

# Belonging!



## **Suggested Book Titles that relate to the Theme Belonging! #2**

Descriptions taken from the Internet

### **Listen by Stephanie S. Tohan JF/TOL**

This is in our junior collection, but would appeal to older readers as well. It is the story of a young girl, Charley, who is recovering from a car accident that caused her to miss a term of school, have a steel plate put in her leg, and undergo physiotherapy to get her moving properly again. It is the summer break and she is under pressure from her father to get moving and get better. Her father and her worlds are shadowed by the death of her mother, a nature photographer, in a plane crash two years earlier. And for Charley, the absence of her best friend Amy, who has chosen to play tennis over staying with her, is a source of aggravation.

But then Charley spies a wild dog she names Coyote, and undergoes the difficult task of winning his trust and becoming his friend. Beautifully written and honest, the book is also about relationships, courage, coping with grief, finding new hope and reconnecting with your surroundings and yourself. It is based on a true encounter of the author with her own 'Coyote'. A chapter of *extras* follows the story, mostly relating to communicating with your pets.

### **The Adoration of Jenna Fox by Mary Pearson T/PEA**

Identity. Where does it lie? In a face? A voice? A bundled string of events we call a lifetime? Is it in our DNA, bone, flesh, ancestry? How do we define our identity, and is it a once and for all definition? Or is it always changing?

Who am I? Can anyone ever know for sure just what it takes to be who we are?

We all search for our place in this world and how we fit in, but for Jenna Fox that search reaches dark new dimensions when she wakes from a coma and can't remember who she is. Worse, she doesn't remember the people who claim to be her parents. There is something curious about them, about the house they all live in--in fact, curious describes her whole life, as she attempts to unlock the secrets of who she was, and who she has become.

The Adoration of Jenna Fox is about Jenna's search for identity, a quest as old as history, but as startling as the future.

### **Indian Summer by Pratima Mitchell T/MIT**

When her mother Rita is called away on a work assignment, 14-year-old Sarla's summer holiday plans are ruined. Sarla decides to visit her grandparents in India. Frustrated by her life with her mother in London, Sarla looks forward to the opportunity to connect with her extended family.

When Sarla arrives in Daroga, she sees her grandparents, Nana and Nani, for the first time in six years. She also meets Bina, the 15-year-old granddaughter of Nana and Nani's maid and cook. Despite their similarities, Sarla and Bina find it difficult to become friends until a crisis for Bina brings them together.

For Sarla, her summer holiday with her grandparents is a time of increasing self-awareness. She begins to appreciate the difficulties Bina faces and realises that families are not always as they appear on the surface.

The likeable narrators Sarla and Bina are well portrayed. They display the emotional complexity of teens including moments of emotional self-indulgence and contrasting moments of great awareness and maturity. The cast of secondary characters round out the story nicely, although Sarla's relationship with her mother is inconsistent with little focus throughout the novel leading to an emotional discussion between the two in the final pages.

The story of Bina's mother Shobharani and the rebel political group the Liberation Front add an element of political and social history to the novel, offering further insight into the complex social and religious structure of Indian society.

#### **Where The Streets Had A Name by Australian Author Randa Abdel-Fattah T/ABD**

Thirteen-year-old Hayaat is on a mission. She believes a handful of soil from her grandmother's ancestral home in Jerusalem will save her beloved Sitti Zeynab's life. The only problem is the impenetrable wall that divides the West Bank, as well as the check points, the curfews, the permit system and Hayaat's best friend Samy, who is mainly interested in football and the latest elimination on X-Factor, but always manages to attract trouble. But luck is on their side. Hayaat and Samy have a curfew-free day to travel to Jerusalem. However, while their journey may only be a few kilometres long, it may take a lifetime to complete.

#### **The Winds of Heaven by Australian Author Judith Clarke T/CLA**

Clementine, a quiet, sensitive girl is in awe of her beautiful cousin, Fan. While Clementine lives a life of relative affluence in the city, Fan is trapped with her embittered mother in a drab country town with no prospects. As Clementine gets older and immerses herself in the heady liberation of university, Fan's bright spirit is slowly crushed by the daily drudgery of children, an indifferent shearer husband, and her frustrated desire for a different life.

#### **Shifty by Lynn Hazen T/HAZ**

"I like how Martha is all trusting of me. Not too many people trust me like that. No one besides Martha, in fact. I got a whole file full of people saying how I'm shifty and not to be trusted." But Martha, she trusts the good in people, even when the bad part is showing up more than anything else. When fifteen-year-old Shifty moves into a new foster home, with a mother, sister and baby brother, he struggles to find a balance between the independent spirit that has helped him survive and his longing for a place to call home. Both funny and tender, Shifty's misadventures touch on themes of resiliency, home, and lost and found family

#### **Pearl Versus The World by Australian Author Sally Murphy JF/MUR**

A moving illustrated verse novel about a girl dealing with isolation at school, and with her grandma's illness at home.

