death of her identity which is directly contrasted by Baker and his sibling’s own childhood security

“*My father, the survivor*

*No longer the victim…a dry bone whose body breathes life; signs of life*” 233

* baker’s father’s name appears on the Register of Jewish Survivors published by the Jewish Agency of Palestine in 1945 🡪 evidence of reason and life

“*You cannot begin to understand what it means to survive the death of your entire world*” 236

***Transformation:***

“*I – his son turned informer- confront him*” 62

***Universality***

“*We compare our results, item by item, as if we were schoolmates exchanging secret notes under our desks*”

***Memory***

“*Sleep my parents but do not dream. /Tomorrow your children will shed your tears,/ tuck your memories in bed and say goodnight*”

“… *but his mind has traveled to another time and place, far from Melbourne, far from me*” 87

“*I wish I could forget what I remember*” 18

“*I could not answer her. The final moments can never be retrieved by history. Nor by memories: for every life, there are countless other deaths.*” 156

“*I’m right, he says. What an honour. What do you know about Aktions? We were standing like little lambs. Screams, crying. A massacre of weeping lambs*” 151

“*don’t interrogate me. I’m your mother, not your prisoner*” 151

“*how can you be so sure? Were you there? You think because you’ve read a few pieces of paper that you suddenly understand enerything?*”151

“*For godsake, who do you think you are? The People’s Investigator?*”

“*You read, you read. Books, books, everywhere. But do you know how it feels?*”154

🡪 experience can only be understood, it can’t be comprehended emotionally

“*there are certain things that hurt me very much and I can’t talk about it. It’s enough to say that he wasn’t nice to me…*” 203

“*To lose a mother, that was the worst. To bury the only person in the world who really cared for me, that was even worse than the ghettos and the hiding in the darkness*” 22

“*so when I exhausted memory I turned to history*” 213

216

“*Each fragment of memory was placed in an archive and catalogued*” 231

“*I felt ashamed/ I felt ashamed/ Digging and digging…*” 232

“*I fear for my father’s memory when he resorts to this name*” 195

***Searching***

“*An obsession…*” 211

“*A single word: released* ***by*** *father; not* ***with****. A new birth; her release*” 237

* “Shadowy figures grope in the dark, forming a sea of human pillars held upright in a wooden cage.’ Baker re-creates the scene of transportation, filling the gap that cannot be filled by hard data. He has entered the story rather than reporting it through historical means. The language is emotionally evocative rather than factual-evocative. The clinical sterility of evidence has been humanised.

**HOW IS THE EVENT REPRESENTED?**

* **Focus on the how. Start with the technique, followed by the ideas/concepts/content.**
* **Why? The different text types give the reader a release from the tension and the suspense. Makes his text effective.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **NON-FICTION** | **FICTION** |
| Documented evidence.  Extracts from written data.  Interviews – differing voices.  Jewish mysticism – a process; we gain knowledge into the faith and a sense of engagement with the Jewish world. | Re-creates scenes and fills in the gaps with imaginative occurrences.  Testimonies from his parents and other people.  Literary techniques – motifs, symbolism, sensory imagery, irony. Extended metaphors: memory as a ‘site’ for the parents.  Letters and songs – tests the genre.  His parents’ dialect – he gently teases their accents; it lightens it, not mockery. |

**TECHNIQUES:**

**Symbols** – stones (the stones become symbols for people), gates (including the ‘chapters’ of the text and the historical Auschwitz/concentration camps gates), lightness/darkness.

**Irony**  – their captive/entrapped past is set free via Baker’s records.

* Survivor is guilt ridden.
* Adversity leads to enlightenment.
* Relive the horror – be released from the horror.
* Son vs historian.
* Interrogator vs praises for his family.
* “My father the victim.” Quote.
* Baker doesn’t play the role of a typical historian – he crosses the boundaries.
* He starts in a clinical way, a process of change. It also becomes his narrative and his journey. He could no longer be detached and there’s quite a remarkable difference by the end. A process to self-awareness/knowledge/consciousness. The responder’s expectation undergoes a transformation.

**Juxtaposition**  – past/present

* Victim/survivor/free
* Parents’ past is frozen in 1940s. Allows the rivers to thaw so that period can be dealt with in the present.
* Their testimony becomes a gift to future generations.

**Humour** – black humour is used to juxtapose what he once thought to what he now thinks e.g. dressing up as Hitler. Becomes a trigger for reflection.

**Sound Imagery** – “run, run, run” – linking motif between chapters.

* “screams” of people running from the Nazis, followed by screams at Baker’s sports carnival.
* Time, sensations, memories.

**Facts – language device.**

* Unemotional statements
* Authoritative tone
* Authenticity
* We implicitly trust
* Baker warns us that that expectation will be subverted.

Historical Statements: Consider the SS Guards testimony:

1. They were there.
2. Ironically, we were so quick to dismiss Yossl and Genia’s stories.
3. They’re all questionable. We package the past; it’s only a representation.

**STYLISTIC DEVICES**

* Historical narrative – his story, factually based, is turned into a logical narrative.

How can his parents have chronology when there’s no frames of reference for them. Baker must re-evaluate and has a wake-up call.

* Recollections – representational methods – different way of speaking in a non-fiction text; different voices. His parents are primary sources.
* Use of italics.
* Poetry – not typical in a non-fiction text. Tests the boundaries of the genre. From academia to creative. Hybridised conventions. Poetry is universal. Applies to more people everytime. Poetry becomes a representational tool.
* Post-modernist.

Documents – are used to re-enforce his parents’ stories; a volcano reupted when he goes to Yad Vashem.

**MODULE C – History and Memory**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| |  | | --- | | **Sample 1** | |

*How has your understanding of events, personalities or situations been shaped by their representations in the texts you have studied. Refer to your prescribed text and at least TWO other related texts of your own choosing.*

History can be defined as “the methodical record of public events” where memory is defined as “the faculty by which events are recalled or kept in mind”. Thus history and memory interrelate as history can be seen as the contextual justification for memory. “The Fiftieth Gate” is a poignant interweaving of history and memory. The text follows protagonist, Mark Baker an historian, son of Holocaust survivors Genia and Yossl (Joe), on an historical journey through memory, to uncover the origins of his past and act as a catalyst for future generations to also connect with their history. Mark Baker’s journey through history and memory is also executed through his conventional ideas that memory is biased and less valid than history. There are numerous references to the discrepancies between the personal memories of his parents and the documented history Mark as an historian believes. In this way it is apparent that Mark is on a quest for verification, “my facts from the past are different”. This displays the flaw Mark traditionally notes in memory and his need for historical evidence.

As responders accompany Mark on his journey, they also encounter the complexity of simultaneously being a son and an historian. This attested via the following when Mark collates his parent’s memories with documented historical evidence “His was a past written on a page…mother couldn’t point to anyone”. This quote represents the way Mark requires documented evidence, history. This is because he believed his father’s memories only when had had evidence and didn’t believe his mother as she was the sole survivor in the town and could not provide documented evidence to verify her memories. As the text progresses, Mark does discover testimony of an SS soldier that justified her account, “found something at last… it’s really true”. Through this quote, responders perceive the significance of history and memory. Responders also decipher memory’s ability to add a third dimension of individual emotion and experience to documented history as the supportive historical evidence corresponds with individual memory and allows such emotion to be expressed as this third dimension. This quote also highlights evidence of post modernity. Mark begins to question and challenge his original ides about history, memory and their significance. He challenges the nature to believe that only history is valid as he explores personal accounts – memory, into the discourse of history.

Baker utilises various literary techniques that emulsify the underlying ideas present in the text. Mark adapts a non – linear chronology using time techniques to create fragmentation, he includes flashbacks of memory, to replicate the nature of memory and it’s incoherent fragments. This is evident when Genia flashes back in Gate VIII to her remembrance of the church “ I use to play there on the hills with a sleigh”

The text is structured in fifty gates. Each gate represents a new door, which when opened grows closer and closer to unlocking the past using a combination of history and memory. This is notable in Gate X that blends Genia’s recollection of a man who sold land to her father with a historical artifact about the ‘Krochmal fields’ in Botszowce. This quote represents the interweaving of history and memory and represents the progression of the journey within the text. It also interplays post modernity as it challenges traditional perceptions of history, through it’s correspondence with memory.

Baker also expresses the effect of memory on everyday life using irony. This is decipherable in the following, “what would you remember before you were eight? I wish I could forget what I remember”. Responders may note that Genia’s wish to forget about this memory explains this recollection still affects her presently. It also is ironic given the value of memory on the journey within this text and her willingness to forget the memories that are her past. As a result of such traumatic memories, it is also evident that the memories are tainted by her willingness to forget. Negative aspects of memories are what is remembered and emulsified, and positive aspects are possibly lost.

**Sample 2**

The Fiftieth Gate by Mark Baker suggests that a combination of history and memory is essential in making meaning, i.e. in shaping perceptions of the world around us. How does baker represent this combination to create meaning?

History can be viewed as a sequential series of indisputable events, whereas memory is of such events that are highly subjective, and affect the way in which they are perceived. The link between history and memory and the way it shapes the world around us, is a component of past and present. We are shown this throughout the prescribed text, *The Fiftieth Gate*, where through bakers quest we see the past continually impacting on the present, as the memories of the past affect those who have endured it. This key concept is also represented in the Channel Seven documentary, ‘Zero Hour- Disaster at Chernobyl’ and ‘Anzac Day commemorative Issue’, released by the Bulletin, 26th April 2005. All three texts show the affects of history and memory that has subsequently altered perspective on life, “History begins with its memories”.

Within the prescribed text, the composer, Mark Baker, conveys how history and memory help shape the way we perceive things in our own world. Bakers search for identity throughout the book adds depth to the meanings that are communicated to the responder. The audience understands that are the beginning of his journey, Baker is metaphorically in the dark about his parent’s identity, “it always begins in blackness, until the first light illuminates the hidden fragment of memory”. Baker discusses the dark and light nature of his parent’s memories and hoe these memories have affected him throughout his existence, “And I sing them to: sleep my dear parents but do not dream, tomorrow your children will shed your tears, tuck your memories in bed and say goodnight”. Through imagery, Baker represents how the Holocaust experience has helped shape himself, his family and its habits and traditions, “my grandfather, Leo, would sit in a corner of his living room in Melbourne, surrounded by imitation German furniture.” His parent’s memories are hidden, deep within them, a way of coping with the nightmares of the events that occurred, “I wish I could forget what I remember.” The distorted memories may be due to burdened minds, trying to live again, away from the blackness of their early life. Whatever the reason may be, these lapses in memory posed a problem for Baker as he tries to immerse himself in his parents history, so that he too can reach an understanding of who he is, “I knew I has to wrap myself up in the details of her story, if only to immunize myself against the secret thing that lay there, threatening me beneath her bright clothes and lipstick”. Only then when Baker discovers who he is, and where he came from will he emerge into a “stream of light”.

For the duration of Bakers quest for self validation, Baker has to deal with the historian and the son to bring his parents to “open the gate” and let the memories flood back. As the book develops, one can see the authors growing obsession with finding validation and truth to those memories, as his search for proof is fuelled with the desire to uncover who he is. To discover the integrity of his parent’s memories, Baker tries to fill in the shady memory gaps by savagely searching for the historical documentation to prove the memories, “18th December 1923 at 2pm”. His search for proof grows until his parents words are not enough, the process of verification brings him to shame, each memory needs a tacit approval of an archival record or corroborating story, “Details, details. Fecks, Fecks”. As the text progresses, Baker discovers a testimony of an SS soldier that justified his mothers account, “found something at last… its really true!” Through this exclamatory statement, the responder perceives the significance if history and memory and how historical evidence corresponds with individual memory “Its perspective I value”.

The need for factual evidence and validation is also seen in the text, *Zero Hour- Disaster at Chernobyl* a channel seven documentary on the calamity which occurred on April 26th 1986 at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Station. This event was a major historical incident which had vast implications after the day the disaster took place. The documentary depicts the history of that event and retells the story through reenactment and through the memories of those who have, and still are enduring it. Both history and memory are key in retelling a true representation of the event.

The director, Richard Doyalson utilizes a variety of techniques to represent the integral interweaving of history and memory. Memory is represented by the recollections of those who survived the traumatic event, “the sight of my dead friends, their faces burnt by the radiation, amongst the rubble, I will never forget”. The description and expression of emotion assists in creating a third dimension of memory, as it adds emotion and personal experience. The responder is clearly aware that even though the disaster was years ago, the event still affects survivors, both physically and mentally, they cannot be free of what the saw, what they endured or what it did to them physically, “that night lives in my body and in my memory”.

History is represented on many levels throughout the text. The responder is shown how the explosion of the reactor was the catalyst of the breakdown of the Soviet Union, Communism and the Cold War. This is conveyed by the video footage showing the historical evidence of these episodes. History is then depicted through the history of the Power Station and what went wrong in order for a catastrophe of this magnitude to happen. Documentation provides factual evidence and knowledge of why and how it happened, “when undertaking safety tests, reactor 4 cannot withstand less than 200”. The document may be accurate, but they lack emotion, the composer entwines historical documentation and information, “10 times the amount of nuclear fuel than Hiroshima” with historical photographs of affected children to change the tone of the text as it helps the audience to emotionally connect with those whose lives have changed forever, “I will never see my daughter grow up”.

The Bulletins, *Anzac Day Commemorative Issue* honors the 90th Anniversary of Gallipoli. The Gallipoli campaign of 1915 ended in stalemate and humiliating withdrawal by Britain and its allies. The issue has various articles which depict different viewpoints through the collaboration of history and memory. That time in history was too forever shake the foundations of Australian culture and live in the memories of Australian society, past, present and future, “that’s why the Aussies and the Turks like each other – we made our futures in the same place”.

The articles all provide historical evidence of the “fateful day on April 25th 1915”. This is done through historical information and the use of photographic verification. The photographs send a very dramatic, emotional tone to the reader as they can see and acknowledge the faces and the individuals of the troops at Gallopoli, and personalize the photographs by imagery of troops wearing Australian flag. For Australian readers this is bound to give a much more significant and astounding feeling. Throughout the text there are many allusions to places and dates, “On March 18th, the naval assault in the Dardanelle’s culminated in disaster. One third of the fleet was sunk or disabled with the loss of 700 men”. This piece of historical documentation is then juxtaposed by a photograph of the warship, again providing the responder to emotionally connect with the events that were endured by the troops.

Memory is ubiquitous amongst the text. For a clear depiction and truthful account, the composer realizes that memory is essential for establishing both truth and meaning. Memory is key in portraying the affect that the war had on those who lived through it, “if they had and Australian in charge, we may have won, I may have come home earlier, to you”. The article provides a place of awareness, not merely of factual truth, but the truth of one’s own perceptions and significance in the collective perceptions of others. The significance of the interweaving history and memory state how troops lived with their memories and as Australians, we have built more from their lives than their experience and memories would suggest possible for them, “I don’t know what my daughter will make of the place and its story. But I think those rows of headstones scattered across the peninsula will grasp at her heart”.

Memory lives within history binding the creator to their social preconditions; it shapes and constructs, dictates their function and demands their superiority. The two cannot be separated, memory binds interpretation. The strength of history lies in its reception through personal nature of communication and demands that we select which is pertinent to our own experience. This concept is manifested through the integration of history and memory within the texts discussed.

**Sample 3**

Differing and personal opinions, reflections and experiences of events can provoke great debate in the way in which history is recorded and interpreted.

