

Exploring Issues of Identity and Belonging

Written by Laura Deriu and Julie Mitchell

Edited by Janet McCurry, Amanda Collins and Debbie de Laps

Designed and formatted by Eveline Visser

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Section A: Introduction to the Context

Who am I?

Who am I? Who are you? Very simple words but very complex questions!

There is a story told that one day a philosopher was sitting in the Tiergarten, Frankfurt, looking rather shabby, when the park-keeper mistook him for a tramp and asked him gruffly, "Who are you?" To this enquiry the philosopher replied bitterly, "I wish I knew." A similar story is told of Marlon Brando. When asked "How are you?" he replied, "How do I know how I am, when I don't even know who I am." The writer Edward Dahlberg observed, "At nineteen I was a stranger to myself, at forty I asked 'Who am I?', at fifty I concluded I would never know." Woody Allen put it a little differently. He said that his only regret in life was that he wasn't somebody else.

(Story found at <http://www.christianity.co.nz/ident1.htm>)

For most of us defining the 'self' seems to be a central, challenging, puzzling and ongoing task in our lives.

On one level *Who am I?* can be answered by referring to one's DNA or fingerprints – these physical elements of being human are unique to each person. Yet few of us would find this a sufficient or satisfactory response. Indeed, the experiences of the 'valids' in *Gattaca* shows that this view of identity merely reduces individuals to a shallow functional state, with limited personal emotional and intellectual diversity. When we fill out forms that require information about our 'selves', like name, address, birth date, sex, marital status, awards, achievements, we are keenly aware that this information doesn't tell anyone who we *really* are. We would want to say that there are dimensions to our 'self' that cannot be categorised and quantified like this. We may find William James' (a C19th American psychologist and philosopher) description of the material 'me', the social 'me' and the spiritual 'me' a useful starting point in defining identity. Lucinda Katz, from the National Association of Independent Schools in the US describes eight major and five minor categories of identity:

The major categories are:

Ability: learning, social, psychological, emotional, and physical attributes

Age: chronological, developmental, and generational stages

Ethnicity: national origin, linguistic background, immigrant status

Gender: male or female identity

Race: traditional anthropological categories such as Caucasian, Asian, African, and so on; may include bi-racial identity

Religion: major religions as well as the degree of cultural and religious observance

Sexual Orientation: gay, lesbian, bisexual, and heterosexual

Socio-economic status: class differences, educational background, and social orientation.

The minor categories are:

Situational Factors: death of a family member, transient family patterns, chronic illness

Geographic Origin: national, regional, or state origin; urban, rural, or suburban orientation

Marital Status: single, married, divorced

Physical Appearance: observable characteristics that cause negative reactions

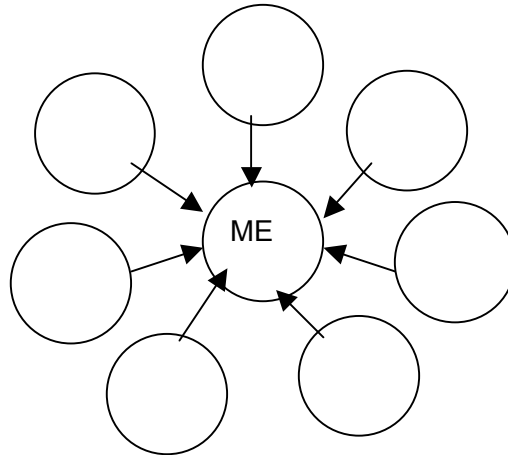
Role and Career: parenting, grand-parenting, adoption; working parent, at-home parent, dual career family, etc.

(From: <http://www.nais.org/publications/ismagazinearticle.cfm?ItemNumber=144259>)

For the classroom:

- Using the categories above, create an identity map (something like the one below) for each of the main characters in the texts as you study them.

Example of a mind map:



- Create the same sort of map of yourself.
- Is this map an adequate representation of 'who you are'? If not, what is missing? Describe this.
- Working with a partner, create a similar map for each other. Compare your partner's perception of who you are with your own. What comments and conclusions can you make about this?
- Many of the aspects you've noted on your identity map will change over time. Does this mean our identity is always changing? Is there something at the core that remains constant despite 'external' changes?

Psychological approaches

Psychologists and philosophers seem to agree that whilst our identity is composed of many parts, it is the integration of these parts and the sense of personal continuity that leads to stability in an individual. When we look at Meryl Davenport in *Bombshells* we can see how losing a sense of personal continuity (Meryl says she's not who she used to be) can lead to anxiety and emotional instability. Similarly, Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher In The Rye* becomes personally fragmented after 'this madman stuff happened to me'. The best known theorist in the field of identity is Erik Erikson. Erikson speaks of identity formation in terms of a series of stages where at each one, a person resolves a crisis between a positive and negative alternative. Resolution of a crisis does not mean rejecting one alternative completely, but rather, that one finds a balance between the two. The seven stages are:

1. TRUST VS MISTRUST: where the infant learns that either the world is basically good and can be trusted or is basically bad and can't be relied upon to meet one's needs.
2. AUTONOMY VS SHAME and DOUBT: is the stage when children begin to recognize themselves as separate people with separate ideas from their parents.
3. INITIATIVE VS GUILT is a refinement of the previous stage. Children learn not only that they have separate desires, but also to plan out means of reaching those.
4. IDENTITY VS ROLE CONFUSION: occurs during adolescence, when we explore different possibilities for career, interests, friends, etc. At this age, adolescents are trying different behaviors and values from what they have learned at home.
5. INTIMACY VS ISOLATION: is the crisis of young adulthood. According to Erikson, intimacy comes after identity because you cannot be sure a person is right for you unless you are sure who you are.

6. **GENERATIVITY VS STAGNATION:** occurs during middle adulthood. Having established one's values and a close relationship with another person, the adult now wants to pass on what he or she has learned through productive work and through raising or nurturing the next generation.
7. **INTEGRITY VS DESPAIR:** is the last stage. A person looks back on his or her life and is either satisfied with what has been achieved, or is in despair having no other choice but to face death as a failure.

These stages are not bound to a particular time in our lives – though there are periods when it is easier to resolve specific crises. If you don't develop trust as an infant it doesn't mean that you will never be able to trust another. According to Erikson it means that it will be more difficult to achieve trust at a later point in your life.

(Information found at: <http://www.fractaldomains.com/devpsych/erikson.htm>)

For the classroom:

- Consider the main characters in each of your texts in the light of Erikson's theory. Can you identify stages that individuals have not managed to resolve? What is the impact of this in the way they see themselves and interact with others?

Nature and nurture

One of the great debates in the field of identity (and one of the oldest intellectual debates) is the nature versus nurture debate. The central question is how much of who and what we are is determined by our DNA, our genes, and how much by our environment and life experiences?

Some scientists and social researchers think that people behave as they do according to their genetic makeup (nature). Those who are opposed to this stance fear that genetic arguments may come to be used to excuse criminality: 'I'm a murderer because of my genes'. Others believe that people think and behave in certain ways because they are taught to do so (nurture). This is particularly pronounced in *Witness*, where the contrasting values in the worlds of John Book and the Amish illustrate the impact of nurture on a person's beliefs and subsequent actions. Bruce Dawe addresses the issue of cultural influence in the formation of identity in many of his poems in *Sometimes Gladness*. Those who subscribe to the nurture view see the process of socialisation as the primary influence in an individual's life:

This influence of social environment is nowhere more apparent than in the cases of children raised by animals. The environmental surroundings here are so different, they are an excellent way to see the input that most of us receive unconsciously. These children, adopted by animals prior to their learning to speak, never become human in the sense of developing an identity, self-awareness, language, a sense of time, and all the subtle equipment that we accept as being human. Genetic material does not make us human. Genetic material does not lead us toward self-awareness. Genetic material does not spontaneously give us language skills. These are all gifts of our environment. They arise in us out of our relationship with other people.

(From: <http://www.dreamhawk.com/nat-nurt.htm>)

Initially with the discoveries of the Human Genome Project (1990-2003), the pendulum swung away from nurture and back towards one's genetic legacy as the key factor in shaping human nature. Findings in the latter part of the project however have muddied the waters. It has been discovered that genes possess what are called epigenetic markers. These are like a volume control for genes and adjust gene intensity. Identical twins are born with the same epigenome. But over time, environmental factors such as diet and other lifestyle differences

can change these markers. This is why the differences between identical twins may develop over time.

For the classroom:

- What elements of the nature / nurture question do you see being played out in the lives of the characters in the texts you have studied?
- Consider your own life. Has your identity been determined by your genes, or are *you* simply the shape created by your experiences? Is it both? How do the two aspects interact? Is one aspect stronger than the other?

The paradox of belonging

One of the paradoxes of our identity is the fact that belonging to a group can operate both positively and negatively in our quest to define our selves. In *My Place* Sally Morgan experiences something of this duality in relation to her Aboriginality. In belonging to a group we can develop a sense of 'us' and 'them' that helps us define who and what we are by knowing what and who we are *not*. In being part of a group we satisfy our needs for belonging, acceptance and approval. However in order to maintain our position in the group we often have to put individual needs second and put the needs of the group ahead of our own interests. We move from 'me' to 'us'. Problems arise when our sense of being an individual is trapped by the group. Sometimes our fear of rejection from the group stops us from saying what we really feel and think. We can end up acting in ways that are contrary to what we understand as our 'true selves'

For the classroom:

- In the texts you have studied what evidence is there of both the positive and negative impact of membership of a group on an individual's sense of self?
- Reflect on the groups you are a part of. What role have they played in your identity development?

Section B: The text in context

The Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger

Holden Caulfield, the 17 year old protagonist of J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, presents the complexities and contradictions of an individual's quest for a place in the world and a sense of self. Disoriented by the increasing social value on materialism and convention in post-WW II middle class America, Holden struggles through a series of meaningless encounters and failures to be a part of and apart from his society in efforts to become a unique and authentic person. Holden's refusal (or failure?) to conform to traditional roles, behaviours and expectations result in his despair and increasing alienation from his peers and society. His experiences illustrate the view that genuine human expression and interactions are crucial to a sense of connectedness and selfhood. Holden's nostalgic views of childhood and cynical outlook on adulthood throughout the narrative underline the necessity to accept and adapt to the inevitable changes in oneself and others in the ongoing processes of becoming an integrated individual. These ideas are raised through the text's genre, key metaphor and the title.

The novel is commonly regarded as a *bildungsroman* (Gm. "rites of passage novel") – a genre that explores the transitional processes from childhood to adulthood. The protagonist is a young person who is confused or uncertain about their goal or direction. The narrative charts the conflicts, failures, lessons and successes they experience through the course of growing up. Generally, they will have an adult mentor to assist with learning life's lessons and adult adversaries to test them. These narratives focus on the protagonist's moral and psychological development towards the formation of a mature adult identity.

For the classroom:

- Is *The Catcher in the Rye* a typical example of this genre? In Chapter 1, where he begins to retell his story from a psychiatric institution, Holden tells us that he got involved in some "madman stuff", was "run down", was "not applying myself", that the "whole team ostracized me" and that the principal "kicked me out". Look for other short quotes in Chapters 2 to 7 in which Holden describes what he was like before he ran away to New York – list these and comment on what they reveal about him. Holden's progress unfolds in five progressive crises: conflict with Stradlater (Ch.4); fight with Maurice (Ch.14); date with Sally (Ch.17); rejection from Phoebe (Ch.21 & 22); lecture from Mr Antolini (Ch.24).
- Comment on the conflicts, failures, successes and lessons Holden experiences at each crisis. Does Holden have any mentors – who and what does he gain from them?
- Compare and contrast the Holden presented in Chapters 1 and 26 to that presented in Chapters 2 to 25. Given this overview, debate the proposition: "That Holden Caulfield resists the process of maturity."

In Chapter 2, old Spencer advises Holden: 'Life is a game that one plays according to the rules.' The game metaphor suggests defined roles, conventions and expectations – unquestioning engagement with these will ensure a clear place, a recognised persona and commonality with others. Although outwardly acquiescent, Holden's internal response is a cynical rejection of this rigid view of individuality and the individual's part in society: 'Some game. If you get on the side where all the hot-shots are, then it's a game ... But if you get on the other side, where there aren't any hot-shots, then what's the game about? Nothing. No game.' (Ch.2) He is disengaged and disaffected by this artificial view of people and society which also implies that an individual needs to be on the right side. However, what ironic assumptions underpin his comment?

For the classroom:

- Note examples of Holden's avoidance of sport competitions, which have the potential to offer individuals growth, self-discovering and a sense of association.
- What do these represent to him and why does he choose not to participate?
- What are the consequences for his sense of self and belonging?
- What are the challenges and consequences for the individual who rejects the dominant roles and positions available in their society?

Salinger places a high value on the expression of original, honest and authentic individuality. Personal integrity is fundamental. Holden repeatedly criticises his peers and the adult world as 'phony': at school he is 'surrounded by phonies', teachers have a 'phony smile', nightclubs are 'very phony' because people behave 'Strictly phony', religious ministers 'sound so phony when they talk', the word 'grand' is 'so phony', and then there's 'old Sally, the queen of the phonies'. Locate other accusations of "phoniness" Holden makes and categorise these under peers, adults and social institutions. Phoniness is widespread and has many connotations for Holden. People who are conventional and conform to social norms are 'phony'; people who are superficial, pretentious or hypocritical are also 'phony'. Holden's detestation of Hollywood and movies is because actors represent fake people and he worries they will 'do something phony'. He claims that actors 'didn't act like people and they didn't act like actors' – the roles are unrecognisable to Holden because they are unreal in his understanding of identity.

