

# Skrzynecki belonging related texts

Life



Belonging is notorious for its complex nature. One person's perception of belonging can vastly differ from another's. This is displayed clearly in Peter Skrzynecki's poetry, in this essay however Feliks Skrzynecki and 10 Mary Street will be discussed in detail. To support the points raised and provide further examples of belonging's complexities the texts Dumb by Nirvana and the film Avatar directed by James Cameron. Firstly, in the poem Feliks Skrzynecki the persona describes the father figure as self-sufficient in the lines " My gentle father/kept pace only with the Joneses of his own minds making".

This is backed up later in the poem when we learn that Feliks has made no attempt to even learn English. This is the kind of complacency that the persona aspires towards. The hyperbole used in the words " swept its paths ten times around the world" shows us as readers the sheer determination Feliks possesses in his path to maintain his roots in his new country. This is juxtaposed in the lyrics to the song Dumb by Nirvana in which Kurt Cobain professes " I'm not like them but I can pretend". These lyrics are talking about conforming to belong.

The persona described in this song is different to those around him and feels that he needs to conform and be " like them" just to belong. This is the exact opposite to the father in Feliks Skrzynecki who refuses to be just like everyone else, he holds onto his culture whilst simultaneously absorbing the culture around him. Secondly, Belonging changes from person to person. For example in Avatar James Cameron uses biodiversity to convey his message about belonging. In the film, Jake Sully is a paraplegic and does not feel as though he belongs.

This is why he travels to Pandora, a distant planet, to take over his deceased brother's duties as a scientist. Jake belongs to the Na'vi people of Pandora because he has nothing to lose. James Cameron portrays Jake as, at first, incompetent. As the film progresses Jake's relationship with his foreign counterparts falls apart. His love interest Neytiri screams at him "you will never be one of the people". This line is perhaps the most powerful line in relation to belonging throughout the entire film.

This line portrays that sometimes no matter how hard one tries to belong through changing to better suit their surroundings it doesn't work. Of course, Jake ends up belonging but at this stage in the film he does not belong at all. The humans shun him and so do the Na'vi. This directly correlates to 10 Mary Street because both texts show the differing nature of belonging from person to person. In 10 Mary Street the parents have a garden which is symbolic of their roots in their new country.

The garden is religiously maintained and gives the parents a sense of belonging in Australia. In stark contrast to this is the persona, he says "my parents' watered plants - grew potatoes and rows of sweet corn: tended roses and camellias like adopted children. Home from school earlier I'd ravage the back garden like a hungry bird". These lines tell the reader that the boy takes the garden for granted and does not particularly care about his parents roots, presumably through lack of understanding.

Lastly, belonging has a complex and at times unidentifiable nature. This is shown in all of the chosen texts. Skrzynecki's deep detail in 10 Mary Street in reference to his visitors and their habits in the lines "Visitors that ate Kielbasa, salt herrings and rye bread... a dozen puffing Billies" tells us as

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readers that Skrzynecki scrupulously watched everything his visitors did. This portrays a sense of the caution of change and the fear Skrzynecki may have felt when these foreign visitors acted so strangely around him.

Similarly, in Feliks Skrzynecki the persona has a deep admiration for his father but also a great deal of distance, he does not ever describe any physical contact or conversation with Feliks which displays to the reader that Skrzynecki preferred to simply watch Feliks go about life rather than question him. The poet conveys a visual image of watching from afar in the lines “ My father sits out the evening With his dog, smoking, Watching stars and street lights come on, Happy as I have never been” in these lines an image of Skrzynecki admiring his father perhaps from a bedroom window is instantly implanted in the readers mind.

In addition, Nirvana’s song Dumb portrays the complex nature of belonging in the lines “ I think I’m dumb, maybe just happy”. These lines tell the listener that the persona described has conformed and although they know it is wrong and they feel “ dumb” about it they still try to convince themselves that it is making them happy. This is belonging in its most complex form, belonging to one’s self.

Finally, in James Cameron’s film text Avatar the protagonist does not belong on his home planet yet sees potential to belong on another. He is drawn into another culture and finds that he belongs better in an alien race than he does in his own world. This is in stark contrast to 10 Mary Street, in the poem the persona saw the Polish visitors as alien and he did not belong whereas Jake Sully does.

In conclusion, belonging is portrayed in many forms, be it through an individual's sense of inner belonging (Dumb), belonging to culture (10 Mary Street), belonging to a new country (Feliks Skrzynecki) or even belonging to a new race entirely (James Cameron's Avatar). An individual may shape their own sense of belonging or they may take another's ideology of belonging and use it to mould their own. Belonging can apply to a group or, more importantly, an individual. All four of the above texts deal with the dynamics of an individual's belonging.