History, which can be viewed as a chronological series of indisputable events can often conflict with the memories that creates, validates, illuminates and humanises it. Both history and memory can be unreliable, as memories are highly subjective and vary due to perspective, and in being intertwined effect the way which these events are recorded. The three texts, ‘The Fiftieth Gate’, ‘Ozymadias’ and ‘The Bridge on the River Kwai’ all emphasise these points. Through this, I have discovered that memory gives history a personal perspective, that both history and memory can distort as well as illuminate and that history is a product of an historian's personal representations of a selection of memories, not an absolute truth.

Memory gives history a personal perspective that is necessary in understanding the historical value and meaning of both the past and the present. It is through a personal perspective of history that enables discovery and journeys to occur of self awareness and appreciation not only of the past but also how it has effected and created the present.

This is clearly illustrated in Mark Baker’s ‘The Fiftieth Gate’, which tells of a journey of self-discovery and awareness in the search for the understanding of the past. Travelling to his parent’s homeland of Poland, Baker is taken through a journey of historical events through his parent’s own personal memories of the holocaust. We see through Baker’s visit to Treblinka and the video recordings of his parent’s memories of the holocaust, that these memories and experiences of his parents, gives him a personal perspective and understanding of historical locations and the holocaust.

On his visit to Treblinka, Baker comes to a more personal understanding of the effect that this has had on his parents.. Baker visits the infamous concentration camp and listens to the recital of a Hebrew verse “here in this carload I am eve with abel my son. If you see my other son cain son of man tell him that I”. Baker is able to understand this verse and find value in its meaning through his father, Yossl’s memories. Yossl’s own mother and sisters were taken away by train, and it is through Bakers personal connection, he is able to find value and understanding of this.

Bakers video recordings of his parent’s memories, show the highly personal aspect of historical events and show their own personal emotions in the facts of the holocaust, such as revenge, pain, grief. ”I didn’t know where I was. The Germans threw bread into our wagons and people jumped on it like hungry animals, one on top of the other. People killed each other for a bit of food”.

These memories give Baker a deep and personal understanding of the holocaust, and in visiting historical locations allows him to come to a better understanding of his parent’s ordeals. We see through the text that Baker’s understanding of his parent’s past allows him to not only understand their present attitudes and values but also his own past and present feelings and values of his parents history. “ 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”.

Without this personal perspective of history and without the memories we find that history will also loose its significance and importance. We see this through P.C Shelly’s ‘Ozymandias’, a poem of the incomplete, in which the importance of memory is suggested in keeping history alive. The poem depicts the insignificance of the individual in history, how once memories of the past are lost they cease to exist

Shelly emphasises this using sonnet form, descriptive language and irony to describe the desolation surrounding the once great king. Words such as “ shattered visage”, “half sunk”, “decay”, “colossal wreck” all show how the great has come to nothing with the absence of memories and personal perspective. Shelly uses irony to contrast the past with the present, stating that memories form a link between the past and the present and without this link, the individual is insignificant. “nothing beside remains. Round the decay of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare, the lone and level sand stretch far away” is ironic with the plaque that reads “look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!”.

Both history and memory can distort as well as illuminate. Memories can be inaccurate and often falter in recalling the events precisely as they happened. How an event occurred, and ones perception of that event can be two entirely different things based on the person’s personal experiences. This can effect the way in which history is recorded and interpreted, as historical events may not be cohesive with the way an individual remembers.

In “The Fiftieth Gate” we see the discrepancies that can occur when memories do not match up to the facts. Genia’s memories distort reality when they return to her hometown of Bolszowce where she becomes disoriented. Baker compares her memories with reality to emphasise this. *“ I remember where we lived in Bolszowce*. This must be the park. No? I played here, I’m sure it was here. Follow me there must be a gate…the gate, I don’t see the gate. My god how its changed”. Genia’s memories of believing that she was kept in the dark during the holocaust also emphasise the idea of distortion. ”In a cellar all day, underground and closed, and nothing, in the darkness, all the time”. Baker finds out from the people that she had stayed with, that she hadn’t been kept in the dark at all. “ But they do not remember the blackness. They recall a little girl staring endlessly out of a window”. Part of Baker’s journey is the understanding of the role that memory has in history. Baker realises that although his mother’s memories don’t match up to the historical evidence, it was her perception of this time in her life and her feelings that shape her memories. Her believing that she was kept in the dark is linked to being kept hidden and the feeling that accompanied this. This is very similar to Yossl’s recount of the day he last saw his mother and sisters, and was sent to work at a prison camp and also illustrates how his perception of the past differs from fact. He remembers marching and it being very cold “It was cold, winter, we had winter boots on, the ones with money sewn inside”. The date though as Baker discovers reveals something different. “He says it was cold. Winter. But it was autumn”

Memory also has the ability to illuminate and emphasise certain aspects of history. This is shown in Pablo Picasso’s painting ‘Guernica’, a reflection and expression of the rage, pain and suffering that occurred consequently when on the 26th of April 1937 German planes dropped 100, 000 tons of bombs on Guernica, a small Spanish civilian town. Picasso’s painting became part of a collective conscienousness, defining the 20th century’s image of war and destruction. Through symbolism of monochromatic colour scheme and images of death (detcapitaded body), destruction (broken light bulb) and grotesque suffering (speared horse, splayed fingers and toes), Picasso illuminates his personal interperation of the event and makes a personal historic source, contributing to the way in which people remember and reflect.

History is a product of an historian's personal representations of a selection of memories not an entirety. The link between history and memory is the way in which human experiences are perceived. Not all representations of the past can be recorded and it is through the historian's perceptions and personal interpretations of human experience is history calculated and recorded. This indicates that historical events are not subject to change, but people’s perceptions of these events. In the ‘Fiftieth Gate’ and ‘The Bridge on the River Kwai’, we see how history fails to capture events and experience due to lack public memory?

History can be defined as “the methodical record of public events” where memory is defined as “the faculty by which events are recalled or kept in mind”. Thus history and memory interrelate as history can be seen as the contextual justification for memory. The following texts are indicative are of this concept, **The Fiftieth Gate** by Mark Baker, **A Painful Reminder** a channel 7 documentary, 1985 and **The Blonde Heroine of The Ghetto – Cesha’s story**, an SBS documentary, 2001. Each of these texts explore this correspondence of history and memory using various examples and techniques and consider the interplay of post- modernity.

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As responders accompany Mark on his journey, they also encounter the complexity of simultaneously being a son and an historian. This attested via the following when Mark collates his parent’s memories with documented historical evidence “His was a past written on a page…mother couldn’t point to anyone”. This quote represents the way Mark requires documented evidence, history. This is because he believed his father’s memories only when had had evidence and didn’t believe his mother as she was the sole survivor in the town and could not provide documented evidence to verify her memories. As the text progresses, Mark does discover testimony of an SS soldier that justified her account, “found something at last… it’s really true”. Through this quote, responders perceive the significance of history and memory. Responders also decipher memory’s ability to add a third dimension of individual emotion and experience to documented history as the supportive historical evidence corresponds with individual memory and allows such emotion to be expressed as this third dimension. This quote also highlights evidence of post modernity. Mark begins to question and challenge his original ides about history, memory and their significance. He challenges the nature to believe that only history is valid as he explores personal accounts – memory, into the discourse of history.

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The text is structured in fifty gates. Each gate represents a new door, which when opened grows closer and closer to unlocking the past using a combination of history and memory. This is notable in Gate X that blends Genia’s recollection of a man who sold land to her father with a historical artifact about the ‘Krochmal fields’ in Botszowce. This quote represents the interweaving of history and memory and represents the progression of the journey within the text. It also interplays post modernity as it challenges traditional perceptions of history, through it’s correspondence with memory.

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Baker also implements Jewish idiom. He uses *Yidish,* a mix between Hebrew and German, “Judenrat” (the Jewish town) and the Jewish accent “fecks fecks” (facts) to institute Jewish culture and express the value of historical context.

The text **A Painful Reminder** a channel 7 documentary, 2001 tells of the making of Sidney Bernstein's film (script by Alfred Hitchcock) Forty years ago British forces entered the Belsen concentration camp. Sidney Bernstein, was working in the Psychological Warfare Division and decided that what had been found must be exposed in such a way that no denial of the atrocities could ever take place. For various reasons of policy the film was never screened until 1985. The film includes interviews with the people involved and with survivors of the camps and explores the value of historical documentation in collaboration with these eyewitness accounts, i.e. personal memory.

This documentary utilises a variety of techniques to portray messages in regards to the journey within this text. As the film journeys through the Belsen concentration camp in 1945 a panning shot establishes the barren landscape and a pile up of deceased people. This camera angle sets the scene and allows responders to empathise and synthesise the experience at the concentration camp.

The text also uses descriptive and emotive language. This is evident when Sidney Bernstein describes life at Belsen concentration camp “dead bodies were everywhere, people died of disease and starvation and had to live among the dead bodies” “the SS soldiers were arrogant and saw nothing wrong with what they did” This description and expression of emotion assists in creating the third dimension of memory, the emotion and personal experience. As it is also an eyewitness account it again assists in making the history personal as responders identify the horrible events with real victims and their own memories.

The text also interweaves historical facts with personal experiences. This is evident in the following when responders are informed that in 1941 five secret extermination camps were set up. These types of facts are also corresponded with personal recollections, “they insulted you, there was no food or not enough there was no relieving yourself, you became an animal” This quote establishes the importance of history and memory subsequent to each other and again, explores post modernity through the challenging of traditional perceptions of history as being more reliable than memory and explores the idea that memory is alternate to history.

The text **The Blonde Heroine of The Ghetto – Cesha’s story** was an SBS documentary in 2001. The documentary undertakes a journey of discovery through the past using a combination of history and memory. The documentary opens with footage of a polish survivor, Max Mannheimer, awaiting Cesha Glazer a fellow Holocaust survivor who immigrated to Australia. Cesha, a Polish - Jew, because she was blonde survived the Warsaw Ghetto. Cesha’s family was not so lucky and with this Cesha decided to help other Jewish people.

This documentary follows Cesha and Max as they walk through Warsaw and reminisce about the horrific events that took place. They journey through their pasts to create the third dimension of memory, emotion and personal experience. The text also interrelates history and memory through the inclusion of interviews with both Cesha and Max, which take place in front of a movie screen, which is a running loop of black and white footage of life in Warsaw before and after the NAZI occupation.

Various camera angles are utilised. There are close up shots of facial expressions and also one of Isi Majercik comforting Cesha with her hand on her shoulder, which again create the third dimension of emotion and personal experience. It also makes the experience a personal one in the eyes of the responder as they are faced with real emotion and presented with the psychological ramifications of such events and expresses the close bond they share through their history. There is also a long- shot used as the text progresses. The long -shot features Cesha walking down the beach. This is a symbol. A symbol of Cesha’s cathartic approach to the memory and cleansing.

Literary techniques are also used. Symbolism is used. Max is a symbol for Cesha. Max represents the past and acts as a catalyst for memory. Their interviews are also a catalyst for memory, as they speak they remember and as they remember they speak. Film footage is again used to reinforce the memories of the survivors and emphasise the importance of memory while indicating the significant relationship between history and memory.

At the conclusion of the film, responders realise that through this trip to Poland and eventually Belgium, she has ‘walked’ metaphorically and literally through her past She was able to share her memories, as similar to **The fiftieth Gate** so that her voice is not alone. Rhetorical questions are posed at the conclusion in regards to German youth, “Do their children know what happened?” These questions are posed to provoke the mind of the responder and to allow them to realise the aftermath of such events. By using this question, the responder starts to think about how such events affected the lives of survivors and the lives of the many generations that proceed. It also asks responders to think about what they have remembered and if others have learned from it.

Thus it is evident that “It always begins in blackness until the first light illuminates a hidden fragment of memory”. It is the interrelationship of both history and memory that allows us to gain an empathetic understanding of an event. This concept is attested by the following texts, **The Fiftieth Gate** by Mark Baker, **A Painful Reminder** a channel 7 documentary, 1985 and **The Blonde Heroine of The Ghetto – Cesha’s story**, an SBS documentary, 2001. This concept is manifested through the integration of history and memory within the texts. This is also orchestrated through the use of various examples, techniques and interplay of post- modernity.

**Sample 4**

*Historical reference, archival documentation and verification only goes part of the way in determining “truth”. With detailed reference to your prescribed text and two related texts challenge or support this premise.*

“It always begins in blackness until the first light illuminates a hidden fragment of memory”. It is the interplay of both history and memory that allows us to gain empathetic understanding of the truth. Traditionally historical reference, archival documentation and verification have been regarded as a factual account of the happenings of the past. This Manichean outlook has been challenged by postmodern ideologies that claim history, because it is a representation, is in fact a misrepresentation. This has resulted in memory being explored as an alternative and complimentary discourse to history. Memory is a composition of personal perspective which can be deemed subjective yet challenges histories officiality and rationalism. Mark Baker’s non-fiction text “A Journey Through Memory- The Fiftieth Gate”, lyrical piece “Mothers, Daughters, Wives” by Judy Small and a commemorative Anzac Day interview on ABC “Enough Rope with Andrew Denton” all explore how both history and memory are crucial in determining “truth”.

“The Fiftieth Gate” illustrates how memory is ubiquitous, living within history and binding interpretation. As a member of the second generation of Holocaust survivors, Mark Baker attempts to make sense of the Holocaust legacy an, “event not personally experienced” (Berger)Bakers original intention was to combine historical research with his parents testimonial memories “I would give them my knowledge of history; they would give me their memory.” However the unconventional non-fiction text includes the narration of his own personal journey of self- validation. Baker adopts this bricolage of styles, including statistics, historical statements and personal memories. These varied devices are derived from both the discourse of history and memory, in order to allow the audience to view the Holocaust experience from a variety of ways.

Archival documents have a reality and objectivity of their own; throughout “The Fiftieth Gate” Baker utilizes historical details such as statistics, dates, interviews and archives to validate his parent’s memories and offer a sense of unambiguous truth to history “18th December 1923 at 2pm”. However often this historical documentation is regarded a “Details, details. Fecks, fecks” by Baker’s parents, with his mother Genia placing greater emphasis on personal experience and memory. Baker questions this idea throughout his text *“*Does history remember more than memory? Do… I only recognise suffering in numbers and lists and not in the laments and pleas of a human being…” The reader is positioned to appreciate the benefits of exploring the respective discourse. They are invited to reflect, ponder and evaluate, thus increasing audience engagement.

Memory gives history a personal perspective that is necessary in understanding the historical value and meaning of both the past and present. The gates are used as a symbolic device to represent the hidden memories of his parents which need to be accessed in order to find his own personal identity. It is the personal perspective of history in “The Fiftieth Gate” that enables Mark Baker’s discovery of self awareness and appreciation of his past and present to occur. The colour imagery of darkness additionally communicates how negative memories can be repressed “I wish I could forget what I remember”; whilst light colour imagery represents what Baker will achieve when he discovers who he is, emerging into a “stream of light”. Baker shows that although memory is fragile, characterized by lapses and often clouded by trauma and emotion, archival evidence is inadequate without it. Using his proficiency and experience as an historian, the son and the interrogator is able to embrace the memory of his parents in his researched exploration of the past.

