

Belonging – 1

Leila Porter sat in the passenger seat, afraid to undo the seat belt and open the door. The term at Farrell Youth Band had already started and Leila was nervous about her trial session.

'I can't do it, Mum', her voice cracked. 'I don't want to start in the middle of the term.'

'But next term is more than two months away, Leila. The sooner you start, the sooner you'll fit in and make new friends. Come on now, let's go in.' And with that, Alice Porter stepped out of the car.

Inside the hall, a group of boys and girls, all about Leila's age, were busily arranging chairs and music stands while laughing and chatting with each other. Leila felt lost. The boys just ignored her but the girls stopped, stared and then ignored her. Leila wasn't sure which was worse.

She hovered at the back of the hall watching everyone take their seats while the conductor spoke with her mum. When Alice left, Jacob motioned for Leila to come forward.

'Settle down, everyone. Now before we start, I want to introduce you to Leila. She'll be joining our band. Eric, fetch a chair, and Carl, a music stand.' The boys rolled their eyes and stomped off. 'The rest of you, make room. Leila, you sit in between Beth and Tanya. Follow the score and join in when you can.'

Leila sat down and tied the strap of her saxophone around her neck. She'd been far too nervous to practise in front of the others, so now she'd be playing cold. She could feel the girls on each side of her bristle with annoyance. Leila ignored them and prepared to blow but the sound she made caused everyone shriek with laughter. It took Jacob some time to calm them down.

'Don't worry Leila', he said, 'it happens to the best of us!' He counted the beat and the music began again. This time, Leila completed her piece but she knew her playing had been well below her usual standard.

'Why is she in our band if she can't even play properly?' Tanya asked Beth as if Leila wasn't even there.

'How could anyone play on such a shabby instrument? It must have come from a discount store', replied Beth. Leila was too upset to comment so she continued to ignore their jibes.

Although her playing improved as the session wore on, Leila continued to make basic mistakes and other members of the band followed Beth and Tanya's lead, adding their own insulting comments. Leila made her decision. She wouldn't be coming back. When the session was over, she packed up her saxophone and left the hall, not bothering to put away her chair and music stand nor speak with Jacob.

As she walked towards the car park, she noticed a smaller group of people of mixed ages milling around. Their words were music to her ears.

'What are we going to do?' asked one of the older girls. 'This isn't the first time Eliza has let us down. We just can't rely on her anymore. She'll have to go but we need a replacement and we need one now! And where are we going to get a sax player at this late stage.'

'Er, maybe I can help', stammered Leila nervously. 'I've been playing for three years and I've been in a band for the last two, but that was interstate. I'm new here. Maybe we could give each other a try?'

'You bet!' chorused the group in unison. 'Let's get started straightaway!'

From the corner of her eye, Leila noticed Beth and Tanya staring open-mouthed in surprise. Leila stopped, stared at them for a moment, then smiled as she turned to join her new band.



Belonging – 2

- EL** 1. How would you explain the main theme of the story and how well do you think the title reflects this?

- EL** 2. Underline words and phrases that tell you how Leila felt at the sessions. In your own words, describe how she felt.

- EL** 3. (a) How good do you think Leila was at playing the saxophone? Explain your answer.

- (b) Do you think boys and girls of your age would really treat a new person in such an unpleasant way? Explain your answer.

- RL** 4. How did the story make you feel for the main character?

- EL** 5. Write the sentence which tells the reader:

(a) the name of Leila's mum.

(b) that Leila does not hold a grudge.

Belonging – 3

EL 6. Explain how each character behaved towards Leila and how this affected her.

Character(s)	Behaviour and its effect
Jacob	
Eric and Carl	
Beth and Tanya	
The other boys and girls	

CL 7. Brainstorm ideas for a story in which the main character is made to feel unwelcome.

(a) Create a list of characters, their actions and how they made the main character feel.

Characters	Actions	Main character's response

(b) Write an idea for a positive result for the main character.

(c) Write a title for your story.