

## Compulsory Weekend Homework – Due Monday

Read and annotate (make notes around) the following texts:

1. *Breaking Out of the Labels*
2. *Dear Fatty*
3. *The Diary of Anne Frank*
4. *Michael Jackson's death puts focus on racial identity*

**Option A:** Choose one of the following prompts and write a 4 – 6 paragraph response that makes reference to *at least 2* of the texts.

**OR**

**Option B:** Write a 1-2 paragraph response for each prompt referring to 1 of the texts in each. (You can match the prompts and texts to suit yourself).

### **Prompts**

- *We value our uniqueness but everywhere are pressured to conform*
- *Our relationships with others help us to define who we are*
- *To be true to yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest achievement*
- *Having a sense of being different makes it difficult to belong*

**Experiment with writing your piece or pieces in a particular form for a particular audience and make not of this at the end of your work.**

# BELONGING...

final places.

## What does it mean to belong?

Belonging is about how we define ourselves and situate ourselves in space and time. It is about how we relate to others, how we perceive others, include or exclude them, identify them as one of 'them' or 'us'. Belonging is the powerful, deep-felt sense of 'this is my country' or 'this is who I am', or 'this is my people'. Belonging is about a spiritual home or state of mind.

### Key questions

*Belonging* invites you to consider, "Where do I belong?"

- Who belongs? And who does not?
- Have notions of belonging changed over time?
- What does belonging mean to me?
- What are the different ways in which people express belonging?

### Themes

#### Place

An affinity with a place is central to most people's sense of belonging. This includes a sense of nostalgia for a childhood home, a holiday place, the place where loved ones are buried or where sacred ceremonies are held. For Indigenous people, attachment to the land is fundamental to a sense of belonging. People can feel an emotional attachment to a region, a state, or the whole country.

'Knowing the country' comes from experiencing it physically, by drawing 'mental maps' of particular areas, and giving it names. 'Special places' extends this idea into particular ways of belonging to a place that relates to specific memories and emotions—childhood, holidays, lost places, sacred places and

#### People

People are as critical as place to a sense of belonging. The groups to which we belong or from which we are excluded often determine how we see ourselves in relation to the rest of society.

Many people gain a strong sense of belonging by being part of a community. 'Making communities' also includes special communities such as those created by people from a particular homeland, religious faith, or sexuality. Many people experience a special kind of belonging associated with playing on a sporting team. 'Dressed to belong' shows how the way people dress can say much about where they feel that they belong. The wearing of a uniform can enforce belonging. The clothes worn by members of organisations such as armies, schools, sporting teams, Masonic lodges, and the kinds of dress considered appropriate for particular occasions, mean that anyone not dressed in a certain way appears not to belong. Informal dress codes also operate among different groups in society. The expectations of society that people should conform to a desired physical shape can prompt some individuals to take drastic measures to make sure that their shape 'belongs'.

'At work' looks at the idea that where we work is integral to our sense of belonging—and that being unemployed can force people to not belong.

'Home' teases out the ways in which our homes create our individual sense of belonging—the houses we dream of, build or buy, decorate, and live in with our families. Lack of a home can destroy or deny a sense of belonging: the experience of homelessness and the fate of the Indigenous stolen generations remind us that for some people 'home' can be a painful concept.

Leena Dhingra

## Breaking Out of the Labels

From *Watchers and Seekers*

*Leena Dhingra was born in India and spent the first few years of her life in Paris before coming to England. She describes the frustrations and pain of having had continually to cope with the 'label-fitting-fighting game' – resisting other people's kind and unkind attempts to define her according to their perceptions.*

I first came to this country nearly thirty years ago during which time I have fallen into, fitted and resisted a series of multifarious labels from: a girl from India, an Indian girl, a coloured, a Paki, a black, a wog, an Asian, and recently graduated to becoming a member of an ethnic minority.

Recently when I was asked to give a talk as an Asian woman, I found myself reflecting more on what to say to fit the label than what to say to fit my own person. Recognising this deeply ingrained old pattern of label-fitting and label-fighting, I decided to embark on a retrospective survey into the meanings and effects of my labelled past.