For the classroom:

- Make a continuum of the characters in the text, ordering them from the least phony to the phoniest. Explain your choices.

Later, Holden worries that people lack self-awareness, and that they are complicit in and oblivious to their own phoniness: 'How would you know you weren't being a phoney? The trouble is, you wouldn't' (Ch.22). In the context of his own behaviours, his anxiety is ironic. Holden, himself, is unable to perceive his own phoniness. He tells us 'I'm the most terrific liar you ever saw'. He 'shoots the bull' and 'chucks the old crap' with outrageous lies about himself and others for no particular purposes - his conversation with Mrs Morrow highlights his own hypocrisies and cruelty (Ch.8). He is a compulsive liar and undertakes several deceptions throughout the text – make a list of these. Some have interpreted this as a form of rejection, avoidance and disengagement from the social expectations of individuals and a resistance to growing up. Holden's critical views about phoniness indicate his own superficiality as he is quick to categorise others and unable to distinguish the individuals within a society. Certainly, Holden's capacity to lie illustrates his own lack of self-knowledge and portrays him as disingenuous; it also raises questions about the veracity of his narration (see Section C).

The title of the novel encapsulates the complications and inconsistencies inherent in Holden's identity crisis: how to retain and protect childhood innocence and honesty despite the inevitable biological and social pressures of emerging adulthood. Robert Burns' poetic song, 'Comin' Thro' The Rye', is introduced in Chapter 16, where Holden observes a child absorbed in his own play world singing the lyrics. This makes him 'feel better' and 'not so depressed'. Later, in response to Phoebe's challenge 'Name something you'd like to be', he declares he'd like to be 'the catcher in the rye' (Ch.22). Although he has misheard the lyrics, indicating his own skewed and naïve perspectives, the song represents Holden's struggle against the dangers and disillusionments of adulthood which he views as the death of the pure self. In the absence of 'nobody big' Holden portrays himself as a saviour – protecting children against the hazards of change and the metaphoric 'fall' into adult knowledge and experience. Later, he eradicates offensive sexual graffiti at school fearful that kids would 'think about it and even worry about it'. It is ironic that the poem/song itself is about a casual

romantic encounter, given Holden's discomfort with – a desire for – intimacy. Throughout, he is preoccupied with his virginity and perplexed by sex ('Sex is something I just don't understand', Ch.9), rejecting with disgust the superficiality of casual encounters. Whilst this saviour role is a projection of his own anxieties about growing up, it is also about his desire for a protector or mentor to guide him through the perilous transition from childhood to adulthood – the need to be connected with others. Indeed this scene occurs prior to seeking out Mr. Antolini, his former English teacher. Significantly, his cautionary advice is: 'I have a feeling that you're riding for some kind of terrible, terrible fall' (Ch.24; see Section C). Ultimately, Holden's dread of personal change and inability to accept change do lead to his downfall through a nervous breakdown.

Holden Caulfield's quest for self illustrates that the individual's greatest challenge is to be true to oneself despite external pressures.

Bombshells by Joanna Murray-Smith

There are many ways in which we define our identity for both ourselves and others. There are of course our physical attributes that mark us out – gender being an obvious one, but largely we define who we are in relation to other people and what we do and achieve. In *Bombshells*, Joanna Murray-Smith addresses all these aspects of self-definition.

The title, *Bombshells*, is an intriguing one. The phrase was first used to describe actress Jean Harlow. Her US film 'Bombshell' was released in 1933. By the time the film was released in the UK the phrase had taken off and it was entitled 'Blonde Bombshell' there. A 'bombshell' was a special kind of sex symbol: an 'entertainer with a sensational effect.' Why has Murray-Smith used this term for her six portraits?

We are presented with six **monologues** from six women, all at different crisis points in their lives. First we meet Meryl Davenport a mother of three young children who takes us through a day in her life as she tries to meet multiple demands of her time. Her current life stage seems to be one long identity crisis. Tiggy Entwhistle is a cactus lover who is attempting to come to terms with her husband deserting her. Then there is Mary O'Donnell – a teenage schoolgirl competing in a talent quest; Theresa McTerry, a bride on her wedding day for whom reality is breaking through the myth; and Winsome Webster, a widow who is surprisingly rescued from a life that has become stultifying. Finally we meet Zoe Struthers, a 'Garlandesque' American cabaret singer who is trying to rekindle her former glory on the stage in the face of personal disintegration.

In the *Author's Note* (p.vii), Murray-Smith explains: "'Women on the edge" was the unifying theme, and I found it disturbingly easy to apply my imagination to the madness which precipitates, inhibits or follows the point at which a woman's private and public selves intersect. It seemed to me that in the **post-feminist** era, women have forsaken one kind of madness with other kinds. Where once women went mad suppressing their ambitions or dreams, they now drive themselves mad trying to fulfil them all simultaneously, dissecting themselves under the microscope of self-analysis. disappearing inside the impossible pressures of the will to be good, to be great and to be true to every individual instinct. Many of us are trying to live multiple lives: child, mother, wife, lover, star, giving small doses of oxygen to each and imploding under the weight of so many competing roles. The women I have written in *Bombshells* struggle sometimes hilariously, sometimes tragically, to bridge the chasm between the wilderness of their inner worlds and the demands of their outer worlds.'

Women, and who they understand themselves to be, is Murray-Smith's focus. In making her observations Murray-Smith echoes the identity theory of psychologist Erik Erikson, who defined identity as: 'a subjective sense as well as an observable quality of personal sameness and continuity, paired with some belief in the sameness and continuity of some shared world image.'

(<http://psychology.about.com/od/theoriesofpersonality/a/identitycrisis.htm>) Erikson and many others who endorse his theory, speak of the importance of integrating our many selves into one unique, stable self which stands behind the diverse roles that life demands we fulfill. Such integration is essential for mental health.

In *Bombshells*, 30-something Meryl Louise Davenport exemplifies the crisis of trying to live multiple lives. She takes us with her, at dizzying speed, through what is presented as a typical day. For Meryl each waking moment reminds her of someone or something she is not. On the maternal front she sees herself as a failure within the first page of the script: there are problems with feeding the baby because she 'selfishly' ate a curry, she is unable to tell her daughter how many countries there are in Africa and her son asks: '... and how come everyone else gets a nice mother?' (p.3)

Meryl compares herself to other mothers: 'None of the other mothers use white bread' (p.6), 'Caitlyn's mother makes an effort' (p.7). She sees herself as a failure as a partner to her husband: 'Nothing to say! Used to be interesting! Used to be witty!...Barry will give up on me!' (p.9). She is a victim of the cult of celebrity: 'If I do yoga my life will begin to resemble Gwynnie's' (p.3) (Gwyneth Paltrow). She is a victim of society's obsession with health, longevity and perfection: 'Toothpaste – probably gives you cancer, non-organic fruit, gives you cancer, Diet Pepsi, gives you cancer...I'm killing my children!' (pp.5-6), '...look at me, I've let myself go, should go to the gym...' (p.6) Meryl struggles with the guilt of meeting her own needs in the midst of the needs of her children: 'NEED A COFFEE...other mothers don't wake their baby for a caffe latte...' (p.7); '...got to have anti-depressants, can't take them, want to feel happier but baby would be drugged now, get cancer later, can't do it, want to do it, selfish mother, wrong priorities.' (p.6) Meryl struggles to recognise herself in the person she has become: 'Never look 'quite right', never look 'put together', never look 'well groomed'. Always dreamt I'd scoff at women who just threw themselves together. Now I am one.' (p.4).

Tiggy Entwhistle, Meryl's neighbour, is a member of the Cactus Appreciation Society and has been asked to speak about how the cactus has pulled her through her 'annus horribilis' – the year in which her husband has deserted her. We are told in the stage directions that Tiggy 'reflects all the characteristics which she later uses to describe the cacti: "a covering of slender, soft hair...slender, needle-like body...long soft woolly covering."' (p.11) Indeed Tiggy comes to identify closely with the cactus and sees it as emblematic of her personal circumstances: 'We regard the cactus as a plant which struggles to survive in a hostile environment, and it is this notion of proud, undaunted struggle, which enhances its appeal.' (p.13) Tiggy is dreadfully hurt by Harry's rejection: '...Do you see? A fine mist is all it takes. Is that too much to ask? Is it? IS IT? Harry, is that too much to ask?'

Tiggy feels she has lost her bearings without Harry – she saw herself and Harry as a secure unit against a world gone mad: '...with planes in towers and suicide bombers, and ordinary acts of plain unkindness and selfishness and unfriendliness and sadness and misery and loss all around, there we were. There we were. A core. A tiny beating heart of ordinary happiness. And goodwill. And...hope. Hope.' (p.16) She finally screams: 'Harry! Harry! Harry! COME BACK!' (p.16) Her final words however indicate a new understanding of self and the fact that her identity need not be dependent solely on another. She speaks of the need to prune diseased plants severely – that this is indeed the way in which regrowth, new growth will occur. She speaks tentatively and inconclusively but nonetheless suggestively, of her

understanding of the illusory nature of her security with Harry and of her hope of a different but stronger sense of self in the future.

Mary O'Donnell is a teenage schoolgirl who calls herself 'the Liza Minelli of St Brigid's' (p.18). She captures for us the insecurity and competitiveness of adolescence. Mary won the school talent show the year before and believes: 'the talent show would be nothing without me. It would be 'the *show*'. The *show*. Because I *am* the talent.' (p.19). The crisis arises for Mary when, in the course of the Talent Show it is announced that Angela McTerry (one of Mary's keenest rivals) is about to perform the same number that Mary has prepared. We might ask why she doesn't simply perform what she has prepared and allow the judges to decide between the performances, but that would be to mistake Mary's desire to stand out from all around her: 'am I going to let Angela McTerry steal *my* thunder?...NO, I AM NOT.' (p.20) With what seems to her to be a sign that God is on her side: 'If you can hear me, make the music jump now. *The compact disc jumps*. Okay, okay. he's on my side. I can do this! I can do this!' (p.22), Mary improvises a brilliant routine from *Shaft*. There is something of the hysterical in her performance, but we are told that the audience erupts. For Mary the crisis that she confronts which threatens her understanding of herself as the top of the pecking order in her school, actually demonstrates her skills and showcases her real creativity. It is interesting that we are left not knowing who wins the talent quest. Perhaps at the bottom of all this Murray-Smith is commenting on the fickleness of life on the stage and the idea that pinning one's sense of self entirely on how we perform is a risky business.

Theresa McTerry is Angela's (of O'Shaunnesy fame) sister, and we meet her before the ceremony on her wedding day: 'a bride in her white fancy underwear.' (p.24) Theresa has fallen in love with a myth, an image, and as she contemplates this, reality slowly dawns. Although she initially makes fun of the idea of being a possession: 'Wife.' I've never really thought about it before. It sounds like a kitchen implement... HAS ANYBODY SEEN THE WIFE?' (p.25), the reality of Ted in his mauve cummerbund brings her up abruptly: 'I'm going to be alone with Ted – and not just for the weekend...A fraction longer than the weekend. A *lifetime*.' (p.31)

Initially Theresa characterises singleness as something negative in identity terms – it is something from which to be rescued: 'Ted stood on the deck and looked out at all the single girls with their smudged mascara and their high heels, bobbing in the waves of inarticulate despair, waving desperately, and he threw me a line...' (p.31). She sees marriage as providing her with an identity: 'The point is, I'm going to *belong* to someone!' (p.25). Marriage, according to the myth, is about the fulfilment of identity: 'Reflect a moment on the bride. She stands on the cusp between the world of dreams and the world of fulfilment, of girl to woman, of me-ness to us-ness..' (p.24) Theresa also characterises marriage as being a decision to 'forsake the path of perpetual self-gratification'. (p.27) She is awakened from her fantasy-land view of marriage by the uncompromising physical reality of Ted: 'And he's so short. He looks like...a pot plant...I can barely see him...' (p.28). She cries despairingly, now aware of her naivety: '*I only really wanted to wear the dress*. The dress. The dress. It's all about the dress.' (p.29)

Winsome Webster is a guest at Theresa McTerry's wedding. The latter refers to her as: 'Marjorie and Helen and Winsome whatsername – wandering through life with Fletcher Jones accounts and gallery membership, husbands all perfectly, perfectly *dead*.' (p.32) Winsome is an older, nicely dressed conservative woman. On introduction Winsome is at pains to underscore her busy schedule, however everything she does, she does in the company of other widows. Notice that she only uses the term 'widow'. This word is defined by the absence of another. For Winsome widowhood has been a real assault on her identity – she refers to it as 'the foolishness of being one' (p.35) – and it has restricted her capacity to relate: 'You can really only confide in other widows. Sisters don't get it. Married friends don't

get it...It's a different kind of loneliness. When you're two, it doesn't take all that long before you forget you were ever one. Then suddenly...' (p.35)

The bulk of Winsome's monologue is taken up with the recount of her relationship with her blind client, Patrick. She has already spoken of one aspect of the life of a widow that she finds stultifying – the lack of 'the unexpected' in her life: '...while you know that anything *can* happen to a widow, anything *doesn't*.' (p.35) It is Patrick's unexpected sexual advances and her own embracing of these that revives her capacity to engage energetically again with life: '...Patrick filled me up again, filled me up with the salve of the totally unexpected.' (p.42) Patrick's initial interest in Winsome leads her to begin revising her self image: 'I'd popped down to the boutique in the village and picked up a black skirt and flared sort of top, which my mother would have described contemptuously as 'exotic'' (p.39) Patrick's physical blindness acts as a foil to his perception of who Winsome really is and through his actions he reminds her that she is much more than a dull, circumscribed widow.

