

# Typical Australian



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The Australian Identity I am here today to discuss our Australian Identity. How do you imagine a typical Australian? Maybe you see a blonde haired, blue eyed surfing babe? Or a bushman who drinks Bushels tea and four X beers while munching on some snags cooked on the BBQ? Or perhaps you see someone like Steve Irwin, our iconic crocodile hunter. Or do you picture the movie “ Crocodile Dundee? ” Australians are stereotyped and our typical Australian is usually imagined to be male. (Click) Russell Ward, well known author, portrays his view of the traditional Aussie as a practical man who is rough, tough bushman that holds true friendship and loyal spirits. Today I will be analysing two poems and one play and determining whether they are reinforcing or challenging the mythical Australian Identity and Russell Ward’s quote. (Click) The poem “ If I was the Son of an Englishman” written by poet Komninos Papadopoulos takes a critical view of Australians and the some of the attitudes, values and beliefs which exclude certain groups from being accepted in Australian society.

The poem describes the Australia through a migrant who feels that because of his cultural background, he isn’t treated as a real Aussie and will never really be apart of Australian culture. Komninos uses a rhyme scheme of ABCB to engage the reader and make the poem more appealing. In the first stanza, he discusses some of the positive opportunities Australia has to offer “ I could be a union boss or a co-star with Skippy; I could even be prime-minister” but only IF he was an Australian.

As the poem progresses he begins to describe some negative aspects of Australian Culture “ I could desecrate the countryside, and destroy the kangaroo. ” (Click Twice) The author has used humour, sarcasm, simple

language and typical Australian phrases and slang such as “ Fair Dinkum” and “ True Blue” to reinforce the authors irritation at the Australian culture. Repetition of phrases “ If I was the son of an Englishman, I’d really be true blue” helps draw the reader’s attention to the main point of the poem; being that if the author was the son of an Englishman, he’d be accepted as an Australian citizen. (Click) The author attempts to create an image of Australians being racist (shown in stanza two lines twenty-one and twenty-two “ I could joke about the Irish, the Greeks, the Abos and the Jews”) (Click) also describing Aussie as inconsiderate and disrespectful of their land (shown in stanza two, lines eighteen and nineteen “ I could desecrate the countryside and destroy the Kangaroo) it encourages the reader to think critically about Australian culture.

In this poem women and children are both silenced, but this poem is referring to all Australians. “ If I was the Son of an Englishman” is a representation of text that challenges Ward’s quote, and his portrayal of the typical Australian Identity. (Click) The second poem I have chosen to analyse is written by the famous Australian poet Banjo Patterson. “ The Man from Snowy River” is a very well-known Australian poem.

Tells the exhilarating story of a horseback chase to recapture the colt of a prize-winning racehorse that escaped from its paddock. Riders gather in an attempt to detain the horses, but the brumbies descend a steep slope, and the riders give up the pursuit, except the nameless, young hero, who rides his pony down the steep cliff to save the day, recapture the horse and turning into a legend. The poem encourages the message of “ Don’t judge a book by its cover. ” It has a rhyme scheme of ABAB CDCD.

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Poetic devices such as (Click) alliteration and onomatopoeia, have been used, and can be seen in lines such as (Click) “ Snowy River riders on the mountains make their home” and (Click) “ resounded to the thunder of the tread” (Click) Metaphors such as “ And one was there, a stripling on a small and weedy beast” and “ he bore the badge of gameness in his quick and fiery eye. ” (Click) Similes shown as “ the old man with his hair as white as snow” and “ He raced him down the mountain like a torrent down its bed. ” All successfully combine together to paint the picture in the readers’ mind of the galloping horses and the thrilling chase.

The reader is able to imagine the horses running wild and the Australian bushman chasing after them. (Click) Typical Australian language and slang is used. Words and phrases such as “ bushmen love hard riding where the wild bush horses are” and “ And he swung his stockwhip round” help communicate to the reader attitudes, values and beliefs of the true Australian spirit and mateship. Throughout the story, the mood is exciting and fast-paced with tense anticipation, leading up to the exciting climatic victory. In this poem, women and children are marginalised.

