

## Sample response: Writing about country

This short story expresses and explores ideas about place and identity.

### Task

Drawing on the writing you have drafted, explored and completed over this unit of work, create a written text that explicitly incorporates one or both of the items of stimulus below.

#### Stimulus 1:

‘We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us. When we see land as a community to which we belong, we may begin to use it with love and respect.’ – Aldo Leopold

#### Stimulus 2:



### Response

My feet sank deep into the dark, wet sand. Hard at first, and then slowly, as the tide enveloped my ankles, space was made for me in that gritty earth. This was how I used to start a fishing trip with my dad, searching in the shallow tide with my feet, hoping to find the telltale lump that means live bait. For a time, I felt bad for the pipis. They didn't ask to be holed up in there, nearly crushed by feet and then put on a hook. But it was better than buying live bait at the store, better for the environment anyway. 'Greener,' my dad had said.

So instead, we chose to find that small life that existed along the shoreline. My hands and feet buried in the granular earth, digging for shells and flesh. But the shoreline could bite back, too. I recall digging for pipis one day, feeling the dirt scrape against me and the earth make way for my small chubby fingers, when broken pieces of shell pressed against me but didn't quite have the courage to break skin. I would later find dozens of tiny cuts crosshatched on my hands, but those small hurts were inconsequential to a child on a mission.

But now, with my legs submerged nearly to the calf, and that childhood left so far behind, my feet could find nothing left in that earth. A small part of me wondered whether, if my father had come with me to the beach, or even if he hadn't already passed on, the pipis would have stayed to be found.

Perhaps, like the pipis that I could no longer find on that shoreline, it was time to move on from this in-between space. Sand and sea and me. The

Starts the piece with a connection to the land and to another character; establishes ideas that will be explored throughout.

Uses personification to give the natural world a sense of agency.

shoreline existing only as a precipice between worlds – a space for those who belong to neither place. Some come here and cannot survive – it is not their place. Some come here and find the only place they could ever call home.

Pipis.

Bluebottles.

Hermit Crabs.

Room for one more?

So much life is found here. Creatures that keep to the shoreline and find a way to exist. Gulls circling the grey sky, tiny fish darting around the rock pools, scuttling crustaceans attempting to outrun the tide. They exist in the grey spaces of the world. No. They thrive in the grey. It is possible to be abundant in spaces that others could never inhabit. This doesn't make you less than, it doesn't make you hard to find or impossible for others to follow. If you carve the path into the in-between lands others will follow, and perhaps there you can find a country for people who love grey.

I wiggled my feet; I felt had to start moving them or I would take root in the sand. The earth clung to me, and I slowly manoeuvred myself around in the sand. There was a great sucking noise as I eventually wrenched out my feet. The waves washed over them once more, the tide taking much of the sand that had been my muse.

I couldn't bring myself to put shoes back on. It was a short walk back into town, and after all that my feet had found, putting a barrier between myself and the land didn't feel right.

Trekking back home I found shorelines everywhere. In-between spaces all around, with different parts of this world finding a place to live. A roofing gutter that held a bird's nest, fences with moss growing over them, ceramic pots that once held indoor plants, still with a smear of dirt on the bottom.

Each of these spaces held life and land, and while life may have vacated for a time, it would return. The in-between spaces could sustain a bond for a long time. This land could and would sustain me.

I skipped over fragmented pavements with flowers forcing their way through the cracks, making my way back to my dad's home. My home now. The beach with its craggy rocks and gentle tide felt more his than the bricks and mortar ever would. But perhaps this could be another in-between space. In-between my life and his. In-between the beach and the city. Me, on the verandah, in-between lives.

Taking a deep breath, I walked across the decking, searching my pockets for the door key when I felt a small sharpness underfoot. A lump that my bare feet knew very well. The small, slightly cracked, but very familiar shape of a pipi shell.

Changes the prose style through a series of short, sharp sentences, transitioning to a broader exploration of ideas.

Identifies and poetically describes several types of in-between spaces while also evoking the narrator's walk into the town, enhancing characterisation.

## Reflective commentary

While writing this piece I found there were several challenges, which I feel I navigated well so that I ended up with an interesting and immersive read. The main challenge, although it was also a source of inspiration, came from using elements of the mentor text 'Split' by Cassie Lynch. These were elements that I found striking and effective but not easy to incorporate into my own writing. 'Split' is a highly imaginative piece, with a lot of creative imagery and pathetic fallacy (giving human feelings to nature). Because of this it is also quite abstract at times and has a fairly loose narrative. I tried to lace my own piece with elements of the natural imagery in 'Split' while also attempting to give it a more easily followed narrative structure. When considering this, I looked to the image stimulus to inspire a clear narrative. The narrative I chose was of a person who has recently lost their father, walking along a beach that they used to visit together, reminiscing about their times there before heading back home. I also drew inspiration from 'Split' in the way that Lynch gives the land a sense of personhood and agency. I tried to use this technique in the passages about searching for pips, in phrases such as 'broken pieces of shell pressed against me but didn't quite have the courage to break skin'. In this way I tried to mirror Lynch's use of pathetic fallacy, which I found very effective and moving, while still making the sequence relevant to my own narrative.

In a way this piece is a reflection of 'Split', but I wanted to focus more on where places come together than on where they divide. I focused on a shoreline because I felt this was the clearest example of a place where different parts of nature collide and create a new kind of space. The image stimulus also has elements of different spaces colliding, as the sand is meeting not only the sea, but also the sky. All of these elements are in shades of grey, further cementing my motif of things that are 'in-between'. Writing about country to me means writing about the many forms of life that can exist in the shared spaces of the earth. This piece is a reflection on the importance of the places we visit and how they become vital to our relationships and identity.

Reflects on the ways in which the mentor text influenced the writing.

Discusses specific elements of the mentor text, using relevant and effective vocabulary.

Notes one way in which the stimulus material was incorporated.

Discusses a structural choice.

Considers the use of a particular language technique and gives an example.

Considers the development of ideas in the piece.