In the final monologue of *Bombshells* we are introduced to Zoe Struthers, an ageing American diva. She opens her performance with a song that affirms her resilience – she announces 'THE LADY IS BACK'. (p.44) Her motto is '...what doesn't kill you makes you stronger.' (p.44) Zoe Struthers provides us with an account of personal disasters in segments of chat in between the verses of her song. The litany begins with the desertion of her husband. Later that year her Beverly Hills home was razed by fire and her mother took ill and died. Before passing away her mother told her the truth about her paternity: '...my father was not really my father.' (p.47) On the heels of this, the child she had adopted out nineteen years before reappeared. She confesses at this point to taking refuge in alcohol. But she explains that she has raised herself from the gutter by fighting the 'demons'. She declares: 'I Am Sober' (p.49), though we doubt her accuracy as the stage directions describe her as *tottering*.

This portrait is the most **stereotyped** in the collection. Struthers is most affected by the news regarding her true father; this prompts her to stop hiding from the question: 'Who *is* Zoe Struthers?' (p.47) She doesn't appear to be able to answer this – rather, she offers advice in her song: 'Don't get a passport / To the terrible country of men' (p.49), which seems to suggest a displacement of responsibility for many of the difficulties she has encountered in life. Struthers' life seems to draw heavily from the latter days of Judy Garland – and the fact that she totters during her performance leaves open the possibility that she is heading for a similar tragic end. Certainly the parallel with Garland draws attention to the voracious and unforgiving nature of the entertainment industry. Zoe doesn't really know who Zoe Struthers is – all she can do is take refuge in the one thing she seems to have left – her image.

Witness directed by Peter Weir

Individuals in conflict with their environment refract issues about self and belonging in *Witness*. Essentially a classically scripted Hollywood crime-thriller with a romance sub-plot, the characters in *Witness* raise questions about cultural identity as well as dilemmas about individual conformity and non-conformity.

The Amish community

Set against the cultural textures of the Amish community in Pennsylvania, the notion of cultural identity in *Witness* can be understood to be that which makes the society an individual belongs to different from other societies or ways of life. The film builds layers of visual detail and occasional didactic dialogue between characters to create a picture of Amish life, where fellowship is a prime communal value. Founded in Europe in the 17th century by Jakob Amman, the Amish are a conservative Christian group guided by a literal

interpretation of the bible and Ordnung (rules of conduct). The range of 'old' and 'new' orders are delineated by the severity of their adherence to the scriptures. Promoting separation from the world as crucial to achieving their goals, key Amish values include: personal and collective commitment to God, family, church and community; obedience and submission to authority; simplicity in lifestyle; strong work ethic; and maintaining traditions. In the spirit of loving kindness, members who experience difficulty in conforming are helped to strengthen their faith, but may eventually be 'shunned' (that is, excommunicated and ostracised).

For the classroom:

- As you view *Witness*, list the features of the Amish that make them different from mainstream western culture. List these aspects under: 'Lifestyle', 'Roles' and 'Beliefs/Values'. In what ways do these features emphasise community unity?
- Undertake research about the Amish. Apart from print sources, consult the following websites:
www.amish-heartland.com
<http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/amish.html>
www.religioustolerance.org/amish
- Identify and explain scenes in the film where John Book is uncomfortable with the Amish. In particular, focus on the ways in which his attitudes to life differ from those of the Amish.
- Which aspects of John Book's behaviour do the Amish criticise?
- Explain the changes in John Book's views about life during/after his experience of the Amish community. Comment on his views on city life, his career, violence, justice, family life and intimate relationships.
- The expectation of conformity is central to the coherence of Amish communities. In what ways are the Amish critical of Rachel's behaviour?
- Is it possible for John Book and Rachel Lapp to develop a successful relationship?
- In your view, are the Amish conformists or non-conformists?
- In what ways does *Witness* portray the clash of different cultures which can never mix?

John Book – character transformation

The dynamics of identity are illustrated through the **transformational arc** of John Book. In the process of living out the narrative, he must change and grow. Initially, Book conforms to viewer expectations of a detective in a crime-thriller as the viewer wonders, 'Will John Book catch the murderer?' His tasks are clear-cut: he must protect Samuel and Rachel, he must protect himself and he must bring the corrupt officers to justice. Book is a self-contained loner, hardnosed and rational, and he values law and order. His sister, Elaine, tells us, 'He likes being a policeman because he thinks he is right about everything.' After receiving a gunshot wound and taking refuge in the Amish community, John Book acts in a way that is atypical for him and begins on the course of self-knowledge and evaluation in response to the new environment.

For the classroom:

- In what ways can the gunshot wound be read as a metaphor that applies to John Book at the beginning of the film?

Whilst with the Amish, Book undertakes a series of transformations. He is deprived of the familiarities of his own world and exposed to other ways of being and belonging. His solitary, emotionally reserved nature begins to dissolve as he becomes an active participant in the community and begins a romantic interest in Rachel. Eventually, he comes to reassess some core values.

For the classroom:

- Download and annotate stills of John Book. Track how costuming (and subtle alterations to costume) visualise the changes in John Book throughout the film.
- Daniel Hochleitner is a contrasting character to John Book – he serves the function of highlighting certain characteristics of, and adding dimensions to, Book’s transformational arc. Even the simple action of how the two drink lemonade is telling. Complete a Venn diagram comparing these two characters.
- Examine and compare the scene where John Book confronts the louts who are taunting the Amish to the final showdown scene between Book and Paul. What are Book’s initial views on violence? Although he kills officers McFee and Fergie, he relinquishes his firearm and resorts to argument. What does he say? What has changed – why?
- Why does John Book leave Rachel in the end?

Females

Witness has received criticism for its limited representation of women. The women presented – Rachel, Elaine and groups of Amish women – are all defined in terms of their relationships to others and position within the family. Note the different bonnets worn by the Amish women – white for married women and black for unmarried women. We learn that Elaine is divorced and John Book admonishes her for having a man in the house. The general clutter of her house contrasts sharply with the sparse order of Rachel’s house. The women shown also represent the stereotyped role of women as custodians of virtues and morals, and they have a sense of duty.

For the classroom:

- Compare and contrast Rachel with Elaine. What aspects of womanhood does the film promote?

Hollywood style characterisation - others

Embedded in mainstream Hollywood scripts is the view that credible characters reflect a key aspect of identity formation – change. We have seen this in Book’s transformational arc. Relationships between characters operate at a practical level to forward the narrative; consequently, some other characters are functional and static. Daniel acts as a **contrasting character** (see above). Eli is a **thematic character** – that is, he dimensionalises key themes in order to add complexity to ideas. Eli is the ‘voice of’ Amish values: what he says and how he acts represents the Amish worldview, particularly about traditions, place in society and non-violence (pacifism).

For the classroom:

- Identify other functional characters in the film: who are they and what is their purpose?
- How do these characters add dimension to John Book’s identity?
- Explain whether you think it is useful to think of identity in functional terms.

Witness explores the complex issues of the interplay between an individual’s cultural environment and the development of identity.

Sometimes Gladness by Bruce Dawe

Bruce Dawe, born in Geelong in 1930, is one of Australia’s most acclaimed poets. He drifted through his early years, showing promise but never quite realising his potential. His many roles in these years - as a labourer, postman, university failure, air force officer, father and teacher – gave him a keen sense of empathy for people of diverse backgrounds. This capacity to see the world from an ordinary bloke’s point of view is a hallmark of his poetry

and undoubtedly a key to his popularity. The collection set for study, *Sometimes Gladness*, covers Dawe's work from the 1950s to the 1990s, and is a tribute to the everyday: everyday beings, everyday things, everyday issues.

Several critics see the 'Australianess' of *Sometimes Gladness* as its outstanding unifying feature. In terms of the context *Identity and Belonging*, many of Dawe's poems explore aspects of our cultural identity. Where many Australian poets in the past focused on the bush in their attempts to define the quintessential Australia/n, Dawe focuses on the places where most of us live – the suburbs of the big cities that hug the coast. His exploration of this aspect of our identity celebrates the ways in which the suburbs bring us comfort and security on the one hand, but also examines the negatives of suburban life. 'Homo Suburbensis' is Dawe's homage to the Australian species 'suburban man'. Unlike the figures in John Brack's painting, *Collins St., 5.00p.m.*, Dawe's suburban man whilst 'ordinary' and 'average', is nonetheless a spiritual individual – a person whose soul has been shaped by the complexities of life. In the quiet and security of his backyard veggie patch he offers up 'as much as any man can offer / - time, pain, love, hate, age, war, death, laughter, fever.' In 'Suburban Lovers' the world of suburbia is presented as a supportive framework to the lovers – as a force that almost cocoons them. Even the physical infrastructure of the suburbs is built with the purpose of: 'sustaining them / against years' seepage.' The lovers' are presented to us as belonging to a community: 'Next door's children / scatter past, laughing. They smile...'

'Up the Wall' presents a different perspective on suburban life and its impact on the individual. It is written in **sonnet** form, as is 'Homo Suburbensis' (see Margaret Saltau's 'Text Talk: The Poetry of Bruce Dawe' in *The Age*, 13 March 2002¹). The two **quatrains** of the **octave** sketch the relentlessness of domestic life: 'The saucepan milk is always on the boil'. The next quatrain, with its repetitive 'She says...' brings the focus to the wife who endures all this alone. In the **couplet** we hear the interpretation of the husband who has been the recipient of his wife's frustrations: 'It's a quiet neighbourhood...' For this man, suburbia is a retreat from his busy world of work. He shows little insight or sympathy for his wife who must endure the isolation that this environment brings, an isolation that is pushing her to the limits of her sanity. We are reminded of the experience of Meryl Davenport from *Bombshells*.

There are several elements of modern life that Dawe represents as a threat to our identity and individuality. In 'Enter Without So Much as Knocking' we are presented with the life story of a man - his passage from birth to death. This is a life that is framed by popular culture: 'Bobby Dazzler on Channel 7' and where the individual will find acceptance and a sense of belonging by conforming to the consumerist 'norm': one economy-size Mum, one Anthony Squires- / Coolstream-Summerweight Dad..' It is a life to be lived within strict limits: 'KEEP CLEAR/OUT/OFF GRASS. NO BREATHING EXCEPT BY ORDER...' It is a life that is ultimately hollow: 'the old automatic smile with nothing behind it'.

In 'Televistas' Dawe suggests that our identity has been hijacked by the media – in particular television. The two characters in this poem are defined by their TV brand preferences: 'She was Sanyo-oriented, / He was Rank-Arena bred'. The stages of their courtship are punctuated by the names of TV programs (none of which are Australian made!). Falling in love, swapping dreams and planning futures – momentous processes in the life of the individual take place in the commercial breaks. 'Real' life for these two is what occurs on the screen, which they 'watch' as passive recipients.

Cultural imperialism is something that Dawe abhors – he feels particularly concerned that our uniqueness as Australians is being swallowed up by the voracity of America. In 'Americanised' he explores this process, representing it as something overpowering,

¹ <http://www.education.theage.com.au/pagedetail.asp?intpageid=172&strsection=students&intsectionid=3>

inescapable and threateningly sinister. America is characterised by the mother in this poem, the small child is the younger nation who is being carefully shaped by mother. 'She' has a limited view of the world – it is a dangerous place '...full of nasty cars and men' and it is part of her job to '...nurse an invalid called the World'. The child is allowed to play only with 'Mummy's things': Pepsi Cola figurines, Spam, chewing-gum, hot dogs, electronic brains. In the middle of the list of 'Mummy's things' the mother's central philosophy is recited: 'I think young, think big, therefore I am.' This is of course a prostitution of Descartes' homage to reason, I think therefore I am. By following the mother's dictum, the child will be made in *her* image.

For all of us, and Dawe is no exception, our families play a momentous role in the shaping of our identity. The irreverent 'Life-Cycle', which portrays football as an Australian religion, has children being assigned concrete aspects of their identity from birth: 'When children are born in Victoria / they are wrapped in the club-colours, laid in beribboned cots, / having already begun a lifetime's barracking.' 'Condolences of the Season', whilst deriding what Dawe sees as the female penchant for fussing about and doting on babies, nonetheless underscores the warmth of belonging the baby experiences. The fact that this child reminds others of Uncle Tom's eyes, Aunt Lena's chin and Cousin Ted's ears, give him a place in the world, people with whom to identify and against which perhaps to define himself as he grows up. The delightful 'Easy Does It' acknowledges the powerful role that parents play in a child's growth and the potential they have for destroying imagination and individuality: 'I have to be careful with my boy, / that I don't crumple his immediate-delivery-genuine-fold-up-and extensible-world'. The final image of this poem – the Sunday visitor – presents the possible consequences of stifling the child's identity, that of turning him into a passive observer rather than an active participant in life.