The lyrical piece “Mothers, Daughters, Wives” by Judy Small similarly shows how memory and history are both necessary to truthfully document the past. The lyrics recount the common story of women in the era of the Vietnam War whose husbands, fathers and sons were sent to war and the outcomes of this faced by women at the home front. The historical documentation in the folk song is complemented by the personal narrative and memories of Judy Small as one of these women, similar to Mark Bakers role in “The Fiftieth Gate”. Adversity felt by women at the time such as sleepless nights and anxiety surrounding the safety of their loved ones is communicated as well as changes in society’s attitude toward women at the time. Small’s memory is evident by the use of the personal pronoun “I” and emotive terms such as “proudly” reflect her patriotic status. History is used to complement and verify her memories; with the chronological structure emphasising the longevity of war and presents a narrative to the audience similar to “The Fiftieth Gate”. Recurring visual imagery highlights the horrors of war and evokes an emotional response from the audience.

“Enough Rope with Andrew Denton an Anzac Day Special” screened on the ABC on the 26th April 2004, provides insight and personal perspective into the lives and experiences of war widows, veterans and military personnel. The interview illustrates the importance of personal perspective in history and emphasizes the importance of people’s memories and emotional experiences. Contemporaneous text utilizes a commemorative tone with interviewees linking their experiences to other texts “… I was only 19 as the song goes” to heighten audiences emotional response. Denton’s dialogue is presented in past tense with words such as “those years” and “back then” creating the time frame and emaphasising memories importance. As Baker does in “The Fiftieth Gate” Denton uses probing questions to gain a direct, private recount of legitimate events; this satisfies the audience’s curiosity and provides a sense of credence.

Both memory and history are vital in providing a credible recount of the past. They are symbiotic elements in solving the mystery of what happened and how it has impacted on those who have experienced it. The resultant ‘truth’ is verified by both facts and remembered images. Mark Baker’s “The Fiftieth Gate”, “Mothers, Daughters, Wives” by Judy Small and a commemorative Anzac Day interview on ABC “Enough Rope with Andrew Denton” all explore the importance of personal perspective in determining the truth. Through their exploration via the discourse of history and the discourse of memory they gain and provoke understanding for themselves and their audience into the past. In embracing both these elements each respective text gains enriched insight and appreciation of the narrative of history. Baker’s major achievement is to make the Holocaust come alive through the medium of non-fiction which with its fusion of historical fact and personal memory speaks to his audiences in unprecedented ways.

**Sample 5**

History and memory are methods of exploring the past and uncovering truths about historical events. History is a factual interpretation which often appears objective, but is subject to bias and control. It can only partially reveal the reality of human experience because of the flaws inherent within it. By contrast, memory offers an emotional response to the past, although it can be distorted and manipulated. Baker’s The Fiftieth Gate, Stephen Esrati’s feature article ‘Mala’s Last Words’ and Alexander Kimel’s poem ‘I Cannot Forget’ portray the past with an amalgam of historical and personal accounts, and employ an array of methods and techniques to influence the response of the audience. Although they differ in style and structure, they all concur that history alone is a flawed tool for examining the Holocaust, and only by combining it with memory can an accurate reconstruction be made.

The form of each text is crucial to its exploration of the past. The Fiftieth Gate is a non-fiction text, a mode that is typically factual and authoritative. However, Baker subverts the medium by providing an intimate and emotional portrait of his parents’ experiences, and thus creates an emotional response within the audience. In particular, he explores his mother’s “darkest nights”, and the impact of her memory in the present. By contrast, ‘Mala’s Last Words’ is a more universal examination of the Holocaust, although it utilizes the “Jewish heroine” of Mala to represent common misconceptions of the concentration camps. As a feature article, it is generally informative, although it concedes that even in history “even the most basic facts cannot be ascertained”. The poem ‘I Cannot Forget’ is highly emotional and personal, with phrases such as “Shadows, on swollen legs, moving with fear” employed to highlight the vivid nature of memory.

The structure of The Fiftieth Gate is integral in revealing the interrelated nature of history and memory. The cyclic chronology allows for the audience to reflect on the consequences of the “exchange of pasts”, as well as demonstrating the lasting impact of memory in the present, especially regarding Yossl. As “yesterday’s tattooed prisoner” he is both liberated from the horrors of the Holocaust and enslaved by “memory’s black hole”. This allows for Baker to highlight that while history may be based on factual evidence, it does little to explain the impact of the past on the present. The division of the book into fifty chapters demonstrates the journey of both Baker and the audience through history and memory and the levels of understanding they gain as a result.

The gate is an important symbol within Baker’s account. It represents the wisdom brought from the discovery of the past through history and memory. Like the exploration of the Holocaust, the gate “opens the blessing or the curse”, and can symbolically be opened by the “broken heart” of memory or the “forgotten heart” of history. Similarly, the razor is an important motif within ‘Mala’s Last Words’, representing the ultimate “freedom of death” in Mala’s own hands rather than “the hands of the Germans”. Mala herself serves as a symbolic representation of the “distortion of the history of Jewish resistance” through different interpretations of her actions. Mala’s death demonstrates how the flaws of memory are transferred to history, as it was the eyewitness accounts of her execution which were formalised in print decades after the event.

The language used within ‘Mala’s Last Words’ is authoritative and objective. This allows for a factual representation of the flaws of history and its ability to “perpetuate the myth of Jewish passivity”. However, direct speech is also employed, with phrases such as “I will fall a heroine and you will die as a dog” expressing the emotional intensity of memory. Similarly, The Fiftieth Gateuses direct speech from Genia and Yossl to allow for an examination of the conflicts between historical veracity and personal accounts. Jewish idioms such as “fecks, fecks” authenticate the characters and identify their cultural background as a means of gaining the audience’s empathy.

The relationship between the author and the audience is an integral component in examining the reliability of memory. Where ‘Mala’s Last Words’ is primarily a didactic text which aims to inform the reader, The Fiftieth Gate is largely dialectic. It offers different perspectives such as Herman Muller’s confessions as a means of allowing the audience to decide for themselves the truth about the Holocaust. The audience is provoked by the use of second person in phrases such as “You will never understand”, challenging the reader to forge a deeper comprehension of the emotional trauma suffered as a result of memory. ‘I Cannot Forget’ evokes a similar response, with Kimel expressing his aim to “Never Let You Forget”. However, it remains largely personal, allowing the reader to gain insight into Mil’s trauma as a result of the Rohatyn Aktion.

A synthesis of different sources is employed within The Fiftieth Gate to contrast the different views towards the Holocaust. Historical excerpts are utilized to authenticate and validate Baker’s parents’ memories. However, they also expose flaws and gaps within the personal accounts, and thus question the veracity of Genia and Yossl’s memories. Songs such as “Mein Shtetl Belzec” provide a thoroughly positive view of the memories of childhood before the Holocaust, and serve as a counterpoint to the bleak despair of their later experiences. However, Baker also admits that “The last moments can never be retrieved by history. Nor by memories”, and therefore he uses fictionalised recreations of events such as Hinda’s death as a method of demonstrating the horrors of the past that cannot be conveyed to the audience through other means.

Rhetorical questions such as “Where have the millions of Jews gone?” are used in The Fiftieth Gate to provoke the audience into questioning the presupposed ‘truth’ of history. Although historical sources are often presented as objective through statements such as “This occurred on the 18 December 1923 at 2 p.m”, ultimately they are subject to as much manipulation and subjectivity as any other route of inquiry. However, in ‘I Cannot Forget’, the rhetorical question “how can I forget?” is repeated to reveal to the audience the haunting nature of memory and its lingering impact decades on. Kimel’s experiences are represented not only as part of a distant past, but also as events ubiquitous in the present. Imagery is utilized in describing the aktion, with phrases such as “Hiding Children, dripping with fear” to allow an accumulation of detail within the reader in order to evoke understanding.

Blood is a recurring motif within the poem, used to highlight the human sacrifice of the action. The contrast between the “peaceful ghetto” before the massacre with the “mass grave” afterwards highlights the devastating impact of the event, and therefore justifies the response of the author. Light and dark are common motifs in The Fiftieth Gate which symbolise Baker’s inner conflict in ‘thieving’ the memories of his parents. Yossl’s trauma is demonstrated visually as a “torrent whose flow runs backward into his darkest nights”, which reveals the comparative impotence of history against the charged emotions of memory. Rocks also serve as a symbol relating to the experiences of Baker’s parents and their cultural heritage, as “Jews [who] remember with stones”. They also serve to represent the ‘mysterious’ nature of the past, and contrast its ambivalence to the solid nature of “Rock’s petrified memory”.

While alone, history cannot fully explain the past, combined with memory it offers both a factual and emotional reconstruction. Through different methods and forms, Baker’s book, Esrati’s article and Kimel’s poem examine the worth of a combined approach to exploring the past, as well as the impact of history and memory on the survivors. They all demonstrate that greater truth can be gained by considering memory in the exploration of the past as a means of allowing the audience to understand and empathise with the victims. Therefore history and memory can together unlock the past and demonstrate its importance in the present and into the future.

Differing and personal opinions, reflections and experiences of events can provoke great debate in the way in which history is recorded and interpreted. History, which can be viewed as a chronological series of indisputable events can often conflict with the memories that creates, validates, illuminates and humanises it. Both history and memory can be unreliable, as memories are highly subjective and vary due to perspective, and in being intertwined effect the way which these events are recorded. History is a product of an historian's personal representations of a selection of memories, not an absolute truth.

Memory gives history a personal perspective that is necessary in understanding the historical value and meaning of both the past and the present. It is through a personal perspective of history that enables discovery and journeys to occur of self awareness and appreciation not only of the past but also how it has effected and created the present.

This is clearly illustrated in Mark Baker’s ‘The Fiftieth Gate’, which tells of a journey of self-discovery and awareness in the search for the understanding of the past. Travelling to his parent’s homeland of Poland, Baker is taken through a journey of historical events through his parent’s own personal memories of the holocaust. We see through Baker’s visit to Treblinka and the video recordings of his parent’s memories of the holocaust, that these memories and experiences of his parents, gives him a personal perspective and understanding of historical locations and the holocaust.

On his visit to Treblinka, Baker comes to a more personal understanding of the effect that this has had on his parents.. Baker visits the infamous concentration camp and listens to the recital of a Hebrew verse “here in this carload I am eve with abel my son. If you see my other son cain son of man tell him that I”. Baker is able to understand this verse and find value in its meaning through his father, Yossl’s memories. Yossl’s own mother and sisters were taken away by train, and it is through Bakers personal connection, he is able to find value and understanding of this.

Bakers video recordings of his parent’s memories, show the highly personal aspect of historical events and show their own personal emotions in the facts of the holocaust, such as revenge, pain, grief. ”I didn’t know where I was. The Germans threw bread into our wagons and people jumped on it like hungry animals, one on top of the other. People killed each other for a bit of food”. These memories give Baker a deep and personal understanding of the holocaust, and in visiting historical locations allows him to come to a better understanding of his parent’s ordeals. We see through the text that Baker’s understanding of his parent’s past allows him to not only understand their present attitudes and values but also his own past and present feelings and values of his parents history. “ 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”.

**Sample 7**

*Historical reference, archival documentation and verification only goes part of the way in determining ‘truth’. With detailed reference to your prescribed text and* ***TWO*** *related texts, challenge or support this statement.*

History is a product of an historian's personal representations of a selection of memories not an entirety. The link between history and memory is the way in which human experiences are perceived. Not all representations of the past can be recorded and it is through the historian's perceptions and personal interpretations of human experience is history calculated and recorded. This indicates that historical events are not subject to change, but people’s perceptions of these events. In the ‘Fiftieth Gate’ we see how history fails to capture events and experience due to lack public memory?

Truth and veracity cannot be established through historical facts alone. Archival, dictation, statistics and artefacts only supply a cold, hard, one-sided view to the occurrences of the past that lacks verification and stability. All the data in the world is nothing without personal experience and individual recount to give the clarity it required to come anywhere near being truth. However, as seen in Mark Bakers’ book **The Fiftieth Gate**, the history and memory of an event rarely collaborate one another and sometimes even refute each other leaving the viewers opinion of what truth is blurred and fragmented. No one can every obtain the whole truth of an experience, so does it really matter in the end? As seen in **The last Days** by Steven Spielberg and **Colours of War** by William Black, the truth does not ease the pain the memory inflicts upon them on a daily basis. Memory and history are puzzle pieces which help us to see the bigger picture of truth in its entirety.

“History never looks like history when you are living through it.”; a quote by J.W. Gardner that seems to sum up Mark Bakers’ non-fiction publication **The fiftieth Gate**, as Baker’s parents Yossl and Genia do not acknowledge the facts brought to them by their son. As Baker raids his parents minds for their memories, his historical outlook is challenged by their experiences and the damage he causes by dragging it up seems pointless as their testimonies do not match up with what he has located from his studies. The **‘fecks’** clash with experience on a hidden dimension, and as Baker comes to realise that history is not a whole picture of what has transpired, he bears witness to what history has done to his parents, his mothers’ fear of darkness and enclosed spaces, her obsession over how she looks, her continuous morning over her lost mother and childhood and how she could have been anything, his fathers’ loss of identity, family and faith in religion and his fathers’ mastery of trivia but failing memory.

Bakers’ failure to see the true value of his parents’ memory at first leaves the truth he longs for inaccurate. He is taunted by his parents’ episodes, you don’t understand, you weren’t there”, showing how Memory knows more than his research has indicated. Throughout the book both memory and history interact to form a more complete view of the Holocaust, , however it is also evident that both history and memory, whilst being accurate, are subject to edit through the perception of those who generated it. Genias’ home town of Bolszowce for example was almost never mentioned in any of the research Baker had undertaken, forcing him to rely on the personal experience rather than his facts. It is at the end of the publication that the lines between history and memory are blurred and Baker sees that the truth is only ascertained through the compromise of facts and the mind.

This morphing of history and memory is also evident in William Black’s online poem **Colour of War** where it is personal history and the soldiers’ memory that interact with one another. In this poem, history and memory are generated through a 3-dimensional world of personal experience by the poet, using colours as a trigger for the memories, like totems of terror on a barren landscape .As photographs activate the memories of Genia, so too do the colours activate the memories of the soldiers, “What are the colours of war/That haunt soldiers’ memories? /What shades and hues evoke responses/In the nightmares of their history?. These lines, whilst being rhetorical, suggest that the atrocities of war are highly detrimental on the human psyche, as even basic elements such as colour bring back the horror of theses experiences to the soldiers: There is no truth to be gained, but the poem demonstrates how history and memory can paint an elaborate and detailed Picture when combined and how history can be made tangible thought vivid memories that make sense of the chaos.

The Steven Spielberg documentary **The Last Days** also displays the dovetailed effect present in the **The Fiftieth Gate** where a greater truth is gained through the interplay of mind and matter and their integration of information. The accounts given by the five witnesses blend into a singular story driven and backed by each others experiences. Spielberg laced his common account with historian testimony and archival footage to verify, support and clarify the points raised by the speakers demonstrating how history and memory use one another to produce ‘truth’ or something close to it. Visual stimulus gives the narratives a physical image, pushing the atrocities of the situation and what these people have witnessed. Mental and physical elements are partnered together to obtain a view of what really happened during the Holocaust.

Truth is an abstract concept that is entirely centred on the perspective of the composer. Whilst Baker gets what he considers to be the truth of his parent’s personal experiences, this is only a minor fraction of the truth behind the whole situation. It is evident that the truth requires elements of both history and memory to give a greater image like that of the nightmarish battle zone in Black’s poem **The Last Days** combination of visual history and oral memory display the veracity gained by the fusing of the two ideals. Whatever the circumstances, truth cannot be obtained with one data type alone.

