

Question 1: Point out elements that question the realism of this scene. Remember to analyse precise examples to answer the question.

This is a scene where the audience is confronted with what, on the face of it, appears to be one of Willy's memories. But there are various aspects of it which suggest that this scene may not be an entirely realistic depiction of what happened. Ben's first cue is made flat and unenthusiastic because of the period and the almost contemptuous conjunction "So" at the start of the sentence (l.2). For the audience, this is a surprisingly detached cue given that this is supposed to be their reunion after years of not seeing each other.

Similarly, Willy's excitement at the precision of Ben's memory (l.18: "What a memory, Ben!") is an odd detail to praise in a brother you've only just been reunited with. It cannot but remind the reader of Willy's own faulty memory. In both these examples, the passage sounds like Willy is recreating an image of his brother which is more based on his own imperfections than on reality.

In that perspective, Ben's long cue about their family's journeys to the West cannot but be understood as Willy's own sense of failure as a salesman since Ben says that he would make "more in a week than a man like him could make in a lifetime" (l.62) in a profession surprisingly similar to Willy's. Besides, the evocation of the family's trips with the father "driving the team right across the country" and "all the Western states"(l.57-59) sounds like a classic (clichéd almost) depiction of a family of early American settlers and is therefore totally anachronistic. Once again, this shows that Willy's memory is partly real and partly fiction, probably because it is influenced by American myths and ideology.