

Growing up asian in aus essay



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

An individual can feel isolated and alienated if they don't feel a sense of belonging to a certain community, place or even themselves. Feeling acceptance is an important aspect of belonging and can intensify an individual's sense of belonging. Peter Skryznecki's anthology *Immigrant Chronicle*, including poems 'Migrant Hostel' and 'Feliks Skryznecki'. These poems explore how individuals may feel alienated from society due to cultural background and in contrast how embracing cultural heritage can give a new sense of acceptance and belonging.

These ideas are similarly explored in Alice Pung's collection of short stories *Growing up Asian in Australia* but specifically in the short story *Chinese Dancing, Bendigo Style*. Peter Skryznecki poem 'Migrant Hostel' explores how immigrants can feel alienated from society due to their cultural background, and physical as well as metaphorical barriers placed by their community can intensify this alienation.

The poem illustrates how immigrants were treated and the way they felt, as they were being kept separate from the Australian society in institutions such as the Parkes Hostel. The poem conveys how the immigrants felt disconnected from society and alienated due to their background. The poem begins with a negative tone, which foreshadows what the overall emotion of the poem will be. It emphasises the way Skryznecki felt about his experience at the hostel. 'No one kept count/Of all the comings and goings'.

These lines use a negative tone to show the negativity he felt toward this place, it shows how there may have been too many people in the hostel to even keep count or that nobody really cared about who was there and that

to society they were just a number. Skryznecki's negative description of the hostel continues in stanza two where he describes how the new immigrants were ' Partitioned off at night/By memories of hunger and hate. ' The alliteration of ' hunger and hate' emphasis the hatred he had and how his memories haunt him and have skewed his perception of Australian society. 'Partitioned off at night' implies how he felt that as a cultural group they were alienated from society because of their heritage and could not accept Australia as their new home. Physical and metaphorical barriers are a reoccurring motif in the poem as they prevent the immigrants from feeling a sense of belonging or acceptance to Australian society. In the last stanza a symbolic image is created by Skryznecki to highlight the distinct separation of the immigrants and Australian society.

'A barrier at the main gate/ Sealed off the highway', the symbolic imagery of the barrier implies that there may be a barrier between the immigrants and the broader Australian society emphasising that they are not accepted in society and that they fail to feel a connection themselves therefore creating a metaphorical barrier to move on from their past life. These ideas of cultural heritage being a barrier of acceptance are similarly explored in Alice Pung's, 'Chinese Dancing, Bendigo Style. Peter Skrynecki's poem ' Feliks Skrynecki' conveys how Peter Skrynecki's father's intimate relationship with his garden and polish friends have helped him to accept his new life in Australia. In contrast, the poet is shown as more alienated as he still struggles to reconcile his past with his contemporary life now. The opening stanza begins with Skrynecki characterising his father as a gentle man and how he enjoyed looking after his garden, ' loved his garden like an only child'.

This simile emphasises the love and the way the garden renewed his father and gave him something to work on physically, this also implies the resentment that Skrynecki had for his father as perhaps his father loved the garden more than he loved and cared for him. The garden is symbolic to his father as he could work on it and watch it grow into a new life similar to his own life in a new contemporary place, Australia. In the fifth stanza, Skrynecki talks about how he remembered ‘remnants’ of polish that he had learnt from his father. Remnants of a language/ I inherited unknowingly’ the motif of language and its importance is used to highlight how much his father had tried to make Skrynecki aware of his cultural background. Skrynecki is unaware of how Poland would always be apart of his heritage and that we would need to learn to accept this and adapt to this new contemporary life. Although Skrynecki’s father tries to help Skrynecki find a sense of belonging in their new home he wants him to find his own way of belonging and wants him to make his own connections.

In the last lines of the poem a strong metaphor is used as well as cultural allusion to emphasis how Skrynecki felt. ‘Watched me pegging my tents.’ The metaphor conveys how Skrynecki is moving away to new places and trying to find a place where he feels himself accepted by the community in contrast to his father’s life where he has a permanent place where he feels a connection. In the final stanza Skrynecki describes how he is ‘pegging my tents/Further and further south of Hadrian’s Wall’ .

This implies the symbolic barrier that Skrynecki is facing and the way in which he is moving further and further away from his father’s European identity. In both Skrynecki’s poems ‘Migrant hostel’ and ‘Feliks Skrynecki’

there is an elusiveness to cultural heritage and how it can be a barrier to finding acceptance or connection to a particular place or society. Although in 'Feliks Skryznecki', Skryznecki's father has found intimate relationships with his garden and his Polish friends, which have helped him to feel a connection to Australia. 'Chinese Dancing, Bendigo Style' shows how an individual's cultural background may isolate them from a community.

The short story explores how the Chew family, specifically Chew, feels locked out of their community as they feel like they aren't completely Chinese nor are they completely Australian. The use of often humorous stereotyping emphasises the way that Chew feels her community perceives her and her family. In the third paragraph, Chew stereotypes the students at her school as 'sandy hair ... freckly skin... that could read the board from the back of the room without corrective lenses'.

In the following paragraph, this is juxtaposed with the characterisation of the Chew family. 'Dull black home cut hair and glasses... to catch balls that were thrown at us.' The contrast between the Chew family and the students at the school implies that they felt out of place at their school and not like the other students there. Chew struggles to understand exactly why she feels alienated in the community and tries to find her own identity. This is further supported with the use of rhetorical questions to emphasise her uncertainty of who she is and where she fits in. 'were we ... because we were Asian... or because our family... competitive and meaningless?' These ideas of an individual's cultural background isolating them from a community are also similarly explored in Peter Skryznecki's 'Migrant Hostel'.

Whilst Chinese Dancing, Bendigo Style shows how cultural backgrounds can isolate an individual from a community, it also considers how embracing that cultural heritage can give them a new sense of acceptance and belonging. Throughout the story Chew is shown to have found a place where she and her siblings feel comfortable, a place where it 'felt a bit like home'. Towards the end of the story Chew describes how they felt a connection as a cultural group, 'we stepped out together to the music we were a tribe'. The use of a metaphor emphasises how they finally felt acceptance from the community and found acceptance of themselves and their cultural background. Similarly this is shown in Peter Skryznecki's 'Feliks Skryznecki' where his father feels accepted by his polish friends. Acceptance is an important aspect of belonging.

An individual can feel isolated and alienated if they don't feel a sense of belonging to a certain community, place or even themselves. Feeling acceptance is an important aspect of belonging and can intensify an individual's sense of belonging. Skryznecki's Immigrant Chronicle and Alice Pung's Growing up Asian in Australian, both explore a similar idea of how cultural heritages can isolate an individual from society. Barriers like your cultural background can effect being accepted but being able to embrace your cultural background can create or intensify a sense of belonging.