**Midnight in Paris (2011) Achievement Standard 3.2B (Media Studies)**

Credits: 3

Resource Title: Midnight in Paris, from a Post- Modern perspective.

**Two aspects that affect the interpretation of Nostalgia:**

* Intertextuality
* Time Bending

**Post Modern techniques in relation to Midnight in Paris**

**Intro**

“This is unbelievable – look at this. There’s no city like this in the world. There never was.” Woody Allen’s post-modern film Midnight in Paris is a rendition to not only the ‘golden age’ of Paris but also the enchantment of contemporary Paris. Set in the modern day an aspiring novelist Gill Bender see’s Paris in the ‘fresh air’. The smells, sounds, and beauty encapsulate Gills every senses as he is so engulfed in the éclat of Parisian society. Unfortunately Gill however is on this trip to Paris with someone who persistently discredits his inner passions. ‘You’re in love with a fantasy.’ Inez his wife to be should provide a figure for Gill to share his profound attachment for the city of love, however she more detracts from his dreams and creates disconnect emotionally in Gills mind. Therefore Gills inner desires pine for a time in which he could escape from being consigned to abandonment with Inez and become immersed in the history and transcendence of Paris life by sidewalk. Additionally Gill finds his present to be ‘unsatisfying’, in which he draws comparison to his own life as he depicts it as being similarly ‘unsatisfying’. But when he reminisces he becomes inexplecably bound to a deep feeling of attachment towards Paris in the 1920’s. More than anything Gill feels nostalgic as he romanticises for a time in which he can feel the electricity of a thriving cultural era. Here the meaning of nostalgia is presented to the audience through Gills discontent with the ‘unsatisfying’ time in which forms his reality. This is then further emphasised with Woody Allen’s utilisation of the post-modern techniques Time Bending and Intertextuality as they enable Gill to become in fluxed with the convulsion of the Paris cultural movement in the 1920’s. These two post-modern techniques conjunctively work to convey the underlying theme and meaning of nostalgia to the audience and further attach us to wider ideas. A Peugeot 176 begins Gill on his odyssey for self-reflection but also for the creation of his masterpiece, his novel. The Peugeot creates a portal from the present day to Paris in the 20s and Woody Allen methodically uses it as a subject of the post- modern technique Time Bending. Once in Paris Gills novel becomes his secondary focus only to being marvelled in the structural and atmospheric majesty that formed Parisian society. Ernest Hemingway and publisher Gertrude Stein played by Kathy Bates enable Gill to become empowered to finish his novel to a standard that is more than just ‘unsatisfactory’ and actually to a level that is respected amongst some of the greatest cultural figure-heads in history. Therefore Woody Allen has utilised Time Bending and Intertextuality to justify two quests, one for Gill to finish his novel and the other for Gill to find a reality in which he is truly passionate for. Rather than the neglectful disconnect Inez creates within his true reality.