**Sample 8**

Traditionally historical reference, archival documentation and verification have been regarded as a factual account of the happenings of the past. This Manichean outlook has been challenged by postmodern ideologies that claim history is in fact a misrepresentation. For, since history itself is subjective when retold from one’s memory, memory itself can be viewed as an alternative and complimentary discourse to history. Thus, “History brings with it memories,” (Baker), and by erasing a fragment of our history, we lose the important memories and truths that have ultimately helped shape us today.As a result, our lives incomplete and unfulfilled. This concept is evident in Mark Raphael Baker’s text A Journey Through Memory, The Fiftieth Gate, William Black’s poem The Colors of War, and Michel Gondry’s film Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, as their use of often non-orthodox conventions of their genres, such as style of narrative and language syntax, continuously merge the past and present together.

In The Fiftieth Gate, Baker’s intertwining of his parent’s subjective reflections with his historical recounts of the Holocaust helps readers to understand the importance in reliving such horrific memories for, in doing so, we ultimately grow stronger from such an experience. In particular, Baker highlights such a concept by closely depicting the transformation of his mother after she ‘journeys back into (her) life’. Genia’s description of her memories of the Holocaust as a ‘black hole’ symbolically represents her present state- unable to relive the events as the pain is ‘endless’, but unable to forget as it “plagues” her in the form of “sickness and nightmares”. By interrogating her about the events, Baker ultimately ‘unmasks… the darkness’ by “opening the gates” to her past, and in the process, he lessens her pain. The image of Genia ‘(rising) from the blackness… dancing in remembrance’ is symbolic of her finally embracing her life as a ‘blessing’ rather than a ‘curse’. Thus, by learning to overcome her traumatic experience of the Holocaust, Genia has, once again, ‘survived’.

In addition, Baker’s representation of historical events through the subjective perspective of one’s memory illustrates how hidden truths about society can be revealed. The tangible recount regarding the execution of the Jewish community in Wierzbnik demonstrates man’s propensity for bestial inhumanity seen in the brutality of German SS soldiers. Graphical imagery of a young child having her “head smashed against the gate,” a young man pleading “if there is a God above,” only to be “answered by a man in uniform who fires at him” and an old man “struggling through an alley,” only to be “shot in head” is used extensively by Baker to shock his audience. By including such documentation in his non-fictional text, Baker aims to revive the history that had been hidden for decades, and present it to society as a **lesson**: ‘it always begins in blackness, until the first light illuminates a hidden fragment of memory…’ Though the Holocaust is an event ‘not personally experienced’ by us we, like Baker, can learn from such an ‘exchange of pasts’, thus hopefully preventing a repeat of such history.

Colors of War’ is a highly emotive and graphic poem thatindicates how the impact of a significant historical event on individuals can shape understanding and, through memory, can alter one’s perceptions. William Black Jr. utilises colour and sensory imagery to re-create an alien landscape that “triggers memories” that are nightmarish in quality. He explores a rich variety of hues and shades that link colour with tangible events such as “drenching rain” or “blood drained bodies,” which coincides with the controversial, colloquial tone of the poem, inviting readers to share such experiences. Terms such as “haunt,” “nightmares” and “dreaded” denote how memories cannot be softened by nostalgia or forgetfulness. The worst of the horror he has known has not been blanketed by numbing forgetfulness. This is one of the coping techniques used by the characters in The Fiftieth Gate.Some victims desperately try to forget and distance themselves from what has caused them pain but this is not always successful as this poem testifies. Genia and Yossl are likewise connected to their nightmarish war experiences, but *The* Fiftieth Gateends on a more positive tone of emotional release, as a result of them unmasking their agonising past.They have been able to move on with their lives rather than remaining inmates of the past.

By erasing a part of our memories, we lose both the histories and experiences that have helped to make our lives complete. This is explored in Michel Gondry’s film Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind, as protagonist Joel Barish seeks to erase the memories of his past lover, Clementine, after their relationship fails. During the ‘memory erasing’ transaction, Joel’s world literally begins to disintegrate, effectively depicted via a distorted camera, where images associated with Clementine are obliviated.. However, as Joel encounters a memory of himself embracing Clementine, he comes to the realisation that erasing his history of her is foolish. His desire to “keep this memory…just this one” is reinforced by the heavy shades of chiaro scuro lighting as a single beam of light is focused upon Joel and the surrounding environment dissolves into the shadows. Ironically, the bright light illuminates a sense of despair settling upon Joel.

As a result of his transformation, Joel is unaware of Clementine’s existence, and coincidentally, they meet each other and fall back in love. Experience, history, memory and truth are cinematically fused. Like Baker, Gondry demonstrates this continuous cycle of love and hate via a non-chronological narrative structure, as both Joel and Clementine’s second meeting is displayed at the beginning of the film. Gondry effectively uses this technique to demonstrate the consequences of erasing our past, and in so doing, emphasizes the value of remembering what has helped shape our lives. History could be repeated without the tempering influence of memory.

Memories help forge our identity and when linked to the historical veracity of factual statistics, data and documents can provide a reliable version of the truth. Such are the conclusion reached by Baker, William Black Jr and Gondry as they explore through different mediums, this interplay of history and memory in ways that challenge their respective audiences. By masking or dismissing such memories, the truths about the past, as painful as they might be, can be irretrievably lost. Baker graphically depicts this didactic lesson by using non-fiction as a narrative vehicle for insight and understanding. As a result, Baker, Gondry and William Black Jr. through the effective use of representative techniques of their varied mediums, reveal how history, in combination with memory, can lead one to gain ultimate knowledge and understanding of life, ‘the darkness or the light’.

**Sample 9**

*The Fiftieth Gate* is a book concerning memories, lovingly written by Mark Raphael Baker as a historian and also as a son. In order to vindicate their stories, perhaps from both personal and professional interests, the author revisits the past of his parents who both survived the Holocaust. "It always begins in blackness, until the first light illuminates a hidden fragment of memory...."The story was intended to "unveil" the mystery of the parents' survival" and to explore forgotten realms in order to unlock their personal memories.

*The Fiftieth Gate* is written in an abstract manner including poems, lyrics, official documents, and old tales with a general narrative, tying it all together. The author uses interesting techniques to narrate the story of his parents' survival. He uses italicized writing to relay points his parents have told him of in the past and non-italicized writing to relay what his parent are telling him at the moment of his narrative. However, the story does not read as if penned from a meticulous and calculating historic hand. Instead, the book is touched with descriptions of such elegance that the language could almost be taken from a fictitious piece.

It is obvious, from the type of history that this book endeavors to cover, that most topics and memories discussed will be dark of nature. The Holocaust itself was a bleak and savage event, and Mark Baker tries to convey how this occurrence has affected his parents in their memories and thoughts. Their memories are hidden and mainly confused. Perhaps the inability to remember is due to the large lapse of time between the "now" and the "then." Perhaps these inaccuracies are due to burdened minds trying to live again, away from the blackness of their early life. Whatever the reason may be, these lapses in memory posed a problem for Mark Baker. He could not simply accept the "facts" his parents gave him, but instead needed to investigate the lives of which they claimed. This was the biggest problem of history the author faced while writing this book; the accuracy of memories gathered.

Mark Baker provides two examples in the book where the "sages" have taught something, yet his parents teach something else. The outcome of both examples taught by the rabbi are hopeful, full of peace and love. The outcomes of both examples taught by the Bekiermaszyn's reflect death and despair. The first example illustrates that of the "Garden, whose fruits reveal the secrets of the world." The sages teach; four rabbis enter and are struck down at various points in the garden, and only the fourth, wise rabbi escapes harm and exits. The author's parents teach that the fourth rabbi passes all points of danger in the garden, but he does not exit. This ending can be seen to reflect the destruction of the Holocaust, the despair and the belief held by these two survivors that the world is not a hopeful place where a happy ending always prevails. They have seen so much death and suffering, perhaps this is the only belief they can hold.

The second example portrays a rabbi being seized by his enemies, wrapped in a scroll of the Torah and set alight. Both sages and Mark Baker's parents teach that he was set alight and cried out he could see the parchment burning but the words were soaring high. Here, the Bekiermaszyn's taught that the rabbi turned to ashen dust, exactly like those Jews killed and burned during the Holocaust.

These two examples illustrate how history can change the perceptions of individuals in both conscious and unconscious ways. Mark Baker had to deal with this problem when writing *The Fiftieth Gate*, investigating and verifying everything he heard and a lot of what he had been taught. Another problem of history the author doubtlessly encountered were the emotions still existent concerning the Holocaust. When raw emotions still remain from a traumatic historical event, recollections and the retelling of events will most likely be clouded with opinions.

The author's parents were born before the war in small towns where the majority of the population was Jewish. Yossl Baker (previously Bekiermaszyn) lived in Wierzbnik with his family, and Genia Baker (previously Bekiermaszyn) lived in Bursztyn with her own family. During the year of 1942, both towns were occupied by German forces and both Yossl and his future wife Genia were forced to move; Yossl to various labor and death camps, Genia into hiding.

It is this time period, during which his father was incarcerated and his mother was on the run, that Mark Baker was most interested in. His father was captured and first taken to Auschwitz then Buchenwald before his liberation in 1945. His mother hid with her parents in forests and in small towns wherever possible. Their stories are different in terms of the horror they both had to endure, yet there is no mistaking that both were left with powerful memories which the author began to unlock when he journeyed into their pasts.

History can be viewed as a sequential series of indisputable events, whereas memory is of such events that are highly subjective, and affect the way in which they are perceived. The link between history and memory, and the way the human experiences it, is a component of past and present. We are shown this throughout the prescribed text "The Fiftieth Gate", where, through Baker's quest, we see the past continually impacting on the present, as the memories of the past affect those who have endured it. The other related material studied also shows examples of this complex relationship surrounding history and memory.

Within the prescribed text, the composer, Mark Baker, combines different types of text in one volume. This is a technique designed to reveal aspects of an event from various points of view.

The title, The Fiftieth Gate, refers to the highest knowledge of God, which is either total darkness or total enlightenment. The book confers to this theory in that it is structured using fifty gates, with each chapter adding to the knowledge.

An important feature that is learnt from the text is the inability to find out or determine everything. We cannot know all of history; the experience is limited and personal. Another major idea within the text is the conclusion Baker comes to that "we are the sum of our experiences", as this is represented throughout.

For Baker the text is a discovery of the history of his family. He wants to be able to define what happened to them, yet while he acts as an archaeologist, uncovering the details of his parents' lives, he is also inevitably linked by birth and this blend of objectivity and subjectivity makes the text more realistic. Baker, as an historian, uses society's tools to explore his parent's past, however it is only when he includes and values their memories that he comes close to truth.

One of the truths Baker learns by the end of his quest is that the story of his parents is valid and has meaning whether it is documented or not, as the emotions and humanity come from their heart and make it just as valid as the archives recorded. The key is not in the detail of their lives recorded on paper, but in the lives his parents have lived in spite of what was done to them. The reader must see Baker as both a chronicler and participant as he weaves fact and fictionalised fact together to create their lives and his own from stories, memories, truth and research. He achieves understanding only when he trusts his parent's memories and lets go of the historian's attitude to the 'truth'.

There is a sense of realisation or discovery for Baker as the text progresses. It is realised that history is indisputable, and its events cannot be changed, only one's perception of them. Baker concludes that history and memory provide the key to self-knowledge.

Through Baker's journey of discovery, he is able to surpass the barriers of time through the power of knowledge and memory and it is discovered that to learn about the past is to understand the present, and it is in this way that history can be viewed as empowering.

It is as a result of Baker's father, Yossl, that we learn the way in which memory can be unreliable. This is proven when Yossl's memory of his hometown, Wierzbnik, is inaccurate and appears differently to how he remembers it to be. He becomes flustered with his memory for failing him in this way.

As with her husband, Genia is a unique individual but the discovery of her memory and past is different from Yossl's. She is made 'real' when she worries about her legs when Baker is filming parts of the interviews, "You can't see my legs can you?"

One key to Genia's life is that there are fewer records Baker can locate, as her village was destroyed by the Nazi's. Although she has told her son that hers was the only family to survive, he deep down does not accept this as fact in the same way he does his father's story. Only when he finds the Soviet record, naming the Krochmal family as being the only survivors, does he access his own need for physical proof. He begins to question his own motives for investing faith in documented evidence, and as he questions; "does history remember more than memory?" the reader is able to see the first point in which Baker turns from his profession.

This 'revelation' is a very human one as a thing is often accepted solely because it is in print while word-of-mouth is somehow taken as less accurate or reliable. When Baker comes to this realisation, he accepts more of who his mother is and was, which leads him to further discoveries.

A film which history and memory have a significant relevance in is "Life Is Beautiful". This is a very interesting representation by Benigni of one Jewish family's ordeal in a concentration camp, and offers a stark contrast to that of Mark Baker's in The Fiftieth Gate. It is a memory of the young son of the Jewish couple, who was in a concentration camp with his father. As the young boy, he does not realise what is going on around him, and thinks it is a game like his father tells him, but by what is visualised around him, we are able to see the truth in what is happening. While he now knows where he was, and the danger he and his parents were in at the time, Joshua can only remember the camp in the context of this game. He is able to understand what is true, but this memory was "(his) father's gift to (him)". While this is undeniably a false memory, it is how the event was perceived by him at the time, and therefore he cannot change what he remembers into what he is told or reads in history books.

Michael Millet's article, "Japan buries war shame in search for pride", appeared in the Sun Herald in May 2001 and outlined the debate concerning the decision to print school textbooks that present the Japanese' involvement in the war in a patriotic light, in order to raise their country's pride. This text raises the idea that the impact of the truth on the present is one of the factors that enter into the distortion of history.

The article reports the debate in an objective manner, and has references to the involvement of the various academics concerned with the issue. The majority of these academics believe that the issuing of these textbooks is essential for Japan, as "otherwise it will result in the collapse of the nation." This belief is supported by many Japanese people, despite being aware that it does not print the entire truth, and is in fact a misrepresentation of the facts.

Similar to the representation of history and memory in "Life Is Beautiful" is that within the film "Radio Flyer". Narrated by an adult from his perspective as a child, the viewer is presented with the way the main character remembers an event in his childhood, in which his younger brother died, while also seeing the truth behind the event. In this case the truth, or history differs dramatically to the memory being related. As a child, the character has perceived the event as his brother escaping from an abusive stepfather, and, although intellectually he realises that his brother is dead, he chooses to believe in his own recollection of the past, and in doing so gives his brother the life he dreamed of having. This text represents the way in which memory is a personal record of history.

These representations of the relationship between history and memory enable a clarified definition of the role of each in discovering the past. They show that, while neither method is foolproof, one cannot be looked at without the other, as a blend of subjectivity and objectivity is necessary in order to perceive the whole truth. History is imperative as societies record, and is valued as a result of its clear truth and trustworthiness. However, to the individual, a memory is priceless, and one's own memory is perhaps the only true account of the event to that person. It is clear that the past cannot be discovered without both accounts, as each interacts with the other to form the true representation of the event.

**Sample 10**

‘Is there such a thing as “history” which is more objective than memory?’