The bushman riders are men and during those times the women and children stayed at home while the men worked during the day. “ The Man from Snowy River” is a ballad which reinforces the typical Australian Identity, as the rough and tough man who is willing to take risks and challenges. The hero in this poem is brave, resourceful and thrill-seeking, displaying the qualities that Russell Ward describes as being part of the mythical Australian Identity. (Click) The One Day of the Year is a celebrated Australian play written by Alan Seymour in 1960.

The play recounts the story of the Cook family around Anzac day. Alf, an aging digger, who served in WW1, celebrates Anzac Day with a few beers his and mate Wacka Dawson Hughie (Alf's son) is attending university where he meets his girlfriend Jan. Hughie feels embarrassed and ashamed of his parents and shares very different views of Anzac day. Whilst Alf sees Anzac day as a day that war veterans get together, drink and can feel special, Hughie regards it as merely an excuse for them all to get drunk. Jan and Hughie set out to do an article for the University paper about the Anzac's.

Hughie takes photographs of Anzac day rebellions drunk and vomiting on the streets. When Alf sees the article even Dot, the peacekeeping mother of the family, cannot stop the huge conflict that arises. Through the use of a range of different characters and beliefs, the play challenges AND reinforces Russell Ward's idea of the Australian identity. The characters of Alf and Hughie share very different, contrasting views of Anzac day. (Click) Alf is stereotyped by Alan Seymour to construct a character that portrays the typical Australian bloke, reinforcing Russell Ward's quote.

Alf believes Anzac day is the day that all who served in the war, are able to celebrate, drink beer and feel proud. He often says on Anzac day " It's the old diggers' day today" and " I'm bloody Australian". (Act 2, Scene 1, page 52) (Click) However Hughie believes Anzac day should not be celebrated and Australian men are using it as an excuse to get drunk. He believes the day is a waste of time, and together Hughie and his aristocratic girlfriend Jan, write an article stating Australians on Anzac day to be a " A screaming tribe of great, stupid, drunken no-hopers" (Act 3, Scene 1, Page 87) (Click)

Russell Ward's quote declares that the mythical idea of an Australian is someone who "swears hard and consistently gambles heavily and often drinks deeply on occasion. He will stick to his mates through thick and thin, even if he thinks they're wrong." Alf's character reinforces Russell Ward's quote. Alf drinks beer heavily (especially on Anzac Day) speaks with strong Australian slang and often swears using words such as "bugger" and "bloody". He believes in the Australian culture and that Aussies these days are becoming disrespectful and ungrateful for the men who served in the war.

Hughie's character however, challenges the quote asking the reader "Is getting drunk on Anzac Day disrespecting the remembrance of soldiers who fought in the war?" Hughie has just started university, and believes himself to be more knowledgeable and above his parents' immaturity. Wacka and Alf share a very close friendship. The two mates have been through the war together and display qualities of mateship that Russell Ward describes in his quote. They stick by each other through thick and thin and are satisfied with their lives.

The character of Dot is represented as the typical housewife. Even though Ward's quote somewhat marginalizes women, and our society usually visualizes a male as our typical Australian, Dot also displays similar qualities of the typical Australian man Russell Ward describes. (Click) As demonstrated in these two poems and the play, Australians and our country can be perceived in many ways. "If I Was the Son of an Englishman" is an example text that challenges Ward's ideas about the Australian identity by portraying Australians as racists and judgemental. The Man from Snowy

River” reinforces Russell Ward’s quote by describing a rough and tough bushman that is willing to give anything a go. “ The One Day of the Year” reinforces AND challenges Ward’s ideas by using a range of characters of different beliefs. The characters of Alf, Dot and Wacka all reinforce Ward’s quote, while the characters of Hughie and Jan challenge the quote. Many different stereotypes exist and everyone has their own opinions. So no matter how YOU perceive Australia, we are apart of a beautiful country full of amazing culture, heritage and people of all different sorts; and we should ALL be proud to be an Aussie!!