Bruce Dawe's poetry is filled with an awareness of the frailty of our humanity. He writes poignantly about loss – particularly the loss of youth and thus the loss of one's status and identity. In the poems 'Happiness is the art of being broken' and 'Then', Dawe explores this pain. In 'Happiness is the art of being broken' it is the elderly who 'Practise it to perfection.' It is not a vision of comfort that Dawe offers. As we 'fragment', 'We learn where we belong, in what uncaring / Complex depths we roll'. Senility is 'an ironic act of charity' that protects us ('all identity lost') from becoming 'curios for children roaming beaches'. In 'Then' the focus is on the absence of love in the life of the elderly. It is as if meaning and purpose have been removed: 'When you are older you don't care much any more / Whether you walk or ride – there's the dust, the road'. It seems that the young keep the elderly locked out of the experience of love because it bolsters their sense of identity: '...as the happiness of the motorist / Depends upon pedestrians envious of their wheels.'

For the classroom:

- Draw up a table where each column notes a different aspect of Identity and Belonging (e.g. family, culture, relationships) addressed in Dawe's poetry. Working with the collection, place as many poems as possible in the appropriate columns.

Section C: The text at work

The Catcher in the Rye by J.D. Salinger

Holden Caulfield as narrator

Narrated in the first person by Holden Caulfield from a psychiatric care institution, *The Catcher in the Rye* is told in **flashbacks** through a series of chronologically ordered episodes and some 'digressions'. On the suggestion of Mr Antolini, his former English teacher, that '... many men have been just as troubled morally and spiritually as you are now ... some of them kept records of their troubles' (Ch.24), Holden writes a stream-of-consciousness style self-reflection on 'this madman stuff that happened to me' (Ch.1). Whilst Salinger's choice of first person narration enables the reader views into Holden's thoughts and emerging individuality, it is problematic. Is Holden Caulfield a reliable and trustworthy narrator?

For the classroom:

- Brainstorm lists of the advantages and disadvantages of first person narration. Where possible, give examples from the text.

Salinger hooks the reader's empathy and identification with the protagonist through his conversational, colloquial expression. From the outset, Holden addresses the reader directly: 'If you really want to hear about it ...'; 'I'm not going to tell you ... I'll just tell you about ...' (Ch.1). Whilst this approach is intimate and positions the reader as a confidante, the reader should be cautious – clearly, Holden will be selective about what will be written and the persona he will construct.

For the classroom:

- In the final chapter, Holden writes, 'That's all I'm going to tell about. I could probably tell you what I did after I went home ... Don't ever tell anybody anything. If you do, you start missing everybody' (Ch.26). As a reader, are you satisfied that Holden has told all there is to tell about what he has already told? Do you want to know what happened after he went home? Why? Why is the sixth crisis, Holden's breakdown, omitted from the telling? What does this suggest about the construction of identity?

The use of **verbal tags**, qualifiers, 1950s **teen speak** and profanities build a picture of Holden as a realistic juvenile narrator with typical teen behaviours and concerns. The repeated verbal tag '...and all' highlights Holden's tendency towards generalisation, his incomplete knowledge and understanding of himself, peers and society. His references to people as 'old' is a term of endearment and his sense of connection to them; however, it signals Holden's issues about youth, aging and growing up, and reminds us that the narrative is told retrospectively. Qualifiers signifying emphasis and clarification are scattered throughout Holden's narration as he seeks to make sense of who he is through his experiences of isolation and interaction: 'I mean ...'; 'If you want to know the truth ...'; 'It really is'; '...always...'; and 'I'm not kidding ...'. Since publication, the novel has attracted controversy and has been periodically banned because of its use of teen speak and profanities. Slang like 'crumby', 'flit' and 'phony' and profanities like 'bastard', and 'goddam' locate Holden in his teen peer group – a link of belonging. These also represent his judgements and labelling of others and the world around him.

For the classroom:

- Make a glossary of meaning and usage of Holden's common verbal tags, qualifiers, slang and profanities. What view does his speech project about teenagehood?

- Whilst these linguistic factors make Holden sound like a credible narrator, critics present various arguments which question his veracity. Can you support any of the following arguments with evidence/quotes from the text?
Holden is too traumatised to tell the truth;
Holden is an academic failure;
Holden has poor interpersonal skills;
Holden's perspective is adversely influenced by his increasing depressive mood;
Holden lacks experience and often misses the point;
Holden is a compulsive liar;
Holden's memory of events and feelings is imperfect;
Holden is excessively judgemental and this impairs his ability to present reality;
Holden always 'digresses' at important points in the story he does not want to tell;
Holden is drunk through several chapters.
- Explain whether you think Holden is a reliable narrator?
- What does the controversy about the truth of Holden's narration suggest about human identity?

Character tags

Writers build clusters of tags to signify their characters' personality and their central, motivating concerns. A **tag** is a specialised and recurring label which may manifest in the character's appearance, abilities, speech, mannerisms and attitudes. Salinger builds two key visual appearance tags in the assembly of Holden Caulfield: gray hair (Ch.2) and the red hunting hat (Ch.3).

For the classroom:

- Read the section 'I act quite young for my age sometimes ...People never notice anything' (Ch.2). What does his gray hair represent to Holden? What is his attitude about it? How does this passage illuminate Holden's looming identity crisis?

The red hunting hat is a central visual character tag for the novel's value of individuality, uniqueness and independence. Holden's hat signifies his desire to be different and his rebellion against the pressures to live life according to socially prescribed rules and banal norms. The hat sets him apart, a visual representation of his isolation and incapacity to fit in. Holden tells Ackley, 'I shoot people in this hat' (Ch.3). Indeed, he often wears the hat when he is expressing a cynical, judgemental mindset denigrating others or scorning conventions. The colour red is of significance as it connects Holden with his red-headed siblings, the much admired Allie and Phoebe who represent the unadulterated world of innocent childhood against the phony world of adults.

For the classroom:

- The red hat is introduced in Chapter 3. Create a chart tracing the red hat's appearance throughout the text. Note who wears it, what they do/say/'shoot' in it, what this says about identity and a sense of belonging or exclusion.

Character and setting

In this text, settings are constructed as projections of Holden's central concerns about growing up and his sense of belonging. Of significance is the Museum of Natural History with its static tableaux of people and fauna (Ch.16). Holden is attracted to the orderly, predictable and comprehensible view of life presented here because 'Certain things should stay the way they are' (Ch.16). His responses highlight his resistance to the processes of change and, ultimately, he doesn't enter the museum for fear of disrupting his idealised memories and confronting how he might be 'different' from them.

For the classroom:

Read the section 'The best thing, though, in that museum was that everything always stayed right where it was ...Anyway, I kept thinking about all that while I walked' (Ch.16).

- Why is the word 'different' repeated?
- What do you think Holden means by 'different'?
- What does this say about the nature of identity?

Although Holden inhabits and travels through a range of settings, it is worth investigating a few with regards to this context.

- Ducks in Central Park: read references to the ducks in Chapters 2, 9, 12 and 20.
- What parallels can you draw between the frozen pond and the environments Holden encounters?
- In what ways is Holden's preoccupation with change explored through the cyclical migrations of the ducks?
- New York versus 'Out West': compare and contrast what New York city (including nightclubs, hotels and street life) represents to Holden with his fantasy of living 'out west' (Ch.17 and 25).

Key character interactions

For the classroom:

Read the section 'I have a feeling that you're riding for some kind of terrible, terrible fall ... You'll begin to know your true measurements' (Ch.24), Holden's encounter with Mr Antolini. This section represents the classic didactic encounter between protagonist and mentor, typical of the *bildungsroman* novel.

- What cautions does Mr Antolini give Holden? Are these reasonable?
- Note the repetition of the word 'fall'. What does Mr Antolini mean by this term? Find other references to 'falling' throughout the text (e.g. Ch.25) – when do these occur and what is implied about Holden's progress?
- Why does Mr Antolini quote Wilhelm Stekel?
- What advice does Mr Antolini give Holden? Is this practical?
- What does Mr Antolini mean when he says 'what size mind you have'? What does this suggest about the formation of identity?
- Could Mr Antolini be perceived as 'the catcher in the rye'?
- Towards the end of Chapter 24, Holden wakes to find Mr Antolini stroking his hair. Describe Holden's reaction. Can you recognise a pattern in the way Holden relates to others? In your view, is Mr Antolini's action a sexual advance or a paternalistic gesture?

Bombshells by Joanna Murray-Smith

Bombshells is an unusual work. Joanna Murray-Smith wrote the script at the prompting of Simon Phillips, Artistic Director of the Melbourne Theatre Company, in order to showcase the talents of actress Caroline O'Connor. It is a one-woman show, consisting of six monologues. A **monologue** is piece of oral or written literature spoken by one person exposing their inner thoughts. It is often quite lengthy and is directed toward another, but that other remains silent. As such it provides great insights into the speaker's character, but only from that speaker's point of view.

For the classroom:

- Make a list of the advantages and disadvantages of the monologue. Consider this from the point of view of the actor, the audience, and the playwright. Where possible, give examples from the text. Compare this list with the list from *The Catcher in the Rye's* first classroom activity on page 16.
- How is a monologue different from a first person novel? Is it?

Meryl Davenport

The opening and closing paragraphs of Meryl Davenport's monologue provide for us the bookends of her day and highlight Murray-Smith's craft and concerns.

1. See page 3 from: 'The baby cries. I open my eyes. It's darkish' to 'Screaming. Screaming now...'
2. See page 10 from: 'Kids in bed, kids want water' to end.

Sentence Structure: By looking at these two passages together we can see very clearly one of the key points Murray-Smith want us to note. The opening and closing bracket of sentences in each passage are exactly the same. For Meryl every day is the same – there is no distinctiveness, no relief – and this is reflected through the sentence repetition. In the opening passage the succession of short, simple sentences creates a sense of responsibilities piling up on Meryl – even before she has lifted her head from the pillow. The repeated use of interrogatives suggests her essential lack of confidence and insecurity. The careful, deliberate construction of a series of short sentences recreates for the audience the experience of how reality comes to press upon us as our consciousness is broken open by the beginning of a new day. The final passage echoes the idea of an accumulation of tasks but this time they are separated by commas – the sentences are longer with several smaller components. The effect of this is to speed up what is said. And, the fact that they are all phrased in the negative, 'didn't', creates a sense of Meryl being squashed and vanquished.

Tone: The first passage begins in a flat, matter of fact tone (one is reminded of Sylvia Plath's poem *Morning Song*). The sense of Meryl being overwhelmed and desperate is created by the repetition of the word 'need': 'The baby needs a feed. The videos need to go back today. I need a coffee...' A series of four questions, 'Is it the light? Is it the cold? Is it my diet? What are we doing wrong?' deepens the sense of desperation. The second passage creates a tone of weariness through the repetition of the word 'didn't. However as this continues – seemingly endlessly – the sense of exasperation grows until Meryl explodes, 'FUCKING VIDEOS'.

Vocabulary: In the first passage the frequent use of the word 'need' indicates the tyranny under which Meryl lives. At this stage she includes her own needs in the list but as the piece progresses her needs are swamped by the needs of others. The italicisation of '*That*' in referring to the baby down the road, indicates another aspect of intimidation that plays out in Meryl's life. She compares her baby and thus herself as a mother to others in similar situations around her. Because she sees everything through a lens of desperation and lack of self esteem, such comparisons simply deepen her sense of not measuring up. In the second passage the climax is indicated by the use of a swear word and the capitalisation of the phrase: 'FUCKING VIDEOS'.

Character: Meryl is person who wants to do well. The content of her monologue demonstrates that her focus is very much on the needs of those around her. She wants those she loves and is responsible for, to be happy. She wants them all to be healthy, well educated and in control. Her vision of life is one of perfection and she is struggling with the limitations of her humanness. This is shown in her language use when her attempts to get everything done are thwarted and her speech rises to a shrill crescendo: 'Truck. TrucktrucktrucktrucktruckTRUCK! PRICK!!' (p.5)

She typifies what many women experience in taking on the identity of motherhood:

- 63 percent of women did not expect their identity to alter in any major sense.
- 63 percent reported an impact on coping 33 percent severe to extreme.
- 57 percent experienced intrapersonal conflict, 30 percent severe to extreme.
- 55 percent engaged in interpersonal conflict, 33 percent severe to extreme.

A baby, when it is born, is recognised as having attained new status in the world. It is no longer a foetus but a person. A mother, when she is born, also becomes a new being but without any recognition that her new identity is quite foreign to the woman she once was... Where once she spent her days in the company of other adult workers making a valued contribution to the world and was paid an income in acknowledgment for so doing, she is now 'just' a mother among mothers. She is unpaid. She is alone for whole days at a time with no opportunity for adult company and no-one who is able to reflect, support or help her mould her new identity.

If a new mother is stunned at her inability to complete even the simplest of tasks she may begin to doubt her own competence.

