

SECTION A: Voices in 20th- and 21st century texts

**Read Text A on pages 4–5 and Text B on page 6 of the source booklet
before answering Question 1 in the space provided.**

- 1** Compare the ways in which the writers create a sense of voice as they reflect upon Paris and its influence on the author Samuel Beckett, who lived there.

In your answer you must consider linguistic and literary features, drawing upon your knowledge of genre conventions and context.

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Text A

This is an edited extract from an article published in 'The Irish Times' in July 2013. It is written by John Calder, publisher and close friend of the Irish writer Samuel Beckett. Here Calder reflects on the times he spent with Beckett in Paris.

Paris, Beckett and Me

I have spent a lot of time in Paris, first as a young publisher looking for authors, later as a resident, but I always made a point of becoming a friend of the writers I took on, and spending time with them in cafés and over meals. Some I came to translate from other languages, primarily French, but some were exiles writing in English. One such writer, who became a very close friend from the time I met him in 1955 up to his death in 1989, was Samuel Beckett.

Beckett first went to Paris to teach in 1928, where he fell in with the Joyce Irish circle, and where he returned frequently to try to write, much to the despair of his well-to-do Protestant business family in Dublin, who could not understand why their academically brilliant son would not settle down to a conventional job, but preferred to be penniless in bohemian Paris, writing novels that no one was interested in reading.

Beckett preferred to spend the second World War with his friends in wartime Paris rather than in neutral Ireland, and there he took part in the underground resistance, was wanted by the Gestapo, which had arrested most of his friends, and spent most of the war hiding in the Vaucluse mountains in the south, working on his third book. It was not published until well after the war, after his later novels, written in French, had given him a small, but limited recognition. It was only after the worldwide success of his play 'Waiting for Godot', first performed in 1953, that he was able to make a living, and by that time his long-suffering parents were both dead.

A total pessimist, obsessed by the many horrors of world events and especially by man's cruelty to man and even to animals, Beckett had a negative attitude to our short lives on this planet and our attraction to wars, killing and cruelty and tendency to dominate others. He once said that he had nothing against happiness, but personally had no talent for it.

Walking along the Boulevard du Montparnasse one day, I commented that it was a fine day. He looked at the sky and replied, "So far." When at a cricket match with Harold Hobson, the theatre critic, who had observed, "On a day like this, it makes you glad to be alive," his reply was, "I wouldn't go so far as that."

When I first knew Beckett, and some years before I published his non-dramatic work, I would often spend whole nights with him in cafés, playing chess and sipping beer. He would talk about Joyce and other favourite authors and other subjects that interested us both, but never about his own work, which he handed over without comment, often expecting me not to like it, but I always did.

We would walk around Paris and eat at his favourite haunts, some of them now gone or changed in character. The Coupole stayed open most of the night then and many large groups of friends would meet there, talking almost to breakfast time. But things are different now and the Coupole has become mainly a tourist trap that closes comparatively early. Situated on the main street of Montparnasse, it is surrounded by every variety of eating place, small theatres and boutiques.

Text B

This is an extract from the travelogue 'Riding the Iron Rooster: By Train Through China' by the American travel writer and novelist, Paul Theroux, who took eight trains across Europe, Eastern Europe, the USSR and Mongolia on his way to reaching the Chinese border. Here he reflects on his journey through Paris.

We came to Paris and were met by a bus and brought to a hotel. This was in the fourteenth arrondissement near the end of the Metro line, in a district that was indistinguishable from the outskirts of Chicago, or South Boston. It was mainly post-war blocks of flats that had once been light stucco and were now grey. There were too many of them, and they were too close together, and people said: 'Is this Paris? Is this France? Where's the Eiffel Tower?'