At school, Pearl feels as though she is in a group of one. Her teacher wants her to write poems that rhyme but Pearl's poems don't. At home, however, Pearl feels safe and loved, but her grandmother is slowly fading, and so are Mum and Pearl. When her grandmother eventually passes away, Pearl wants life to go back to the way it was and refuses to talk at the funeral. But she finds the courage to deliver a poem for her grandmother that defies her teacher's idea of poetry – her poem doesn't rhyme; it comes from the heart.

- A powerful and moving story about loss, grief and isolation.
- Deals with sensitive issues of dementia from the child's perspective.

### **The Truth About My Bat Mitzvah by Nora Baskin T/BAS**

Seventh-grader Caroline Weeks' mum is Jewish and her dad isn't. When Caroline's Nana dies around the same time that Caroline's best friend, Rachel, is having her bat mitzvah, Caroline starts to become more interested in her Jewish identity. If Caroline does start going to temple, won't that hurt her dad's feelings? Would her Nana have wanted her to be Jewish? To be Jewish, does she have to have a fancy bat mitzvah like Rachel?

### **Absolutely Positively Not... by David Larochelle T/LAR**

In a touching, sometime hilarious coming-out story, Steven DeNarski, 16, tries to deny he is gay. He covers his Superman posters with pictures of women in skimpy bikinis and lacy lingerie, and he follows the aversion therapy prescribed in a parents' handbook for getting over his "deviant" desires and awakening his sluggish interest in girls. He hangs out with the hockey players and tries to start dating (even kissing), to the delight of his fussy mom and macho dad. It doesn't work. When he reluctantly tells his friend Rachel that he is gay, he has to restrain her from celebrating it to the world and "empowering" him at school.

The wry, first-person narrative is wonderful as it moves from personal angst to outright farce (Steven takes a pet golden retriever to the school dance). The characters are drawn with surprising depth, and Steven finds quiet support, as well as betrayal, in unexpected places. Many readers, gay and straight, will recognize Steven's need to talk to someone.

### **The Good Daughter by Australian Author Amra Pajalic T/PAJ**

Fifteen-year-old Sabiha has a lot to deal with: her mother's mental health issues, her interfering aunt, her mother's new boyfriend, her live-in grandfather and his chess buddy, not to mention her arrogant cousin Adnan. They all want to marry her off, have her become a strict Muslim and speak Bosnian.

And Sabiha's friends are not always friendly. She gets bullied by girlfriends and is anxious about boyfriends, when she just wants to fit in. But two boys, Brian and Jesse, become the allies of this fierce and funny girl.

*The Good Daughter* is a coming-of-age novel written with sensitivity and humour. It confronts head-on the problems of cultural identity in the day-to-day lives of teenagers. Amra Pajalic has a wonderful ear for idiomatic dialogue and the dramatic moment

### **Tamar by Mal Peet T/PEE**

When her grandfather dies, Tamar inherits a box containing a series of clues and coded messages. Out of the past another Tamar emerges, a man involved in the terrifying world of resistance fighters in Nazi-occupied Holland half a century earlier. His story is one of passionate love, jealousy

and tragedy set against the Second World War. Unravelling it will transform the younger Tamar's life...

### **Finding Home by Australian Author Gary Crew JF/CRE**

Rich and beautiful, Gary Crew's text is redolent with the sounds and colours of the Australian bush. This picture book for older children is an ode and an obituary to the indigenous landscape, much of which was destroyed by white colonists. Ignorance and selfishness can destroy the things we love and value most - the child whose parents don't value his differences, the beauty of wild nature - and this story offers the reader a metaphor for the greater destruction of the environment through thoughtless acts.

### **Mama's Song by Ben Beaton**

Georgina—a teenager, alone and pregnant—is estranged from her mother and father. When she seeks refuge in a country town, she discovers her grandmother has passed away, leaving her more alone than ever. It is here, in a small country hospital, that she must come to terms with the enormity of what she faces and the new life she is now responsible for.

### **The White Giraffe – Lauren St John Series JF/STJ**

Martine's parents are killed in a fire, and she must leave her home in England to live on a wildlife reserve in Africa with a grandmother she never even knew she had. As soon as Martine arrives at the reserve, she hears whisperings of a mythical animal living there—a white giraffe. No one has ever seen the animal, but it leaves footprints behind. Her grandmother insists that the white giraffe is just a legend, but then, one stormy night, Martine looks out her bedroom window straight into the eyes of the tall and silvery animal. The white giraffe is real! But why is everyone keeping the giraffe's existence a secret? To find out, Martine will use all of her courage and smarts, and an emerging gift for healing, in a daring adventure to save her new friend.

### **Jip – His Story by Katherine Paterson JF/PAT**

When an aged lunatic named Putnam arrives at a poorhouse farm in rural Vermont in 1855, he is treated as little more than a beast by everyone except the orphan Jip, who himself arrived at the charity orphanage/asylum after being found abandoned by the roadside. Jip and Putnam become friends, then allies of a sort, as Jip struggles to improve his own lot and that of his friend Lucy, the unfortunate daughter of the late town drunk. This historical tale by Katherine Paterson involves its young protagonist in the great 19th century struggle between slave owners and abolitionists while sending him into a test of his own loyalty and courage. Paterson handles weighty issues with grace and verve, and does not shrink from terrible truths in this challenging novel for young readers.

