

Looking for alibrandi: multiculturalism vs peer pressure



**ASSIGN
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Looking for Alibrandi {1992} is a novel written by Melina Marchetta, which presents to us the internal conflict that immigrant children face in a multicultural society. Throughout the novel Josephine Alibrandi struggles to find her personal and cultural identity, she is trying to find who she is. At school she experiences a feeling of being different and endures prejudice of other students who have not learnt to accept or appreciate anyone different from themselves. Through her last year she learns how important family, culture and tradition is to her.

These themes I have found relevant to me as a daughter of Polish- Catholic parents growing up in Australia. The style of writing by Marchetta used was common street/school language and settings found all over Australia, the author has enabled most people to identify with the themes she has chosen to present to us. Melina Marchetta presents us with certain cultural/religious traditions as well as an outsiders view on this. Tomato day, as Josie refers to it ' National wog day! '(p171). This is a day when all Italians come together and make tomato sauce.

Josie is embarrassed about it and does not understand the true meaning and significance of it by asking her grandma why she can not buy a pre-made sauce. I can relate to Josie about being embarrassed about certain cultural traditions, which I did not want people to know about because I was scared of being teased. I also did not understand why it was so special or notable. Marchetta reverses the plot, were through Josie's last year at St. Martha's she learns how important family, culture and tradition are. ' You can't hate what you're part of.

What you are. I resent it most of the time, curse it always, but it'll be a part of me till the day I die... there is this spot inside me that will always be Italian.' (p152) She begins to understand that all Australians will not realize that it is a multicultural society, but she knows her own place and that is what matters. My understanding of this quote is that Josie is proud of who she is and her background and culture but she will always have to deal with racial slurs and even though she might not show it all the time, she loves being an Italian.

At St. Martha's a catholic all girls school, where most girls were of an Anglo Saxon decent, Josie felt like she did not fit in. She is teased and ridiculed by these girls who did not appreciate people of other nationalities. Josie's fights with Carly begin when Carly refers to her as a 'wog' a racial comment. 'She called me a wog, amongst other things' (p88). From this quote the author shows how outsiders view immigrants with such ignorance, referring to them in such racial terms and not accepting them as individuals.

'Jacob: "Welcome to the nineties, Josephine. Women don't have to be virgins any more." Josie: "Women don't have to be pushed into things anymore it's (virginity) not a prize and I'm not a prize. But it's mine. It belongs to me and I can only give it away once and I want to be sure when it happens Jacob or one day someone else is doing it. I don't want to do it, Jacob, because everyone else is doing it." (p236) Melina is using a conflict to highlight the pressure that children of immigrants have in being accepted by their peers.

As a Catholic Josie's views on sex are that you shouldn't have it before marriage. He puts her under pressure when he just tells Josie that it is not a big deal. Josie knows morally as being a Catholic that it is wrong. In conclusion I believe Melina Marchetta has created a believable world, which is presents to her readers, the conflict that people from different cultures and religions feel between holding up their traditions and beliefs and being accepted by their friends.

Even the title of this novel ' Looking for Alibrandi' represents Josephine's struggle to find her self. By using believable issues such as sex and suicide, which are topics relevant to all teenagers, she is able to spread her message more effectively. The theme of peer pressure and religious/cultural tradition in conflict is very important, especially in Australia where multiculturalism is so strong.