

Spec slims – "migrant hostel" by peter skrzynecki essay sample

[Literature](#), [Poem](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Subject: Migrant Hostel is a poem composed by Peter Skrzynecki. It is a moving account of the experiences of migrants living in an overly-crowded lodge. The first stanza captures the temporary nature of the immigrants stay at the hostel; "comings and goings", "arrivals of newcomers" and "sudden departures". The second stanza goes on to express the cultural divisions existing within the hostel; "nationalities sought". The next stanza reminds the responder of the seasonal, short time spent in the hostel and the boredom, tedium and uncertainty which results. The final stanza concludes the poem by creating a strong sense of oppression, explaining that the hostel controlled the migrants' every action. Overall, Skrzynecki communicates that his stay within Migrant Hostel is a negative experience: chaotic, depersonalised and imprisoning.

Purpose: Skrzynecki's intention is to uncover the discrimination existing subconsciously within human thought. This relates to the concept of belonging. Belonging is a basic human need. Through cultural groups, age and socio-economic status individuals can gain acceptance by others and in turn, have an entity to belong to. The quote "nationalities sought each other out instinctively" shows that an individual's primary means differentiation is based on cultural heritage.

Emotions: There are a myriad of negative emotions Skrzynecki experiences during his stay at Migrant Hostel. Feelings of fear, confusion, alienation and isolation all add to a foreboding and animalistic atmosphere. Racial tension is also prevalent as nationalities divide and issues of superiority and stereotyping complicate the social landscape.

Craftsmanship i. e. techniques:

Sound: The use of alliteration is prominent. For example, "no one kept count of all the comings and goings" repeats a harsh, consonantal 'c' sound. The strong syllable 'c' dehumanises the migrants as there is sense of personal detachment. This is further achieved through a staccato (short, sharp) rhythm to the phrasing. Ultimately, the migrants will forever be the outsider, the eternal alien within a racist white society. The quote "that left us wondering who would be coming next" makes use of the soft 'w' sound. This fabricates hopelessness and weakness as the migrants are naive of what is going on around them. Foreigners are manipulated, oppressed and alienated which destroys their chance of truly belonging. 🎬📌 Language: Binary opposition is employed by Skrzynecki. For instance, "to pass in and out of lives that had only begun or were dying" concludes the poem. This contrast of those young and old shows another means of differentiation of migrants staying at the hostel – age. It also provides two opposing ideologies regarding age: the young have potential and possibility as their lives have "only [just] begun" while the elderly are in effect, "dying" and are no longer valuable within society.

This reaffirms stereotypes and discrimination based on age. One's identity plays a crucial role in with regards to belonging and age can ultimately determine whether or not a person belongs. 🎬📌 Imagery: The simile "like a homing pigeon circling to get its bearings" compares the migrants to a bird. Pigeons travel their entire lives which symbolises the eternal migration of foreigners within Australia. Thus they can never fully belong as a member of

the country. Barriers such as discrimination, social unrest and stereotypes exclude migrants from dominant culture. The word 'circle' also adds to this eternal battle for migrants. A circle has no beginning or end which emphasises that the struggle to belong is endless and an inherent human need worth fighting for. 🎬📌 Movement: Skrzynecki has a stream of consciousness approach to his poem as each stanza is one train/chain of thought. The use of punctuation creates free-flowing ideas. For example, the dash is used to create enjambment where the idea is continue beyond a couplet. The commas, semi-colons and colons provide pauses, which highlight particular ideas. In the third stanza, for example, Skrzynecki writes "always sensing a change in the weather: unaware of the season whose track we would follow".

The colon continues the idea of seasons throughout the stanza. This holds the poem together, creating uniformity. 🎬📌 Structure: The poem is four stanzas. The first stanza is seven lines, the second eight, the third six and the last eleven. The centre of the poem is the final stanza. Its longer length emphasises its importance. In this stanza Skrzynecki argues that the hostel is "a barrier" to belonging to Australian society. It is the hostel which unfairly categorises the migrants. The tone of the verse is reflective, with Skrzynecki providing memories of "the main gate" and "our doorstep". Active voice is given to the hostel which undercuts the agency of the migrants. This further alienates them and makes their attempts at belonging futile.

Summary: Australia is a cultural phenomenon – one of the most multicultural nations in the world. Migrant Hostel is poem where its composer Peter Skrzynecki reflects upon the experiences of living in a lodge as a migrant for two years. The concept of belonging is process driven and heavily based on dominant culture. Migrants are excluded and alienated from society due to their cultural identity and social issues such as white superiority, prejudices (e. g. age) and cultural stereotypes. Human beings need to belong to attain unity and associate with others. Migrants achieve this is through cultural groups.

SPECS SLIMS – Migrant Hostel

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