(From: <http://www.motherinc.com.au/editorial/ShowStory.asp?StoryID=31&Redir=1>)

Meryl is too quick to take responsibility for all manner of what she sees as failures: 'I'm a selfish, hungry, greedy mother.' The final passage in the monologue suggests she has made little progress in the identity war in which she is engaged. At the end of the day she can only list her failures e.g. 'Didn't water hydrangeas, didn't ring anyone...' and fall into exhausted sleep. Whilst the character of Meryl creates great hilarity in the theatre, she is a woman on the brink of oblivion if she is unable to revise expectations of herself as a mother.

Winsome Webster

See from p.34 'On Mondays, I go to the pictures with the widows' to 'I'll talk to a widow or two on the telephone.'

Sentence structure: This opening part of the monologue is structured around the activities of Winsome's week. The repetitive sentence opening, 'On Mondays... Tuesdays... Wednesdays... Fridays...', suggests that there is something monotonous about Winsome's week. This is reinforced by the fact that the sentences are simple and are followed by the same clause structure: 'On...I go / play / do...'. These are also not particular days, rather there is a sameness and predictability about the days of each week.

Tone: Winsome Webster's speech style is relaxed and conversational. We feel as if we are mid-conversation when she begins, 'On Mondays...' and further on she speaks directly to us, 'You know that one...' Whilst the content of the passage suggests that Winsome's life is busy, the weariness of her existence is underscored particularly in the fourth and sixth sentences: 'The beach, the dogs, whatever... Thursdays, we have book club.' These are spoken with a tone of dismissiveness – the word 'whatever' creates this – which is quite different to the surrounding sentences that are poised and carefully structured.

Vocabulary: Perhaps the most striking feature of Murray-Smith's vocabulary choice in this passage is the repetition of the word 'widows'. Winsome is telling us not only about the activities of her life, but also the people with whom she spends her time. For most of us, spending time with people is an indication of our regard for and our closeness to them. Fascinatingly, Winsome's companions remain anonymous – they have no personal names, nor are they distinguished in any other way from one another. They are simply the grey, non-descript widows.

Character: Winsome is a measured person. This emerges from the organised manner in which she conducts her life. She is also abstemious: 'On Monday's it's cheaper for senior citizens...the Widow's Special'. The fact that she does volunteer work one day a week shows that she is not an egocentric person, that she has a social conscience. She is also mindful of the need to maintain a healthy lifestyle and exercises regularly. The exercise of her intellect is also catered for through book club. The profile of Winsome's life thus constructed is however at odds with her lack of vitality at her very core. Her belonging to the widows is a deficit construction of her identity – this is who she is because of what she lacks.

Tiggy Entwhistle

See from p14 'During the cooler months...' to '...To feel something – anything – for that?' (p.15)

For the classroom:

- In this passage, explore how Murray-Smith parallels and intertwines the lives of certain plants with the life of Tiggy Entwhistle. Focus on sentence structures, how tone is created, vocabulary choices and the language used to construct character.

Witness directed by Peter Weir

The opening sequence

View the opening sequence of scenes: 'Funeral Rites', 'The Journey', 'Material Witness', 'John Book', 'Positive ID'.

The action in *Witness* occurs in two contrasting communities – the Amish settlement in country Pennsylvania (Lancaster) and the cityscape of Philadelphia. Not only does the marked contrast between these two settings presage the clash of cultures and narrative conflict, it also signifies the central theme about a sense of community and a sense of selfhood within that community.

For the classroom:

A film's 'set-up' includes the visualisation of place, mood, theme, pacing and style. Often a key film image (or metaphor) will be introduced. The opening three minutes of *Witness* is image oriented through a series of lingering long shots of the Pennsylvania landscape.

- Why has the Director used long shots? Make notes about how the rural nature of the setting is established.
- What mood is conveyed through such images? Consider the musical soundtrack accompanying these images – how does it add complexity to the mood?

The field of wheat sets up a recurring visual motif in the film – images of grain and bread. This is also a unifying visual motif in the film as it is present in both the rural world of the Amish and bustling Philadelphia, and connects the characters.

- What does it mean when people "break bread" together? Note the contrast between the wholesome, home-made bread served at the funeral and the hotdogs served in white processed rolls.
- List other examples of this visual motif throughout the film and consider what is being suggested about relationships. Be aware that this motif also represents the violence of John Book's world – note examples of this.

The striking image of Amish people emerging as a collective from the field of wheat signifies their connection with the earth and each other. In the 'Funeral Rites' scenes, most frames are composed of groups of people.

- Make notes of the ways in which a sense of community is conveyed in the human world and also the animal world in these scenes.
- What do we learn about the roles of men, women and children in this world?
- What are the key values about belonging in this community?
- What does the superimposition of 'Pennsylvania, 1984' suggest about the importance of time and place in this film?

In texts, identity is often constructed through name. Note the biblical names of four key characters: Rachel, Eli, Samuel and Daniel (also John).

- Research the biblical meanings of these names. Are the characters appropriately named?
- Why does Eli warn Rachel, “You be careful among the English”?

The filmic style changes dramatically in tracking Rachel and Samuel’s transition from the Amish world to the modern city world of Philadelphia.

- What images are presented?
- What types of shots are used?
- How does the soundtrack change?
- What does the change in filmic style suggest about the challenges of belonging and preserving an identity?
- What filmic features in the scenes from ‘The Journey’ to ‘Positive ID’ suggest the harshness and impersonal nature of the city? Include references to the range of camera shots and angles used, as well as the domestic soundtrack.

As Samuel enters the ‘new world’ of the city, Weir adopts a series of point-of-view shots to show what he sees.

- Comment on the effect of these.
- Comment on Samuel’s encounter with the Rabbi.

Several artworks are featured at the train station – the angel statue and a painting of St. George and the dragon.

- What ideals do these reflect about people and relationships?
- Who are these images and ideals associated with in the film?

- How is John Book presented?
- In what ways is he shown as the classic detective?
- What else do we learn about him?
- How do we find out about John Book?

As this sequence develops, we increasingly see John Book framed alone in a range of mid shots and close ups.

- What does this imply about his place in his world?
- Begin a list of comparisons between Rachel and Elaine, John Book’s sister. How are women represented in this film?
- How are African-Americans represented in this film?

Breaking the rules

View the scene ‘Breaking the Rules’.

The romance that emerges between John Book and Rachel Lapp challenges their core values and self-images, as they come to understand that their ways of life make them incompatible. Additionally, the way they are perceived within the Amish community presents them with the very real danger of ostracism.

For the classroom:

- Identify the ways in which camera shots/angles, mise-en-scene and the soundtrack establish the romantic intimacy between John Book and Rachel.

- Explain the values about romance presented in the song, 'What a wonderful world it would be'.
- In what ways has John Book changed? How are these changes represented?
- In what ways has Rachel changed? How are these changes represented?

Romance narratives usually include obstacles that must be overcome if the lovers are to be united.

- What obstacles to romance are there in *Witness*? How does the romance progress?
- What complications does falling in love with Rachel cause John Book?
- What would Rachel have to sacrifice to be in a relationship with John Book?

Several key terms appear in the conversation between Eli and Rachel which are of relevance to the notion of belonging.

- What do the following mean: 'Ordnung', 'shunned', 'judge' and 'shame'.

Barn raising

View the scene 'Barn Raising'.

This scene epitomises key values in the Amish way of life. Barn raisings are a link to Amish traditions and strengthen community ties.

For the classroom:

A sense of harmony and co-operation is built in this scene.

- List the images Weir incorporates to express this.

This sequence begins and ends with a similar shot and frame composition.

- Describe this and its subtext about community.
- There is very limited dialogue in this scene. Why?
- Comment on the style of music used in this scene. What mood is created by the music?

The viewer gains a clear picture of the organisation of Amish society.

- Identify the roles of men, women and children. How does this help maintain a sense of belonging and selfhood?

John Book, Daniel and Rachel are shown in a series of cross-cutting close ups throughout this scene.

- What emotions are shown? What does this contribute to the relationships shown?

Key quotes

For the classroom:

Comment on what each of the quotes below elucidates about identity and belonging.

- John Book to Rachel: If we'd made love last night I'd have to stay. Or you'd have to leave.
- Eli: This gun of the hand is for the taking of human life. We believe it is wrong to take a life. That is only for God. Many times wars have come and people have said to us: you must fight, you must kill, it is the only way to preserve the good. But Samuel, there's never only one way. Remember that. Would you kill another man?
Samuel: I would only kill the bad man.
Eli: Only the bad man. I see. And you know these bad men by sight? You are able to

look into their hearts and see this badness?

Samuel: I can see what they do. I have seen it.

Eli: And having seen you become one of them? Don't you understand? What you take into your hands, you take into your heart. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing.

- Rachel: He's leaving, isn't he?
Eli: Tomorrow morning. He'll need his city clothes.
Rachel: But why? What does he have to go back to?
Eli: He's going back to his world, where he belongs. He knows it, and you know it, too.
- Rachel: Your sister says you don't have a family.
John Book: No, I don't.
Rachel: She thinks that you ought to get married and have children of your own, instead of trying to be a father to hers.
John Book: Yeah.
Rachel: Except she thinks you are afraid of the responsibility.
John Book: That's interesting... anything else?
Rachel: Mm hm... she thinks you like policing because you think you are right about everything and you're the only one who can do anything, and when you drink a lot of beer you say things like 'none of the other police know a crook from a bag of elbows!'. At least I think that's what she said.

Sometimes Gladness by Bruce Dawe

'Enter Without So Much as Knocking'

'Enter without so much as knocking' traces the cradle to grave experience of an unnamed person. Through this 'life story' recount, Dawe suggests that identity is constructed by the dominant forces in society. According to Dawe, the dominant force in Australian society of the late 1950's is **consumerism**.

In the opening **stanza** the infant awakens to begin his life journey in the silent landscape of the hospital. The sentences are deliberately short and simple, as they reflect the innocence and lack of complication in the child's life at this point. 'HOSPITAL' is capitalised as it marks the beginning of the journey – just as 'CEMETERY' marks the end in the final line of the poem. On arrival at his home the first voice he hears is the voice of materialism / consumerism from a TV game show: 'Bobby Dazzler on Channel 7 / Hello, hello, hello all you lucky people...' The sarcastic voice of the speaker turns the definition of 'lucky' on its head, suggesting that ignorance of this world is true luck.

The second half of the first stanza provides a sketch of this child's family. The family is described as being 'set-up' which suggests a veneer or constructed identity that is predetermined and non-negotiable. The language of advertising is used to create the family portrait – compound words like 'well-equipped' and 'economy-size' are indicative of this domain. The keys to defining who you are in the world of this poem lies in conforming: 'like every other', and possessing the 'correct' brand: 'One Anthony Squires-Coolstream-Summerweight Dad'. The other children have no names and possess no individuality coming 'straight off the Junior Department rack'. The **metaphor** of clothing underlines the dominance of consumerism and the children's lack of individuality.

The world beyond the family home is presented in stanza two. Shopping is seen as the pinnacle of the child's life experience thus far. This outside world is hectic – the pace of the poem accelerates through the use of a number of short imperative sentences: 'NO

SMOKING...BEWARE OF THIS.' It is also highly regulated – Dawe capitalises the commands to emphasise this point. He also points out the ridiculousness of such regulation by slipping in the outrageous 'NO BREATHING EXCEPT BY ORDER'. The bracketed 'beeps' that punctuate the last lines of the stanza underscore the chaos of this world. Note how clamorous sound has been present in the child's life from the moment of arriving home from being born in the hospital.

Stanza three begins with the adverb 'However' which alerts us to both a change in tone and pace. The phrases are more complex and flowing – such a contrast to what has gone before. The focal point is what the child can see beyond the movie screen – there is a moment of optimism here as we note the child's attention is not consumed with the constructed world represented on the screen, but the natural world of the stars. The vocabulary Dawe chooses to represent the different worlds highlights the contrast between what 'man' has created and what 'nature' has created – 'pure' and 'luminous' are words that celebrate sensuously the natural world, 'snarled' and 'screamed' sound the harshness and hurriedness of man-made reality. This moment of peace does not last – the next stanza moves us on beginning with 'Anyway...'. It is interesting to note also that this hiatus is located at the physical centre of the poem – it is buried deep within its heart but is soon smothered by what is called reality.

In the fourth stanza we return to the frenetic world we seemingly cannot escape. Here the pace is accelerated through the lack of punctuation, a very lengthy phrase and the reappearance of hyphenated, compound words: 'money-hungry back-stabbing miserable / so-and-so'. This stanza is dominated by colloquial expressions: 'it's Number One every time / for this chicken, hit wherever you see a head and / kick whoever's down'. These axioms roll off the tongue, are familiar and embody 'common wisdom'. The child is now an adult. The stars are gone forever and he has been shaped into a harsh, selfish adult. It is the pursuit of money and the preservation of self that matters – no matter what the cost: 'kick whoever's down'. '...well thanks for a lovely / evening Clare' indicates a distinct change of tone. It is our man's again, the tone is gentle but ingratiating and false given the voice we heard earlier in the stanza. He excuses his hinted-at infidelity as something of a reward for his daily battles. There is clearly no emotional sincerity in this man for in the next part of the stanza he derides this woman, Clare.

