Comparative Textual Analysis

Text A
London from William Blake’s Songs of Experience, published in 1794. Although one of the Great Romantics, Blake’s poetry often commented critically on the state of Britain, which promoted an unjust and unequal society. Many poems from Songs of Experience were written in response to the Industrial Revolution, the French Revolution, organised religion and education.

Text B
An extract from Notes from a Small Island, published in 1995: a memoir of American writer Bill Bryson, who came to live and work in Britain in the 1970s. The book is an analysis of why Bryson loves Britain so much, as well as humorously pointing out its more eccentric points.

Text C
A leaflet from www.visitlondon.com, which gives information for tourists visiting the city during the Autumn/Winter period of 2010/11.

Using integrated approaches, compare and contrast how London is presented in Texts A-C.

In your response, you must analyse and evaluate how the different contexts and purposes of the texts influence linguistic choice. You must also consider how effective each text is in developing its ideas.

TEXT A London (1794): William Blake

I wander thro’ each charter’d street,
Near where the charter’d Thames does flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infant’s cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg’d manacles I hear.

How the Chimney-sweeper’s cry
Every black’ning Church appalls;
And the hapless Soldier’s sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls.

But most thro’ midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlot’s curse
Blasts the new-born Infant’s tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse.
TEXT B Notes from a Small Island (1995): Bill Bryson

I do find London exciting. Much as I hate to agree with that tedious old git Samuel Johnson, and despite the pompous imbecility of his famous remark about when a man is tired of London he is tired of life (an observation exceeded in fatuousness only by 'Let a smile be your umbrella'), I can't dispute it. After seven years of living in the country in the sort of place where a dead cow draws a crowd, London can seem a bit dazzling.

I can never understand why Londoners fail to see that they live in the most wonderful city in the world. It is far more beautiful and interesting than Paris, if you ask me, and more lively than anywhere but New York and even New York can't touch it in lots of important ways. It has more history, finer parks, a livelier and more varied press, better theatres, more numerous orchestras and museums, leafier squares, safer streets, and more courteous inhabitants than any other large city in the world.

And it has more congenial small things incidental civilities you might call them than any other city I know: cheery red pillar boxes, drivers who actually stop for you on pedestrian crossings, lovely forgotten churches with wonderful names like St Andrew by the Wardrobe and St Giles Cripplegate, sudden pockets of quiet like Lincoln's Inn and Red Lion Square, interesting statues of obscure Victorians in togas, pubs, black cabs, doubledecker buses, helpful policemen, polite notices, people who will stop to help you when you fall down or drop your shopping, benches everywhere. What other great city would trouble to put blue plaques on houses to let you know what famous person once lived there or warn you to look left or right before stepping off the kerb? I'll tell you. None.

Take away Heathrow Airport, the weather and any building that Richard Seifert ever laid a bony finger to, and it would be nearly perfect. Oh, and while we're at it we might also stop the staff at the British Museum from cluttering the forecourt with their cars and instead make it into a kind of garden, and also get rid of those horrible crush barriers outside Buckingham Palace because they look so straggly and cheap not at all in keeping with the dignity of her poor besieged Majesty within. And, of course, put the Natural History Museum back to the way it was before they started dicking around with it (in particular they must restore the display case showing insects infesting household products from the 1950s), and remove the entrance charges from all museums at once, and make Lord Palumbo put the Mappin and Webb building back, and bring back Lyons Corner Houses but this time with food you'd like to eat, and maybe the odd Kardomah for old times' sake, and finally, but most crucially, make the board of directors of British Telecom go out and personally track down every last red phone box that they sold off to be used as shower stalls and garden sheds int farflung corners of the globe, make them put them all back and then sack them no, kill them. Then truly will London be glorious again.