

## **ENGLISH: *EXPLORING ISSUES OF IDENTITY AND BELONGING***

**“Everyone needs to have a sense of belonging”**

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Boat people – struggle to find identity – stuck between two worlds, difficult to belong. Make their own little hub in Melbourne (Footscray, St. Albans)

Contrast to Australians (from their point of view – see them as lazy, but then with time start to accept them (Chinatown) “flourish”

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The machine roared to life, the boat lurched forwards  
Into the mist  
Hundreds of bodies all crammed together  
Stifling, claustrophobic.  
Babies cry, children sitting idly  
Weeks at sea, morale was dwindling  
The Vietnamese boat people

Thirsty, hungry, sleep deprived  
Malnourished bodies: clavicles protruding, faces like skulls  
A distant hum from within the mist awakes the whole boat  
A hundred pairs of eyes alert,  
Bodies ready to pounce  
“Everybody get down!” –The metal contraption dies down

Spotlights pierce the air, illuminating the dank air  
The outline of the vessel prominent but is ignored  
The huge cargo ship lurks on, into the still night  
Sighs of relief pass and wash over  
Like the waves which lapped against the sides  
Somewhere in the crowd, a mother breaks down  
On her knees  
Features distorted with tears  
She thanks Buddha for answering her prayers

With each passing day they yearn for soil, trees, acceptance  
As night falls their eyes bulge as they go on high alert,  
The cover of darkness incomparable to the darkness that resided within them  
These are the boat people, who would have their souls devoured to seek acceptance

These are the boat people, their prayers have been answered  
The land girt by sea has welcomed them  
Has it?  
Every day the boat people see their eyes glancing at them  
Who knows what words, sharper than knives these Australians say about them behind their backs?  
Under a relentless sun do these boat people labour  
The red soil is too desolated,  
The water is too bore  
The rice field does not flourish, but they keep their heads held high

Small hubs flower

They have long forsaken the thought of belonging with the Australians

They gather under the full moon,

Thousands of years of tradition passed on

A new land will not stop them

The white men are slowly opening up

They have come to accept the boat people

Chinatown is established,

The Orient seen as unique