

History and memory



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

How the texts you studied in this elective have challenged your ways of thinking about History & Memory How has the Queen questioned your perception of History and Memory-An individual's struggle in an event in history is able to change and shape one's own understanding-Different perspectives of memory is what shapes history-The importance of historical accuracies in which constructs the representations in history History is a continuous, systematic narrative of the past yet it is only through one's own individual memories as well as the memories of the collective that history is then embodied and represented.

History is formed and created through the perceptions of different people and are challenged and questioned every day. The film, the Queen directed by Stephen Frears as well as the autobiography, Mao's Last Dancer written by Li Cunxin both demonstrate an individual's struggle in a specific instance in history is able to change and shape one's own understanding, how different perspectives of memory is what shapes history today as well as the importance of historical accuracies in which constructs the representations in history. Both composers use a diverse range of both visual and literary techniques to convey and illustrate the complexities and perceptions of history and memory. Stephen Frears' The Queen illustrates the deep essence of the complete inner struggle of personal choices through the depiction of vivid characterisation. The character of the Queen is portrayed with such intensity of a cold, stoic individual whom struggles with making the best choices not only for herself but as well as her people. The specific use of camera angles is used to convey her professional demeanour with costume and setting to further enhance her personality.

However, because of a certain event in history, in this case, the Death of Princess Diana, the Queen is forced to re-evaluate her choices and morals regarding the expected needs of her people.

??? I??™ ve kept my feelings to myself. Foolishly, that??™ s what I believed the people wanted from her Queen.??? Furthermore, Frears uses dialogue to illustrate the conflicting perspectives of her people while demonstrating the conflict within the Queen herself. Moreover, it is through this particular event that the Queen is able to gain a more personal and better understanding of her people which enables her to change the value of her own personal understanding. The autobiography, Mao??™ s Last Dancer written by Li Cunxin exemplifies the inner struggle of an individual with conflicting perspectives of a particular event in history, the Communism in China. However, it is also through personal experiences that stem the memory of that event which is then able to shape and challenge one??™ s own understanding. The story, ??? The Frog in the Well??™ told by Li is continuous extended metaphor used throughout the novel to illustrate the battle within his own beliefs and reflects upon in memory.

Thus, it is evident that the film, The Queen as well as the novel, Mao??™ s Last Dancer demonstrates how an event and place in history is able to colour and shape the acceptance and understanding of an individual through memory. It is said that history is built upon by different conflicting memories of different individuals with different perspectives of a certain event. This concept of collective memory reflecting upon a situation is evident in Frears??™ the Queen through the motif of the media which help not only shape and write the film but also creates different frames of reference in this

moment of history. The use of real media footage and montages gives the audience a glimpse into what was the reaction, views and attitudes of the people while juxtaposing against the behaviours and beliefs of the Queen of which differs exponentially to those of her people. It is these conflicting memories and beliefs that form and merge to create and colour the event of DianaTM's Death, a very important event in history.

Furthermore, the use of the television in the film acts as a window to different points of view within the film in which Frears is able to cleverly manipulate in order to influence and create meaning. This concept is too evident in LiTM's *???* MaoTM's *Last DancerTM* through the conflicting memories and ideals of separate parties. *???* Nothing I have seen so far has matched the dark, decaying, depressing picture of America the Chinese Government has painted. *???* The use of alliteration enables the audience to understand the values and attitudes of the collective against the personal experience of the individual.

Yet it is only through these inconsistent views and memories that history is then coloured and shaped. Thus it is apparent that the film, *The Queen* as well as the novel, *MaoTM's Last Dancer* both depicts the notion of different, yet communal perspectives is what truly shapes and colours history.

Memory, both individual as well as collective, is coloured, to an extent, by partiality or favour and thus to a degree of which then colours, reshapes and creates a new understanding of a moment in history. This notion is explored in FrearsTM *The Queen* through the use of carefully and ingeniously picked real footage and snippets of interviews of Diana herself. This not only brings in factual information about the event but is also able to influence the views

of the audience which then instigates a different representation of the event. Frears too incorporates historical accuracies through his characters in order to create that specific representation of history. ??? A bunch of freeloading, emotionally retarded nutters!??? Through the character of Cherie Blair, of which is well known of her attitudes towards the monarchy, Frears is able to make the connection between an historical understanding of her character and how people remember her in order to represent the authenticity of history and memory in the film.

Furthermore, Li??™s novel, Mao??™s Last Dancer is an autobiography of which it is a physical representation of his life in a certain era. ??? I have never been so proud to be a young guard of Chairman Mao.??? It was a time of which propaganda was a form of education and through his experience; Li is able to bring forth his representation of history as well as to draw empathy and sympathy from his audience. Yet this novel is written in hindsight and is subjected to bias whether consciously or not which bring about a different representation of history.

Hence, it is therefore apparent that both The Queen as well as Mao??™s Last Dancer has an underlying bias which then constructs a different representation of history. Throughout time, there is an apparent interplay between history and memory of which is evident in both Frears??™ The Queen as well as Li??™s Mao??™s Last Dancer. History is embodied through different perceptions of different people yet together reflects upon the memories of the collective as well as the individual. Through a diverse range of both literary and film techniques, The Queen in conjunction to Mao??™s Last Dancer convey the acceptance and understanding of an individual

through history and memory, the interplay of different perspectives in shaping history as well as the authenticity and accuracy in constructing a different representation of history.