

## **Memory Town**

**(tiffany)**

I'm unsure of whom the speaker of this poem is, but the underlying concept of the verse is clear. "Radioactive material" is an allusion to memory. Memories can be brutal, dangerous, if uncovered just like radioactive material. We, as a society, go to great lengths to make sure that toxic substances are buried deep so that they can't contaminate anything. As people, we do the same thing with painful remembrances; we bury them, try to forget them so that they can't come back to haunt us. And yet, the most random things can trigger memory – a smell, an action, a saying, maybe painting. I'm not sure if painting is an allusion to something. Painting could be the actual artistic act or "to describe vividly", either of which could work in this situation. Both work as triggers and then the speaker of the poem asks how deep each memory needs to be planted to be forgotten, unable to do damage.

*Amendments*

Memory Town (Allison)

When I read this poem I almost thought of God, just because of the painting. I might have liked a short blurb on biblical references here, just because the opening line sounds like a creation story. I agree that radioactive material is definitely a memory, and something that is buried and not meant to be dug up. It sounds like a group of people are asking her to recall something and she wants to know how far back she has to go in order to recall the memories. I think overall the analysis is really well done, especially because there is no obvious cliché or historical figure (as far as I can tell) that this poem could be alluding to.

Memory Town (craig)

Painting here seems to be drawing on memories for inspiration, as the memories seem to be the addressees of the poem, and the speaker says "In each one of you I paint" as if they paint many of them. The concept of painting gives a lot of freedom to the speaker here in that they seem to have total creative control of their memories, which seem to be rather vivid and colorful due to the chosen verb. It is an interesting parallel to the introduction to this section in that she mentions how these 'towns' seem to paint the lines for themselves, which she just happens to be in the position to observe. Here, she is actively painting the memories, though the mention of increasing depth seems to suggest that she was trying to hide these memories from herself. But this brings up an interesting concept; we have a tendency to repress painful memories, but in order to fully understand oneself, wouldn't they need to understand the things that they are afraid of? And isn't this the ultimate goal of any artist, including writers? Maybe she is not trying to bury the memories, but to dig deeper in hopes of uncovering them for inspiration, or otherwise, just for personal understanding and absolution. I think, though, that the poem allows for both the meaning of the desire to cover up this "radioactive material" as well as the need and desire to dig it back up and allow yourself exposure to it.

Memory Town (casey)

As a society we isolate, conceal, and mislabel our radioactive waste and materials to avoid public contamination. Still we hear of leaks, of seepages into our consciousness, eventually the material isn't covered and someone gets hurt. Really hurt, not scratched or insulted, but mutated into super villains, or wasted until cancer steals you away. That is the problem with remembering someone, what if they bring that waste with them. How far is far enough never to remember.

Memory Town: (courtney)

The part about memories needing to be buried, and the reference to radioactive materials, is good. You "paint" a picture when you describe a memory you have—if a person is describing his/her memories, he/she will find related memories, things that are "triggered" by each new memory brought to light. The more memories you uncover, the deeper you have dug into buried memories, possibly-dangerous material.

Memory Town (marina)

This poem seems to be using the closely related two meanings of the word paint, as in the painting with colors or painting with words, both serving as vivid descriptions. Since the poem deals with memory, I can also think of memory as being very imagistic, that is we often associate memories with images, not words or even sounds. I might be re-iterating Tiffany here, but the memory is being compared to a radioactive materials burial site, as if the narrator is digging and digging for the memories going deeper to find them and/or maybe put them deeper into the ground because they are so painful.

Memory Town (martin)

Your analysis seems very plausible, every line makes sense with it, but if it's true then I find this to be one of Carson's weakest poems. I mean, everybody knows memories are tough to bury and forget about, especially ones you want to bury and forget about. It's not like Carson to just introduce a stale topic. Also, mentioning "8 miles down" instead of just "8 miles" seems pointless to me. Obviously Carson wants us to know we should measure distance downward, bury it bury it, but in the previous line the mention of a buried site already suggests down. She doesn't have to repeat it. I like the structural way 8 miles, 15 miles, 140 miles gets lower and lower on the page, like getting deeper and deeper. The numbers seem randomly chosen, so I didn't look for a pattern there. It's also rare that Carson directly addresses the allusion in the title of her town poems. She usually refers to them in the third person. The "you" could be someone she is trying to forget. Then the rest of the poem could help specify who exactly.

Memory Town Amendment: (matt)

I think this analysis is spot on. The memory-as-radioactive-material metaphor fits it perfectly. However, I think it should also be mention that radioactive waste is famous for not being properly buried. Right now it is literally just piling up in temporary storage facilities in our nuclear plants, it's only recently that the Yucca Mountain thing has come up to bury the stuff. So I see the questions ("You think 8 miles down is enough? 15 miles? 140 miles?") as being futile not because the stuff will leak out but because it won't be buried in the first place. It's nervous talk, but it's only talk, not action. Especially since I don't think we can drill even 8 miles down into the Earth's crust. So it seems to me to be

talking about not the fact that you can't repress something forever but rather that many memories aren't repressed in the first place and simply lie around, polluting their source. We have a lot of bad memories left free inside us; I mean, who represses a grudge? You need that bad memory there to stoke your righteous anger.

Memory Town (mike)

As a society we isolate, conceal, and mislabel our radioactive waste and materials to avoid public contamination. Still we hear of leaks, of seepages into our consciousness, eventually the material isn't covered and someone gets hurt. Really hurt, not scratched or insulted, but mutated into super villains, or wasted until cancer steals you away. That is the problem with remembering someone, what if they bring that waste with them. How far is far enough never to remember.

Memory Town (monte)

I think that the memory is the 'you' in the poem, so the first two lines could read 'each memory I paint, I find.' Or that each memory ever made by the speaker has an effect on him. And then the speaker goes on to ask how deep must you bury these memories before they never resurface – it is a rhetorical question, because no matter how deep they are, the speaker will always find them.

Memory Town (tom)

I see the allusion to painful memories going on here. Carson seems to deal a lot with her memories and seems to have more than her share of bad experiences and haunting memories, or at least that's what gets reflected in her work. I think the paining could also pertain to dressing or altering memories perhaps to be not so painful. I think that there may also be something with the progression of burying deeper. First 8 miles, then 15, then 140! That seems akin to the statement time heals all wound and yet begs the question how much time must pass before healing comes.

Memory Town (abby)

I pretty much agree with everything Tiffany said here, so it would be redundant, although the assignment, to comment further.