When I first came to England it was in the mid-fifties. I was an eleven-year-old schoolgirl on my way to boarding school, and was, quite simply, a little girl from India. There was nothing to quarrel about there. Even the fact that I had not at the time arrived directly from India, but from Paris, where my family had found itself, having lost home and city to Pakistan following the partition, I was still a little girl from India. I knew that

India was free, and that we were refugees. From my father I knew both the Bengali and English versions of the poem by Tagore which had become the Indian national anthem and used to recite it to rhythm as I played hopscotch on the Paris pavements:

Thou art the/ruler/of the/minds/of all/people

Thou/dispenser/of India's/destiny

Thy/name/rises/in the/hearts/of the Punjab . . .

My mother always chose to remind me about being a refugee when she dispensed my pocket money: 'We are refugees . . . everything we have is by God's grace . . . we are lucky . . . must always share . . . and help others . . .' But I didn't really need any prompting by then, as it was always willingly that I would place the greater part of my money in the large Munich beer mug my father had been presented at some conference and which had since come to be known as my refugee mug.

London, though new, didn't feel strange at all. In fact it had a fairy-tale familiarity in my eleven-year-old eyes. I knew it from pictures I had seen, from stories I had heard and so many people appeared to have visited, passed through, studied or lived in it. And, of course, I knew it from the Monopoly board and the childhood magic that had been invested in the game through playing it with my cousins in the sunny Indian courtyards, sipping long lemon drinks and wrangling over the property cards. And I was pleased to find that even the train that was to take me away to my boarding school left from my favourite station, Kings Cross!

My cosmopolitan Quaker boarding school posed no threat to the three pillars of my identity: of being Indian, free and a refugee. And the three countries I flew in and out of so frequently, reinforced the meanings

---

AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

which I imbibed as Gandhi, dignity, and concern for others less fortunate than me. As an Indian girl in Paris, I came from the land of Gandhi. In India, I was part of a history and a caring present, and in boarding school, my tendency to the most enormous painful chilblains would invariably elicit tender concern from my housemother and reminders of my precious Indian-ness. It all fitted neatly and felt okay.

But the okayness of it all soon came to an end once I left the protected precincts of my boarding school and came to London. This time it was not to pass through as I usually did on my way to Paris for the holidays, but to stay, get a couple more 'O's, finish off my 'A's, prepare for an audition to Drama School and find a place to stay.

'Are you coloured?' said the voice on the phone.

'I beg your pardon?' was my reply.

'Where have you come from?' said the voice.

'From Paris,' said I.

'Are you French?' said the voice again.

'No, no no. I'm Indian,' came my reply.

'Sorry dear, but we can't take no coloureds here.'

Surprise ceded to shock, followed by indignation. A stink bomb had been thrown open and without realising it at the time I had absorbed its smell, as for my next call, I said:

'Excuse me, but, I am an Indian student calling about the room you advertised.'

Read the following extract carefully; it has been taken from *Dear Fatty* (2008) the autobiography of Dawn French, the British actress, writer and comedienne. Many of French's comedy sketches have poked fun at her size and shape, with her confidence inspired by her father who told her every day that she was beautiful.

In your answer you should:

- consider the writer's thoughts and feelings about the struggle for identity and the ways in which he expresses them
- compare this extract to your wider reading, saying how typical you think it is of literature about the struggle for identity. You should consider both subject matter and style.

When I was about 13, I was invited to a party by my friend Karen. I was so excited about this party because I knew that there was going to be a boy there called Mark who I really liked. Although we had some mutual friends and we had been in the same room together on various occasions, he had paid me no attention whatsoever and was blissfully unaware that I existed at all. I found this heartbreaking and I was determined to get him to notice me. I planned to summon up my courage and somehow do this at a party that Saturday night. In order to impress him, I decided to wear my new purple suede hot pants. Hot pants were what we called shorts back then and they were the singular most fashionable item you could own. I saved up my pocket money for AGES, I did odd jobs for extra cash, and eventually I had enough to go to a big shop called Trago Mills and buy them. They didn't really fit me, they were far too tight, but I wanted them SO much I didn't mind how uncomfortable they were. Everyone wanted hot pants, but it is so often the cruel injustice of fashion they suited very few people. I *wasn't* one of those chosen few. It was definitely an advantage to be tall, thin and have long, shapely legs. I had none of these attributes but I convinced myself I could carry the hot pants off nevertheless. My whole outfit was new. Starting from the bottom up (the bottom of my legs, that is, not my actual bottom): brown suede wedge heels with espadrille straps around my Miss Piggy ankles. American tan tights. The bright purple hot pants with shiny buttons on the pockets. Above the waist was a considerable overflow of puppy fat, which was forced upwards and outwards by the too-tight waistband of the hot pants. On top of this was a cream cheesecloth smock top with stringy lacing down the front, slightly see through with flared sleeves...I glanced in the mirror and decided I looked pretty damn fine. Actually I didn't feel this at all, but I knew I would have to fake feeling good in order to leave the house. So it was with this pretend confidence that I went to look for my dad to arrange a lift home. I was hoping to negotiate a later pickup just in case Mark might notice me! I met my dad in the hallway and he asked me to come in to the front room for a quick chat. He closed the door behind us, and asked me to sit down. My heart sank. I thought I was in for a good talking-to. I was right about that, but it wasn't the usual precautionary drill, it was something else. Something I've always remembered, especially if I'm feeling a bit insecure – which we all do sometimes, don't we? It was a long time ago but, to the best of my memory, it went something like this:

