

The simple gift



Why is belonging significant to each and every one of us? What benefits does belonging impart for the individual? The real question is what is belonging?

Belonging is a sense of acceptance felt when an individual gains an understanding of themselves in relation to others and the wider world. Sense of acceptance can be experienced through time and different types of relationships or connections with their family, friends, and community, which may enhance the ability to belong or feel as though they belong.

Good morning teachers and my fellow students, today, I am going to discuss with you my interpretation of acceptance in the environment of the individual and how it has been represented through the two significant texts including, free verse book *The Simple Gift* by Steven Herrick and wordless picture book *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan. Each one of these texts' discusses and portrays the idea of being accepted or not being accepted in the environment through different circumstances but in a similar way.

The first text is *The Simple Gift* by Steven Herrick which examines the life of a 16-year-old boy called Billy Lockett, who ran away from home because of the sense of isolation which shapes his identity and value. In 'Longlands Road' the imagery of the dilapidated house portrays the sense of denial that Billy has experienced in the past. The disconnected relationship between the place and his father, led Billy to move away from his environment to gain the sense of connection he never experienced.

The isolation caused by an abusive father is seen in the quote "gave me one hard backhand across the face, so hard I fell down... and slammed the door on my sporting childhood." pg. 15-16'. The technique that is used here is a metaphor explaining how Billy stopped playing sport. Billy's journey of

alienation ends when he moves and meets an old alcoholic man called Bill and a rich caring 17-year-old girl called Caitlin. Billy felt a physical and emotional sense of belonging to his new environment in the way its more welcoming and friendly than his hometown.

Even though Billy does not belong physically, he feels he belongs emotionally because he's away from his dad's merciless treatment and he feels safe. The sense of acceptance of Bendarat can be seen in the quote "Bendarat is the perfect town" and this portrays that even though it's not a perfect town but Billy sees it as a faultless town due to the connection that this town has provided Billy through Old Billy and Caitlin. When Old Billy gives the key to house and Billy are not homeless boy that is not accepted but a boy that has a family and is secure.

At the end of the book *Belonging* reaches beyond boundaries 'and I looked up into the sky, the deep blue sky that Old Bill and I shared.' (p. 205). This quote demonstrates the technique of symbolism the start of new journey of acceptance that comes from the connections that the individual gains through their relation with place, family or time. The second text that I have selected to portray ideas understanding and importance of belonging is *The Arrival* by Shaun Tan. Similar to the *Simple Gift* the migrant character in *The Arrival* leaves sense of isolation to look for an environment that would accept him.

The story is told as a series of wordless images that might seem to come from a long forgotten time. Nameless man leaves his wife and child in an impoverished town that was destroyed because of the war. The man travels to an unknown country seeking better prospects for him and his family. This

is seen when the visual techniques represent the family coming together. The most significant technique used on every single page of the book that lets the responder not only be in the characters shoes, but also contemplate what it would be like to be in a migrants situation, is the lack of words.

This lack of words helps the responder contemplate the alienation felt by not only the character but by all migrants entering a foreign land and culture with a completely different language. Other than the responders' contemplation of the alienation felt by the character and migrants, it also forces the responder to interpret the visual without the guidance that only words can provide finally the joy shown by the protagonist's daughter in the final chapter of the book shows the safety that has been resulted.

The Simple Gift and the Arrival are similar in the way both of the main characters left their homes to look for a place that will provide them the acceptance and the belongings they need. Both of the characters environments did not provide these individual with the sense of fellowship. In The Arrival the man travels and leaves his wife and daughter to look for a better life for them in a new town.

He was not force to leave but chose to leave to search for a better life for him and his family, even though he was accepted in that place but the circumstances of the war led to his movement. Much like the Simple Gift, Billy left his town for a better life away from his abusive and unaccepted father again he was not forced to leave but chose to look for a place that acknowledged him. Billy did not associate with his family or town but in The Arrival the man belonged but chose to leave for a better existence. Both characters went to search for a better and acceptance life.

When Billy left he did not care about his father because he was the reason Billy left to find acceptance in the new experience where as the character in The Arrival was accepted in the town but chose to leave because of what the trouble and obstacles that the war produced. Family was a big part of the character life in the arrival where as in the simple gift Billy's real family had no part in his life. In both texts the characters did belong in their first towns but in the simple Gift Billy chose not to belong where as in the arrival the character chose to belong.

This shows that the barrier to belonging is linked to the action of the individual interacting to the community and place to gain the feeling of acceptance. Lastly status had played a role in the movement of the both character, this is seen when the nameless man and Billy left because the poor conditions they lived in. Both books have similar technique in the way they both portray the symbolism of new journey of acceptance. In conclusion belonging is a lifelong requirement for the individual.

Although how and where we experience a sense of kinship can change, but it remains a key contributor to our wellbeing and participation throughout our lives. Our sense of association can emerge from the connections we make with people, places, culture and groups. The Simple Gift and the arrival portray a clear understand of the importance and significance of belonging. Each character wants to feel belonged and they go and look for belonging. This shows that belonging is imperative in each and every one of us for our wellbeing.