

Belonging



“ A sense of belonging is shaped by connections to other people, places and things” Belonging in some instances cannot be beneficial for ones wellbeing. Negative consequences may arise from the way in which one develops belonging. Barriers to belonging can be imposed or voluntarily constructed, and allowing one to distort the barriers can affect the way one belongs to people, places, groups or the larger world.

Peter Skrzynecki's persistent desire to connect/belong to his cultural heritage is carried forth in various poems, such as Feliks Skrzynecki and St. Patrick's College. Cultural barriers determine whether the composer/responder is able to belong, and shows the ways in which he attempts to belong. The continual desire to belong to a social group and the want to mature is defined through the film Mean Girls by Mark Waters in 2004 and the TV series One Tree Hill written by Mark Schwahn/ Directed by Bryan Gordon.

As a teenager, the necessity to belong to a group is crucial. However her choice to socialise with one group and not another infringes on her friendship, and inturn creates tragedy for all her friends around her. Connections can be formulated through relations with people, places, groups and the larger world. For the composer to be connected through the poem Feliks Skrzynecki, he learns to understand his father, with much attention around his cultural identity and connections with his place of birth.

However, the son feels dislocated from his place of birth along with his perceived cultural isolation as a migrant. This results in a lack of connectedness from social and cultural groups: ' Happy as I have never been'. His father's connection with his places of birth is maintained, despite

his exile, and consequently his perceptions of his self and identity are intact. However, the son realises his sudden dislocation with adolescence and movement away from his cultural identity.

The opening line of 'Feliks Skrzynecki,' 'My gentle father,' allows the reader to predict that this poem can not only be considered a noticeable tribute to the composer's father, but can also imply a physical journey. This idea of a journey becomes more evident throughout various areas of the poem including the metaphor used in stanza seven, "After that, like a dumb prophet, watched me pegging my tents further and further south of Hadrian's wall. This line allows the reader to understand that the father could foresee the result of his son's detachment, but chooses to stay quiet to allow his son to learn for himself. The line in stanza three, 'His Polish friends, always shook hands too violently' conveys a feeling of discomfort within the son, it is evident that the son feels detached from the "violent" ways of his heritage and feels like he does not belong, like he is an outcast.

This line strongly relates to Mean Girls, when Cady finds that after she confessed to the teacher of what she has done with that burn book and said that Ms Norbury sold drugs on the side as her second job she lost all her friends as she was trying to sabotage Regina George she became just like her, in the lunchroom she was alone everyone looking at her in despair she had nowhere to sit so she sat in the girls toilets feeling isolated.

This emphasises the negative consequence of the way she developed belonging so therefore she suffered the consequences of not belonging because she is a bitch just like Janis Ian says. Schooling is supposedly a place which nourishes an individual and promotes one's growth, sense of

community and identity. However, Peter Skrzynecki's poem St Patrick's College challenges this idea through the depiction of an individual who is disengaged and struggles to develop a sense of connection and find his place within the school community.

The reflective mood of the poem is established through the use of past tense; Skrzynecki also uses a rather unenthusiastic tone, short sentences and the repetition of "for eight years" to create a chilling atmosphere and describes the long and monotonous time spent in St Patrick's College which has played a significant part in his life.

This also connects to the TV series One Tree Hill written by Mark Schwahn/ Directed by Bryan Gordon in season One, throughout the season the character Hayley is studious, and always puts maximum effort into her school work never lets anything distract from her studies, but then she started to associate with the popular kids such as the jocks on the basketball team in which she developed a relationship with Nathan the captain of the basketball team, also became friends with the cheerleaders.

Hayley was known as tutor girl but once she interacted with the popular kids she started to belong and tutor girl was no longer tutor girl it was just Hayley. The opening lines, "Impressed by the uniforms" demonstrates that the identity's mother was motivated by "superficial" and values of social status when sending him to the school. It was in all of her intentions to provide him with "What was best", however, the school had become somewhat of an obstacle and the role questions whether this was "for the best" following all the "darkness" he was forced to endure.

Furthermore the idea that uniforms allows individuals to “fit in” and identifies that the individual has an affiliation with the school is contrasted to “stuck pine needles into the motto” which indicates the individual’s anxiety and dismissive attitude towards the school and its values. The character does not develop any real connections or relationships and feels disconnected from the school and its traditions.

The ideology of uniforms relates to a scene in One Tree Hill episode 14 when Brooke is standing in complete darkness against a white wall with light shining over her with an overhead that has words on it previously of what she thinks about herself she says: that’s what I’m afraid of. Not being enough, not.. Good enough, not smart enough, not pretty enough, not.. the effect this has is that everyone always has doubts and worries whether they are pretty enough the technique here is juxtaposing because in One Tree Hill they don’t have a uniform but in the poem St.

Patrick’s college they do, not wearing uniform defines you and shows your personality wearing your everyday clothes which therefore gives opportunity for people to judge them for what they wear and it’s all about being a fashion contest. Who is better? Whereas wearing uniform you all look the same and therefore there is no opportunity for judgement. The disconnectedness is emphasised through the image of “Our Lady... with her outstretched arms” attempts to portray a sense of embracement and welcoming, however this is juxtaposed to “her face overshadowed by clouds” which creates a sorrowful and sinister atmosphere.

In the final stanza, the image of “Our Lady still watching, above, unchanged by eight years of weather” conveys the idea that the persona had no real

connection to the school and through the eight years, the “ Lady” who has been watching over him and reinforces the feeling of not belonging to this religious (something missing word) In the end the quote “ A sense of belonging is shaped by connections to other people, places and things” which is conveyed throughout the studies of the Skrzynecki poems which are Feliks Skrzynecki and St Patricks College and the two related materials the film Mean Girls by Mark Waters in 2004 and the TV series One Tree Hill written by Mark Schwahn/ Directed by Bryan Gordon they both have a range of belonging and not belonging. Barriers to belonging can be imposed or voluntarily constructed, and allowing one to distort the barriers can affect the way one belongs to people, places, groups or the larger world.