

Sample Annotation: Dear Australia - Don Bemrose

Using the form of a letter draws on the readers' prior knowledge of the conventions of this text type. Choice of form can signal an author's intentions and contribute to tone. E.g. formality

Dear Australia,

Specificity of language used by the author to introduce himself and his tribe indicates this information might be important. Suggests a key theme: identity

I am a descendant of the Gunggari people of the Maranoa district near Mitchell, Queensland. I am a member of a rich living culture. I grew up with a loving, generous extended family on the Sunshine Coast in Queensland and I have much to be thankful for.

Consider the impact of the author's vocabulary? E.g. *rich living culture, loving generous family*. What is the effect of the words? How might the effect be altered if different words had been used?

The choice of the noun 'Australia' allows the author to speak a collective, but also to use the personal pronoun 'you'. What might be the effect of using this pronoun?

I love this country and all its people for shaping the man I am today and allowing me to be me. I educate, I inspire and I entertain, but I have flaws and I have done wrong and wronged you, Australia, so I must tell of how sorry I am and ask you to please forgive me.

I'm sorry

I'm sorry I identify as Gungarri and Aboriginal. I know **you** would prefer I added 'part', 'quarter' or some other quantifier to signify that I am less than full; to reinforce my lesser status, and as a reminder that my people are to be bred out.

Consider whether the author may be drawing on the readers' knowledge of other texts. E.g. *The 2008 National Apology to the Stolen Generations*

What is the impact of starting each sentence with the phrase 'I'm sorry'? How does this device contribute to the style of the text?

I'm sorry I am neither white, nor black enough for **you** to easily label or identify me as 'other'. I understand how hard it can be for **you** to be openly funny or casually racist when people like me are around.

I'm sorry I'm not a 'real Aboriginal' living in a remote part of Australia, surviving off the land. Sorry that I can't be herded up like cattle or sheep when a mining company decides that destroying this country is more important than sustaining it.

What tone is the author using? What devices or techniques does the writer use to establish tone? For example, irony or satire can allow authors to utilise sarcasm to draw attention to issues like racism, discrimination & stereotypes. E.g. Assimilation policies, outdated ideas about blood quantum and the use of cultural stereotypes. What does the author's tone tell us about his attitude to these subjects?

I'm sorry I can't do dot paint, play football or run really fast.

I'm sorry I have only been able to become a leading opera artist, sharing the stage with some of Australia's finest classical musicians in operatic works by Mozart and Puccini, and in new Australian works such as *Pecan Summer* by Deborah Cheetham and *Cloudstreet* by Palmer, Edwards and Sexton.

And while I may consider myself an artist, I am sorry I can't shake a leg or wear a lap-lap every time you need someone for a significant 'Australian' event. I am sorry I can't 'Welcome you to Country' because we are not one mob. There is no one Aboriginal people, and my mob, the Gungarri, we are not from here.

I'm sorry I completed year 12, graduated from the university of Melbourne's Victorian College of Arts with a Bachelor of Music Performance (Opera), and I am really sorry I went on to graduate from Charles Darwin University with a Graduate Diploma of Teaching and Learning. To have me, a blackfulla, educating the young minds of white Australian children at one of the Australian Capital Territory's best schools must be hard for you to fathom.

Finally, I am sorry I have said sorry more than once. Once really should be enough to heal all past and current atrocities I have committed against you. No explanation required. You have taught me that on many occasions.

Consider the use of devices like irony to create humour and pathos and to parody the act of apology. E.g. I am '*really* sorry' 'I am sorry I have said sorry more than once', 'once should really be enough'. Also consider links to other texts.

What is the effect of the author's vocabulary and language choices? E.g. 'atrocities', 'i', 'you'.

What key ideas does Bemrose present in this essay? E.g. discrimination; injustice; racial stereotypes; identity; 'reconciliation'.