

History and memory



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Analyse the ways in which history and memory create compelling and unexpected insights. History is the continuum of events occurring in succession leading from the past to the present and even into the future. Memory is the cognitive processes whereby past experience is remembered. It is the offering of a truth, undocumented by history for purposes of an emotive response. It is these continuums that influences the memory we have of past events, and sculpts are accounts of what has and what will happen. History creates tradition, and this tradition somewhat determines what happens in the future.

Stephen Frears's film *The Queen* demonstrates several aspects of tradition, which in turn generate unexpected actions and reactions. Elie Wiesel's speech *Listen to the Silent Screams* displays the emotional distress of Jewish people during the war. The frightening actions of the Nazi Army during World War II created distressing memories for holocaust survivors. Similarly, the stories and accounts of ANZACs during battle either terrified young Australians or motivated them to enlist. John Schumann's film *I Was Only Nineteen* portrays the emotional struggles ANZACs faced when unexpected situations arose during battle. Stephen Frears's film *The Queen* is set during the week after Princess Diana's death in 1997. Caught between relentless media attacks and the outcry of the British public, Frears gives an insight as to what life for the Royal Family was like, as well as the affects Diana's death had on the relationship the British people have with The Queen.

The British people demonstrated several emotions and unpredictable actions in response to a sequence of events that no one could have expected. The

Queen??™s reputation was put at stake, with ??? one in four??|in favour of abolishing the monarchy altogether.??? The Monarchs disapproval of Diana is evident through the use of subtle humor. Frears aims to present the Queen in a more comfortable manner through his use of humor, although she is still very composed and concealed. However, as the public??™s dislike for the Queen grows more and more obvious, our insights into the Monarchy are influenced greatly.

Frears clearly demonstrates the public??™s aversion towards the Queen, and supports this with repeated newspaper articles and television reports. “Where is our Queen Where is her flag” and “Show us you care??? The unexpected turn against the Queen leaves the Monarchy confused. The Queen??™s perspectives are altered. Her insights of Britain had changed, and her traditions became outdated.

Yet personally, she did not distinguish this. It took the negative actions of the media, the scrutiny of the British public, and the influence of Mr. Blair to persuade her to give the British people what they wanted. The history of some events is more dismal than others, leaving people with terrifying memories and creating gloomy images for those who did not have first hand experiences. Elie Wiesel, a German holocaust survivor, gave a speech in Auschwitz in occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Holocaust (27 January 1995). ??? Listen to the Silent Screams??? represents the struggles and emotional hardship Jewish people faced during the Second World War.

Represented by a number, Jewish people were tortured by the horrific actions of the Nazi Army. ??? Look and listen as they quietly walk towards

dark flames so gigantic that the planet itself seemed in danger.??? Wiesel??

™s use of dark, vivid imagery adds to the gloominess of the holocaust.

The actions of the German army terrified everyone, not just the Jews alone.

The emotional disfigurement that these actions caused changed the lives and attitudes of many people. ??? After Auschwitz, the human condition is no longer the same. After Auschwitz, nothing will ever be the same.

??? Wiesel uses inclusive language, using the whole population to represent the Jews that were brutally executed under the reign of Adolf Hitler. ??? Let us declare this day marks our commitment to commemorate their death, not to celebrate our own victory over death.??? Their lives were changed, yet their beliefs remained strong. Similar to the context of Wiesel??™s speech, John Schumann??™s ??? I Was Only Nineteen??? gives the listener insights as to what life was like being an ANZAC.

Schumann uses personalized language to place emphasis on the memory aspect of the experiences of Australian soldiers at war. ??? I caught some pieces in my back that I didnt even feel?! God help me, I was only nineteen.??? Throughout the song, we hear helicopter propellers, gun shots and orders of attack, representing the environment in which soldiers lived. Their lives would be changed; their emotions distorted, and the psychological impact left many traumatized. ??? It was a war within yourself.

??? They had no expectations. The stories they were told were nothing like the reality. Their memories are the most reliable source of history they have. ??? The Anzac legends didnt mention mud and blood and tears, and stories that my father told me never seemed quite real???. Facing a different battle

each day, the ANZACs did not have insights as to what would occur in the next minute. Their fate was unexpected, and the history of these events does not account for the disturbances they suffered when they returned. The memory a person has may be the closest form of history they can obtain.

Their memories are the clearest experiences of what happened. Yet ones memory tells a million different stories to that that history tells. The way one lives, the attitudes they have, and what they believe in, are all altered through memory.

This penetrative force from within our mind can be positive or negative, tearing people apart, or building them back up. The history of event provides foundations for our memories to build on. This relationship between history and memory provides comprehensible understanding of past, present and sometimes future events.