Dad: Sit down puddin'. Actually before you sit down, give us a twirl. Wow, you look really lovely, a right bobby-dazzler. Are those shorts, or lederhosen?

Me: They're hot-pants, Dad!

Dad: Where did you get those? Millets?

Me: No, Dad, Trago Mills.

Dad: Well you look very...pretty. They are quite short...

Me: Yes, because they're shorts.

Dad: I see, well you look really super in them. Very dandy. Super.

Me: Can I come home late?

Dad: Hold your horses there, missus. Before we talk about arrangements, there's something I want to say. What's that black stuff in your eyes, by the way?

Me: Kohl.

Dad: Coal?

Me: No, Kohl, It's Indian. I've worn it before.

Dad: Have you? I've seen black stuff *on top* of your eyes before...anyway, this party tonight...

Me: It's fine, Dad, there won't be any alcohol.

Dad: I should hope not. Alcohol? You can't drink alcohol!

Me: I know. That's why there won't be any.

Dad: You're not allowed to buy it or drink it, young lady.

Me: I know.

Dad: It's against the law.

Me: I know.

Dad: No alcohol whatsoever. Do you understand?

Me: Yes.

Dad: Right, I'm trusting you on that.

Me: There won't be any.

Dad: How do you know?

Me: Because Karen said so. Can I come home late?

Dad: Here's the thing I want to say...how much do you think Mum and I love you?

Me: Um...a lot?

Dad: More than a lot, Dawn, much more....Truly, you are our world, our joy. Never forget what a treasure you are, and if your faith in that ever wobbles, have a look in the mirror and have confidence in what you see. You are a rare thing, an uncommon beauty, a dazzling, exquisite, splendid young woman. Look! You must know it's true, you're a corker... We love you and we need you.

Then we had a big hug and off I went to the party, feeling ten foot tall and fabulous in my hot pants. Mark did come and talk to me that night, but I wasn't interested. He wasn't really good enough, to be honest...

One of the many questions that have often bothered me is why women have been, and still are, thought to be so inferior to men. It's easy to say it's unfair, but that's not enough for me; I'd really like to know the reason for this great injustice!

Men presumably dominated women from the very beginning because of their greater physical strength; it's men who earn a living, beget children and do as they please . . . Until recently, women silently went along with this, which was stupid, since the longer it's kept up, the more deeply entrenched it becomes. Fortunately,

education, work and progress have opened women's eyes. In many countries they've been granted equal rights; many people, mainly women, but also men, now realise how wrong it was to tolerate this state of affairs for so long. Modern women want the right to be completely independent!

But that's not all. Women should be respected as well! Generally speaking, men are held in great esteem in all parts of the world, so why shouldn't women have their share? Soldiers and war heroes are honoured and commemorated, explorers are granted immortal fame, martyrs are revered, but how many people look upon women too as soldiers?

In the book *Men against Death* I was greatly struck by the fact that in childbirth alone, women commonly suffer more pain, illness and misery than any war hero ever does. And what's her reward for enduring all that pain? She gets pushed aside when she's disfigured by birth, her children soon leave, her beauty is gone. Women, who struggle and suffer pain to ensure the continuation of the human race, make much tougher and more courageous soldiers than all those big-mouthed freedom-fighting heroes put together!

I don't mean to imply that women should stop having children; on the contrary, nature intended them to, and that's the way it should be. What I condemn are our system of values and the men who don't acknowledge how great, difficult, but ultimately beautiful women's share in society is.

I agree completely with Paul de Kruif, the author of this book, when he says that men must learn that birth is no longer thought of as inevitable and unavoidable in

those parts of the world we consider civilised. It's easy for men to talk – they don't and never will have to bear the woes that women do!