In the final stanza we return to the voice of the narrator – here the man's last journey is described, having been killed in a car crash. The name of the undertakers is ironic – 'probity' suggests strong morals, honesty and decency, yet in death this man is presented with a façade: 'a healthy tan he'd never had'. There are no comments on his character, his achievements – only his exterior – his shell. In death he remains the one of T.S Eliot's hollow men: 'the old automatic smile with nothing behind it'.

The metaphor of life as a TV show returns – in the voice of the show host we are told of the outstanding features of his new abode. This underground metropolis represents liberation from the strictures of life for this man – no more worrying about parking tickets, bad breath or hair falling out. These seemingly oppressive concerns once again underscore for us how shallow and insubstantial this life was.

'Easy Does It'

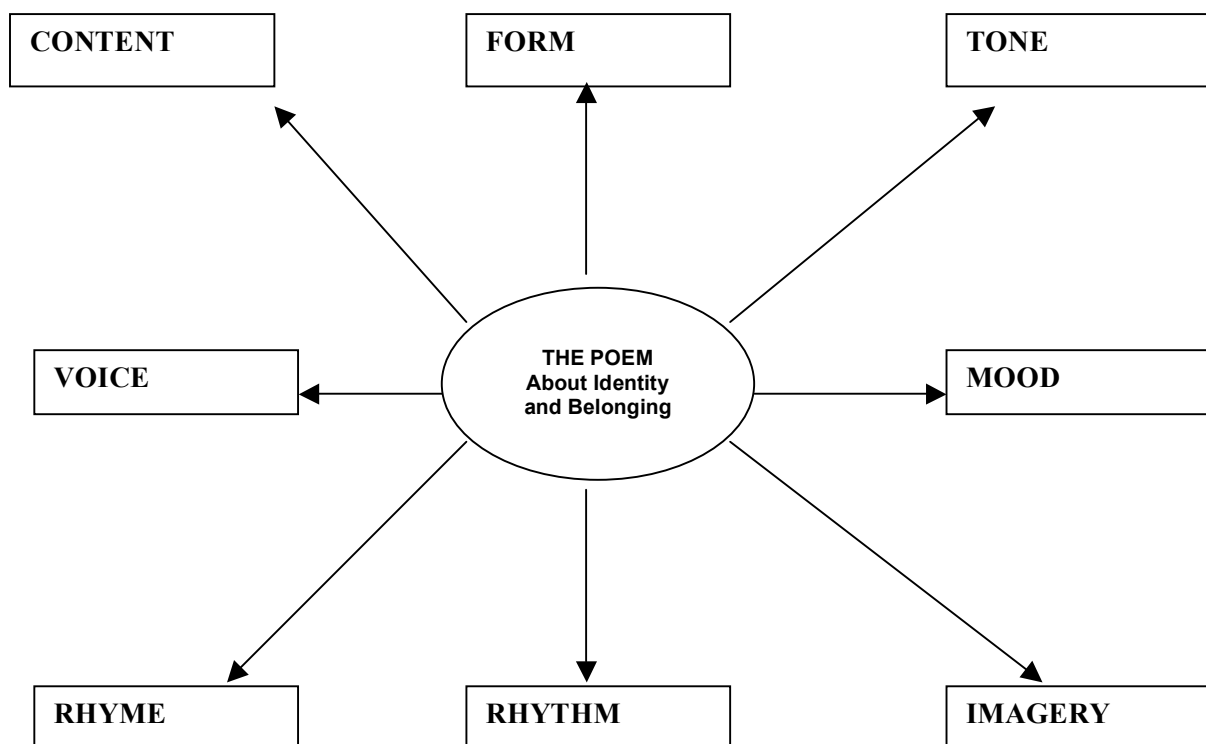
'Easy Does It' is a delightful poem reminding us of the endless imaginative capacities of children, and our responsibilities as adults to nurture rather than destroy this. It is a potent reminder of the power adults – parents in particular – have over the identity formation of their children. The poem opens with the speaker reminding himself, 'I have to be careful with my boy'. The second stanza begins with the same phrase emphasising the fact that we need to consciously exhort ourselves about this, as it would seem that our natural tendency is to squash rather than nurture.

The poem moves, in both stanzas between the vivid and exciting world of the child and the removed, moribund world of the adult. The second line of the first stanza reveals the adult penchant for accuracy and specificity – ‘tree’, but for the child ‘it comes out hazy / very green and friendly...’ There is so much more to ‘tree’ in the child’s mind; it is a richly sensual experience. This contrast is highlighted again in lines 5-12. This time it is the word aeroplane under consideration. For the boy it is a difficult word: ‘he has to stand on tiptoe to touch it.’ Despite this, it does complicated aerobatic manoeuvres (Immelmanns) for him, where for his father it is a model reduced to scientific and technical fact.

In the second stanza Dawe gives us a further insight into the nature of the child’s imagination by demonstrating its capacity for complexity, excitement and engagement through the creation of a word made up of multiple compounds: ‘immediate-delivery-genuine-fold-up-and-extensible’ world. The individual words of this compound word characterise the child’s world for us – it is spontaneous, not contrived; it is sincere, not a façade; and it is incredibly flexible. The father understands the risk he runs of ‘petrify(ing) its wonder’.

The final image of the poem, the visitor at the lake feeding the swans, is a sneak preview of the kind of life the child will lead when grown up if the father is not ‘careful’. It is a powerful image of a person who lives life at a distance, who is not closely involved but is a ‘visitor’, devoid of any authentic place, not really belonging. Life is lived carefully as evidenced in the prepared crusts that the visitor brings with him. The saddest aspect of the image is the response of the swans ‘who arch their necks and hiss’. The swans do not receive the offering gratefully – rather they are dismissive and contemptuous, somehow knowing that there is little to be gained from this interaction.

Below is a map of elements that combine to create the overall effect of a poem. These elements will constitute much of the answer to the three essential questions one asks when studying a poem: What is it about? How is it written? Why has the poet chosen to write in this particular way?



For the classroom:

- Work in groups to analyse one of the following poems from *Sometimes Gladness*.
- Discuss what you learn from the poem about the Context: Exploring Issues of Identity and Belonging.
- Next, use the key elements from the diagram above to analyse *how* Bruce Dawe conveys these ideas to us through the medium of poetry.

Poems to consider:

'Family Man'
'Americanised'
'Homo Suburbiensis'
'Up the Wall'
'Televistas'
'Happiness Is the Art of Being Broken'
'Then'
'The Little Blokes'
'Widower'
'Unemployed'

Section C: Supplementary texts

Heywire

Heywire is a web-based initiative of the ABC. It features a wide range of personal stories from a regional perspective. Some contributions describe the isolation of outback Australia, while others reflect lives spent in larger towns. Some examine the problems of the modern rural economy, but many are focused inward on family, friends and aspirations. The selections listed below focus on issues of identity and belonging. These are excellent texts to use with students as they have been written by their peers.

<http://www.abc.net.au/heywire/stories/2005/tas/joshwhiteley.htm>
<http://www.abc.net.au/heywire/stories/2000/sa/twaters.htm>
<http://www.abc.net.au/heywire/stories/2004/act/arnhembickley.htm>
<http://www.abc.net.au/heywire/stories/2001/vic/zulejhakliko.htm>
<http://www.abc.net.au/heywire/stories/2005/wa/terrencewinner.htm>
<http://www.abc.net.au/heywire/stories/2006/nsw/caseynortham.htm>
<http://www.abc.net.au/heywire/stories/2002/sa/mstokes.htm>

Have a look at two very different ‘takes’ on identity and belonging in a small country town. First, read Josh’s account: <http://www.abc.net.au/heywire/stories/2005/tas/joshwhiteley.htm>

Josh opens with the colloquial phrase, ‘a heads up in life’, which creates the image of a person who has been lifted up in the midst of a crowd and who now has a particularly clear view. It also places him firmly in a young age group.

He represents city life as a movie set – ‘lights, cameras... action’ – full of appeal, colour and movement, but superficial and synthetic. This is contrasted with what Josh and his mates (note this is a shared viewpoint) consider more valuable – their sense of identity. ‘Identity’, placed alone and made distinctive by the use of the colon, is presented as the solid foundation of their lives.

In the following paragraph Josh creates a brief portrait gallery of local entities, emphasizing the strong sense of community that exists. His relatively short, mostly simple sentences all begin with the pronoun ‘we’, drawing attention again to shared experience, followed by strong verbs that represent the core values of his community: knowledge and trust, respect, hard work and training, learning, acknowledging friends.

Josh is at pains to highlight that such qualities spring from a well-developed sense of identity. In order to emphasise this, he isolates ‘Identity’ at the end of a single line paragraph.

In his final paragraph Josh italicizes ‘*our*’ to highlight his sense of belonging in this community. The repetition of the phrases beginning with ‘to our’ creates a rhythm that emphasizes the role that people and place play in creating a sense of belonging. He also draws the distinction between a house and a home – a home being a place of security and belonging.

The liveliness of Josh’s writing has something to do with the fact that his writing contains some features of spoken English e.g. sentences that begin with conjunctions – and, but, because. This creates a personal, informal tone.

Mel has a different view of the relationship between small town life and individual identity. Read Mel’s story on: <http://www.abc.net.au/heywire/stories/2002/sa/mstokes.htm>

For the classroom:

- How does Mel use the imagery of the grapevine to explain her experiences?
- How does her experience with others in the town contrast with Josh's? How does her language create the meaning?
- What descriptions of herself does Mel give? Compare Mel's use of pronouns with Josh's use of 'we'. What impression is created of Mel's relationship with the people in her town?
- What impression does she create of her town? How does she achieve this?
- The phrase, 'the back door slams shut' is used in the opening and closing of this piece. What do you think is Mel's purpose in using such repetition?
- What insights into identity and belonging have you gained from this piece?

My Place by Sally Morgan

Sally Morgan is a descendant of the Palku people of the Pilbara region, Western Australia. She was born in Perth in 1951 to a white father and part-Aboriginal mother and is the eldest of five children. Morgan is also a successful visual artist and is currently Professorial Fellow at the School of Indigenous Studies at the University of Western Australia.

In 1987, the year of Australia's bi-centennial celebrations, The Fremantle Arts Centre Press published a landmark book, *My Place* by Sally Morgan. *My Place* begins with Sally Morgan recalling her experiences of growing up in suburban Perth in the late 1950s and 1960s. Gradually hints about her real ethnicity begin to emerge and her Aboriginal heritage is unearthed. *My Place* draws upon two traditions of autobiographical writing: Western autobiography, whose main concern is the quest of an individual; and the Aboriginal life story, which is more concerned with the community and family relations than with individual selfhood. An excellent resource on Aboriginal identity can be found at: <http://eprints.qut.edu.au/archive/00002081/01/2081.pdf>

In *My Place*, Sally Morgan recounts her increasing confusion about her family origins. Sally's naivety and innocence in matters of race suggest that her mother and grandmother have had great success in hiding their aboriginality from her. She had been told that her forbears were from India One afternoon she returns home to find her grandmother crying. Nan rails: 'You bloody kids don't want me, you want a bloody white grandmother, I'm black. Do you hear? Black, black, black!...For the first time in my fifteen years, I was conscious of Nan's colouring.' (p.97) Her sister is amazed at Sally's lack of awareness:

'...You know what we are, don't you?'

'No, what?'

'Boongs, we're boongs!' I could see Jill was unhappy with the idea.

It took a few minutes before I summoned up enough courage to say, 'What's a boong?'

'A Boong. You know, Aboriginal. God, of all things, we're Aboriginal!'

'Oh.' I suddenly understood. There was a great deal of social stigma attached to being Aboriginal at our school. (p.98)

Sally's hidden aboriginality had in fact been exercising a negative influence on her life – on her sense of value and self-worth. The incident with her art teacher reminds us how fragile young people's emerging identities are and how they have to be treated like eggshells: 'He held up one of my drawings in front of the class one day and pointed out everything wrong with it. There was no perspective, I was the only one with no horizon line. My people were flat and floating. You had to turn it on the side to see what half the picture was about. On and on he went. By the end of ten minutes, the whole class was laughing and I felt very small.' (p.97) As readers we can see that her style of painting belongs to a particular approach used by some Aboriginal artists. Not long after this she is warned off a friendship she has with a girl at church. The girl's father is a leader in the church and says to Sally: 'You're a bad

influence, you must realise that...I don't want her (Mary) mixing with you in case she picks up any of your bad habits.' Whilst it is never said explicitly, it is Sally's aboriginality and what that stereotypically represents for him, that leads him to such extreme behaviour.

