

Explore how
perceptions of
belonging and not
belonging can be
influenced by conne...

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Perceptions of belonging or not belonging can be influenced by the connections to places through memories, culture, beliefs and many other aspects. Personal connections to places are the links that are the strongest, as they have a first hand account of belonging or not belonging. Jane Harrison ' Rainbows End' play set in the 1950's, shows belonging or not belonging to places, predominantly through connections with culture. Also, belonging and not belonging to places is evident in the film ' The Blind Side' directed by John Lee Hancock, released in 2009.

The links to a place is enforced by the characters passion to a sport. ' Looking for Alibrandi" the novel, published in 1992 written by Melina Marchetta, demonstrates through culture and background connections to places and how the characters belong or not belong. The individuals in these texts are enriched and challenged by society and others. In Jane Harrison's play, ' Rainbows End' the play is centred around the aboriginals being assimilated into the white society and the hardships and struggles that came along with that transition.

But, characters seem to still be isolated and rejected from the white society because of their aboriginal culture. Harrison shows the depth of their belonging to a place through feelings and physical disorientation when away from where they feel home is; this is evident after the flood when they are taken away from their safe place. In Act one Nan Dear wasn't content but she had accepted that she was forced to live in a humpy on the riverbank, she would always refer to how happy she was at the Murray Darling, or what her culture calls Cummeragunja.

The repetition of Nan Dear saying this symbolises her strong connection to a place. After the flood Nan Dear and her family are forced to move again because their house was destroyed. In Act two, scene seven, Nan Dear becomes sick from being away from her home, the place she feels she belongs. The strength of Nan Dear's physical and mental connection to her home is so strong that being distanced from it has made her ill. Dolly leaves Nan Dear with Errol and she says "No way I'm going to fall off my perch in his company." By Nan Dear saying this, it highlights the cultural differences and beliefs of that time.

Nan feels as though she cannot be in a 'white' person's presence to pass. Errol offers to drive Nan Dear to Mooroopna or the Murray so she would feel comfortable and not displaced where she is. Errol's offer shows that through the younger generations, the mind set of segregation and downgrading of aboriginals is changing in the eyes of the 'white' youth. This scene shows how people can have a physical, spiritual, emotional and mental connection with a place. Through these aspects, they help the responder to get a connection with the meaning of the scene and sense of change.

Similarly, in the book, 'Looking for Alibrandi' by Melina Marchetta, Josephine's Nonna Katia is emotionally connected to a place in Queensland from when she first moved to Australia from Italy. Her husband was absent for extended periods and she was left alone in a foreign country, unable to speak the English language. This language barrier proved to be a challenge and struggle for not only Nonna Katia but for most immigrants from that era.

Katia became friends with a man, who we learn is Christina Alibrandi biological father.

This link strengthens the connection she has to her place in Queensland as it reminds her of love. Katia began to feel accepted and safe in her new place, she felt like she belonged to her home and her place. Language became less of an issue and Katia grew into a liberated, independent young woman.

Although her home was dirty she felt like it was hers. She says, " It was old and the floor was dirt, but it was mine. " This quote gives a sense of ownership and pride in what she belongs to. It also shows the simplicity of the time and how so little meant so much in comparison to modern day values.

In ' The blind Side' directed by John Lee Hancock, the lead character Michael experiences belonging to a family when Leanne Tuhey takes Michael in off the street and treats him with respect and love, like no one else had ever done for him. Hancock shows Michael's differing emotions of belonging and not belonging through image flashbacks and colour changes. Hancock uses black and white images to represent his past where he did not belong and how it was a darker time for him. He then contrasts this by using colour to represent the present and how he belongs and is happy.

The colour symbolises hope, happiness and perseverance through the hard times. His passion to achieve greatness leads him into a lighter future.

Michael had always felt isolated from the " white" society like Nan Dear, Dolly and Gladys because of their race and background. Leanne, like Errol, saw beyond the stereotype of their race and looked at the individual and

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what they had to offer. Leanne is from a wealthy family and provides Michael with a room of his own. He says: Michael: " I've never had one before"
Leanne: " your own room? " Michael: " a bed"

This scene showed the viewers and Leanne how different Michael and his society lives compared to them. Michael finally felt apart of something; like he had a family and he belonged to them. Education connects people to a place through emotional memories; it also plays a role in all three texts. In ' Rainbows End,' Nan Dear buys Dolly encyclopaedias because she wants Dolly to be educated so she can have a good career and future. Education is important to the Tuhey family also; Michael is told that he has to bring his grades up so he can be eligible to play football.

Football is used as an incentive to achieve, for the Tuhey family sport is a privilege not a right, it has to be earned. He is provided with a tutor to help with his schooling. Football is Michael's and the Tuhey's passion as a family and its what Michael really feels he belongs to and can excel at. Josephine Alibrandi also values education in her life as her mother and father are educated and she is on an academics scholarship at her school. School can be a factor that influences individual's perception of belonging or not belonging.

Belonging or not belonging in a school environment starts from day 1 of schooling through social cliques and hierarchies, an individual's sense of belonging or not belonging can be linked to the place they were educated. Experiences, past memories and culture can hinder or assist an individual to belong in society and to groups, including school. Michael feels displaced and unsure of where he belongs when he goes back to his family home in the '

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hood. ' His mother had been evicted and he feels a sense of loss and abandonment.

Michael has an internal conflict of love and sadness, he chases the love of a mother but is saddened by her lacking involvement and presence in his life. He is seen sitting at his former front door sobbing and alone. A similar scene is created in Rainbows End, Dolly is by the river, unsure and confused about where she belongs and who she is, and she is also sobbing. Both of these scenes show an emotional connection to a place and how their perception of belonging is altered and influenced by memories, feelings and connections to place. Perceptions of belonging or not belonging are evident in all three texts.

A range of influences such as memories, culture, society and other individuals can change or mutate an individual's perception of belonging or not belonging. A change of feelings towards belonging or not belonging is evident in all three texts as characters grow and change over the duration of the texts. Belonging or not belonging may not be clear to start with but, through different influences the characters are shaped into what they belonged or not belonged to. Their own experiences gave them knowledge or barriers towards situations resulting in them belonging or not belonging.