

## Teaching ideas

AS/A-Level English Language and Literature 7706/7707

*Remembered places: Memories*

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### Introduction

These teaching ideas can be used with students when exploring the *AQA Anthology: Paris*. These encourage students to think about the nature of memories, questions of reliability and unreliability, and how writers and speakers of texts in the anthology reconstruct the past.

The suggested activities are intended to span one lesson lasting one hour.

### Learning objectives

Students will:

- understand how memories are used to build up narratives about place
- understand the unreliable nature of memories and how text producers show or deny this aspect.

### Prior knowledge needed

Students should have some knowledge of the following:

- narrative discourse
- foregrounding
- language levels.

### Lesson preparation

Teachers will need the following resources:

- access to YouTube or DVDs or a short story of the teacher's choosing
- *AQA Anthology: Paris*.

### Activities

- Show the students a short film extract or tell them a short story (ideally no more than one page). The extract chosen should be challenging in terms of detail so that students would necessarily have to do quite a bit of work to retell it, having only heard it once. However, equally there should be events, places, characters that stand out for some reason. Then some time later (15-30 minutes is ideal) ask them to write down everything that they can remember and reconstruct the events of that narrative. Then ask students to compare what they have written and discuss the following questions:

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- how are narratives similar?
  - how are they different?
  - what strategies did they have to use to reconstruct a series of events? For example, did they link together characters or base their narrative around a particular location or event that stood out?
  - what made certain events and characters memorable? Was it what they said or did?
  - what did they choose to foreground in their narratives? Did this match the original film/story?
  - what linguistic strategies did they use? This might be in the form of modifying places, characters and their actions, use of tense and so on.
- From this, the whole concept of memory as a form of **reconstruction** that is **partial, selective subjective** and potentially **unreliable** could be discussed (these terms are important).
  - Students can use this as the basis for looking at texts in the *AQA Anthology: Paris* that are based on memories. Using a focused approach on the language of the texts, they can consider exactly how memories are constructed using specific techniques and methods. Texts that are particularly worthy of exploration are:
    - Bill Bryson
    - Ernest Hemingway
    - Sophia and Isabelle talking about places in Paris
    - Anna and Zara reminiscing about Paris.

In exploring texts, students could comment in particular on the use of:

- temporal/spatial deixis
- particular perspectives and registers
- evaluative adjectives and adverbs
- verbs of perception and sensory experience.

## Further work

- Students can further explore memories by asking family members or friends to write down their account of a significant event and comparing accounts. What do people generally agree on? How do accounts differ? Are there particular ways in which people try to reconstruct the past when they are in some doubt as to what actually happened?
- Ask students to think about any literary texts that explore the theme of memory and the reconstruction of the past. If needed, teachers could provide short extracts. A level students could begin to think about possible areas of exploration for their NEA (it would be possible to explore in detail how memories 'work' in literature and then to do some comparative work with non-literary material).

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