The centre of Paris is a masterpiece of preservation, but the suburbs such as this one are simple and awful. The brutal pavements and high windows of Saint-Jacques seemed designed to encourage suicide. Then I was told ('funnily enough') that Samuel Beckett lived in one of those blocks of flats and indeed had been in it for years. That was where he wrote his stories and plays about the sheer pointlessness and utter misery of human existence. I thought: No wonder! I was told that he often came over to our hotel, the Hotel Saint-Jacques, to have a morning coffee. The hotel was a newish, spick and span place that resembled the lonely hotels that are found just outside American airports, where people stay because there is nowhere else. Beckett came here for pleasure? I walked the streets, I lurked in the coffee shop, I prayed for him to appear; but, nothing. It was a lesson, though.

When people read 'Samuel Beckett lives in exile in Paris', they did not know that it meant a poky little flat on the fifth floor of number thirty-two – a tall grey building in which residents waited for Godot by watching television. And it was seventeen stops on the Metro from the centre of Paris, the Left Bank, the museums.

... It was a wet black morning in Paris, the street-sweepers and milkmen doing their solitary rounds by the light of street-lamps, and just as dawn broke over the eaves and chimney pots we plodded out of the Gare de l'Est. I thought we had left the suburbs behind in the rue Saint-Jacques, but there were more, and they were deeper and grimmer. The people in the group, with their faces at the windows of the train, were shocked and disillusioned. It wasn't gay Paree, it wasn't even Cleveland. The Americans looked very closely. We were unused to this. We put up suburbs too quickly and cheaply for them to wear well. We expected them to decline and collapse and be replaced; they weren't built to last, and they look temporary because they are temporary. But French suburbs – villas, terraced houses and blocks of flats – are solid and fairly ugly and their most horrific aspect is that they look as though they will last for ever. It had been the same in outer London: how could houses so old look so awful?

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tone ✓
personality (25)
relationship ✓
register

Paul Theroux

Unseen

- Paris

- His friend

G - Travelogue

G - Extract from an article

A - People who regret about places

A - Fans of John Calder / Samuel Beckett

P - Inform, describe

P - Describe

Sense of character of Samuel B.

Both text are evolved around Paris, text A ~~are~~ putting Samuel Beckett in Paris and what they did there and text B, on how the Paris suburbs may have had an influence on Samuel Beckett and his personal. Both texts are written in first person however, text A is an article piece whereas text B is a travelogue. Travelogues have a purpose of creating a sense of place for readers to explore and ~~on~~ develop their knowledge of the world. They can also influence where you may want to visit but, Paul Theroux's negative piece about Paris



Many of the links would be recognised by Americans

"It wasn't gay Paree, it wasn't even Cleveland."

~~Robert Calder's~~ writing. The humour in this comment makes the audience feel more included, it is much more engaging than text A. Text A is more detached from the audience but a lot more personal being about his and Samuel Beckett's relationship.

We learn a lot more about Samuel Beckett in

Calder's article: his character, likes and dislikes, his

background and the life he lived. The direct

speech quoting what Beckett said in response to

the comment "it makes you glad to be alive", ~~this~~

makes ^{me} you feel like you know him better. The

compound sentences show how much Calder

knows him and wants to tell us everything.

"negative attitude to our short lives on this planet

and our attraction towards, killing and cruelty and

tendency to dominate others."

A generic feature of a travelogue is the high density

of adjectives. This is so the reader can visualise

the place with ease, Paul Theroux does this to

exaggerate the miserable looking buildings and

the reactions of the Americans "were shocked and



* In the travelogue, ^{there is a lot} ~~a~~ lot of colour imagery ~~as~~ to describe his visit to Paris "that had once been light stucco and were now grey... black morning". The dark and boring colours add to the overall negative tone of the piece.

Both texts Another similarity of the texts is that the writers' personalities do come across to the reader. Theroux ~~entirely~~ ^{friendly} cynical and realistic tone adds to how unimpressed he was with Paris and Calders ^{relationship with} Beckett. ~~The differences~~

~~The~~ The main difference is that Calders' article is more factual ^{because it is remembering time}, whereas ^{because it is when he was with Beckett} Theroux account of Paris is purely based on ^{and} opinion, ~~it~~ is highly biased.

