

Candidate 3

Texts used: C/D (2015 paper)

Whilst emerging the reader into entirely different worlds, highlighting the contrast between the European haze of Calais and the rural buzz of New York, both 'Roundabout Papers' and 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?' explore the sentimental nature of memory, with each extract using structure, language and style to demonstrate the way in which our minds positively distort memories as time passes.

Comment [A1]: The style of the opening is unnecessarily ambitious and not entirely controlled; it would be better here to write more simply and clearly.

Comment [A2]: The introduction could be expressed more clearly, but the candidate seems to establish sentimentality and the distortion of memory as topics for discussion.

The suggested sentimental distortion within the two extracts is elicited through the fragmentation of both the narrative voice and of the memorable experience itself. Whilst the narrative voice in 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?' is broken up by such techniques as ellipses which destroy the linguistic flow and rhythm, or by the use of foreign words in 'Roundabout Papers' which again interrupt the smooth euphony of the article, both pieces also use sensory experiences to fragment the memories. The mention of 'the voices [...] the flavour [...] and the fresh smell of the sheets' in 'Roundabout Papers' suggests that the narrator of the piece is failing to maintain a constant line of thought as he/she has quickly jumped between senses, breaking up the experience. It is this breaking up of the memory or experiences that allows for the distortion that can be seen in both extracts and the character of George interrupts the quick-paced flow of his memory when he recalls his friends saying 'I'll have bergin... give me some bergin, please... bergin and water.'. Through this broken sentence, the reader observes that perhaps George has only a fragmented recollection of the event in his mind as, not only is he pausing throughout his sentences, slowing the pace of the extract, clearly his repetition of 'bergin' evokes a sense of confusion again suggesting that his memory is somewhat faded. Therefore, the sensory confusion that the reader experiences along with the broken up narrative voice demonstrates in both extracts that our memory easily becomes distorted.

Comment [A3]: The answer introduces the idea of 'fragmentation' to compare the passages. Whilst this is exemplified reasonably well from the Albee passage by reference to ellipses, the examples from the Thackeray passage of 'the use of foreign words' and 'jump[ing] between senses' are unconvincing.

Comment [A4]: The candidate is referring to George's long speech. Use of the term 'narrative voice' is unhelpful here, since the extract is from a play.

This manipulation of memories is further developed in both extracts through the lack of control, especially within the narrative voice. Whilst both extracts show a lack of control and conformity with the use of syntax, 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?' shows this over-running of excitement in a more personal manner than extract C through short and sharp conversation between Nick and George in the

middle of the extract. Not only do the short lines create speed, suggesting a lack of control, the reader can see that George himself cannot contain his excitement as, after telling Nick that he 'won't tell him', he continues to narrate a long passage. The contrast between the length of the short conversational lines and George's passage that follows further eliminates uniformity and control in the extract as there is no constant rhythm to the piece. Extract C demonstrates the lack of control that we have over our memories in a more implicit manner through the use of foreign words. Not only do these alien words fragment the piece as previously discussed, they suggest the absence of a strategic or rational thought pattern in the narrator's head as he fails to distinguish between English and French. Instead, the narrator almost 'pours' his thoughts onto the page. Both extracts additionally employ complex sentences and lists to create a quick pace in their passages. The lack of full-stops in both passages allows for chaotic, free-flowing ideas and imagery which overwhelms the reader, showing no control or structure to the works.

Comment [A5]: There is recognition here that the extract is dramatic, but there is no evidence in the text that the conversation referred to is 'short and sharp'; stage directions give Nick's delivery as 'very quiet' and 'faintly pleading'.

Comment [A6]: Again, the candidate seems to be forcing examples of fragmentation: the introduction of French words in the Thackeray article is in fact controlled and appropriate, and there is no sense that the narrator is unaware or out of control in his use of language.

Comment [A7]: The idea that there is 'no control or structure' to the extracts has not been adequately substantiated.

Such fragmentation and fast-paced confusion allows for the distortion of ideas and both authors have chosen to focus on the sentimental way in which we see our pasts – specifically highlighting the value of youth. When George in extract D describes his friend as 'blond and had the face of a cherub', the religious connotations of the cherub almost sanctify youth. The sanctity of youth is strengthened when considering that this phrase 'blond cherub' is used to describe a child who murdered his mother. The fact that the narrator overlooks this and still almost deifies the child, highlights the purity that society connects with youth. Furthermore, the sentimental nature of memory is evoked in passage C through the ambiguity surrounding the 'delights of the jolly road'. The reader does not have any contextual knowledge on said road and is therefore left to associate this geographical location with a memory of their own. The positivity of the reader's chosen memory is envisioned by the word 'jolly' and the sentimental value of the piece is increased by the fact that the reader now associates the writing of a happy memory of their own – the extract is now personal.

Comment [A8]: This is a more successful insight into one of the extracts, although it is not well incorporated into the argument.

Comment [A9]: This is an unconvincing comment given that Thackeray supplies so much contextual detail in his article. The conclusion does not fit well with the argument of the essay.

Examiner Marks: 17 + 17 = 34

This answer falls into Band 3 of the marking criteria, suggesting that it is an essay which shows 'some understanding of chosen texts and limited evidence of effective close reading'. Where close reading is attempted, it is often unsuccessful because the candidate is trying to fit the extracts to what appears to be a pre-determined thesis about fragmentation and seems determined to find it in both extracts even where the textual evidence is not helpful. More thought about the genre of each extract (Thackeray's magazine article, Albee's play) may have helped the candidate in initial reading and planning; greater clarity in the introduction would also provide a better basis for a sustained argument.