

## Going Home – Essay with Explicit Framework

What are the main themes of the short story Going Home and how were they constructed to position the reader.

### Introduction

#### (L) Lead In

The short story Going Home was written by Archie Weller in 1986. It tells the story of a young Aboriginal man, William Woodward, who left his family at the age of 16 to pursue a new life in the city. His journey was successful; he began to live the “white life” but there was always something missing. He decided to venture back to his roots, but this proved to be his undoing.

#### (A) Answer the question

The text provided us with three main themes including racism, construction of a new identity and the rejection of his Aboriginal heritage.

#### (M) Menu

The themes in the text were created by the techniques of characterisation, language, point of view, plot and setting.

### Body Paragraph 1

#### (T) Theme

Racism is a strong moral issue still entrenched deep within today's society. Going Home addressed racism especially between the white and the Aboriginal society of Australia.

#### (E1) Explanation of Technique number 1

Weller used diction, character actions and personification to construct this theme. Both times that William experienced racist behaviour, it was from individuals in authority positions; they spoke rudely and aggressively towards him. When William stopped at a bar to buy some beer, the barman immediately assumed that because he was Aboriginal, he represented trouble and stated,

#### (X1) eXample of Technique number 1

“Well then, you're not gettin' nothin' from me. You can p... off, too, before I call the cops. They'll cool you down, you smart black b.....”

#### (E1) Explanation of Technique number 1 (continued)

Weller deliberately had the barman use swear words as well as racist terms when speaking with Billy. “you smart black b....” was an example of offensive language delivered by someone who used his power to demonstrate prejudice.

#### (E2) Explanation of Technique number 2

We witnessed the same type of authority figure abusing his power when the policeman arrested William at the camp site. The policeman acted violently towards Billy,

#### (X2) eXample of Technique number 2

“he grabs hold of Billy's hand.....he twists it up behind Billy's back and slams him against the blank blue side of the van.” and “He is shoved into the back, with a few jabs to hurry him on his way.”

#### (E3) Explanation of Technique number 3

In addition to the violent actions, the police van is constructed as a monster through the technique of personification. Billy is almost perceived as being

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eaten alive by the van, which reinforces the policeman's satisfaction with the his arrest.

### (X3) eXample of Technique number 3

"He is thrown into the back of the van. The van starts up with a satisfied roar.....Hunches miserably in the jolting iron belly as the van revs over to the humpy."

### (E3) Explanation of Technique number 3 (continued)

Weller has given the police van a human-like emotion of satisfaction which reinforces the attitude and behaviour of the policeman, who is so pleased that he managed to blame Billy for a crime. In addition, "the jolting iron belly" of the van provides an imagery of entrapment that Billy now faces, in line with the entrapment he experiences because of his race.

### (R) Reader Response

♥ The theme of racism positioned us to respond with shame and embarrassment. 🧠 It is unthinkable that one person could treat another in such a degrading way, yet we hear many stories similar to William's occurring all the time in society. It is essential that we learn from the deeply moving story of William Woodward and make changes to the attitudes of society.

📖 In many respects, the theme of racism within Going Home is similar to the treatment of the young Aboriginal boy "Jasper" in Craig Silvey's novel Jasper Jones where (because of his race) Jasper is wrongfully accused of a crime he did not commit.

## Body Paragraph 2

### (T) Theme

The search for a new identity was a strong theme in the text. We saw William, a young Aboriginal boy, who was thrust into a white society where he established a definite "white" identity in his city setting,

### (E1) Explanation of Technique number 1

Weller used characterisation to construct the "white" William. He constructed him in a likeable and charming way, so that we would immediately "connect" with him and "invest" in his character. His appearance, dress code, movements and language were all pleasing and combined to produce a friendly and easy-going character,

### (X1) eXample of Technique number 1

"He bought clean, bright clothes and cut off his long hair that all the camp girls had loved. Billy Woodward was a handsome youth, with the features of his white grandfather and the quietness of his Aboriginal forebears. He stood tall and proud, with the sensitive lips of a dreamer and a faraway look in his serene amber eyes."

