

Candidate 3

Texts used: A/C/D

The writers explore the theme of memory in the texts through the use of sensory imagery which is inserted within a complex structure. The way that they approach the past is often with a nostalgic tone.

Comment [A1]: The introduction is rather vague and rushed.

The way that the texts explore memory is with an interesting attention to sensory images. The attention of Thackeray is distracted by the senses he experienced. His descriptions of his memories are dominated by details such as 'the voices of the women crying out' and 'the flavour of the cutlets and wine'. These are the visual sensations that are brought to mind when he returns to Calais. Perhaps this is a statement on the way that memory works in such an illogical and irrational way. In 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?' the sensory imagery focuses on the audible with memories of 'jazz' and 'laughter'. The text also pays attention to drink, with the 'bourbon' which is mentioned outside of the story being the trigger that brings the memory to George's mind. The combination of the location (being a 'bar') with the drink makes George involuntarily remember the story, which being a sad story he understandably has clearly repressed. Within the Thackeray article there is the similar idea of these memories being triggered by a sensory input. It is the sight of Calais and what he describes as 'women screaming' that reminds him of his first visit to Calais and what he describes as 'the voices of the women crying out'. Thackeray finds a connection between the two sounds although clearly prefers those in the past.

Comment [A2]: They are not actually visual.

Comment [A3]: The candidate makes a thoughtful link between the passages, but it does not emerge with great clarity from this long paragraph.

The preference that Thackeray indicates towards the past is indicative of the nostalgic time that is often associated with memory. Thackeray's nostalgic tone is obviously misplaced. The distaste he shows towards the present day 'women screaming', and the affection he shows towards 'the voices of the women crying' is evident from his change in language. Thackeray shows empathy to these women of the past as he says that they are 'crying' and even then the action is attributed to 'the voices' and not the women themselves. When in 'Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?' George looks back on the past with a sense of nostalgia, George chooses to look at the past in a positive way and it is only because of the intervention of Nick that George chooses to recollect the tragic ending to the

Comment [A4]: This assertion is not explored or supported with examples from the text.

story. Even though he admits that they 'suffered the next day... with a grown-up's hangover', he still considers it to be 'the grandest day of [his] youth'. This overwhelmingly positive recollection of the experience may simply be that the distance of time has offered perspective on their events. Alternatively it could be that the tension for the positive view of the past is the unconscious repression of negative experiences. The end to the story is undoubtedly a negative experience that is seemingly repressed as he only brings it up when prompted to, although with a surprisingly willingness to tell the story. The script appears to be rather detailed indicating information, such as 'a rather long silence: five seconds, please', so as there is no indicated pause between the lines 'the following summer' and 'All tight', it would appear that George does really want to say. If his part of the memory is really repressed then his eagerness may be part of a desire to relieve himself of the emotional strain that the repression has caused him.

Comment [A5]: This part of the answer is rather speculative and circular. The link to the Thackeray passage seems to be via nostalgia, but the two passages are not really being brought into contact with each other.

The inconsistencies, irregularities and irrationalities within memory is something that is reflected by the structure of the texts. Within Thackeray there is a large variation in the length of the sentences. When Thackeray first delves into his memory he does not finish the sentence for six lines. This sentence is made up of loads of clauses that could be separated into their own sentences. Thackeray's loss of grammatical conventions demonstrates the power and agency of memory to overwhelm the listener. Conversely the structure of Laetitia Pilkington's poem is highly ordered. The structure of each sentence remains the same; each has three lines, a regular rhythm and regular rhyme structure. The way that this text differs from the others is that while the others have specific memories, this poem is reflecting on memory in general – as indicated by the matter of fact title 'Memory, a poem,' the reason that it lacks the chaotic structure of the other texts may be an effort of the poet to try and control the ideas of memory and bring a level of order to a topic that can drive writers to irrationality and make them lose sight of reason. This loss of reason is what affects the writers when they succumb to nostalgia, for example finding annoyance with one soul but sympathy with another. The irrationality that dictates the memories that are formed with how they are remembered is key to understanding how the writers choose to write about memory.

Comment [A6]: The answer seems to have found a new direction here, rather than sustaining a particular focus throughout.

Comment [A7]: The attempted analysis of grammar is rather unclear and is not supported by quotation.

Comment [A8]: A third text has been brought in very late, which is going to make sustained comparative writing difficult to manage.

Comment [A9]: This is a clearly articulated idea and could well have formed the focus for discussion throughout the essay.

Comment [A10]: This has not been firmly established in the answer.

Comment [A11]: This seems to be an overstatement.

Examiner Marks: 19 + 20 = 39

This answer falls into the 18 – 23 range of the mark scheme, which suggests that there is engagement with the passages and that there is some promise, but this has not been fully realised. The candidate has not established an organising principle for their answer and the whole thing seems to have an improvised quality. (The introduction was written at the end as an afterthought, suggesting that they had no clear plan in mind while writing.) During the answer, new ideas and even a new passage are introduced with the effect that the answer appears to lack discipline and direction. The treatment of the third passage is brief and lacks purpose; the candidate would have been better off remaining with the other two and bringing them into closer contact with each other. Nevertheless, there are occasional interesting and insightful points made and with better exam technique, they would be likely to produce a stronger response.