

Prompt- It is not easy figuring out where you belong.

Extract of the Memoir of Sandra Laing

Black or White?

Chapter 4

Schooling

As a child, I could not wait to turn 12 and be able to move away and attend school. I loved it at home, and I loved that my mother taught my brothers and me with the local kids, but I was looking forward to going away and making new friends.

I still remember the feeling in the pit of my stomach as father drove our old Beetle into the gates of Daniel Malan High School. It was a mixture of anticipation and excitement. I was nervous; I had never been away from home before and the thought of living in a room with five other girls was scary. What if we had nothing to talk about? What if we didn't like the same things? I was excited as I would have friends my own age and we could talk about school. As the car pulled into the parking space, I looked at my mother and father. There was no hiding the look of fear on their faces. I'll never forget the words my father said to me. He said, "Never give up." At the time, I had no idea why he said that to me. However, I soon learnt why he said those words.

I walked with mother to my dorm room. Everyone we passed stopped in his or her tracks. People stared. They whispered. I saw the other mothers shaking their heads and the other girls stand their with their mouths agape. I felt my mother's hand squeeze tighter. Yet the look of determination on her face disappeared when the girl in the bed next to mine was grabbed by her mother and moved away from me. At the time I had no idea why people were acting in this way. It was though, the first time that I felt conscious of the colour of my skin. For the first time in my life, I was being rejected. It did not take me long to work out why.

Explanatory statement-

Symbol- the gates of Dr Daniel Malan HS- Malan was the politician who introduced the Apartheid system in 1948. The gates symbolize the power of the state in dictating the identity of an individual. The secondary socialiser, school, is a system controlled by the state in which stereotypes are formed and the groups to which individuals can belong is dictated.

Language- first person as is expected in a memoir

Language- use of short sentences "People stared." "They whispered." Used to describe the reactions of the white Afrikaaners to Sandra's entrance to the all-white High school highlights the absolute shock and disdain of the white parents. Short sentences create a dramatic impact on the readers and the use of them here demonstrates the dramatic time it was in Sandra's life. It was the first time that the colour of her skin had an impact on her identity- purely because of the actions and beliefs of others.

What other Language techniques have been used and why?

Purpose-

In the section on purpose in your explanatory statement, you need to link the purpose of your piece to the prompt. In this memoir, Sandra recounts and reflects on the first time she was made to feel different due to the colour of her skin. I would link this to the prompt by describing that as children develop, they work out where they belong due to the socializing agents and how they dictate where individuals belong. I would describe the family unit and explain that she belonged in a 'white' family, as her parents made her believe she was white. She had no reason not to think she was white. The school changed that though. I would explain how schools act as a socialiser and then how the schooling experience of Sandra made her re-evaluate who she was.