For many years now there has been a strong debate, as regarding wether or not there is such a thing as ‘history’ that is more objective than memory. Due to memories completely subjective nature, history although also being somewhat subjective, it is a great deal more objective than memory. To discuss such a statement first one must define the terms ‘history’, ‘objective’ and ‘memory’. The Macquarie Dictionary defines the term ‘memory’ as:“ the mental capacity or faculty of retaining and reviving impressions, or of recalling or recognising previous experiences. A mental impression retained; a recollection.” For the purpose of this essay assume history to be; the knowledge of what happened, the record or expression of what occurred.” The term “objective” refers to being free from personal feelings or prejudice, unbiased.

The idea of objectivity involves a belief in ‘the reality of the past, and [to] the truth as correspondence to that reality.’ In the light of such definitions memory is entirely subjective, with no elements of objective truth. Laurel Holliday’s book entitled Children’s Wartime Diaries illustrates how memory is composed of and subjective to ones current emotions and circumstances. Caroline Baum in her article The Children’s Ark and Mark Baker in his novel The Fiftieth Gate both use history and memory to reconstruct their parents past. Throughout their journey of discovering their parents’ history both authors discern the subjective elements of memory and discern memories subjective characteristics. Such characteristics as personal recall, bias feelings, fragmentation, gaps, forgetfulness and emotions involved with memory add to its complete subjective nature. History although being more objective than memory, also has a number of subjective characteristics.

David Irving’s web site includes a document entitled ‘Did Six Million Really Die?’ This document illustrates how histories foundation on evidence constrains it partially to subjectivity. The Sydney Jewish Museum illustrates how historians know the past to be; not the past as it was in itself but the past as it appears from its traces in the present. Despite such subjective characteristics, history is more objective than memory. The fact that a historian’s view of history can never be completely objective does not mean that descriptions of the world cannot tell anything objective about it. The Fiftieth Gate demonstrates how to some extent the nature of archive documents cause them to reasonably reliable and objective and when the past is well supported by abundant evidence it is reasonable to say that the history being presented is objective. The Sydney Jewish Museum in addition illustrates how history unlike memory has a systematic organised structure, which inevitably adds to its’ objective nature. As a result of memories complete subjectivity, history although also being somewhat subjective; it is a great deal more objective than memory.

Memory unlike history is completely subjective. Memory is composed of personal feelings or prejudice and bias. Memory privileges the private and the emotional. Against histories officialism and rationalism, memory reveals the hidden pasts, the lived and the local, the ordinary and the everyday. Memory dreams in fragments and gaps. It values representation and the remember, rejecting factualism and objectivity. Diary entries are such a text type where these characteristics are considerably evident. Laurel Hollidays’ book ‘Children’s Wartime Diaries, Secret Writings from the Holocaust and WW2’ is a collection of exerts from diaries written by twenty-three young people living in Nazi occupied Europe and England. The children are aged between ten and eighteen and recount the horrid experiences they lived through during the Holocaust and WW2. It is evident throughout Hollidays’ book that memory is composed of personal feelings and bias, making it completely subjective.

It is apparent that each of the children wrote about what was important to them at the time. Adolf Hitler may have been executing thousands of Jews a block away, but Janine Phillips was more intent on writing about her sister’s movement from one concentration camp to another. It is a fact that one recalls experiences differently according to their current state of emotions and feelings. Hollidays’ book gives a number of different contradicting accounts of the Holocaust. Dirk Van der Heide, a twelve-year-old boy living in Holland recounts a German bombardment in his hometown of Rotterdam. He describes how there were four hundred Germans attacking with guns and other such weaponry. Sarah Fishkin was another child living in Rotterdam at the time of this exact bombardment. Unlike Dirk Van der Heide, she recounts the bombardment as being reasonably small and undisruptive, with only sixty Germans attacking. Such contradicting accounts of the same event show how memory is subjective, to ones current situation. Diary entries are usually written immediately after an event has occurred and such immediate response may cause an under or over exaggeration of the situation, adding to memories subjective nature. Laurel Hollidays’ book has been composed in such a way so as to resemble a diary.

The cover is a mottled blue design and the corners and the spine have been coloured red, so as to give the impression of being bound. Each of the diary entries is dated and separated by a single line, again, so as to resemble a diary. Such a layout gives the impression that they are real diary entries and personal, therefore subjective accounts of the holocaust. The variable emotions and feelings surrounding an event makes memory completely subjective.

‘The Children’s Ark’ written by Caroline Baum is an article accounting a daughters (Caroline Baum) discovery and investigation into her fathers childhood experiences during the Holocaust. Throughout this article the subjective characteristics of memory are evident. Within the text there is a strong use and interaction between both memory and history, as Baum tells of her father’s journey from Jewish oppression to freedom. Baum discovers that memory alone is insufficient as its’ characteristics lend it to subjectivity. At the times when Baums’ fathers’ memories lapsed she relied on history to tell what her father was unable to recall. Towards the end of the article Baum comments on the aging of the kinder and the results this was having on their memories; ‘…Suddenly, as the kinder grew older and more frail, their memories more unreliable, there was a realisation that if it was not told now, this story could never be told…’ As people age it is a fact that their memory deteriorates and becomes overall less reliable. Such an element of memory adds to its completely subjective nature. Due to this subjectivity, throughout the text history is often used to confirm and fill in the ambiguous memories expressed.

‘The Fiftieth Gate’ by Mark Baker, is a true story, where he uses history and memory to explore and reconstruct his parent’s experiences during the Holocaust. He discovers the subjectivity of memory and thus repeatedly recognises and speaks about the limitations and weaknesses with the use of it. When he asks his father to recall the weather conditions on the day of his liquidation, he finds that his fathers’ memories contradict the records. Bakers father recalls the time as being winter and very cold, but the records record his time of liquidation as being a warm Autumn. On the following pages Baker explores the reliability of his fathers memory, and begins to understand the flaws in memory. His fathers’ memories are just experiences without any chronological order, so it makes sense that all his memories don’t line up. The Fiftieth Gate has been structured in such a way so as to express such ideas. The content expressed throughout the book is very disconnected and there is little evidence of any chronological order. These structural elements actively develop the idea that memory is overall fragmented, with no real begging, middle or end. The issue of his fathers’ correct age is one of the many other events in the book where his fathers’ narrative has surrendered to forgetfulness and therefore subjectivity.

The modern historian Michel Foucault’s stated “…. with its moments of intensity, its lapses, its extended periods of feverish agitation, its fainting spell, memory fails to be objective…” It is at such points in The Fiftieth Gate where memory falls short, that Baker has sufficed to let the logical, more so objective option, of history, rule over his parents’ completely subjective memories. At a number of stages throughout The Fiftieth Gate, when Bakers father feels he can remember no more, Baker is forced to interact by telling his father a part of history which inturn triggers another memory. Such a responsive characteristic of memory insinuates that memory is subjective to the current situation.

History is considerably more objective than memory but due to its’ basis on evidence it too contains elements of subjectivity. History is founded upon evidence and, despite preconceptions, evidence is not always objective. There is a bias in the creation of evidence and a bias in the survival of evidence. During the Nazi regime the German government had tight control over the survival of evidence that proved to their actions. Such political power meant that this century’s perspective of history has been significantly altered. G.R.Elton said; ‘that which is deliberately preserved by observers is a drop in the bucket compared with what is left behind by action and without thought of selection for preservation purposes.’ Subjective evidence means subjective history.

Historical evidence is limited as to the amount of information it can ultimately provide. Such a limitation to a degree forces history to be subjective. Historical descriptions are like the theories of physics, theoretical constructions designed to account for the available evidence. There is a limit to the amount of knowledge one can gain from evidence, as it is impossible to cover and account for everything with historical facts. There are not records detailing every moment of every day, and as history is often based upon evidence history can be little more than a theory. David Irving, in his article ‘Did Six Million Really Die?’ discusses his belief that ‘there were no gas chambers used for mass murder at Auschwitz and Other Camps.’ Irving argues that there is no objective, truthful evidence suggesting that there were gas chambers. He believes that the “gas chamber tragedy” is just an over exaggerated theory, with no factual grounding. Wether or not Irvings’ argument is correct is debatable, but what is evident through his article, is that history is not always completely objective, as it is often only a theory based upon limited evidence. The idea that historical evidence does not prove the truth of all elements of the past seems to be supported by the fact that historians are sometimes unable to agree among themselves over what happened. The restrictions involved with historical evidence inevitably mean that it is subjective, and subjective evidence means subjective history.

The subjectivity of science, consequently lends history to an element of subjectivity. Much of today’s history has been established from science. For instance many people today believe that the world was created by the “big bang”, such a historical theory has been developed from and is based around scientific concepts. Many people today believe that science is factual but this is not the case. After all, scientific theories employ scientific concepts, which have been seen to change from time to time, so they seem better described as representations of reality, of whose real nature we remain mostly ignorant, rather than a mirror of its essential nature. This subjective nature and unreliability of science, infers that history developed on science is consequently partially subjective as well.

A historian’s personal bias unavoidably influences their choice in material. In many ways a historian’s job is to fill in the gaps memory leaves, making their role an ideological and political one. This role of a historian inevitably lends history to elements of subjectivity. Historians both conform to and help erect structures by which their society functions around. Over the past century it has been seen how history has the ability to strategically ‘forget’ some aspects of the past while ‘remembering’ others. For instance, in Australia the Aboriginal identity for many years was suppressed by history. Historians and the white European society denied and concealed the facts that the Aboriginals were the original inhabitants. It was only through the objections and challenges brought about by memory; the truth of the issue was uncovered. Historians naturally prefer some interpretations of historical evidence to others for all sorts of cultural, social or personal reasons. The majority of historians use and search for evidence that will support and help them construct their account of what happened. David Irving, a British historian and author, is one of the very few who has openly denied the Holocaust. On his web site he has written a document entitled ‘Did Six Million Really Die?’ Irving discusses a number of “facts” which deny Adolf Hitlers role in the Holocaust. Whether or not his argument is correct is irrelevant, what is relevant is the fact that it is obvious that Irving has privileged some evidence over other evidence. Throughout the document Irving places much emphasis on the evidence that supports his argument, while scarcely mentioning and denying contradictory evidence. Consequently, it is evident that a historian’s personal bias inevitably affects their choice and use of evidence, therefore adding an element of subjectivity to history.

A historian’s personal bias not only shapes their choice in material but also inevitably affects their interpretation of the evidence. R.G.Collingwood put forward his view in the essay ‘The Limits Of Historical Knowledge.’- “…historical thinking means nothing else than interpreting all the available evidence with the maximum degree of critical skill. It does not mean discovering what really happened, if ‘what really happened’ is anything other than ‘what evidence indicates.’ The interpretation of evidence inevitably means the inference of personal bias and as a result subjectivity. Keith Jenkins uses the uncertainty about Hitler’s intentions after gaining power as evidence of the unreliability and subjectivity of historical evidence. The significance of the Hossbach Memorandum, in which Hitler outlined his plans to acquire extra territory for Germany, has been under considerable debate in the past few years. Some have interpreted Hitler’s plans as an honest declaration of intent; while others, notably A.J.P. Taylor, have doubted its genuineness, suggesting that it was a plan which Hitler hoped would justify increased expenditure on armaments.

Analysing documents is simply interpretation, and the process of interpretation is always subjective. History can never be completely objective due to the cultural relativism involved. History is just a representation of a historian’s way of conceptualising things that have happened. Every culture views the world differently through the lenses of its own concepts and interests, events and experiences are both seen and interpreted differently. The fact that interpretations of past events vary with cultural prejudices, personal interests, and standards of rationality, implies that nobodies’ interpretation of the past can be true or objective. An illness, which a person in one culture blames on an evil spirit, a person in another might describe in terms of a medical theory. Our perceptions of things in the world are a function of our culture, of its practices and concepts. Even within ones own culture there are differences in the way people view things. A common person may see the sun rise over the horizon, but the scientist thinks of the earth turning toward the sun instead. Everybody shapes what he or she sees according to the concepts with which they have learned to structure the world. Keith Jenkins has denied the objectivity and truth of history in his book Re-thinking History (1991). Although agreeing to the idea that historians study sources he remarks that “…the historians viewpoint and predilections still shape the choice of historical materials, and our own personal constructs determine what we make of them. The past that we ‘know’ is always contingent upon our own views, our own ‘present’….” The Sydney Jewish Museum is such a piece of historical memorabilia that has been obviously been significantly shaped by cultural relativism.

The Jewish people of today, have established such a museum to recognise the thousands of Jews who were slaughtered during the Holocaust. Their personal interests, cultural prejudices and concepts forced them to shape and mould their perspective of the past. The Sydney Jewish Museum informed that during the Holocaust a total of 5,860,000 Jewish people were slaughtered, but what the museum failed to inform was that a further 5,000,000 were also killed. This further 5,000,000 consisted of Polish Christians and Catholics, the well educated and anyone physically or mentally handicapped. The composition of the museum also played an important part in the representation of the Holocaust. The entrance and the whole of the bottom floor was made from a grey mottled marble type of material. Such a choice, in the colour and material of the floor set the solemn mood and tone that was to follow. In the front foyer there were a number of large plaques with the names on those Jews who were either killed or went missing during the Holocaust and numerous stained glass windows depicting scenes from the Holocaust, covered the walls. The solemn mood was carried through the rest of the museum by the use of specific lightening, music, colour, diagrams, choice of achieves, photos and pictures. The composition of the museum has had a major role in the representation of the Holocaust, in that it strongly emphasises the hardships and horrific events many of the Jews experienced. The ‘history’ presented through the Jewish museum, although partly true, it is formed by their present cultural feelings, prejudice, values, beliefs, interests and bias, making it to some extent subjective. There can be no objective history of ‘the past as it actually did happen’ there can only be present day historical interpretations, none of which are final.

Despite histories subjective elements, it is still a great deal more objective than memory. Unlike memory, which is fragmented, full of gaps without any chronological order, history has an organised structure. History is a record. It collects and organises such facts that are available and relevant, provides some sort of framework for them, and lays down the guidelines for their presentation. It supplies order, harmony, and direction, for what might otherwise be a chaotic assemblage of miscellaneous facts. The history presented through The Sydney Jewish Museum reflects some of these objective characteristics. The exterior of the building was a big white sandstone building with a number of steps leading up to two large glass doors. Above these doors in large black writing was the name of the museum “THE SYDNEY JEWISH MUSEUM”. Such a simple but striking exterior immediately gives the impression that the museum and the history presented through the museum, is very serious, solemn and important. The museum itself was designed in a rising spiral shape, where each layer rolled onto the next, systematically going through the Holocaust from the beginning of the Jewish existence to their liberation. Such structural orderliness gives the impression that history is a lot more objective than memory.

Archive documents have a reality and objectivity of their own. The names, numbers and expressions on the pages do not change, no matter who is looking at them. For instance, there is no disagreement among historians that the Hossbach Memorandum is a record, reasonably accurate, of a speech made by Adolf Hitler on the 5th November 1937. The language used throughout the museum in regards to the archives, diagrams, photographs and pictures on display was rather conservative, factual and informative. Such objective language used beside these artefacts emphasised the truth and objectivity of the history being expressed through them. Similarly, throughout the Fiftieth Gate, Baker places great amounts of “truth” on the archives. Numerous times throughout the book when his parents’ memories are not sufficient Baker uses archives to fill in the spaces. Mark’s parents thrive so much of the historical knowledge Mark offers because these “facts” sharpen their stories and add an element of realness and truth to their memories. At one particular point in the book Baker uses the archives to fill in his fathers prayers regarding Leib Bikiermaszyn’s details. The archives give details regarding his full name, place and date of birth and the date of his death. Such documented details offer a sense of unambiguous truth to history, as they do not allow for any interpretation, thus suggesting that certain documentations to some extent are objective.