**Time Bending**

Time Bending is first introduced in a scene in which Gill feels isolated towards the own ‘family’ he has envisioned for himself. “If it’s okay with you, I would really like a little walk.” Gill speaks in such hesitance as his suspicion of Inez turning down his proposal becomes very evident within his tone. “I will just meet you back at the motel.” Upon the rejection Gill becomes isolated from his own wife Inez as she instead would prefer to go dancing with an egocentric pestiferous attention freak by the name of Paul. Woody Allen here utilises Paul to symbolise the divide in ideological values and passions between Gill and Inez. Gill would prefer to absorb the atmosphere that lights up Paris by walk, especially ‘in the rain’. For Gill he finds that the rain creates an illustriousness that accentuates certain characteristics that otherwise wouldn’t be admired. As for Inez she would prefer to go dancing with Paul who is in Gills words a ‘pseudo-intellectual’. This is particularly significant as it displays the contrasting characteristics of both Gill and Inez. Inez would prefer to be confined to the in-doors dancing and mixing with the poignant people that pretend to understand Paris. Gill in juxtaposed views would prefer to enjoy the vastness of Paris by the ‘fresh air’ in which he can emit the beauty of every street, wall, crack and crevasse that forms the character that is Paris. It is this divide that forces Gill into wondering the streets of love alone on the verge of midnight. With Gill being somewhat intoxicated he lacks cognizance and suddenly finds himself lost. Here is where Woody Allen initialises the post-modern technique of Time Bending. A yellow Peugeot 176 pulls up and creates a portal for Gill to escape from the burdens of his reality. As Gill put it “Yeah, that's what the present is. It's a little unsatisfying because life's a little unsatisfying.” On that point it is Time Bending that allows Gill to enter into a world that to him is not so ‘unsatisfying’ and more like the beauty of a symphony. So as a result the Peugeot takes him into a hyper-form of reality in which he becomes audience to the cultural history being made in Paris in the 1920’s. Ernest Hemingway a literary idol and a known auteur in English history is fittingly one of the many historical Parisian figures that present themselves to Gill. Therefore Gill becomes completely befuddled with words as he struggles to comprehend the time warped predicament he has found himself in. “Ernest Hemingway – This is – I.” Gills nostalgic cravings have been met beyond his wildest imagination and in his moment of awe he loses all ability of comprehension. Woody Allen here creates the post-modern technique of Time Bending to show the profoundness of Gills nostalgia. His longing, his craving, his needing for a chance to be amongst a society and culture that is in a state of complete artistry revolution. “Boy, I’d drop the house in Beverley Hills, the pool, everything – in a heartbeat.” These words truly represent Gills nostalgic nature as he references what he would give up just to be able to stand where the likes of Hemingway, Picasso, Monet and Braque once stood. It is Time Bending that begins Gills odyssey into this artistry revolution and with a quest comes an end resolution. Adriana a Parisian native that Gill meets in his first night in Paris in the 1920’s provides a vocal point towards this journey. Annette is a woman that Gill can agree with on the ‘big things’. She is truly passionate for Parisian society and agrees with Gill in stating that Paris is quite possibly the most thriving centre point in the whole universe. The two protagonists Gill and Adriana become somewhat entangled as their passions for Parisian society ignite a chemistry that is new to both. Gill envisions himself loving Inez and yet he references her as being ‘sexy’ and not beautiful. It is as if she does not compare to his love for the raw ‘beauty’ of Paris. Adriana is someone that Gill feels a stronger belonging towards. She describes it as ‘for some inexplicable reason I am drawn to him………Perhaps it is because he is naïve and unassuming.” It is this attachment that enables Gill to feel comfortable in ‘babbling’ and being himself, slightly poetic and philosophical. However Woody Allen utilises Time Bending here to force Gill into self-reflection upon his true reality. This is because in one of Gills midnight adventures to Paris in the 20’s he finds himself delving deeper into Parisian history with Adriana. They find themselves in the ‘belle epoche’ era. Adriana becomes truly swooned and encapsulated with the Belle Epoche era in the same way that Gill is mesmerised Paris in the 20’s. For Gill it is incomprehensible that someone could love the belle epoche more than Paris he was passionate for, the one he felt the first true connection in with Adriana. Therefore Gills nostalgic nature is over-thrown by a sudden realisation that every era is different, and yet each has their own qualities that are desirable. It is about finding a place, situation and more prominently in Gills case a love life that makes your era truly self-empowering and enjoyable. Therefore Time Bending as a post-modern technique enables Gill to go on a journey of self-discovery as he realises the importance of your own true life. As a result we see Gill leave Inez and make the life changing decision to stay in Paris and continue with his novel.