I believe that in the course of the next century the notion that it's a woman's duty to have children will change and make way for the respect and admiration of all women, who bear their burdens without complaint or a lot of pompous words!

Yours, Anne M Frank

## Michael Jackson's death puts focus on racial identity

Jackson was to music what Michael Jordan was to sports and Barack Obama to politics — a towering figure with crossover appeal even if in life, some of Jackson's fans wondered if he was as proud of his race as his race was of him. But in his death, many African Americans embraced Jackson publicly and without ambivalence.

By **MARCUS MABRY**  
*The New York Times*

Jamie Foxx, the host of the Black Entertainment Television music awards, was unequivocal Sunday night:

"We want to celebrate this black man," Foxx said of Michael Jackson. "He belongs to us, and we shared him with everybody else."

Around the world, Jackson was celebrated Sunday, but there was a special fervor in black neighborhoods and churches.

Clapping and cheering congregants at the First African Methodist Episcopal church in South Los Angeles opened the 10 a.m. service with the strains of "I'll Be There" over a video tribute to Jackson.

Jackson was to music what Michael Jordan was to sports and Barack Obama to politics — a towering figure with crossover appeal even if in life, some of Jackson's fans wondered if he was as proud of his race as his race was of him. But in his death, many African Americans embraced Jackson publicly and without ambivalence.

No longer were many blacks expressing resentment, as they once had, for his strangeness, his distance from the cherubic Michael of the Jackson Five.

Darrell Smith, 40, a filmmaker in Brooklyn, noted "when his skin started getting lighter" many black people said Jackson didn't want to be black.

"It wasn't until the molestation charges that people leaped to his defense and felt like it was unfair," Smith said.

Some African Americans said those most determined to discuss Jackson's failings were white.

"The system likes to take black men down," said Stan Jamison, a 61-year-old house painter, leaning against a fence outside the old Jackson home in Gary, Ind., on Sunday. "They did it to [boxers Muhammad] Ali. They did it to [Mike] Tyson."

But even some blacks acknowledged Jackson — like many African Americans — had issues with his identity.

Gerald Early, a professor of African-American studies at Washington University in St. Louis, pointed to Jackson's self-image as an adolescent who had acne and hated his broad nose. In some reports, his father, Joe Jackson, was said to have told young Michael he was ugly.

"If blacks were not, in some degree, emotionally and psychologically scarred from their oppression, they would hardly have needed the Black Power and the Black is Beautiful movements of the 1960s, efforts to restore their mental health," Early wrote in an e-mail message.

It was Jackson's changeability that, in part, allowed him to resonate with millions of people around the world.

Amy Whitlock, 38, and her husband Dave, 42, who are white, drove 100 miles to Gary to pay respects to the pop star. They described how a young Jackson had transformed the way white children saw race.

"I was from a small town in Illinois where there weren't any black people," Whitlock said, tears running down her cheeks. "The older people, they saw just some black guy dancing. But we saw someone who was extraordinary, someone who made us want to dance. Michael was for unity. And he made people my age want to be for unity."

Meighan Maheffey, 27, who is white and who grew up in North Carolina, said The Jackson 5 was the only black group her grandmother allowed her mother to listen to. "It was very nonthreatening to her," Maheffey said.

But Jackson also staked out new terrain for black performers, even while being mutable and acceptable to whites.

"He dubbed himself the King of Pop, which was a pretty daring act," Early said.

"This, in a way, radically redefined the black performer's relation to music ... . Jackson may have paved the way for Obama in the sense of black man as auteur and self-mythmaker."

The Rev. Jesse Jackson, who has been acting as a family spokesman, said Jackson, like Jackie Robinson, Muhammad Ali, Jim Brown, James Brown and Josephine Baker, redrew the boundaries of black possibility by showing whites — and blacks — that the race was capable of more than anyone had previously acknowledged. "The light cast by these luminaries was great and shined on the whole race, even when they did not intend to be 'political,'" he said.

The Black Entertainment Television music awards were not originally intended, for instance, to be a tribute to Jackson, but plans were rushed through to change the program once he died.

The night that news of Jackson's death came, Ingrid Deabreu, 49, of Brooklyn, stayed up watching a marathon of his videos with her 7-year-old daughter Kimberly. When the video of Jackson's "Black and White" came on, her daughter turned to Deabreu and asked " 'Mommy, he said it doesn't matter if you're black or white, so why's he trying to make his skin white?' "