Although much of history is partially subjective due to its basis on subjective evidence, if a historical statement is well supported by abundant evidence, and much better supported than any alternative account, then the statement can be reasonably accepted as very probably true. For instance, it is by and large undisputed that in 1933 the Nazi party took power in Germany and Adolf Hitler became the chancellor, or prime minister of Germany. Such statements as this, although to a certain extent open to elements of subjectivity, due to the abundance of well supported evidence surrounding them they are generally seen to be objective.

No description of the world can be completely independent of its’ authors point of view, however this does not mean that descriptions of the world can not tell us anything objective about it. The historian C.B. McCallagh has developed what he calls the ‘correlation theory’. The correlation theory says that, “a description of the world is true if there is something in the world that resembles one of the conventional truth conditions of the description.” For example it is true and objective to say that a river runs through Melbourne if there really is something in the world that resembles a-river-running-through-Melbourne. There are a number of problems with the correlation theory that confirm the concept that history can have elements of objectivity but is still to a certain extent subjective. First, scientists say that our perceptions are caused by things in the world that trigger our senses, which finally produce our perceptual experiences. With this concept in mind it is fair to say that our perceptions provide us with information about reality, but do not mirror it exactly. In other words, our perceptions cannot give us a complete objective view of history but can only provide us with some elements of objective truth. Although our perceptions of the past do not reflect the whole truth and consistently correspond with the world because of the subjectivity involved, they do provide some objective information about the world as they were partly caused by it.

The characteristics that make up memory all contribute to its’ complete subjective nature. It is subjective to personal prejudice, emotions and forgetfulness. History is considerably more objective than memory however it still contains elements of subjectivity. History unlike memories complete fragmentation has a systematic structure. Histories basis on archives means that to a certain extent it can be objective and if history is abundantly supported by unambiguous evidence or reflects part of the current world it is reasonable to say that history is more objective than memory. Though this is not to say that history is completely objective as it too has elements of subjectivity. History is neither scientific nor mechanical, the ideal history, completely objective and dispassionate, is an illusion; as there is bias in the choice of a subject, bias in the selection of material, bias in its organization and presentation, and, inevitably, bias in its interpretation. Consciously or unconsciously, all historians are biased. Due to memories completely subjective nature, history although also being somewhat subjective, it is a great deal more objective than memory.

**Sample 11**

*“How are we to know the past?” Using The Fiftieth Gate and two other texts explore this question.*

Traditionally, history has been regarded as a factual account of the happenings of the past. This Manichean outlook has been held in high esteem in our attempt to explore human progress. However, with the relatively recent advent of Postmodernist Ideologies the claim that history is an objective, absolute truth has been regarded as a delusion. Postmodernism claims that history, because it is a representation is a misrepresentation.

Postmodernism suggests a multitude of ways in which an event can be viewed, each with its own validity and each vital in order to gain a broader understanding. Whilst the binary type thinking of modernism is suspicious of memory, it has become one of the most highly embraced postmodernist tools in the exploration of the past. Memory has begun to be explored as an alternative and complimentary discourse to history.

Mark Baker’s *The Fiftieth Gate*, subtitled *a Journey through Memory*, is a fascinating example of an attempt to explore the past through the means of both discourses as Baker attempts to gain an elementary understanding of his parent’s holocaust experiences. As a historian he feels the need to validate his parent’s stories through documented evidence. He values the structured nature of history and uses it to validate memory. In opposition to this, his mother disregards the documentation, placing greater emphasis on personal experience and memory, *“You read, you read. Books, books, everywhere. But do you know how it feels?”* This contrary thought positions the responder to appreciate the benefits of exploring the respective discourses.

Baker, himself, also begins to question the methodic way in which he is exploring the history of his parents, “*Does history remember more than memory? Do… I only recognise suffering in numbers and lists and not in the laments and pleas of a human being…”*. In this way, *The Fiftieth Gate* presents archival evidence as inadequate but also implies that one cannot entirely rely on memory. Baker shows that memory forgets, lapses and is clouded by trauma and emotion. His fathers recount of being forced to march on a cold winters day, while recorded evidence talks of an unusually warm afternoon is one example of the fallibility of memory. However, even with their respective weaknesses, Baker demonstrates that each discourse must be explored parallel to one another in order to gain insight into the discourse of history. William Sinner states “*Instead of trying to separate these elements,* (Baker) *embraces their continuum by adopting both a realist and antirealist approach”.* He adopts a bricolage of styles, deriving from both the historical discourse and the discourse of memory in order to allow his responder to view his parents experiences from a multitude of ways. Poems, dictionaries, statistics, interviews and letters are all ways in which Baker enhances the responders ability to know the past. Baker, whilst utilising his proficiency as a historian, embraces the memory of his parents in his exploration of the past.

An explicit example of history and memory working opposite one another to provoke understanding can be viewed in the Sydney Jewish Museum. The museum itself uses objects to communicate the narrative of the holocaust enforcing an appreciation of historical discourse within its audience. Complementing the systematic nature of the museum is the presence of various manifestations of memory such as video footage, written testimony of survivors, interactivity (eg. the claustrophobic nature of the ghetto section), and of most significance, the Tour Guides – each a holocaust survivor. Each of these aspects, offer the information presented within the museum within their own context. They transform the 2D documentation into the tangible, humane form of memory, evoking empathy and thus inducing an overarching understanding of the events for their audience. It seems that human nature demands more than the cold, detached representation of history in documentation. The museum displays the need for both history and memory in representing an historical event such as the holocaust and stresses the importance of examining an event from a number of fields.

The capability of memory to colour historical discourse is also explored in a speech written by William Macmahon Ball as a response to his visit to the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp in 1938. ‘Mac Ball’ embraces the confluence of History and Memory, using both elements to trigger greater understanding within his audience. His speech commences by offering aspects of his visit such as date, time, historical context and geographical location. This data provoked an easily established understanding of these formalities for the responder, uninterrupted by the anarchic nature of the discourse of memory. As a result, he demonstrates the benefits and clarity offered by the clinical disposition of historical discourse.

Once a broad understanding has been established, ‘Mac Ball’ dramatically changes the tone of his speech. *“So far I have been speaking only of externals. But the thing wanted most to see was the type of men in a concentration camp, their expression, and the relationship between guards and men”*. Within this sentence he transforms his speech, from one based on historical documentation, to one which embraces the necessity for the discourse of personal interpretation, the discourse of memory. Memory revitalises the message ‘Mac Ball’ is attempting to communicate to his audience. *“I saw many faces which I thought showed character, sensitiveness and intelligence… In the eyes of most there was deep misery… mixed with fright and… in some cases terror is not too strong a word.”* Through compassionate and empathetic language, the camp is brought to life, provoking sympathy and understanding within the minds of his audience. They are able to grasp a far broader understanding of the past and of the message Mac Ball is trying to convey as they acknowledge the atrocities of the concentration camp from within the historical discourse and furthermore, from the compassionate and empathetic stance of the discourse of memory.

Whilst it is not possible for one to entirely “know” the past, *The Fiftieth Gate*, the Sydney Jewish Museum and William Macmahon Ball’s speech on the Sachsenhausen Concentration Camp are all examples of texts which exploit the broadest and most overarching methods in their attempt to know history. Through their exploration via the discourse of history and the discourse of memory they gain and provoke understanding for themselves and their audience into the past. In embracing both these elements each respective text gains incredible insight and appreciation of the narrative of history.

**Sample 12**

Differing and personal opinions, reflections and experiences of events can provoke great debate in the way in which history is recorded and interpreted.

History, which can be viewed as a chronological series of indisputable events can often conflict with the memories that creates, validates, illuminates and humanises it. Both history and memory can be unreliable, as memories are highly subjective and vary due to perspective, and in being intertwined effect the way which these events are recorded. The three texts, ‘The Fiftieth Gate’, ‘Ozymadias’ and ‘The Bridge on the River Kwai’ all emphasise these points. Through this, I have discovered that memory gives history a personal perspective, that both history and memory can distort as well as illuminate and that history is a product of an historian's personal representations of a selection of memories, not an absolute truth.

Memory gives history a personal perspective that is necessary in understanding the historical value and meaning of both the past and the present. It is through a personal perspective of history that enables discovery and journeys to occur of self awareness and appreciation not only of the past but also how it has effected and created the present. This is clearly illustrated in Mark Baker’s ‘The Fiftieth Gate’, which tells of a journey of self-discovery and awareness in the search for the understanding of the past. Travelling to his parent’s homeland of Poland, Baker is taken through a journey of historical events through his parent’s own personal memories of the holocaust. We see through Baker’s visit to Treblinka and the video recordings of his parent’s memories of the holocaust, that these memories and experiences of his parents, gives him a personal perspective and understanding of historical locations and the holocaust.

On his visit to Treblinka, Baker comes to a more personal understanding of the effect that this has had on his parents.. Baker visits the infamous concentration camp and listens to the recital of a Hebrew verse “here in this carload I am eve with abel my son. If you see my other son cain son of man tell him that I”. Baker is able to understand this verse and find value in its meaning through his father, Yossl’s memories. Yossl’s own mother and sisters were taken away by train, and it is through Bakers personal connection, he is able to find value and understanding of this.

Bakers video recordings of his parent’s memories, show the highly personal aspect of historical events and show their own personal emotions in the facts of the holocaust, such as revenge, pain, grief. ”I didn’t know where I was. The Germans threw bread into our wagons and people jumped on it like hungry animals, one on top of the other. People killed each other for a bit of food”.

These memories give Baker a deep and personal understanding of the holocaust, and in visiting historical locations allows him to come to a better understanding of his parent’s ordeals. We see through the text that Baker’s understanding of his parent’s past allows him to not only understand their present attitudes and values but also his own past and present feelings and values of his parents history. “ 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”.

Without this personal perspective of history and without the memories we find that history will also loose its significance and importance. We see this through P.C Shelly’s ‘Ozymandias’, a poem of the incomplete, in which the importance of memory is suggested in keeping history alive. The poem depicts the insignificance of the individual in history, how once memories of the past are lost they cease to exist

Shelly emphasises this using sonnet form, descriptive language and irony to describe the desolation surrounding the once great king. Words such as “ shattered visage”, “half sunk”, “decay”, “colossal wreck” all show how the great has come to nothing with the absence of memories and personal perspective. Shelly uses irony to contrast the past with the present, stating that memories form a link between the past and the present and without this link, the individual is insignificant. “nothing beside remains. Round the decay of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare, the lone and level sand stretch far away” is ironic with the plaque that reads “look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!”.

Both history and memory can distort as well as illuminate. Memories can be inaccurate and often falter in recalling the events precisely as they happened. How an event occurred, and ones perception of that event can be two entirely different things based on the person’s personal experiences. This can effect the way in which history is recorded and interpreted, as historical events may not be cohesive with the way an individual remembers.

In “The Fiftieth Gate” we see the discrepancies that can occur when memories do not match up to the facts. Genia’s memories distort reality when they return to her hometown of Bolszowce where she becomes disoriented. Baker compares her memories with reality to emphasise this. *“ I remember where we lived in Bolszowce*. This must be the park. No? I played here, I’m sure it was here. Follow me there must be a gate…the gate, I don’t see the gate. My god how its changed”. Genia’s memories of believing that she was kept in the dark during the holocaust also emphasise the idea of distortion. ”In a cellar all day, underground and closed, and nothing, in the darkness, all the time”. Baker finds out from the people that she had stayed with, that she hadn’t been kept in the dark at all. “ But they do not remember the blackness. They recall a little girl staring endlessly out of a window”. Part of Baker’s journey is the understanding of the role that memory has in history. Baker realises that although his mother’s memories don’t match up to the historical evidence, it was her perception of this time in her life and her feelings that shape her memories. Her believing that she was kept in the dark is linked to being kept hidden and the feeling that accompanied this. This is very similar to Yossl’s recount of the day he last saw his mother and sisters, and was sent to work at a prison camp and also illustrates how his perception of the past differs from fact. He remembers marching and it being very cold “It was cold, winter, we had winter boots on, the ones with money sewn inside”. The date though as Baker discovers reveals something different. “He says it was cold. Winter. But it was autumn”

Memory also has the ability to illuminate and emphasise certain aspects of history. This is shown in Pablo Picasso’s painting ‘Guernica’, a reflection and expression of the rage, pain and suffering that occurred consequently when on the 26th of April 1937 German planes dropped 100, 000 tons of bombs on Guernica, a small Spanish civilian town. Picasso’s painting became part of a collective conscienousness, defining the 20th century’s image of war and destruction. Through symbolism of monochromatic colour scheme and images of death (detcapitaded body), destruction (broken light bulb) and grotesque suffering (speared horse, splayed fingers and toes), Picasso illuminates his personal interperation of the event and makes a personal historic source, contributing to the way in which people remember and reflect.

History is a product of an historian's personal representations of a selection of memories not an entirety.

The link between history and memory is the way in which human experiences are perceived. Not all representations of the past can be recorded and it is through the historian's perceptions and personal interpretations of human experience is history calculated and recorded. This indicates that historical events are not subject to change, but people’s perceptions of these events. In the ‘Fiftieth Gate’ and ‘The Bridge on the River Kwai’, we see how history fails to capture events and experience due to lack public memory?

**Sample 13**

“It always begins in blackness, until the first light illuminates a hidden fragment of memory.” Mark Raphael Baker’s “The Fiftieth Gate” acknowledges the importance of both history and memory in the search for truth. History is the culmination of evidence that portrays a past event; it is reliant on facts, attitudes and cultural values and is often credited with being the most objective and reliable way to view a particular event, personality or situation. Memory on the other hand is an individual’s recollection of the past; and being personal and subjective, is fragile and often biased. Baker’s non-fiction text effectively incorporates a variety of representational methods with stylistic features in order to explore the interrelationship of both history and memory. Such notions are also depicted in Christopher Nolan’s film Memento and William Black’s poem Colours of War. These texts use a plethora of structural and poetic devices to explore the truth surrounding human suffering through conveying the positives and negatives of history and memory.

In The Fiftieth Gate, Mark Baker questions the validity of history and memory through the continual cross-referencing of information and perspectives. He seeks the ‘truth’, and wishes to record his parents’ stories correctly. The text is a combination of primary sources and personalised accounts intertwined; “This was the deal. I would give them my knowledge of history; they would give me their memory.” While Baker himself grapples with the notion that memory is highly subjective while history is more reliable, he eventually acknowledges the equal validity of both approaches. He makes known to the audience his altered perspective when he questions, “Does history remember more than memory?” As such, Baker becomes a mediator between past, present and future, believing that it was imperative that he “listen to her story…record her life for the sake of our children.”

As a Historian, Baker uses history as a certifiable source to validate and substantiate his parents’ memories. He draws upon archival evidence, documents and “fecks, fecks” in his quest for understanding. 🗸Baker’s father, Yossl, is a camp survivor. He represents a shared history and shows a sense of solidarity gained from it. Baker is able to challenge his father’s memories through widely accessible historical data, “Prove it…I don’t believe this part. Prove it!” Genia, however, is not part of this culture of shared history. Her history is a personal and individual one that relies mainly on the recollection of memory. Her son, seeking for truth, “searched history to vindicate her stories”, but unable to cross-reference her version of the events she experienced, becomes agitated and frustrated. Eventually, the historian is forced to regard history and memory as equally valid, as a consequence of his attempts to substantiate history through the very method he originally holds in doubt.

