

Belonging essay-



‘ An individual’s interaction with others and the world around them can enrich or limit their experience of belonging’ Discuss this view with details reference to your prescribed text and ONE other related text of your own choosing. An individuals’ sense of belonging is shaped by society and the world around them. A lack of interaction with society limits the sense of belonging felt thereby, confirming social separation. This can be compared to the sense of contentment experienced when interaction with society and the world around them is increased.

This contrast of social separation and contentment from the individual’s sense of belonging is evident in the texts: Strictly Ballroom by Baz Luhrmann and Wicked by Gregory Maguire. Throughout these texts the acceptance of others is shown to be the deciding factor of whether belonging is experienced. It is shown that belonging has a major role in the shaping of an individual. Throughout Strictly Ballroom, Doug is depicted to be a social outcast, craving to belong in the world of Dance Federation.

Comparisons in costuming of characters are used as a device to establish social barriers between Doug and the Dance Community. This social separation, as seen through differences in costuming, is established from the very beginning. In the opening scene, Baz Luhrmann uses mockumentary style to make a comparison of characters. The presentation of Shirley and Doug depicts the social divide. Shirley is presented as over the top, with exaggerated makeup, exaggerated face expressions and artificially coloured clothing. This depicts the loss of individualism. This is contrasted to the dull, drab clothing of Doug.

They are shown that even though they are sitting on the same couch and supposedly belong together, there is a social divide between the two. The costume differences emphasises the difference between them. This is further emphasised by the derogative language directed at Doug by Shirley. ' You silly man' shows how Doug is not accepted in the dance community and especially not by Shirley. Therefore establishing Doug as socially inferior. As seen in this scene, Doug's sense of belonging in the world surrounding him is limited by the interaction with the community around him due to the lack of acceptance.

A lack of interaction with others is further show to be a limitation of an individual's sense of belonging in Wicked by Gregory Maguire. Elphaba is shown to be a social outcast from the beginning. The lack of acceptance and belonging given by herfamilyis shown to affect her sense of belonging for the rest of her life. ' Melena couldn't bear to look at the thing' this shows the lack of acceptance towards Elphaba by Melena, Elphaba's mother. The use the word ' thing' shows the dehumanisation of Elphaba because of her green skin.

This further emphasises the lack of acceptance because of Elphaba's appearance. This dehumanisation is a constant theme within the novel. Elphaba is constantly referred to as an ' it' and ' thing' by the people surrounding her. This is seen to have an effect on Elphaba's reaction to human contact. ' The infant flinched and her backbone arched. ' Contact with Nanny after a couple weeks of non-contact with her parents as an infant is shown to a have a perverse effect on Elphaba. This reaction displays that lack of affection at early stages causes changes in behaviour.

Lack of interaction therefore severely affects the belonging felt by individuals. However, social separations' effect on an individual's sense of belonging can be contrasted to the heightened sense of belonging when an individual is interacting with others. In *Strictly Ballroom*, Fran is depicted as socially inferior due to her physical appearance. This is evident through the use of derogative language, which is used to talk down to Fran. 'Frangipani de la squishy mop' emphasises Fran's alienation from the dance community.

This inferiority is further revealed through the use of slapstick comedy, used to show how Fran is easily discarded as an unimportant figure. However, Scott's acceptance of her is shown to increase her sense of belonging and therefore develop her sense of self. This is shown through the visual metaphor of Fran's physical change from her ugly duckling stage to the transformation to a swan. Reflecting her sense of belonging increasing as she finds her place with Scott. This physical change includes the loss of frizzy hair, bad skin and teeth, unflattering clothes.

Ending with the leaving behind of the glasses. Visual language is further used to show her growth of confidence. Close up camera angles of Fran's feet is used to display the lack of confidence of Fran. She is shown to be unsure and shaky however, her steps become more confident and sturdy as her confidence grows. This therefore shows how the individual's sense of belonging can be enriched by relationships. The individual's sense of belonging and sense of self is shown to increase due to acceptance by social groups.

In *Wicked*, Gregory Maguire explores this concept through the character development of Elphaba. Elphaba is seen as an enactment of the devil spirit

due to her green skin tone. ' She is the devil'. Throughout the novel, Elphaba has to fight against these evil connotations, which have arisen due to her appearance. However, Furius acceptance of her and her appearance, leads to her acceptance of herself. ' She had at last understood that she was beautiful. In her own way. ' This demonstrates the increased sense of belonging to the world around her has influenced her acceptance of herself.

Through *Wicked* by Gregory Maguire and *Strictly Ballroom* by Baz Luhrmann an individual's sense of self in relation to the relationships they form is explored. Through this exploration, the character's behaviour shows the effect of social separation and inclusion shapes the individual. The individual is seen to react positively in reaction to a greater sense of belonging. Comparatively, without social interaction the individual's character is shown to become reclusive and therefore their sense of belonging decreases.