

Area of Study (Belonging) Practice paper 2012

Question 1 (15 Marks)

Recommended Time: 40 minutes

Instructions

Examine the four texts carefully, then answer the questions that follow.

- Answer on lined A4 paper.
- Put your **name** and the heading AOS Practice Section 1 at the top of the first page.
- Label each question clearly. Leave 3 lines between each answer.

Text One: Visual text - *Playing the game*



Text Two: Poem

The Canes

by Paul Hostovsky

After the accident, he walked with a cane for several months. And he began to notice the other people with canes, and to feel a kinship with them, a strong identification when he saw one crossing a street or waiting for the train, the bus, the elevator — a desire to speak to them in the language of the cane, the language of the country of the cane, which no one else seemed to know existed, which he never knew existed himself until now. But he didn't know what to say to them, because he didn't know them. He only knew what they knew. So he didn't say anything directly. But instead he said things to himself in the language that was in him. And his thoughts grew wider, as though the white canes of the blind were clearing the way — click, sweep, click — a separate way through the darkness home.

Text Three - Comment

Shaun Tan Comments on *The Arrival*

The following is an extract from an article written for Viewpoint Magazine
<http://extranet.edfac.unimelb.edu.au/LLAE/viewpoint/>, describing some of the ideas and process behind his graphic novel.

Looking over much of my previous work as an illustrator and writer, such as *The Rabbits* (about colonisation), *The Lost Thing* (about a creature lost in a strange city) or *The Red Tree* (a girl wandering through shifting dreamscapes), I realise that I have a recurring interest in notions of 'belonging', particularly the finding or losing of it. Whether this has anything to do with my own life, I'm not sure, it seems to be more of a subconscious than conscious concern. One contributing experience may have been that of growing up in Perth, one of the most isolated cities in the world, sandwiched between a vast desert and a vaster ocean. More specifically, my parents pegged a spot in a freshly minted northern suburb that was quite devoid of any clear cultural identity or history. A vague awareness of Aboriginal displacement (which later sharpened into focus with a project like *The Rabbits*) only further troubled any sense of a connection to a 'homeland' in this universe of bulldozed 'tabula rasa' coastal dunes, and fast-tracked, walled-in housing estates.

Being a half-Chinese at a time a place when this was fairly unusual may have compounded this, as I was constantly being asked 'where are you from?' to which my response of 'here' only prompted a deeper inquiry, 'where do your parents come from?' At least this was far more positive attention than

the occasional low-level racism I experienced as a child, and which I also noticed directed either overtly or surreptitiously at my Chinese father from time to time. Growing up I did have a vague sense of separateness, an unclear notion of identity or detachment from roots, on top of that traditionally contested concept of what it is to be 'Australian', or worse, 'un-Australian' (whatever that might mean).

Beyond any personal issues, though, I think that the 'problem' of belonging is perhaps more of a basic existential question that everybody deals with from time to time, if not on a regular basis. It especially rises to the surface when things 'go wrong' with our usual lives, when something challenges our comfortable reality or defies our expectations – which is typically the moment when a good story begins, so good fuel for fiction. We often find ourselves in new realities – a new school, job, relationship or country, any of which demand some reinvention of 'belonging'.

This was uppermost in my mind during the long period of work on *The Arrival*, a book which deals with the theme of migrant experience. Given my preoccupation with 'strangers in strange lands', this was an obvious subject to tackle, a story about somebody leaving their home to find a new life in an unseen country, where even the most basic details of ordinary life are strange, confronting or confusing – not to mention beyond the grasp of language. It's a scenario I had been thinking about for a number of years before it crystallised into some kind of narrative form.

Text Four - personal reflection

Initiation

By Angus Gallagher

There is an apparent lack of public knowledge about the local Aboriginal culture in Armidale, having said that I am not even of the Anawain or Kamileroi tribes. I'm sure the information is out there with the elders but I feel like it would be inappropriate for me to ask. I am aboriginal but I'm not from here. By birth I'm from god knows where. My father is currently compiling a quite extensive family tree but the further back it goes, the more I feel like I could be from anywhere within 1000 clicks of this place.

I moved here aged 6 from Sydney and beyond that I really have no idea where I'm from. As my father's family tree grows I become more and more aware of how many people I really am related to but I still have no idea where I'm from exactly or who I really belong to. My father grew up not publicising his aboriginality for fear of being ostracized. His grandmother, who would have been a wealth of information having been raised by a mother from the land, spent her whole life pretending to be anything that wasn't aboriginal.

I have struggled with how Aboriginal I am. I feel comfortable living with white society, though guilty sometimes, seeing myself as snobbish. I long to understand my cultural heritage and to learn about the customs and the way of life of my people, whoever they may be.

I have had to satisfy myself by trying to understand the connection I have with this land that I have come to, this land that I grew up loving, exploring and ultimately coming to respect. With a lack of people to share this with I have become my own tribe. Being aboriginal in spirit and feeling that my ancestors spirits and I are in our own little tribe, connected to whatever land we can find. Not quite belonging where we are, but not knowing where we belong.

I even went so far as to name my own totem, the Tawny Frogmouth (there is a pair who nests in our yard every year), as mine was lost with my ancestors. I have been rejected and abused by people; both Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal who have failed to try and look just a little deeper.

I search for old traditional initiation customs, forms of officialising and exploring my journey into manhood; a corroboree with the men or a journey through the wilderness to prove my worth to the world. I have always dreamed that one day I would find my people. I would go to that place and in a dark circle of trees around a campfire I would be accepted in a celebration of song and dance as an Uncle would teach me the law of this land.

If anyone out there who is willing to give me that, don't hesitate to let me know.

Questions

In your answers you will be assessed on how well you:

- demonstrate understanding of the way perceptions of belonging are shaped in and through texts
- describe, explain and analyse the relationship between language, text and context

Text one — Visual text

(a) Select one aspect of the visual text and explain how it offers a perspective on belonging. 2

Text two — Poem

(b) How are personal insights into belonging and identity conveyed in the poem? 2

Text three — Comment by Shaun Tan

(c) From his experience of composing The Arrival, what does Shaun Tan come to understand about belonging? 3

Text four — Personal Reflection

(d) "... I have become my own tribe."
Discuss the importance of cultural heritage to Angus' sense of belonging. 3

Texts one, two, three and four

(e) Analyse the relationship between belonging and identity in TWO of these texts. 5