Memory remains fragile; easily lost or manipulated but it can also be an important incentive for action. In the film Memento, protagonist Leonard Shelby is unable to form new memories after a brain injury called anteriograde amnesia. He therefore writes everything down as he records his memory through photographs. Leonard’s ‘story’ is fragmented, reflected by the non-linear structure of the film, and we as responders question Leonard’s ability to form a coherent understanding of his history. The fractured, intervening storyline is made more complex by being depicted in short, compartmentalized segments and flashbacks that have the tale looping back on itself, fusing past and present. This complex storytelling structure mirrors in some ways the method used by Baker in “The Fiftieth Gate.” As film critic, Cynthia Fuchs has observed, “viewers become detectives themselves. For a long time, they’re struggling as much as Leonard does, to create a “coherent narrative out of all the pieces”. Phrases such as “trust your own handwriting” connect with the assertion of documented history being unquestionably true and valid, as opposed to memory or oral history. The film shows us how both memory and history can be circumstantially manipulated and distorted. As Shelby reflects, “Memories can be distorted. They're just an interpretation, they're not a record, and they're irrelevant if you have the facts.” Leonard, like Genia and Yossl, has lived through traumatic experiences which colour his view of history.

Baker incorporates a variety of stylistic features to convey the nature of history and memory as well as to impact on the viewer. Fifty chapters or ‘gates’ symbolising Baker’s journey through his parents’ stories form the structure of the book. Each gate reveals a personal discovery in Baker’s uncovering of his parents’ past and his understanding of their experiences. The gate motif provides contrasted connotations between sources of obstacles and doorways to understanding, as we the audience are invited to “come and see”. The non-chronological structure of the text mirrors the random nature of memory. Genia recalls events through certain triggers, “I then turn to a photograph”. Baker’s unique structure creates a personalised and very immediate atmosphere. His intricate detail is aided by rich emotive language, allowing a greater sense of empathy and understanding for the responder.

**Sample 14**

*‘At the heart of representation are the acts of deliberate selection and emphasis’*

*Do the texts you have studied demonstrate this in relation to ‘History and Memory’*

Deliberate selections and emphasis are always encountered in the representation of events, personalities and situations. What is seen in this is that particular selections of historical documentation and writings can make the representation of events biased and misinterpreted. This veers from the once held, traditional, belief that history is completely objective. Post-modernist schools of thought now confirm the notion that deliberate selections are made when writing history that can impact on the veracity of what is represented. Undoubtedly however, memory is also biased and being personal rather than academic, can be highly subjective. It is subject to the ravages of age and health so that details can be easily forgotten or distorted. These notions can be seen in Mark R. Baker’s The Fiftieth Gate, the famous Redgum song, I was only nineteen and an article published in the Hawkesbury Gazette on 10/10/2001 titled, Mind and Body to Work as One. Through their representations of war and its effects on human experience, particular comments can be made about the way history and memory overlap and fuse to more fully and truthfully represent the event, war and its experiences.

Baker in The Fiftieth Gate employs a personal tone with factual documentation and his parents memories to reconstruct the events of the past. He realizes that the integration of both history and memory is needed, shown by his pledge; “I would give them my knowledge of history; they would give me their memories”. And so the reconstruction begins, also inviting the audience to join him on the quest for ‘truth’, where in the epigram, and integrated throughout the text , the symbol of gates are used to represent the moving towards understanding. The short invitation, “come and see” **🗸**implies that there needs to be someone that wants to find the truth about experiences and events for they will not superficially seek just a “deliberate selection and emphasis”.

Typical of the non-fiction genre, Baker includes specific historical statistics, letters and other texts to offer information about an event, personalities and situations. The Holocaust is personalized in references such as those of “Count Choo-choo”. This self titled “interrogator” subverts the conventions typically found in non-fiction texts by using evocative and poetic language in order to draw on emotions of his parents to express their true feelings. This better enables the reader to identify with both Baker as author and as a second-generation son of Holocaust survivors. This lends the text an intergenerational focus that makes it more powerfully resonant. The use of italics to document exact recollections of his parent’s memories fused with the use of explicit historical documents validate each other and authenticate the resultant representation of the event.

Baker uses historical documents to corroborate his parent’s memories and when he continues to hear his mother’s story he begins to doubt it since there is very little historical evidence to validate it. His badgering of information makes her exclaim in frustration “Yes. What do you think, I’m making this up?” Here Baker clearly shows how he will not accept a version of an event based purely on memory.

Redgum’s famous song I was only nineteen, shows how memory can be used to validate history, by drawing on the audiences historical knowledge of the Vietnam war. This utilizes cultural memory to enhance meaning and strengthen understanding of personal suffering. By including specific place names such as “Puckapunyal”, “Vung Tau” and “Nui Dat” and having it as a story like recollection proves that events did actually occur there. Also the harmony in the last verse exemplifies that there were many people that experienced this and tat the historical documents of death registers, survivors and of the other facts were actually true.

Both texts also demonstrate why an event can not be represented solely as a deliberate selection of history and of memory. Mark Baker explores the fallibility of memory, noting comments such as his father’s, “I wish I could forget what I remember”, displaying how people bury their memories as a way of coping. By doing this there is no doubt that details will be forgotten as will a lot of the memory of the past. This is the reason for Baker’s continuing demand of his parents, so they do not forget anything.

The concept of historiography, the way history is written, is very important to note when it comes to understanding why history is not reliable enough on its own. In Gate XXIX Baker points out and contrasts two very different interpretations of events, done by truncated sentences on introducing i.e. “Our sages remember” “My parents remember”. In I was only nineteen” this issue of historiography is also noteworthy. In the lyric “The ANZAC legend didn’t mention the mud and blood and tears” there is a direct allusion to the symbolism often associated with significant historical events. The truths were not in the “legend” and so memory was able to challenge historical misconceptions.

This is similarly examined in a newspaper article published by the Hawkesbury Gazette in the 10/10/2001 where the use of typical journalistic features of 3rd person and factual investigation of post traumatic stress disorder reports on Tom Sharp, a war veteran and sufferer of the “mental health disorder”. The use of evocative words such as “seep” and “sink” personalize the experience as the audience tries to understand that for veterans like Tom, even though they “tried to suppress their memories, sometimes even decades later, they would seep back in various insidious forms”. Tom implies that historians are subject to personal and academic bias, and the only way to fully comprehend an event, such as his, is to have first hand accounts.

Therefore there is no doubt that in order for a complete representation of an event both history and memory are required to work together. These texts demonstrate how together they can generate a greater truth. The Fiftieth Gate shows how “we are the sums of our experiences” represented by the symbols of light and darkness as the shades of individuality, shaped by experiences. This final and integral understanding reached by Baker at the 50th Gate demonstrates that the context is just as important as the person. Both are needed in a type of negotiation before comprehension can be ultimately attained.

**Sample 15**

*Write the transcript of a speech you would give to a group of senior students, analyzing the representative ways composers influence the response of an audience on the theme of history and memory*

When we think of the past, we often think of the dusty tomes of history; facts, figures and statistics that tell us much about historical events, yet at the same time, very little. Often overlooked, however, is memory, an emotionally intense reconstruction that helps to explain the past through the eyes of survivors. Yet it too has its flaws, being fragile and open to distortion and manipulation. Academic revisionists however are evaluating the impact and significance of memory and its validity as a signpost towards historical truth. Literature including Mark Baker’s The Fiftieth Gate, Stephen Esrati’s feature article Mala’s Last Words and Alexander Kimel’s poem I Cannot Forget all examine these issues through different mediums, asking us the question; how are we to know the truth about the Holocaust? While we can see in them various methods and techniques in dealing with the past, what they agree on is that history or memory alone are not enough to reconstruct the Holocaust; we must use them together if we want to understand the reality of mankind’s darkest hour. Therefore, as senior students, it is necessary to examine the various means of representation as well as what is presented in such texts when examining the interplay of history and memory as a validation of truth.

In examining these texts, their forms highly influence the way they recreate the past. As a non-fiction text, The Fiftieth Gate is highly informative and educative. However, Baker also subverts this medium by intertwining typical factuality with atypical accounts of his parents’ memories, as well as his own. ***🗸*** He examines their “darkest nights” in order to provide an emotional and personal portrait within the wider historical framework. Mala’s Last Words, on the other hand, on a broader scale, aims to investigate the “perpetuation of myths” of the Holocaust as a result of the misuse of history and memory. It remains more universal in its depiction of the past, although it utilises the “Jewish heroine” of Mala and the conflicting accounts of her death to demonstrate that in some instances “Even the most basic facts cannot be ascertained”. By contrast, I Cannot Forget, as a poem, is highly personal and intimate, examining the Rohatyn Aktion in isolation to reflect on its lingering impact in the present as Kimel asks us “How can I forget?” The function of remembering and forgetting are explored in myriad ways, fascinating the responder and making them reflect.

The repetition of this question forms a structural framework to Kimel’s memories, bringing us back to the present to highlight that he is re-living the experience, not just remembering it.In all these texts, the structure is integral to their revelation of the past. In The Fiftieth Gate¸ Baker divides the book into fifty chapters or ‘gates’ that reflect the levels of understanding that both he and the audience gain as a result of the “exchange of pasts”. The gate is an important symbol within Baker’s work; it represents the ultimate knowledge of the past, opening “the blessing or the curse”. Through it, we can respond emotionally to the anguish suffered by the entire family due to “memory’s black hole”.

The language of The Fiftieth Gate is highly descriptive, using phrases such as “empty and chaotic landscape of death” to visually represent the trauma associated with memory. By doing this, Baker makes us more emotionally engaged, eliciting sympathy within us and allowing us to understand not only the suffering of the Bakers, but of all Holocaust victims. Similarly, I Cannot Forget uses imagery such as “shadows, on swollen legs, moving with fear” to demonstrate the vivid nature of his memories. By contrast, Mala’s Last Words remains explicitly formal and objective rather than emotional in its tone, giving it greater authenticity and credibility in criticizing the subjectivity of “eyewitness testimony”.

As a feature article, Mala’s Last Words is primarily a didactic text that aims to inform the reader of the “myth of Jewish passivity”. I Cannot Forget is similarly didactic, although it aims to provide emotional understanding rather than factual knowledge. Kimel explicitly states his aim to “Never Let You Forget”, to pass on the memory of his experiences. The Fiftieth gAte, however, is largely dialectic, allowing us to make up our own minds about the Holocaust and the historical and personal veracity of the accounts. Baker utilises different sources such as Herman Muller’s confession to examine both sides to the Holocaust: however, he also criticises many of them to convey their flaws and weaknesses. The rhetorical question “Where have the millions of Jews gone?” emphasises to us the elective nature of history and its subjectivity.

The bricolage of historical and personal sources is integral to Baker’s examination of the past.He dovetails his parents’ versions of events with historical documents that either support or contradict their memories. ***This shows his innate objectivity as a Historian but it is tempered by his also being a ‘son’.*** By doing so, we can see the lack of any clear truth surrounding some events, particularly Genia’s “childhood buried in a distant sepulchre”. Baker does concede that “The last moments can never be retrieved by history. Nor by memories”, and therefore he uses imaginative reconstructions of events such as Hinda’s death to encapsulate their tragedy. Present tense is employed in these, through phrases such as “two eyes watch from behind glassy cavities” to make them more immediate to us, and thus amplify our response.

While many of these events may seem almost surreal, Baker uses a variety of literary methods and techniques in order to ground them in reality. For instance, Jewish idioms such as “Fecks, fecks” establish a cultural heritage for Genia and Yossl as well as adding depth to their characters. Foreign terms such as “Judenrein” and “shtetl” also reflect the social and cultural factors surrounding the Holocaust. Mala’s Last Words also uses jargonistic terms such as “sonderkommando” to add veracity to Esrati’s exposition of the misnomers of the past. The personification of “the result that keeps screaming the number SIX MILLION as a result of its failure” reflect the ability for statistics to falsify the past, being misrepresented so that some aspects of the Holocaust such as “the Jewish resistance” are downplayed. However, I Cannot Forget deliberately refrains from this, using simple language to allow us to have a deep empathy for Kimel, unclouded by the use of complicated terminology.

Kimel’s poem utilises the motif of mothers and children to emphasise the destructive nature of the Holocaust. The line “Mothers searching for children in vain” is particularly emotive: how can we not respond so such a poignant image? The Fiftieth Gate also uses symbols such as rocks. As well as acting as a representation of culture, since “Jews remember with stones”, they also reflect the lasting impact of the past on the present, trapped in “Rock’s petrified memory”. The motif of light and dark is also used to express the simultaneous enlightenment and trauma experienced by exposing the past. Phrases such as “His words break out from their glacial silence, releasing a torrent whose flow runs backward into his darkest nights” convey to us the suffering caused by memory, triggered by Baker’s “theft” of their experiences. However, this ultimately allows Baker to share with us the reality of the Holocaust: through both history and memory we can identify the truth as containing both historical veracity and emotional intensity.

Across different forms and media, composers influence their audience and shape their response. Particularly regarding history and memory, we can see in different texts attempts to explain to us different facets of the past. However, in Baker’s book, Esrati’s article and Kimel’s poem, we can see a consensus in the roles of the two interrelated concepts in examining the Holocaust. Alone, they are subject to their own flaws and weaknesses; however, together they can overcome their issues to reconstruct the past with a greater sense of truth. BY doing this, they offer a factual and broad perspective of the Holocaust, yet one which also reveals the personal impact of the experience in the present and into the future.

**Sample 15 – Rewritten as a Feature Article**

**The Holocaust Everlasting**

One tragic event cemented in history and the memories of survivors

The Holocaust stands out as a landmark in the twentieth century, a horrific demonstration of man’s inhumanity to man. Over six million people were killed, the majority of them Jews, in what is quite possibly the greatest catastrophe of humanity.

And yet, even though the tanks rolled over the barbed-wire fences and the victims were freed, the Holocaust did not end for those who endured it. Even today, its legacy can be felt by the lasting impact it has had on the survivors, as memories linger on. The tragic past is firmly etched in history and in the lives of people around the globe, not just those directly affected.🗸

And so, how is the Holocaust to be examined: as a personal, emotional account, or as an historical, factual one? Certainly, both history and memory have their flaws. Whilst historical accounts often appear to be objective, they are often highly selective and interpretative, and subject to bias and control. By contrast, memory offers an emotionally intense account, yet one that is fragile, highly subjective, and can be distorted.

Perhaps, then, the best way to explore the Holocaust is through a combination of both methods. Baker’s book The Fiftieth Gate, Stephen Esrati’s feature article ‘Mala’s Last Words’ and Alexander Kimel’s poem ‘I Cannot Forget’ take this approach, combining historical veracity with personal emotion to create a more accurate reconstruction of the past, while at the same time examining the flaws inherent in both history and memory in portraying a great human tragedy.

While most non-fiction works of literature are highly factual and informative, Baker’s The Fiftieth Gate subverts this typical approach. He combines historical accounts of the Holocaust with the story of his parents, Genia and Yossl. In this way, he is able to examine both the broader picture of the event and the specific, personal accounts of two of its survivors, whose memory is like an “empty and chaotic landscape of death”.

