

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.

(25) 1901

Although both John Calder and Paul Theroux are both writing about Paris in relation to Samuel Beckett, Calder does so through creating an affectionate voice whilst Theroux does so through creating a voice of disappointment. Calder's text is an article and therefore ~~it is~~ his <sup>purpose</sup> ~~aim~~ is to inform his audience of both facts and his opinions in an entertaining way and his audience are probably made up of those interested in Beckett and Irish people in general as it was published in a national newspaper. Whereas Theroux's text is a travelogue so his ~~write~~ audience will be much more interested in the subject matter he is discussing and therefore his purpose is to inform, provide opinions and entertainment.

Both of the texts are relatively informal but ~~are specialist texts~~. Calder creates a rather conversational tone through the use of the first person and also, for example, by the frequent



Foregrounding of 'A total pessimist' as, not only does this bring to the forefront the thing he wants to portray to the reader, but ~~this something~~ this reversed syntax is often associated with spoken language, making the text more conversational and informal. <sup>a generic convention of an article</sup> Although the noun 'pessimist' has negative connotations, by portraying ~~Calder~~ Beckett in this way Calder does show affection towards him as it ~~proves~~ shows their close bond and is also a type of <sup>insulting</sup> 'humour' often used by British and Irish people, which would appeal to his audience.

Theroux too uses ~~both~~ informal ~~and specialist~~ lexis. For example the pre-modifying adjective 'newish' <sup>paired with</sup> ~~and~~ the idiomatic pre-modifier 'spick and span' is ~~retain~~ an example of colloquial language, adding to Theroux's unimpressed voice as he avoids descriptive and complimentary language to describe his surroundings.

Despite this informality, both of the texts use specialist <sup>and oblique referencing</sup> lexis to ensure that this informal tone does not undermine ~~there~~ the informative aspect of the texts. For example, Calder references 'Joyce' and this proper noun suggests he



assumes his readers will either have literary knowledge or be aware of famous Irish figures which would make sense considering his audience. Although Calder does use some oblique referencing, he often provides the reader with extra information as assuming too much of the reader's knowledge would be a mistake when writing in a national newspaper with a widespread audience. For ~~example~~ example, in reference to Beckett's later novels, he parentheticalizes 'Written in French' acknowledging that most of his audience would not have extensive knowledge of Beckett whilst also showing his own knowledge of the topic in discussion, conforming to the generic convention of an article.

Theroux too uses specialist lexis, in this case French lexis, such as 'arrondissement' and the proper noun 'Metro' as his audience would be interested in the specific details of his trip because of the nature of the genre. He also uses oblique referencing such as the proper noun 'Godot' in reference to one of Beckett's plays, clearly assuming a certain level of intelligence from his audience, again, a generic convention of a travelogue.

Both of the texts are written in first person



to emphasize that they are discussing their first hand experiences. Calder makes use of first person plural pronouns such as 'We' to portray his close relationship with Beckett, ~~and~~ adding to his affectionate voice. Moreover he also makes use of ~~the~~ third person pronouns to directly describe Beckett, for example 'he was able to make a living, and by that time his long-suffering parents were both dead.' This conforms to the genre conventions of informing the audience whilst also portraying Beckett in a positive light to his audience through for example, the <sup>emotive</sup> pre-modifying adjective 'long-suffering', again, contributing to his affectionate voice.

Theroux also uses the first person singular and plural. The use of the first person singular is a generic convention of travelogues and the first-person plural significantly contributes to his voice of disappointment. For example, in reference to the architecture in the U.S. he states 'we expected them to decline and collapse and be replaced' and the use of the pronoun 'we' creates a sense of togetherness in the lack of understanding of French culture that



Theroux depicts ~~Theroux~~ Me is able to portray the cultural differences between Paris and America with such ease because of his American readership, for example, stating that the 'district was indistinguishable from the outskirts of Chicago' as the preposition 'from' portrays ~~the contrast~~ how easy it is for him to compare the disparity between Paris and America and create a voice of disappointment through doing so.

A significant difference between the two texts is that Calder creates a largely positive tone whereas Theroux creates a negative tone. Calder ~~he~~ does so through his retrospectiveness in

Looking fondly back over his memories, for example, 'playing chess and sipping beer', <sup>as</sup> the dynamic verbs 'playing' and 'sipping' ~~have~~ <sup>have</sup> connotations of recreation and contributing to Calder's affectionate voice not just for Beckett but for his memories of Paris too.

§ Alternatively, Theroux's tone is overwhelmingly negative and is one of the most significant factors in creating his voice of disappointment. He creates a semantic field of depression through



lexis such as 'suicide', 'grey' and 'miserable', creating negative impressions of Paris, and also uses pathetic fallacy through describing the morning using the pre-modifying adjectives 'wet' and 'black'. This contributes to his voice of disappointment as he directly juxtaposes these negative aspects with his positive expectation for example, 'Masterpiece of preservation' with 'simple and awful', the noun 'Masterpiece' and the adjective 'simple' emphasizing this.

Something that also separates the two texts is their outlooks and preferences. Leleux's tone becomes more negative when describing present-day Paris describing it using the metaphor 'tourist trap' to express his contempt, emphasizing why he ~~feels so fondly~~ looks towards his memories with such fondness and affection. Whereas, seemingly Theroux would have preferred to experience the tourism of Paris, probably because of this is an important part of American culture, when he claims, concerning the buildings, 'The most horrific aspect is that they look as though they will last for ever' as this hyperbolic claim not only contributes to his tone of disillusion.



and voice of disappointment but ~~directly~~  
~~opposes Calder's~~ expressed ~~&~~ contempt for the  
aspects of Paris Calder loves, emphasizing the  
cultural difference between the two texts.

Calder creates a voice of affection for not  
only his friend Beckett, who he associates  
with personal and emotive lexis, but also for  
the way Paris used to be and the memories he  
had there. Whereas Theroux creates a voice  
of disappointment by portraying his shock  
of what Paris he experienced and saw in Paris  
compared to what he expected, and emphasizing this  
through the cultural differences between America  
and Paris. Therefore, although the texts discuss a  
~~diff~~ similar topic, they are profoundly  
different because of their opposing outlooks,  
emphasized by the disparity between their voices.

