

Australian identity speech essay sample



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Australian identity is the way that Australians as a whole see themselves. This can be different depending on the person's experiences. Different people's view on Australian identity can often be incorporated into art such as poetry. It is thought by many that part of the Australian identity is being a very tolerant country that accepts and includes all cultures and people from all walks of life; however, after coming across the poems No More Boomerang by Oodgeroo Noonuccal and Be Good, Little Migrants by Uyen Loewald, the experiences felt by two Australians prove that this idea is... questionable.

No More Boomerang by Oodgeroo Noonuccal was published in 1992 in her book *The Dawn is at Hand*. She was motivated to write this poem, contrasting the 21st Century, colonised society to how the Indigenous people used to live and practise their culture, by seeing the disadvantages of Aboriginal people when she was working in the campaign for the reform of the Australian Constitution to allow the Indigenous people full citizenship.

This poem implies that the Australian way of life has 'forced' the Indigenous community to adapt, leaving behind their culture and identity. The poem *Be Good, Little Migrants* by Uyen Loewald was published after she migrated from Vietnam to Australia. She was motivated to write this poetic critique by her experiences and observations of power relationships between 'mainstream' Australians and refugees.

I found that the poem seemed to imply that Australia is trying to whitewash their society to make everyone adhere to what seems to be the Australian 'norm' by taking away their culture and identity. Both poems seem to have

an almost list type structure, as if reading rules, using repetition. In Loewald's poem, each stanza begins with the words: " Be good, little migrants", which belittles, or even infantilises the migrants, showing the power relationship of the Australian government over migrants.

The stanzas then go on with the expectations of them, for example: " Be good, little migrants Use leisure with prudencesew costumes, paint muralswrite music, and dance to our tuneOur culture must not be dull"

Similarly, in Noonuccal's poem the stanzas start with the words " No more" or what the Indigenous people have being prevented from doing in colonised Australian society, then go on to talk about the society's ' substitutes' for what the Indigenous people used to do, for example:

" No more message-stick; Lubras and lads Got television now. Mostly ads"

This repetition assists in conveying the poets' message to the audience as it emphasises the importance of the " mainstream" Australian society's attitudes towards migrants and Indigenous people, and expectations of them to abandon their cultural identity. This expectation shows that the alleged cultural acceptance incorporated into the Australian identity is false.

Juxtaposition is also present in nearly all stanzas in the poem by the author Noonuccal in her use of the words " no more" and " now" to aid in the contrast current Australian culture and the Aboriginal Australian culture before colonisation. The poems both use a fairly negative tone which helps in presenting their experience as poor. Noonuccal and Loewald use very few emotive words, and when they are used, they are negative. As well as this,

the authors use enjambment within the stanzas, which allows the lines to be read as serious statements or facts, instead of opinions or stories.

Using these devices, which create a negative mood, there is a bad light shone on the supposed cultural acceptance within the Australian identity. The repetition and negative tone used by authors Uyen Loewald and Oodgeroo Noonuccal in the poems *Be Good, Little Migrants* and *No More Boomerang* allow readers to understand the poets' views on the Australian identity. Through my interpretation of the poems and their devices, I have concluded that these poets believe that Australia is not a culturally accepting place and Australia wants everyone to adhere to their societal standards.