For Sally, the secrecy surrounding her heritage began to take its toll on her personal well-being: 'How could I tell her it was me, and her and Nan. The sum total of all the things I didn't understand about them or myself. The feeling that a very vital part of me was missing and that I'd never belong anywhere. Never resolve anything.' (p.106)

The process of uncovering her aboriginality is important for Sally's understanding of her self, but it also opens up her relationship with her mother: 'It was as if a wall that had been between us suddenly crumbled away.' (p.135) And for Gladys, learning about her 'mob' fills a void that she has experienced all her life. In speaking to Nan she says: 'You seem to be ashamed of your past, I don't know why. All my life, you've never told me anything, never let me belong to anyone. All my life, I've wanted a family, you won't even tell me about my own grandmother.' (p.148)

When Sally and her mother travel north to visit Corunna Downs station, their 'homeland', they are given their 'groups' by the folk who live there. This gift of belonging is priceless to Sally and her mother: 'That's right', agreed Billy strongly. 'You got your place now. We've worked it out. You come as often as you please. There's always a spot here for you all.' We all felt very moved and honoured that we'd been given our groups. There was no worry about us forgetting, we kept repeating them over and over. It was one more precious thing that added to our sense of belonging.' (p.232)

Consider the following passage:

'I settled back into my mattress and began to think about the past. Were we Aboriginal? I sighed and closed my eyes. A mental picture flashed vividly before me. I was a little girl again, and Nan and I were squatting in the sand near the back steps.
'This is a track, Sally. See how they go.' I watched, entranced, as she made the pattern of a kangaroo. 'Now, this is a goanna and here are emu tracks. You see, they all different. You got to know all of them if you want to catch tucker.'
'That's real good, Nan.'
'You want me to draw you a picture, Sal?' she said as she picked up a stick.
'Okay.'
'These are men, you see, three men. They are very quiet, they're hunting. Here are kangaroos, they're listening, waiting. They'll take off if they know you're coming.' Nan wiped the sand picture out with her hand. 'It's your turn now', she said, 'you draw something'. I grasped the stick eagerly.
'This is Jill and this is me. We're going down the swamp.' I drew some trees and bushes.'
(pp.99-100)

The language and style of *My Place* is both engaging and accessible. Examples of specific Aboriginal speech are rare, but there are examples of language use that create the impression that Morgan's material is drawn from an oral rather than written tradition.

In the passage above, Sally's contemplation about her possible Aboriginal heritage leads her to recall a time past with her grandmother. Several important language features emerge from this brief passage.

What is immediately evident is that 'story' in Aboriginal culture is conveyed both visually and orally – Nan's spoken words are reinforced by images sketched in the sand. Morgan represents the easy-to-remember simplicity of oral tradition in her writing by using predominantly monosyllabic words and simple sentences: 'This is a track...See how they go.'

Morgan captures Nan's background through a subtle alteration of traditional grammar and the use of vocabulary that contains strong cultural connotations. In referring to the difference in animal tracks Nan says: 'You see, they all different.' The omission of the verb 'are' in the second part of the sentence alerts us to the fact that for Nan English is not just language. The use of the colloquial term 'tucker' and the fact that it's kangaroo, goanna and emu being referred to, also alerts the reader to Nan's non-European, Anglo heritage.

Sally picks up the conventions of story telling very quickly. Her: 'This is Jill and this is me. We're going down the swamp' echoes in tone, structure and style the way Nan speaks to her. First there is the identification of the place or people involved. This is followed by a statement of action. (e.g. 'These are men...they're hunting'). The tone is matter-of-fact, unemotive and allows the picture to be created clearly in the mind's eye.

For the classroom:

- Collect (in your mind!) a story from your family or friends that is often recounted orally when you gather together. Transpose the story into a written piece, using linguistic structures and features that indicate it come originally from an oral tradition.

Gattaca directed by Andrew Niccol

Set in the 'not-too-distant-future', Niccol's *Gattaca* explores the consequences of the premise: what if we could manipulate human DNA and create a society of perfect people? The film raises questions about the nature and construction of identity. It asks: is a person more than the sum of their genetic make-up? It also queries whether conformity to a socially sanctioned and valued identity is more important than the expression of a unique persona.

View the opening 30 minutes of the film, from Chapter 1 to Chapter 8: Opening Titles; 'The Not-Too-Distant-Future'; Ten Fingers, Ten Toes; The 'Natural' Way; The Unspoken Contest; Discrimination Down To A Science; The DNA Broker; Becoming Jerome.

For the classroom:

DNA (deoxyribose nucleic acid) is the genetic code for all human life unique to each individual. The chemicals that form an integral part of this are nitrogen elements (**g**uanine, **a**denine, **t**hymine and **c**ytosine).

- What is the Director (Andrew Niccol) attempting to emphasise about individuality through bolding the letters G, A, T and C in the title credits (also closing credits)?
- Describe the atmosphere and ideas projected through the montage of extreme close-ups of falling skin cells, fingernails and hair, the blood/urine pouches; as well as the accompanying exaggerated echoing sounds/music. What issues about identity and belonging does the Director signal through such filmic devices? (Chapter 1).
- Describe the way individuals are characterised in the *Gattaca* Corporation with reference to types of shots, colours, costuming and movement. (Chapter 2).
- In Chapters 2 and 3, what do we learn about "Jerome Morrow"? What concerns about individuality does this information raise?
- Consider the sequence of scenes concerning Vincent's conception (Chapter 3). Identify the filmic elements used to emphasise humanity. In what ways do the people shown in this sequence differ from those that inhabit the *Gattaca* Corporation?

Names are of significance in *Gattaca* with regard to ideas about identity and a sense of connection.

- Is there any connotation in Vincent's mother's name, 'Marie'? Does this have any connection with the name of Vincent's mentor at the *Gattaca* Corporation, 'Director Josef'?

- Explain Vincent's father's refusal to give his own name to Vincent after hearing of his DNA profile/predictions. Why are names passed from generation to generation? What does the name "Vincent" mean?
- In what ways is Vincent's early childhood limited by his DNA profile/natural birth? Identify the filmic elements used to draw attention to these.
- In Chapter 4, how does the Geneticist reassure Vincent's parents in response to their comment: "We were wondering if it's good to leave some things to chance"? What scientific values are implied about the construction of individual identity in his response?
- List examples of the rivalry between Anton and Vincent throughout the sequence of Chapter 4. Note filmic elements which emphasise the rivalry – especially mise-en-scene. How does this inform the idea of belonging within a family?
- Vincent says: "My real resume is my genes." Explain.
- What is genoism? (Chapter 4). What does this suggest about the rules of belonging in the world of *Gattaca*?
- Vincent says: "It was the one moment in our lives that my brother was not as strong as he believed, and I was not as weak. It was the moment that made everything else possible." Explain Vincent's realisation (epiphany) about the importance of self-belief? (Chapter 5).

Sometimes, people have to leave their families in search for role models, communities and lifestyles that are not available to them within their family.

- Comment on the significance of the family photograph (note the mise-en-scene). (Chapter 5).
- Comment on how society has "discrimination down to a science"? What are the consequences for individuals in the world of *Gattaca*? (Chapter 6)
- Note examples of Vincent's determination. What aspects of his identity are emerging? (Chapter 6).
- Explain why Vincent has decided to become Jerome Morrow. (Chapter 7).
- The sequence "So began the process of becoming Jerome" incorporates a range of close-ups and extreme close-ups of Vincent, as well as upbeat music. Comment on the effects of these. (Chapter 8).
- Describe your impressions of Jerome Morrow with references to the filmic elements used to portray him. What is the source of Jerome's bitterness? (Chapters 7 and 8).
- Comment on the name changes between Vincent and Jerome.
- Find out what "Eugene" means. What is "eugenics"? What connotations does this have concerning views of identity? (Chapter 8)
- There are several key quotes about identity and belonging in the sequence of Chapters from 1 to 8. Identify these and develop a discussion forum on the school intranet.
- Debate the proposition: Human perfection – desirable or undesirable?

'Value-Added Values' by David Chalke

Recent worldwide trends and events like globalisation, acts of terrorism and advancements in communication technologies have caused many countries to debate their unique cultural identities.

For the classroom:

- Discuss: definitions of 'cultural identity'; factors that make up a 'cultural identity'.
- Individually list the features of an Australian cultural identity. Share these lists in small groups. Drawing on these individual lists, create a common group list. What sort of evidence/examples have you used to support your selected features? Were there areas of easy agreement? Were there areas of disagreement? Compare with other groups – comment on the similarities and differences.
- Create a Venn diagram comparing features of an Australian cultural identity with that of another country that you have some familiarity. What conclusions can you deduce about the construction of cultural identities?

Several governments have undertaken steps to define their own country's cultural identity – some, like Britain and the Netherlands, have instituted tests for immigrants wishing to take up full citizenship. A similar proposal was presented in the Australian parliament by Andrew Robb, the Secretary for Immigration. It was suggested that the Australian citizenship test would examine competence with the English language, knowledge of Australian history, institutions and values. This aroused widespread controversy for many reasons; however, a key area of contention concerned how we define the 'values' that make up our identity as Australians.

Read David Chalke's response to this issue in his article, 'Value-Added Values'. David Chalke is a social analyst and consultant to AustraliaSCAN. The article is available at: <http://www.news.com.au/heraldsun/story/0,21985,20468947-5006029,00.html>

For the classroom:

- Chalke incorporates several Australian icons and iconic events in his article. Identify these and comment on the unique Australian cultural features they represent. Do you agree with his choice of icons and events? Is anyone/anything missing from Chalke's selection? Who/what would you choose as icons/iconic events? Why?
- Chalke lists several values and qualities that he believes are part of the Australian cultural make-up. Describe the image of Australianness this creates. Do you agree with his list? What might you delete or add? How would you support your adjustments to Chalke's list?
- Idioms are common words and expressions particular to a specific country or culture. Chalke uses many colourful Australian idioms throughout his article. Explore the meanings of each idiom. In what ways does the inclusion of such distinct expression contribute to his argument?
- Reflect: do you fit Chalke's view of an Australian cultural identity as defined by values?

Section D: Student texts

Identity & Belonging

Character is at the core of this context – characters are the vehicles for the exploration of issues and ideas about identity and belonging. Texts selected for this context, including many of Dawe’s poems, are essentially character driven narratives. You need to examine how authors design convincing and engaging characters with unique identities. This section presents a series of exploratory writing activities on the context.

Thinking about characterisation

According to Australian author Kate Grenville, “Characterisation is the process that transforms real-life people into characters in fiction.” (Grenville, *The Writing Book*, p.36)

For the classroom:

Read the following reflections about characterisation offered by authors.

- What issues does an author need to take into account when constructing characters?
- What techniques do authors use to build their characters?
- How do these authors view the concept of “identity”?

“What is character but the determination of incident? What is incident but the illustration of character?” (Henry James)

“Fiction is nothing less than the subtlest instrument for self-examination and self-display ...” (John Updike)

“One important thing about characters is that they’re not the same as people. People are in life: characters are in fiction.” (Kate Grenville)

“Should all the people suddenly become wise, mature and well-controlled, there would be nobody left to write about, laugh about or sympathise with.” (Stanley B. Stefan)

“I collect lines and snippets of things somebody might say – things I overhear, things I see in the newspaper, things I think up, dream up, wake up with in the middle of the night. I write a line down in my notebook. If I can get enough of those things, then characters begin to emerge.” (Richard Ford)

“I think my characters are very normal, very typical people. But I’m assuming the range of what is normal is very wide.” (Mary Gaitskill)

I spend a lot of time working on characters. I start off with a resume – a job application form that I have extended a little bit. I fill that out and sort of force myself to think about the characters. Then, if I am lucky, I will find a picture of my character in a magazine. I will go through hundreds of pictures to find pictures of my characters and pictures of their houses.” (Walter Dean Myers)

“An author’s knowledge of himself, realistic and unromantic, is like a store of energy on which he must draw for a lifetime; one volt of it properly directed will bring a character to life.” (Graham Greene)

“I decided, ‘I’m going to write out of myself.’ Once I made the decision, all inhibition was gone.” (Irina Spanidou)

“The loss of childhood is the beginning of poetry.” (Andrei Tarkovski)

Thinking like an author

Authors have to consider four key questions when designing a presentation of their ideas:

Why am I writing? This is the purpose of the presentation.

What will I write about? This is about the content and focus of the presentation.

How will I write about it? This is about the way in which the content and focus are presented. Here the author makes decisions about techniques and strategies that will be used to convey their content.

Who will I write for? This is about identifying the specific audience for the presentation. In turn, the answer to this question will influence decisions about the what and how.

For the classroom:

- Prepare a brief on different presentation options for the following proposition by completing the chart. This may be done individually or in groups.

Proposition: In order to achieve a secure and fulfilled sense of selfhood, people must continually move on in physical, emotional and psychological terms.

Mode of Presentation	Why? (Specify purpose)	What? (Give brief outcome of the focus)	How? (Give overview of linguistic structures and features of specific mode)	Who? (Give specific audience)
Short Story				
Web Page				
Poem				
Newspaper Feature Article				
Dramatic Script				
Opinion Article				
Documentary Film				

- Review the options you have outlined. Explain which presentation option you would choose to complete. Based on your responses, make a list of the criteria that most influenced your decisions.

Getting started – writing about identity and belonging

Undertaking a series of character-based writing improvisations will enable you to generate ideas for your own writing and to develop a consciousness about the use of specific structural and linguistic features in presenting views about the context.