### (E2) Explanation of Technique number 2

Weller utilised language to contrast William with all the other Aboriginal characters in the text. From their conversations, we could distinguish William's immersion in white society from his use of formal language. The Aboriginal characters always used a non-standard form of Aboriginal English with abbreviated words, slang and brief phrases. This was in stark contrast to William's formal use of language, obviously shaped by his experience of living in the "white" society.

### (X2) eXample of Technique number 2

When Darcy got into the car he asked, "Ya got a smoke, William?"

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To this William replied, “Certainly. Help yourself.”

Another example occurred when his mother challenged William about not returning for his father’s funeral,

‘So ya come back after all. Ya couldn’t come back for ya Dad’s funeral, but-unna? Ya too good for us mob, I s’pose,’ she whispers in a thin voice like the mouth organ before he even says hello, then turns her eyes back into her pain.

‘It’s my birthday, Mum. I wanted to see everybody. No one told me Dad was dead.’

### **(R) Reader Response**

♥ We are positioned to feel a sense of desperation on behalf of William.

🧠 We understand he is desperate to take on a “white” identity even though he cannot escape from his past.

## Body Paragraph 3

### **(T) Theme**

In contrast, William seemed to feel that the only way he could adopt his new identity was to reject his Aboriginal heritage. We observed many occasions in the text where he was ashamed of his family and their way of life.

### **(E1) Explanation of Technique number 1**

Weller used figurative language to “paint” the Koodup camp setting in a negative light to reinforce this rejection. When William arrived at the campsite where he grew up, he was appalled by the conditions. Weller used a range of figurative devices such as personification, metaphors and lists to create the undesirable setting,

### **(X1) eXample of Technique number 1**

“A rickety shape of nailed-down tin and sheets of iron. Two oatbags, sewn together, form a door. Floundering in a sea of tins and rags and parts of toys or cars. Mud everywhere.”

### **(E1) Explanation of Technique number 1 (continued)**

The sentence, “Floundering in a sea of tins and rags and parts of toys or cars.” is powerful. The use of personification, “floundering” makes us perceive the setting as struggling to survive, particularly when it is embedded in the metaphor, “in a sea of tins and rags and parts of cars or mud”. The concept of “floundering in a sea” reinforces the idea that the camp site is drowning in its own pollution. The list of objects drives home the huge amount of debris scattered across the land.

### **(E2) Explanation of Technique number 2**

Third person point of view (omniscient) provided us with insight into William’s feelings towards his culture; we understood how much he wanted to rid himself of his Aboriginal heritage and start afresh without the shame of his family and friends. Weller convinced us that William wanted to escape from his past yet knew that he would always be identified with and by his people.

### **(X2) eXample of Technique number 2**

“Something hits Billy deep inside with such force that it makes him want to clutch hold of the bar and spew up all his pride.

He is black and the barman is white, and nothing can ever change that.”

### **(E3) Explanation of Technique number 3**

In fact, in a remarkable twist of the final plot, Weller made William’s very own brother set him up so that he would appear responsible for the possession of a

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stolen watch. This was included in the text to ensure that William received a bitter reminder of what it was like to be black. He was given a deliberate “reality check” with the final words,

### (x3) eXample of Technique number 3

“Welcome ‘ome brother.”

### (R) Reader Response

♥ Weller positioned us to feel so disappointed for William. 🧠 Just as he was beginning to make a new and successful life for himself, he was confronted by injustice, and we can only imagine what the remainder of his life would be like. ♥ We felt such a sense of loss and waste.

## Conclusion

### (A) Answer the question

Going Home by Archie Weller was a text that held many significant messages. It is an important text that should be read by all young Australians because it teaches us about how the pursuit of a new identity may result in the rejection of an old one and it shows us the damage that racism can do to an individual as well as a culture.

### (M) Menu

Weller has used a considerable range of techniques including characterisation, point of view, language, setting and plot to construct these vital themes.

### (L) Lead out

♥ We were positioned to respond with deep emotions of desperation, disappointment and shame. 🧠 Hopefully Weller’s short story will be used to entertain as well as educate generations of Australians to come.