### **Finding Freia Lockhart by Aimee Said T/SAI**

Freia Lockhart just wants to fit in at school but her best friend Kate is determined to get in with the popular Bs: Belinda, Bethanee and Brianna. Even Freia knows when she hangs out with the Bs she fits in like a turkey in a flock of flamingos. Kate convinces Freia to audition for the school play so they can 'all hang out together' and meet all the cute guys. Predictably, Freia misses out on a chorus role and instead is assigned to production lighting, with rumoured bad boy Daniel. Freia soon learns first impressions aren't always correct and when Daniel needs a friend, she risks her reputation and place among the Bs to support him. The most surprising development is the group of friends she ends up spending her time with. On opening night there's not a B in sight.

- An authentic, fresh voice from an up-and-coming author.

- Teenage girls, in particular, will relate to the themes of acceptance, friendship and self-identity.

### **Eric by Shaun Tan JF/TAN**

Eric is eternally curious and effortlessly charming - a house guest whose approach to the world will capture your heart. 'Shaun Tan's stories touch on wonder, fear, exploration and relationships...Questioning strangeness is a strong theme, a reminder that difference doesn't have to mean the same thing as fear...'

### **Morse Code for Cats by Australian Author Tom Conyers T/CON**

Coming of age... coming out. Sam wants life to be the way it is in books – one meaningful moment after the other – so exchanging the country for the city on the eve of a new millennium presents a wonderful world of possibility. A new circle to move in, plus a chance to make money doing something he loves: his fresh start offers it all.

But reality soon becomes more pot-boiler than literary masterpiece, and Sam finds himself re-examining the books that have inspired him. Perhaps there he can find what he needs to be 'good at life' before his own spirals completely out of control.

Contemporary... insightful... raw... funny at times, and at times intensely moving.

### **Sugar Sugar by Australian Author Carole Wilkinson T/WIL**

Jackie has left Australia with a psychedelic suitcase and a dream to become a world-famous fashion designer. She knows exactly where she's going and how she's going to get there. So how does a weekend in Paris send her spinning off-course? How does she end up somewhere she couldn't even find on a map?

### **Dog Tucker by Kathryn Drinkwater T/DRI**

Devlin is a troubled teenager living in foster homes, with a reputation for running away. His case worker gives him one last chance, if he promises not to run away he can go and live with a distant relative, Uncle George, on his farm. Devlin reluctantly agrees.

### **Give Me Shelter – Stories about children who seek asylum edited by Tony Bradman JF/GIV**

This collection of short stories shows us people who have been forced to leave their homes or families to seek help and shelter elsewhere. Some are about young people travelling to other countries; others are concerned with children left behind when parents are forced to flee.

### **Vivi Finds Bean by Vanessa Holle JF/HOL**

This is the tale of Vivi, a little German girl who decides to travel to Australia to find Bean, the godmother she's never met. Travelling by whale and camel, and on a turtle's back, she finally lands in Sydney and after a wonderful time with Bean's family, she hops on the plane back home. A delightful tale of friendship and adventure.

### **The House by J Lewis JF/LEW**

A stone-and-mortar house watches a century pass and inhabitants come and go in this gorgeously illustrated book from 2008 Hans Christian Andersen Award winner Roberto Innocenti.

A stone house on a hill is the narrator and forms the keystone for this picture book for older-readers. Spanning the twentieth century, Lewis' verses, and more vitally, Innocenti's artwork, show the transformation of the old house in an unspecified (but likely Italian) countryside. The tableau for the artwork remains the same throughout: the house and terraced hillside occupy a static position on the pages but grow and morph with each step, providing distinct snapshots to distill different eras and passing generations. The unfolding of small dramas will have children eagerly flipping the pages back and forth in time: a wispy tree planted in 1905 grows majestically to preside over a wedding in 1915, is naught but a stump by 1993, and is replaced by a pool in 1999. The poetry, though skillful, can be obscure for the intended audience ("By spring's pastoral play, the hill, beguiled, / Returns a natural likeness"), but the fascinating and immersive imagery goes to great length to bring it to life.

## Resources at your Library.....

**Schools Collection** which includes Study Guides and support material including DVDs and exam preparation books

**Online Databases:** Free access to the following NSW.net databases available at all libraries and at home with your library card number:

- **Biography Resource Center:** from brief summaries to lengthy biographies - if they're well known they're in here - pictures too.
- **Australian & New Zealand Reference Center:** hundreds of full-text Australian and New Zealand journals and newspapers including the Sydney Morning Herald, The Daily Telegraph, Time magazine and more.
- **Master File Premier:** a comprehensive collection of full-text journal, magazine and newspaper articles from around the world.
- **NovelList:** a Readers Advisory database, created by librarians, to help in finding that elusive title or next good read.
- **Literary Reference Center:** a literary database with articles on world authors and their works.

To access Databases, go via the Library Catalogue at [www.pmhc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.pmhc.nsw.gov.au)

**Free Online Essay Writing Assistance via Your Tutor**