Propositions and anecdotes

For the classroom:

- Write an anecdote to explore one or more of the following propositions. An anecdote is a brief illustrative story with clear beginning, middle and end. Draw the anecdote from either your direct experience or observed experience. The anecdote may prove or refute the proposition.
The search for self never ends.
People prefer to accept the roles society gives them.
A sense of belonging enables a person to develop a secure sense of self.
People will do anything to achieve acceptance from others.
Rebellion against one's upbringing or environment is important for personal growth.
People seek a sense of identity through others.
A person's sense of identity is influenced by their culture/class/religion (choose).
People define themselves in relation to others/places/material objects (choose).
- Once you have written your anecdote, identify the dominant language and structural features by annotating them on your piece. Identify a suitable target audience. Select a different audience – what alterations to the language features would you make for this audience?
- Working with the same proposition, write a short persuasive piece explaining and supporting your viewpoint. Your piece could be a letter to the editor, essay, opinion feature, etc. Once you have completed this, identify the dominant language and structural features by annotating them on your piece. Identify a suitable target audience. Select a different audience – what alterations to the language features would you make for this audience?
- Compare your anecdote and persuasive piece – which is the most effective in presenting your views about identity and belonging? How did writing in a different mode influence your ideas about the context?

Character inventories

As suggested by Myers (above), some authors create 'resumes' about their characters – these are also referred to as inventories or profiles. Essentially, character inventories 'list' facts in chart format. There are several different forms of character inventories which emphasise aspects of a person's sense of identity and position in the world. These reflect various theories of personality formation (see Section A).

Character Inventory #1 (adapted from Bernays and Painter, *What If?*): name; nickname; sex; age; looks; education; vocation/occupation; status and money; marital status; family/ethnicity; speech, accent; relationships; places (home, office, car, etc); possessions; recreation hobbies; obsessions; beliefs; politics; sexual history; ambitions; religion; superstitions; fears; attitudes; character flaws; character strengths; pets; taste in books, music, etc; journal entries; correspondence; food preferences; handwriting; astrological sign; talents.

Character Inventory #2 (adapted from Bickham, *Writing The Short Story*): Character's name, age and brief factual biography; character's dominant impression and major tags; character's goal, problem or lack that motivates them in this story; action, event or setting that introduces the character; action, event or place where the character will be at the conclusion of their part in the story; brief physical description of character.

Character Inventory #3 (adapted from Field, *The Screen-Writer's Workbook*): write a factual biography of the character from birth until the time of the story in the first person.

Character Inventory #4 (adapted from Horton, *Writing The Character-Centred Screenplay*):
 Background – place and time, parental profile (race, ethnicity, socio-economic level), siblings, family structure and life;
 Basics – gender, physical abilities/limitations, race, ethnic background, religion, socio-economic standing, environment;
 Personality Traits/Tendencies – protagonist or antagonist, more thinking or feeling, life/career/personal goals, core characteristic, biggest personal contradiction, father or son, daughter or mother, victim/persecutor/saviour, self-centred/selfish/selfless;
 Personal Individualising Habits/Tastes – personal appearance/stature, clothes, favourite/hated food/drinks, education, hobbies, fears, most hated activities, most enjoyed activities, deep secret, wildest fantasy, closest friend/s, attitudes towards self/others/friends/sex/love/family/country/world/ religion/etc, sense of humour, etc
 Professional/Public Life – job/career/occupation, accomplishments in society’s eyes, clubs/ organisations belongs to, public causes supported/protected, etc;
 Telling Details/Likes/Dislikes – conservative/traditional or liberal/radical, ability to act “out of character”/contradictory, vegetarian or carnivore, substance abuser or abstainer;
 How Would The Character React To – death of loved one, unexpected compliment/kindness, serious illness, natural disaster, etc.
 (You can build additional categories and criteria into this model).

For the classroom:

- Compare and contrast these character inventories, noting the aspects of identity that each emphasises and which aspects are in common.
- Which is the most useful inventory in thinking about and designing a character?
- Apply one of these character inventories to a character you have studied. What does this suggest about aspects of the character’s identity construction?
- Using one of these character inventories, create a character for your own writing about the context.

Appealing and unappealing personalities

For the classroom:

- Drawing on the individuals you have encountered in the texts studied, complete the following lists.
- List the personality aspects that you find appealing (10-15)
- List the personality aspects that you find unappealing (10-15)

Authors build clusters of tags to signify their characters’ personality and their central, motivating concerns. A tag is a specialised and recurring label which may manifest in the character’s appearance, abilities, speech, mannerisms and attitudes. A character tag is a concrete representation of abstract aspects of personality.

For the classroom:

- Give a concrete tag to indicate each of the appealing and unappealing personality aspects you have listed.
- Develop some of these into a descriptive paragraph.

Additional character based writing improvisations to explore issues of identity and belonging

For the classroom:

- Monologues: explore the structure and psychology of monologues; re-write monologues into third person narratives, noting how this alters representations of identity.

- Stream-of-Consciousness: examine the linguistic features (especially sentence construction variety) and structural focus of this mode. Write own stream-of-consciousness piece based on the opening line of *The Catcher In The Rye*, “If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you’ll probably want to know is ...”; or the opening line of a Bruce Dawe poem; or the opening line from a *Bombshells* monologue.
- *Bildungsroman* narrative: review the narrative features and design appropriate characters and situations; be specific about the “lessons” for the protagonist.
- Point of View: re-write scenes from the selected texts from a different point of view to note what was revealed (or omitted) from the original representation of identity and belonging. For example, Mr Antolini tells about his discussion with Holden; Rachel Lapp tells about her encounter with John Book.
- Research theories of character construction, or theories of personality, and present these on as an informative webpage. Incorporate character examples from the texts studied.
- Personal Writing: write about similarities/differences between yourself and their parents/siblings/family/friends.

Section E: The Outcome for Area of Study 2

In all likelihood, teachers will discuss and model structures and features of forms of texts as the class considers the selected and supplementary texts for this Context, and their own writing, in preparation for the Outcome. Examples of forms of writing that challenge or modify conventional forms should be noted and explored as well as more traditional forms. For instance, it may be useful for students to consider the Time Magazine Essay formats as a model for essay writing and to discuss the ways that these differ from scaffolded structures that they have been introduced to previously.

Students should be encouraged to construct forms of writing that challenge some traditional conventions, and modify or combine traditional forms of text in order to present their ideas in the most interesting and engaging ways. Forms of writing that incorporate elements of narrative, exposition and argument, such as feature articles or opinion pieces or human interest stories published in the print media, give students flexibility in the ways that they might approach the tasks and structure their writing, as do literary texts which incorporate a range of forms.

Schools must decide whether students will complete this Outcome by putting together a folio of 3-5 shorter pieces of writing, or by presenting **at least one** extended piece for each of Units 3 and 4.

The end of year Examination specifies audience and purpose, but will not specify form. Teachers are encouraged to give students experience in making decisions about form and in learning to trust their own judgement about such matters. The prompts suggested below specify an audience and purpose for the student's text, without specifying a particular form. However, teachers can easily include a specific form if they wish.

The Examination task for Area of Study 2 requires students to demonstrate in some way that they have read one of the selected texts from the VCAA list. However, this is not a requirement for the Outcome task.

Sample assessment tasks

Include a statement briefly explaining decisions you made as an author to present your ideas in this piece of writing. In particular, describe how choices you made about language features and structures were influenced by your sense of the specified audience and purpose, and explain reasons for the judgements made about what would be most appropriate and effective in terms of register and form.

- Develop a personal reflection on the people, places, events and experiences that have shaped your identity. This text will be published anonymously in an anthology of student writing for Victorian VCE students.
- Write a bildungsroman narrative in which the protagonist develops from a stage of naivety or innocence to one of experience and knowledge. This writing is to be published in a school anthology of Year 12 VCE English student's writing.
- Develop a cycle of poems about your developing identity or that of a fictional character that you invent. Set each poem in a different stage of this person's life. This writing is to be published in a school anthology of Year 12 VCE English student's writing.

- Write a script for a performance during which the protagonist goes from a sense of alienation to a sense of belonging, or vice versa. The script is for a series of presentations that will be made to the local community.
- You live in a rural area. Write a reflection about identity and belonging in your community, for submission to the *Heywire* website: <http://www.abc.net.au/heywire/stories>
- You live in an urban area. Write a reflection about identity and belonging in your suburb or city, for submission to the education section of a daily metropolitan newspaper.
- Write a series of anecdotes that trace the development of a person’s identity. This will form the basis of your speech at their twenty first birthday party.
- The following prompts have been published by a charity that is running a competition for unpublished writers in order to highlight the work that they do with disadvantaged people. Respond to one of them in a piece of writing that draws on your understanding of ideas and issues associated with the Context ‘Exploring Issues of Identity and Belonging’:
 - A person’s sense of identity and belonging are defined more by their circumstances than any other factor.
 - Labelling and stereotyping people who belong to a particular group can be limiting.
 - Feelings of alienation, displacement, or discrimination are things everybody has to deal with, but some of us have a harder time doing this than others.
- Create a dictionary that explains the visual markers and verbal tags of the groups you belong to. Include graphics or photographs if you wish. This text will be used by English teachers at Year 10 to introduce a Unit of work on “Peer groups.”
- Write a piece that reflects on a turning point in your life (or someone else’s life) which has had a profound impact on your sense of self. This writing will be shared with your teacher.
- Write a piece in response to somebody else’s text, that comments explicitly or implicitly on the ideas about identity and belonging that are explored in the text. Your writing will be displayed on the classroom noticeboard.
- Choose a passage (approximately 40 lines, or 10 minutes of a film) from one of the texts you have studied in the Context ‘Exploring Issues of Identity and Belonging’. Write an analysis of that passage, looking at the relationship between the style of the writing and the central ideas raised in the passage that are relevant to the Context. Your writing will be placed on the notice board in the school Library during parent teacher interviews.

Section F: Glossary and resources

bildungsroman (Gm. “rites of passage novel”) – a genre that explores the transitional processes from childhood to adulthood in which the protagonist child/teenager learns key life lessons.

character tags – A tag is a specialised and recurring label which may manifest in the character’s appearance, abilities, speech, mannerisms and attitudes. Screenplay term.

consumerism – the preoccupation of society with the acquisition of consumer goods

contrasting character – a supporting character who contrasts against the protagonist in order to highlight dimensions of the protagonist. Screenplay term.

couplet – a pair of successive lines of verse, esp. a pair that rhyme and are of the same length.

cultural imperialism – the imposition of a foreign viewpoint or civilization on a people.

metaphor – a figure of speech in which a term or phrase is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable in order to suggest a resemblance.

monologue – a form of dramatic entertainment, comedic solo, or the like by a single speaker.

octave – a group of eight lines of verse, esp. the first eight lines of a sonnet in the Italian form.

post-feminism – a discourse of feminist concerns that is informed by the postmodern era.

quatrain – a stanza or poem of four lines, usually with alternate rhymes.

sonnet – a poem, that expresses a single, complete thought, idea, or sentiment, of 14 lines, usually in iambic pentameter, with rhymes arranged according to one of certain definite schemes, being in the strict or Italian form divided into a major group of 8 lines (the octave) followed by a minor group of 6 lines (the sestet), and in a common English form into 3 quatrains followed by a couplet.

stanza – an arrangement of a certain number of lines, usually four or more, sometimes having a fixed length, meter, or rhyme scheme, forming a division of a poem.

stereotype – a simplified and standardized conception or image invested with special meaning and held in common by members of a group.

teenspeak – the language used typically by teenagers, characterised by in-group sayings, meanings and pronunciation.

thematic character – a character in who verbally and visually dimensionalises key themes in order to add complexity to ideas. Screenplay term.

transformational arc – the pattern of transformations (growth and change) a character undertakes as they progress through a narrative. Screenplay term.

Additional reading and viewing

Additional reading and viewing for the Context 'Exploring Issues of Identity and Belonging':

Abdel-Fattah R., *Does My Head Look Big in This?*
Achebe C., *Things Fall Apart*
Anderson S., *Triage*
Atwood M., *The Handmaid's Tale*
Atwood M., *Cat's Eye*
Barker P., *Border Crossing*
Baynton B., *Bush Studies*
Bronte C., *Jane Eyre*
Chevalier T., *Girl With a Pearl Earring*
De Beauvoir S., *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter*
Dessaix R., *A Mother's Disgrace*
Dickens C., *Great Expectations*
Freeman C., *Cathy: Her Own Story*
Gilbert K. (ed), *Inside Black Australia*
Goldsworthy P., *Maestro*
Gow, *Away*
Harrison J., *Stolen*
Jhabvala R., *A Backward Place*
Lawson H., *Short Stories*
Malouf D., *Remembering Babylon*
Malouf D., *Fly Away Peter*
Marchetta M., *Looking for Alibrandi*
Martin J., *Lionheart*
MacLeod A., *No Great Mischief*
McCarthy M., *Queen Kat, Carmel and St Jude get a Life*
Morgan S., *My Place*
Pilkington D., *Follow the Rabbit Proof Fence*
Wolff T., *This Boy's Life*
Winterson J., *Oranges are not the only Fruit*
Winton T., *Minimum of Two*
Winton T., *That Eye The Sky*

Viewing:

The opening ceremony of the Sydney Olympics
The 7 Up series
Australian Rules
Bend It Like Beckham
Billy Elliot
Blade Runner
The Castle
The Dish
The Year My Voice Broke; Flirting; Nostradamus Kid
Japanese Story
Marking Time
What's Eating Gilbert Grape?