Name Journeys / Homing

Language and cultural identity

Comparative argument

Mundair and Berry show that pressure on speech can become pressure on identity. Mundair foregrounds migration and misrecognition, while Berry imagines a suppressed regional voice being recovered as a loving inheritance.

Identity has a history

Name Journeys - Cultural allusion (“wilderness”): References to South Asian epic stories make a name carry a history the surrounding English environment may fail to recognise.

Homing - Extended metaphor (“box”): The accent becomes a stored possession: present in the family but withheld from public hearing.

Connection: Both present linguistic identity as richer than outsiders’ judgements allow.

Suppression is physical

Name Journeys - Bodily metaphor (“milk teeth”): Changes in speech evoke childhood vulnerability and a difficult process of accommodation.

Homing - Material imagery (“rusted”): Long silence makes release difficult and makes the effects of suppression tangible.

Connection: Analyse the cost of modifying or concealing language, rather than describing accent as incorrect speech.

Form and final direction

Name Journeys - Metaphor (“echo chamber”): The final difficulty of reception challenges the idea that the new language-space is fully open to difference.

Homing - Simile of release (“pigeons”): The movement towards freed words gives inheritance an active future in the speaker’s own voice.

Connection: Couplets and flowing enjambment in Mundair suggest continuing journeys; Berry’s movement from confinement to flight makes recovery more explicit.

Relevant context

Relate Mundair’s cultural allusions to migration and Berry’s Black Country words to hierarchies of accent. Regional and migrant identities are not interchangeable, even where both meet pressure to conform.

Plan your argument

Open with the comparative thesis and qualify the main difference.

Paragraph 1: Identity has a history. Both present linguistic identity as richer than outsiders’ judgements allow.

Paragraph 2: Suppression is physical. Analyse the cost of modifying or concealing language, rather than describing accent as incorrect speech.

Paragraph 3: Form and final direction. Couplets and flowing enjambment in Mundair suggest continuing journeys; Berry’s movement from confinement to flight makes recovery more explicit.

Conclude by explaining how the endings change your understanding of the shared theme.

Try a question

Compare how poets present language and cultural identity in ‘Name Journeys’ and in one other poem from your anthology.

Suggested comparison: Homing. You may choose a different poem from your prescribed cluster.

Check your understanding

What is lost when speech is suppressed?

How do physical images make linguistic pressure visible?

Which poem offers the clearer movement towards recovery?

Original critical notes by Exam Stash. Use your own edition or anthology alongside these notes.