

Idea of belonging



The idea of belonging is an important and fundamental value in our lives. Belonging most commonly emerges from experience and notions of identity, relationships, acceptance and understanding. The sense of belonging is represented in various ways throughout texts such as “Ancestor” by Peter Skrzynecki and ‘China Coin’. Each of the texts has a wide range of ideas on how belonging is created through personal experiences and notion of acceptance and understanding.

In “Ancestors” Peter Skrzynecki expresses a detachment from ancestors resulting in a lack of belonging in terms of relationship and understanding. Being separated from his heritage, the speaker experiences a kind of guilt about not being attached to his parents’ culture, but also a sense that this issue will have to be resolved, even if doing so may involve some distress and turmoil. The use of active voice in the poem shows – there are no passive voice verbs at all -- his need to do something about the problem of belonging.

The “bearded, faceless men” represent the shadow/spirit of his ancestors but the speaker may also be actually referring to photographs he has seen of these ancestors “standing shoulder to shoulder” – which also depicts the unity of these ancestors and the force they create is firm in his mind and forces him to find out what his roots are. “The eyes never close” shows that the moment is still and may be evidence that he is in a dream partly based on looking at such photos. A questioning tone also carries on throughout the poem.

This questioning is about his identity through examination of the past which is represented by the ancestors, creating a sense of reflection and investigation on his relationship to his ancestors. But we can see that throughout the poem Skrzynecki is refusing to explore the past of these ancestors because he is afraid of the tainted, torturous past which stops him continued searching for a home: “ To what star do their footprints lead? ” This not only evokes his fear of the past but also shows that his uncertainty about re-rooting to his ancestral culture.

The ancestors “ Never speak ” implying that those ancestors communicate to “ you ” in some other way. The poem is mainly a nightmare about the idea of ancestry/belonging, and Skrzynecki uses the blood allusion in “ The wind tastes of blood ” to show that the root is in our blood which connects us to our ancestors. However, the speaker’s sense of alienation from his ancestors has blocked his ability to belong and find the relationship between him and the ancestors. Blood ” therefore limits our understanding of our past, which is what we originally belong to. Comparing to Peter Skrzynecki, Leah in The China Coin chooses to belong with her mum and her friends and being positive and happy. At beginning, Leah's relationship with her mum Joan was strained since she refers to her as the “ evil aunt ” “ Joan ”, evil aunt is a technique of metaphor, it shows negative feelings “ Joan ” is a technique of 3rd person which shows the distance between Leah & “ Joan.

Especially when Leah is lost during the student protest and result in a huge argument with Joan “ It's your rotten China. ” presents again a big difference from Both Joan and Leah, through the emphasis on “ your ” and “ from China ” with the descriptive word “ rotten ” Comparing to Peter's relationship with his

school and folk museum, Leah's relationship with her mum at first was even more unsatisfactory. But rather than running away and belonging to someone else, Leah has stayed with her mum and tried to fix this relationship.

When she decides to end the conflict with her mother and rebuild the relationship, saying "It's over" Leah took Joan's hand and squeezed "we've been through a lot, eh" The action of squeezing echoes they are becoming closer. While Leah decided to belong to her Chinese culture, she also finds a second home. Even though Leah is reserved, the warmth and acceptance of this family draw her in, it's also for the first time Leah was thinking of Joan's family as her family. Furthermore, Leah again builds relationships with family members Ke, Linan and uncle Tong.

When the other half of the coin falls from the croll. Leah's reaction is positive" Li-Nan crushed her pounded her on the back and called her "sister" The symbolism of the strong hug and approval by Li Nan shows her acceptance into this family. Leah also build a special relationship with her cousin Ke. When Joan's in the hospital, Ke becomes the only one who Leah can depend on. She decides to build a relationship with him in order to belong with him. Since then, Ke refers to Leah with the word "mate", This typical Australian word presents Ke accepted Leah and her culture.

Also mate's a very positive word. It shows a positive relationship with people that's what it exactly represents here. Comparing to Peter's homeless, Leah both physically and mentally chooses to belong, therefore, she gets a positive and good result. Each of the texts shows us a strong will to belong and we can see that the ways people achieve belonging emerge from all

these elements. Therefore it can be said that the texts have provided a wide range of ideas on belonging that support the statement that “ a sense of belonging can emerge from experiences and notions of acceptance and understanding. ”