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Summary

This contains two examples of Area of Study (Belonging) creative writing questions and answers as well as a tips sheet to help students understand how they can improve their creative writing exam answers.

In general this document may be useful for,

Students who want to know more about how they can improve their creative writing, and who want to know how to best answer exam questions to gain maximum marks.

QUESTION 2 - CREATIVE WRITING PIECE 2 ON THE SUBJECT OF *BELONGING*

QUESTION

“By building relations we create a source of love and personal pride and belonging that makes living in a chaotic world easier.”

- Susan Lieberman¹

“A self does not amount to much, but no self is an island; each exists in a fabric of relations that is now more complex and mobile than ever before.”

- Jean-Francois Lyotard²

Drawing on the ideas in ONE of these quotations, write an imaginative piece that explores the role of connections to others in developing a sense of belonging.

ANSWER – SUSAN LIEBERMAN

‘Oh, don’t get so upset, Vivi. Everything has an end, you know – only a sausage has two.’

A stupid proverb, for a stupid culture, coming from a pre-eminently stupid man. I told him as such as I hugged him (*ihn umarmte*), endeavouring to crush as many of his ribs as possible. He let me dirty his clean, crisp white business shirt (*weisses Hemd*) with a mixture of tears and mucus (*tränen und schleim*), until I felt a hand on my shoulder. My German *Mutter, Mutti, Mama* was trying to tell me that my flight was boarding soon, but rather than let her, I pulled another family member close for a farewell, ein *Auf Wiedersehen*, beginning to border on the hysterical.

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It was the peeing thing. This exquisitely German, laissez-faire attitude to something as old-fashioned and outmoded as privacy in the ladies’ room.

My head was already swimming, at a party where I was a conversational warrior. Rather than simply participate, I grasped the edge of my chair, leaned forward, brow furrowed and tried, by sheer force of will, to *make* the German words make sense.

My willpower not equal to the speed of the conversation, my resolve began to wane. I got up to go to the bathroom; ‘Ich gehe... Ich gehe... to die Bathroom.’

A tornado of unconnected syllables came out of my host sister’s mouth – I gathered she was coming with. She led me to the bathroom of this friend’s house. She stood in the doorway of the bathroom, and regarded me standing outside the door, curiously. It looked like she wanted me to come in with her – ‘are you staying here, Vivian?’ Did she want me to watch her pee? ‘Yes...’

‘Oh.’ She closed the bathroom door, seeming a little disappointed, and a little confused.

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My dislike of strawberries was abnormal at home, but here, in northern Germany, it was positively criminal.

My host *mama* was at a loss. Her years of cross-cultural experience had not prepared her for the catastrophe of culinary planning that was a child who did not like strawberries.

¹ Sourced from http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/s/susan_lieberman.html, accessed 28/6/12

² Sourced from <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/j/jeanfranc370949.html>, accessed 28/6/12

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'You do miss us, right?'

'Of course I do, mum...'

'You're not going to come back just to tell me you want to live there forever?'

'No, mum...'

'And you don't love this... *Wiebke* woman more than me, do you?'

'Mum!'

'Well... it's eight o'clock now. I had better let you go, I suppose.'

'I miss you all lots, you know that?'

'I know you do, Viv. Only 117 days until you come home.'

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The German post (*Deutsche Post*) is – as most German things – efficient, organised and practical. Although my host family was trying their best to teach me (*das mich beizubringen*), those three words had never in my life been used to describe me. This was most apparent when I made the mistake of trying to mail a letter myself, rather than letting my host mother handle it. The postal worker either did not, or chose not, to understand me – she took offence to the width of the margin I left on the return address (*Rückkehradresse*), the peculiar shape of the envelope (which contained a birthday card), even the way that I searched in my wallet (a French borrowing – *das Portmonnaie*) for the exact change. Frustrated at being repeatedly told that I 'was in Germany now', as if it was my foreignness that made me anathema to the postal service, I took my bicycle and rode home.

I had left a note of the kitchen table (*Küchentisch*) explaining my whereabouts. I walked my bike (*das Fahrrad*) into the shed at the same time my host parents pulled in to the driveway. As my host dad held the door open for me, I saw my mama holding the note in her hand, laughing to herself

I failed to see what was so amusing about my note – in fact, I was failing to see the amusement in anything, at that point. 'What is it?'

'Oh Vivi, it's just – I hadn't noticed – when you came to us you couldn't speak a word, but now – your German is so good!'

And I laughed too, because two months of free-flowing conversation (*fleißig Sprache*) had somehow gone unnoticed, but correctly using the past participle was what nudged me over the line into fluency.

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Parties were no longer a battle.

Now, I leaned back in my chair and let the conversation flow over me. I was able to keep up with jokes (*Witze*), and surprised my group of friends with the revelation that, as my fluency increased, I was suddenly, hilariously, sarcastic (*sarkastisch geworden*).

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