

# Belonging essay



**ASSIGN  
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Peter Kim ‘ Gaita brilliantly captures the distressing immigrant experience of struggle and displacement in the rugged Australian landscape. ’ Discuss the ways Raimond Gaita explores these experiences in *Romulus, My Father* and how they’re explored in ONE other related text of your own choosing. Many immigrants describe their initial experience of Australia to be one of struggles and displacement. This is likely due to a lack of attachment to the rugged Australian landscape and unfamiliar people.

Raimond Gaita in his memoir *Romulus, My Father*, and Sobonfu Some in his short story *A Place to Belong* both explore the immigrant experience of struggle and displacement through contrasting views of the natural surroundings and a sense of foreign place acting as a barrier to affinity. In *Romulus, My Father*, the loneliness and desolation felt by immigrants is highlighted by the language used to describe the natural environment surrounding Romulus and Christine at the time, and is juxtaposed with Raimond’s view of the landscape.

The use of alliteration in “ European or English eye” used to describe Romulus’ perspective of the landscape highlights the inability for Romulus to adapt to the new environment due to his strong connection to his homeland and Raimond states that “ even after forty years, my father could not become reconciled to it”. Likewise, to Christine, her new life in Australia was one of isolation and loneliness. “ A dead red gum stood only a hundred metres from the house and became for my mother a symbol of her desolation”.

The use of red imagery evokes thoughts relating to death, emphasised by the word “ dead” preceding it. Like Romulus, Christine was unable to feel attached to the Australian environment and it mirrored her discomfort of the new life in Australia and Romulus went as far as to planting peppercorns which were used to “ mediate between local and European landscapes”. To Raimond however, who is accustomed to life in Australia, “ The landscape seemed to have a special beauty, disguised until I was ready for it”.

The contrast in views between Romulus and Christine, and Raimond highlight the struggles of Romulus and Christine to belong to this new environment due to their sense of foreign place which act as a barrier to forming a new connection to the land and people, where as Raimond is able to see the “ beauty” of the Australian landscape as he does not see Australia as a foreign place. Similarly, in A place to belong, Some contrasts the weather and landscape of his home ountry with those of his lovers country to display his inability to bond with the new country. He describes the houses of his home to be “ nicely smoothed with cow dung, ash and the juice of some plants”. The ironic use of the word “ nicely” reveals that Some felt a strong connection to his home and could not “ imagine something better than this land”. He compares the houses of his home to the “ multi-storey buildings” and houses which “ were so well crafted that I wondered if they were made just to be admired”.

These differences in landscapes encourage his sense of foreign place which act as a barrier to forming relationships with other people in the new country and is further emphasised by the cold weather which he was unaccustomed to. Some’s use of hyperbole in “ The winter took an eternity to go away”

reinforces his inability to fit into the new environment as the unaccustomed cold served to emphasise his sense of a foreign place and act as a barrier to new relationships.

In conclusion, *Romulus, My Father* by Raimond Gaita and *A Place to Belong* by Sobonfu Some both reveal the distressing immigrant experience by focusing on the environment of the new land and by exploring the sense of a foreign place which acts as a barrier to affinity. In *Romulus, My Father*, he does this by comparing Christine and Romulus' views of the land with Raimond's and in *A Place to Belong*, Some does so by comparing his new environment to his old.