

## ENGLISH STANDARD

### Changing Perspective

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One of the few inevitabilities of life is the fact that we will all gradually change our perspective on things throughout our existence. Whether that be on our family, friends, events or ourselves, we can all be certain that our opinions and ideas will shift as we gain a better understanding of life. As we change our view on these things, it is also inevitable that our identity (who we think we are) will mirror this change.

This concept of an alteration of perspective and personality is clearly seen in the film *Looking for Alibrandi*, directed by Kate Woods, and the silent graphic novel *The Arrival*, by Shaun Tan featuring *The Migrant* as the protagonist.

In *Looking for Alibrandi*, the audience discovers that changing your perspective on an event will inevitably alter your identity. In the Introductory Scene – Tomato Day, we see that Josie has no cultural connection to the annual event. When her voice over starts, the sepia tone that was used to express the out-dated nature changes to full colour as she says to the audience “I actually find this really embarrassing” and that it will be her last Tomato Day. As the story progresses she gradually comes to accept her heritage through a long series of events and one year later is back at Tomato Day again, however this time on her own accord. Woods uses this bookend technique to juxtapose the scenes to make the differences (like the presence of Josie’s father, boyfriend and friends from school) far more obvious. Her attitude towards Tomato Day unavoidably results in cultural acceptance and a transformation of her identity.

*Looking for Alibrandi* also shows the audience that altering your perspective on yourself will change your identity. Josie’s original view of her father was very negative as he had never been a part of her life. When he abruptly arrives at Nona’s house and sees Josie, the camera cuts between their faces to emphasise their looks of shock and disbelief, juxtaposed by Nona’s overjoyed face scurrying around in the background. Josie then symbolically runs from the house and into her bathroom at home, bolting the door behind her – a metaphor for attempting to shut off that part of her life. Woods expresses Josie’s confusion and anger through a cacophony of noise and loud pleonastic music. Josie then starts to feel claustrophobic and tries to open the window, symbolising that she has to open a part of her life to her father.

Another aspect of changing your perspective is on what you consider home. How this modifies your identity can be seen in *The Arrival*. Shaun Tan portrays the unspecified horrors in the protagonist’s homeland as dark black tentacles engulfing the neighbourhood. Because of this he is forced to leave the country, but in leaving his family behind they are threatening their unification.

This is a similar concept to that found in *Looking for Alibrandi*, however Josie’s family is threatened because of the secrets kept from one another. *The Migrant*’s long process of altering his view of the New World is shown through the Companion Animal, which is a cross between a mouse, tadpole and dog. At first he tries to defend himself from it with a fire-poker as it seems terrifying and dangerous but eventually comes to love it as they grow on each other. This is the same with his perspective of the land. As a result of this, his family moves over with him and they are reunited with a new identity and a stronger emotional bond which is also emphasised with a bookend.

*The Arrival* also demonstrates that changing your perspective on other people after getting to know them will also change your sense of self. As the Migrant befriends other people, he hears their own stories of enslavement, avoiding persecution and the direct effects of war on an individual. Tan emphasises the sadness of the sub-stories by using a dark background around the pictures as well as symbols like piles of skeletons representing the soldiers and villagers that died in the third man’s story and high angles throughout the text when appropriate to emphasise isolation. When the

Migrant hears stories of other people's suffering he learns that he is not alone and that he can embrace life in the New World, rather than fearing it in his previous home.

There are thousands of things that you can change your perspective on but some of the most important ones are cultural events, yourself, what you call home and what you think of the people around you. Changing perspective is evidently a part of human nature and consequently, so is changing one's identity. So maybe the more important question isn't "What has my perspective changed to?" But, "Who am I now?"