**Intertextuality**

Intertextuality as a post-modern technique is very prominent in the film Midnight in Paris as Woody Allen uses it to symbolise Gill Pender’s quest. Time Bending is utilised in a more metaphorical way as Gill goes on a quest of self-discovery. However Intertextuality is more literal as in conjunction with Time Bending Gill is on a quest to create a novel that may someday place him amongst Parisian cultural history. Gill Pender an aspiring novelist finds inspiration from the Paris of old and intends to write his novel about a nostalgia shop owner who has traits remarkably uncanny to himself. As most writers do, their characters are often mere reflections of themselves and their own personalities as people. Therefore when Gill finds himself transported back to where his literary idols established themselves he becomes governed to his nostalgic nature in which it requires him to seek assistance in his own literary genius. Ernest Hemingway provides he first contact point. “You will never write well if you fear dying. Do you? ….That is my biggest fear. Have you ever made love to a truly great woman? ....My wife is very sexy. And when you make love to her do you feel true and beautiful love and at least for the moment lose your fear of death?...I believe love that’s true and real creates a respite from death.” In this short conversation between Gill and Ernest Hemingway Gill is given a piece of knowledge that enables him to understand why perhaps he is a failed novelist. Throughout the film Gill constantly makes mention as to how he never truly gave being a writer a shot and even alludes to his work being ‘good but forgettable.’ Perhaps this is a reflection of his relationship with Inez. It is therefore because he has not experienced an impassioned a true love for Inez that he is unable to break the barriers of forgettable and go down in history as an auteur. An auteur at the level of such Parisian geniuses as Hemingway and T.S Elliot, whom he meets later in his journey. “T.S Elliot? Prufrock is my mantra!” Therefore when Gill meets Adriana he is able to begin to create a novel that Gertrude Stein Hemingway’s trusted publisher can resonate with. When she first reads the book she remarks of him having a ‘lovely and clear voice’, emphasising his potential. However she does then go on to describe him as a ‘defeatist’. The word defeatist again is plausible towards Gills own reality as he often finds himself being resigned to defeat as he succumbs to Inez’s passions while his take the backseat. This is evident throughout the film as Inez is the clear dominant figure within the relationship. But after meeting Adriana Gills novel begins to turn. Suddenly his own life has become in fluxed with the pure ecstasy of lust and perceived love with Adriana that it is rubbing off in his novel in the way that Ernest Hemingway alluded to. Therefore the next time Gill goes to show Gertrude his work her comments are even further well received. She remarks his work to be wonderful and yet she does have one key comment. “Hemingway did have one plot suggestion - he doesn't quite believe that the protagonist doesn't see that his fiancée is having an affair right before his eyes.” This is where Woody Allen has specifically utilised intertextuality as a link to the disconnect between Gill and Inez. Gills novel is clearly based upon actual events indicating that his relationship with Inez is featured throughout the novel. Therefore when Hemingway makes suggestion that it is more than obvious that the main protagonist’s fiancée is cheating Gill becomes suddenly aware. His own reality is completely curtailed by Inez cheating and him finally grasping that he doesn’t truly love her. It is Paris that he truly loves, the fresh symphonic beauty that envelops the city can only be second to one woman, and Inez is clearly not the one. It is perhaps Adriana that is the one. However her not being a part of his true reality and present time disallows Gill to truly pursue this relationship. Instead he is lead to a woman who shares the same nostalgic values. Gabrielle a Parisian native uniforms all that Gill grabbles deep to his heart. Woody Allen symbolises this by her joining Gill in the rain. From the beginning Gill alludes to rain as being majestic in the way that it has an innate ability to make picturesque scenarios truly capture the atmospheric enchantment. Inez wouldn’t dare venture into the wet. “I don’t mind getting wet” Gabrielle’s words in juxtaposed views to Inez inducing us as the audience to understand that she is the one that Gill is going to truly be able to resonate with. In doing so Gills novel will eventually go down in Parisian cultural history in the same way that Gertrude Stein and Ernest Hemingway did. Therefore Intertextuality as a post-modern technique sets the scene for Gill to create a novel worthy of legend. Not ‘wonderful, yet forgettable.’

**Conclusion**

To conclude Woody Allen has utilised the post-modern techniques Time Bending and Intertexuality to establish the meaning of nostalgia. Furthermore he has enabled us as the audience to understand Gills literal and metaphorical journey as he ventures to not only create a book of Parisian legend but also to find his own sanctuary in which he can feel truly impassioned. This means he must embrace the time in which he lives by disregarding his nostalgic nature and more using it to inspire his own life into providing love for other individuals. Therefore he leaves Inez his fiancée and settles down in Paris where he can finish his novel in the womb of a society that engulfs cultural supremacy. As Oscar Wilde once put it “When an American dies, he goes to Paris.” Reflecting Gills precise nature as he truly associates Paris to a degree of worship.