This approach also allows Baker to demonstrate the lasting impact of memory on the present. In particular, Yossl as “Yesterday’s tattooed prisoner” is both free from the torment of the past and enslaved by the memory of it. By doing so, Baker is able to express how, for many, the Holocaust did not end in 1945.

BY contrast, ‘Mala’s Last Words’ is a feature article which aims to inform and educate the reader. Overall, the article examines more broad concepts such as the “theory of Jewish passivity” to demonstrate the ability for history to conceal the truth. However, it utilizes the “Jewish heroine” of Mala to expose the weaknesses of both history and memory, as “even the most basic facts [about her] cannot be ascertained”.

‘I Cannot Forget], however, takes a completely different approach, focusing entirely on the personal story of Kimel. He uses repetition in phrases such as “Do I want to remember?” to convey to the reader how he is continually drawn back into his memory, despite his efforts to forget. This structure also emphasises the continual sense of mourning through all the events of the Rohatyn Aktion.

The Fiftieth Gate employs a cyclic structure, which allows the audience to comprehend what they have learnt through the “exchange of pasts”. It also demonstrates how Baker himself grows and matures, in questioning his role as “The People’s Investigator” and the effect his interrogation has on his parents. .🗸The book is divided into fifty chapters or ‘gates’, which represent the different levels of understanding the author and the reader gain through history and memory.

The gate is an integral symbol within the account, representing ultimate knowledge and understanding, “The darkness or the light”. By utilizing the gate motif, Baker exposes the flaws of the “broken heart” of memory and the “forgotten heart” of history as ‘keys’, ultimately recognizing the inability of the two to, in isolation, reconstruct the past: only by combining the two does the Holocaust become clear to us.

However, the story of Genia and Yossl cannot be comprehended without understanding their cultural heritage. To do this, Baker employs Jewish idioms such as “fecks, fecks” and Yiddish songs like “Mein Shtetl Belzec” to add authenticity to the characters as well as placing them within the cultural framework of Jewish society.

‘Mala’s Last Words’ similarly employs jargonistic phrases such as “sonderkommandos”, however, they are used to enhance the article’s authority and veracity rather than provide depth of character. Overall, the article is a didactic text, which aims to inform the reader of the ways in which both history and memory can “perpetuate the myths” of the Holocaust.

The contradicting “eyewitness testimony” to Mala’s death, with accounts indicating “quite the opposite” of each other, underpins the argument that in many cases, no objective truth can ever be recovered. Too many variables and too many lost threads can keep the past clouded in uncertainty.

‘I Cannot Forget” is also a didactic poem; however, it aims to elicit emotional empathy rather than simple understanding from the audience. Kimel explicitly states his aim to “Never Let You Forget” his own experiences, as a means of honouring the dead in the “Mass grave steaming with the vapour of blood”.

By contrast, The Fiftieth Gateis primarily a dialectic text, which presents varying opinions such as Herman Muller’s confession in order to allow the audience to make their own judgements. However, Baker does critique many of the sources, such as the Polish census where he asks “Where have the millions of Jews gone?”

In spite of the bricolage of historical and personal accounts, there are still gaps in Baker’s portrayal of the Holocaust. In particular, the “untold deaths” of those who did not survive “can never be retrieved by history. Nor by memories”. Therefore, Baker utilizes imaginative recreations of incidents such as his grandmother’s death in order to provide an emotional portrait of these incidents.

To do so, he uses highly descriptive language such as “beady eyes watch from glassy cavities”. Present tense is also employed to provide immediacy and intimacy to these events, which otherwise could not be portrayed.

Imagery is also critical in ‘I Cannot Forget”: Kimel effectively recreates the action by combining visual and emotive descriptions such as “the faces of mothers, carved with pain”. The motif of the mother and child is utilized to emphasise the indiscriminant violence of the Nazis, as “mothers search for children in vain”.

In The Fiftieth Gate, symbolism is extensively used, through images such as light and dark The concept of the ‘curse’ of memory is established through phrases such as “His words break out from their glacial silence, releasing a torrent whose flow runs backward into his darkest nights”, representing the lasting impact of memory in the present.

Rocks are another important motif which identify Baker’s family as “Jews [who] remember with stones”. The cultural and religious icon acts as a representation for the damage and loss of the Holocaust, solidified in “rock’s petrified memory”.

In ‘Mala’s Last Words’, the razor becomes a symbol of the ultimate “freedom of death”, the only freedom Mala had “at the hands of the Germans”. Mala herself acts as a symbol, one through whom we can see no clear depiction through either history or memory. However, by combining the two, hopefully a real and vivid recreation can be made, with both emotional intensity and broader historical veracity.

As such a controversial topic, the Holocaust ahs inspired an array of different interpretations spanning a whole variety of media. Through different features and techniques, they all convey how neither history nor memory alone is enough to understand the past.

However, by combining the two, a whole new picture can be formed, and hopefully this portrait can demonstrate the truth behind the Holocaust and its lasting impact to the present and into the future.

**Sample Essay-Advanced English Module C, History and Memory-The Queen.**

Take note and learn from the way this essay has been structured. This essay received a mark of 20 out of 20 and captures the essence of the module with reference to a really good related text!

**Question: Compare how the texts you have studied emphasize the complexities evident in the interplay of history and memory**

History, a struggle over the past in the present to shape the future, is an exploration of the causal relationships between individuals and events. However, history has always been contested terrain, due to the fact that history is established through individual and collective memories, which by nature are subjective and coloured by circumstance. In the post modern era, the conventional ways of thinking which dismiss memory due to its bias and triumph historical fact have been challenged, and the credibility of history has been diminished by literature which explores how both history and memory can be essential to any construction of the past. Through their representation of history and memory, Frears’ The Queen and Becker’s Goodbye Lenin explore the nature of each individual concept and their interconnectedness in establishing the past. A plethora of film techniques are employed by both directors in order to represent the importance of memory in establishing the personal dimension of history, the relevance of trivial historical accuracies in constructing a representation of history and the process by which memory can reshape and colour historical events.

Memory gives history a third dimension of individual emotion and personal experience to documented history that is necessary in understanding the historical value and meaning of both the past and the present. It is not historical truth alone that allows one to gain a universal understanding of an event or person, but rather the interrelationship of the factual history and the personal and collective memories.  In his representation of the contrast between the individual and collective memories prior to the death of Princess Diana, Frears concurs with this notion and allows the responder to establish their own emotional connection with the historical event.  Through the representation of the Queen’s struggle to respond appropriately to the Diana, Frears explores the aforementioned personal and emotional third dimension of history. The Queen is represented as in a confused struggle between protocol and precedent and the desires and needs of her people. This comes across subtly, through the character’s facial expressions at the sight or sound of her people’s disappointment with her behaviour, and more explicitly through her dialogue, where she comments “I chose to keep my feelings to myself. Foolishly, I believed that was what the people wanted from her Queen” to Tony Blair. In many ways, this fulfills the purpose of Frears film, to represent the unexplored memories of this significant historical event; the untold stories which allow an individual to gain a more global understanding on all dimensions of the implications and significance of certain moments in history. Becker also explores the importance of memory in accounting for the personal experience of history in Good Bye Lenin!  . When the Berlin wall falls, Becker uses montage and dialogue to suggest the limitations of the former German Democratic Republic and also represent new found freedom and the ability to experience new things on a personal level. The protagonist’s sister, Arianne, is featured in this montage trying out different cultural activities such as belly dancing and experiencing a relationship with a West German man. This construction of the responses to the fall of the German Democratic republic enables Becker to illustrate that when an historical event such as the fall of the Berlin wall occurs, it is personal experience and the emotions associated with the tangible events which enable a more global understanding of the actual historical event itself. To Arianne, and most likely to many others, the fall of the Berlin War was the fall of more than just physical barriers, and through Goodbye Lenin, Becker establishes this truth and validates the personal dimension of memory as that which contributes to a universal understanding of an historical event.

In the construction of a representation of history, it is individual and collective memory which conjures an understanding of the historical figure or event, yet it is historically accurate details and trivialities which authenticate such representations. Physical evidence and relevant historical details are essential in constructing both history and context as they create direct links to memory. Frears interweaves the imagined and the real into a believable representation of history, in order to tap into and make a connection with the collective memory and individual’s personal memories of the historic event. He achieves this through incorporating researched historical accuracies into the narrative. This is exemplified in the character of Cherie Blair, who is constructed to be critical of the Monarchy through dialogue and her actions, most notably when she offers a shallow curtsy to the Queen and calls the royals “a bunch of freeloading, emotionally retarded nutters.”  It is a widely accepted historical fact that Cherie Blair was an anti-monarchist who offered disrespectful curtsies only to the Queen. The inclusion of such a historical truth by Frears makes the representation of both history and memory more believable by creating a direct link to the historical understanding of Cherie Blair and the way that people remember her. Becker also inquires into the importance of historical accuracies in representing history through his construction of Alex’s reaction to his mother waking up from her coma, after the German Democratic Republic she loved so greatly had collapsed. Alex changes their apartment to the way it was before the wall fell in order to reconstruct her old world by means of physical signifiers. He collects evidence from before the wall fell, such as foods and furniture that his mother was used to, and pieces it together to form a reconstruction of the past. This reconstruction is symbolized by the pretend “News Reports” Alexander and his friend Dennis film and present to Christiane as real to cover up the increasing presence of symbols of the West such as giant Coke billboards. Alex’s concealment of the impact of Westernization with signifiers from his mother’s memory is Becker’s way of demonstrating how essential physical evidence is in constructing history and context by creating a direct link to memory.

History can only be recorded retrospectively; hence, to a degree it relies on memory. The interplay of history and memory therefore can result in new understandings of events and people, ones which are now reshaped and coloured by individual and collective memories. In the post-modern era, history has lost its monopoly over the production and conservation of the past, and memory has developed independently. Frears explores this notion inThe Queen through his representation of collective memory.  Archival footage which is weaved into the film communicates a particular collective memory, which is in many ways just as relevant to the actual death of Princess Diana as the car crash itself. The archival footage is an authentic means of representing memories synonymous with the death of Diana-grown men exploding in tears at the news of her death, mountains of flowers outside Buckingham palace and irate Britons expressing their anger at the monarchy’s failure to respond to their needs.  Frears, through the inclusion of such footage, is attempting to represent how a particular collective memory can reshape and impact on the way an historical event, in this case the death of Princess Diana, is remembered and referred to in the future.  Becker also represents the dynamic relationship between memory and history in the final scenes of Goodbye Lenin. In his final charade, Alex changes the way his mother will remember the fall of the German Democratic Republic through a pretend news report in which he gives “the GDR the send-off it deserved.”  Becker references the fact that memory can reshape and colour the way historical events are represented and referred to, and goes beyond this to inquire into the nature of humans to romanticize their own individual memories of historical events when Alex comments that “The GDR I created for her increasingly became the one I might have wished for.”

Through literature, the concepts of history and memory are explored and appreciated as separate entities and also as interconnected elements that unlock our understanding of the past. History and memory provide both complementary and conflicting understandings of human and personal experience, yet together constitute a source of understanding on all levels of the events and people before the present. In both The Queen and Goodbye Lenin, Frears and Becker use filmic techniques to represent the relevance of memory in enabling a more universal understanding of history, the importance of historical accuracies to re-enact history and link it to memory, and the way in which memory can colour an understanding of certain historic events.

**Past HSC Questions:**

**2013:**

‘All representations are acts of manipulation.’

To what extent does your study of history and memory support this statement? In your response, make detailed reference to your prescribed text and ONE other related text of your own choosing.

**2012:**

Analyse how the representation of past events and recollections leads us to a greater awareness of the complexity of human attitudes and behaviour.

In your response, make detailed reference to your prescribed text and at least ONE other related text of your own choosing.

**2011:**

Explore how [core text] and ONE other related text of your own choosing represent history and memory in unique and evocative ways.

**2010:**

To what extent has textual form shaped your understanding of history and memory?

**2009:**

Analyse the ways history and memory generate compelling and unexpected insights.

**2008:**

Compare how the texts you have studied emphasise the complexities evident in the interplay of history and memory.

**2007:**

How have the texts studied in this elective challenged your ways of thinking about ‘History and Memory’?

**2006:**

Texts in this elective offer perspectives on the significance of history and memory in human experiences. Were you persuaded to embrace these perspectives?

**2005:**

‘At the heart of representation are acts of deliberate selection and emphasis.’

Do the texts you have studied demonstrate this in relation to ‘History and Memory’?

**2004:**

You are the keynote speaker at a conference for young writers and directors.

The title of your presentation is: Visions and Versions of History and Memory.

In your presentation, explore how and for what purpose composers create their particular visions and versions.

**2003:**

Imagine you are a journalist. You have been asked to contribute an article to an educational supplement for HSC students about the ways texts represent History and Memory.

Your headline is History is Not a Single Story.

**2002:**

How has your understanding of events, personalities or situations been shaped by their representations in the texts you have studied?

**2001:**

You have created an exhibition of texts entitled: ‘History: Whose Story Is It?’

The exhibition includes your prescribed text and other related texts of your own choosing.

Write your speech for the opening night of the exhibition. In your speech, explain how the exhibition reflects your view of the representations of history and memory.

**Questions used by school etc:**

1. You are speaking to an audience of your peers. Compose a speech in which you demonstrate how your understanding of the interplay between history and memory is shaped by the construction of the texts.  (2009 CSSA Trial)
2. In contrast to documented evidence, personal history or memory inevitably reflects a one-sided or biased view of history. Evaluate the extent to which the representation of events or situations in the texts you have studied reflects this view. (2009 Independent Trial)
3. Can individual memory play a role of any value in our attempts to improve our understanding of the past? In your answer refer to the understanding of History and Memory you have gained from your prescribed text and at least TWO related texts of your own choosing. (ETA 2009 Trial)
4. Without a record of personal experience, much valuable history is lost and all we have left is a cold, lifeless, one-dimensional view of the past. To what extent has your study of the elective History and Memory supported this statement. Discuss. (ETA 2009 Trial)
5. History is constantly being reshaped by new representations of the past. To what extent has this idea been demonstrated by your study of [core text and related]? (ETA 2009 Trial)
6. History and memory is the lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience – Edward Gibbon. Explore this proposition in relation to [your texts].
7. It is not possible to hold a mirror to what we seek to represent. Representation will always modify thereby shaping meaning and influencing responses. To what extent do you agree with this statement?
8. You are a speaker at a conference for writers and directors which is exploring the relationships between representation and meaning. You have been asked to discuss the extent to which documentary evidence is more useful than personal history.
9. History is a myth that we are sometimes persuaded to believe. To what extent do the texts you have studied in this module support or challenge this idea? IN your response, make detailed reference to your prescribed text and at least ONE other related text of your own choosing. (Abbotsleigh 2010 Trial)
10. You have been asked to take part in a debate on the topic: “that the personal dimension memory provides can only enrich history“. Write a speech that you could use to argue FOR or AGAINST this statement. In your speech, support your argument with close reference to how ideas have been represented in your prescribed text and at least TWO other related texts of your own choosing. (Baulkham Hills 2010 Trial)
11. How have the texts you have studied in this elective enhanced your understanding of the complexities of history and memory? Refer to your prescribed text and TWO texts of your own choosing. (James Ruse 2010 Trial)
12. The impact of history is enhanced by its interaction with memory. You have been asked to present a view on this statement to an audience of HSC students. Write a transcript of the speech you would give. In your response, you must make detailed reference to your prescribed text and at least TWO other texts of your own choosing. (St Ignatius Riverview 2010 Trial)