

How have the roles of  
old bill and caitlin  
expanded your  
knowledge of  
belonging i...



The role of both Old Bill and Caitlin has expanded my knowledge and understanding of Belonging in the text *The Simple Gift* in a variety of ways.

The first few poems provide an insight into the character of Caitlin who, unlike Billy, has a stable family home and wealthy parents. However it is evident that Caitlin, like Billy, is searching for a kind of meaning that she cannot find in the world she exists in. In a material sense Caitlin has everything, the opposite of Billy and Old Bill when the texts begin.

She meets Billy when he is scrounging food at McDonalds while she is working mopping the floors. The time spent by Caitlin with her parents in comparison with the time spent with Billy reflects the relationship she had with both. A strong sense of connection and belonging is depicted by the part in novel, when Caitlin parents plan on going away for the weekend, and Caitlin wants to invite Billy to her place. She provides a negative view towards her family. Change for Old Bill comes in the person of Billy who befriends him after he notices him despairing after dropping a bottle of beer. He is a hobo who has become one and dropped out of mainstream society because his daughter and wife have died after freak accidents. Thus his first change was dictated by the experience of his daughter and wife dying. Old Bill kept wandering from room to room discovering another side to the moon the comparison between Billy and Old Bills visit with ??? visiting the moon???; metaphor, for the social distance between these characters, a reminder that they belong to two very different worlds.

These quotes show the way these characters are alienated. Chapter seven is basically a turning point for Old Bill, who wakes Billy, instead of the other

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way around, with their unusual breakfast; a coffee and bowl of Weet-Bix. “ I realised as i walked home that for a few hours, I hadnt thought of anything but how pleasant it was to sit with these people and to talk to them”. This quote said by Old Bill explores the value and power of friendship, one thing Old Bill had avoided, the time before Billy and Caitlin came along. A sense of companionship and acceptance. Belonging always involves a choice. People do many things to demonstrate belonging such as many people strive to belong to a particular group, in wanting this they act and behave in a way that theoretically gives them the feeling of acceptance thus demonstrating belonging or wanting to belong. People can create themselves afresh, people have many choices when it comes to starting a new beginning but for people to create themselves afresh they first must make the choice too.

This text enables one to see the story from various angles. That Caitlin and Old Bill are preoccupied with Billy and their different relationships with him indicates that while he is estranged from his family, school and community he has forged a new belonging with these friends and they in turn have their lives changed by their belonging to him. This is Billys simple gift to them. The irony is that in different ways they are all at odds with society.

Yet the catalyst of Billys departure from home and his chance encounters with Caitlin and Old Bill produce a rich new experience of belonging.