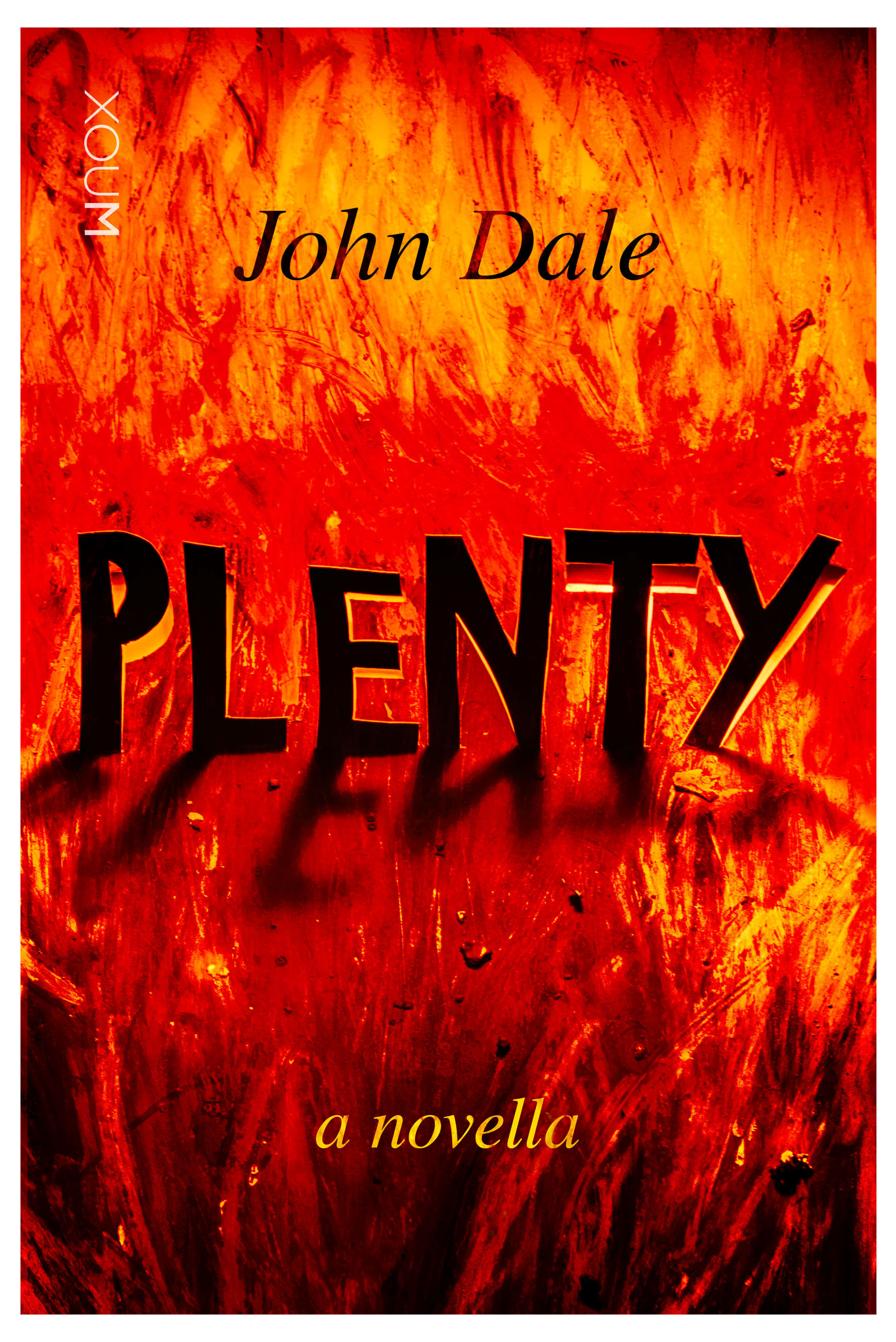
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**Task D – Novella Response**

**Essay question:**

How does author John Dale use  
narrative techniques in *Plenty* (2013)  
to explore ideas, values and beliefs  
relating to the asylum seeker debate  
in Australia?

**Digital Portfolio Link:**

<http://elspethgrant.weebly.com/semester-1-task-d-novella-response.html>

**Formatting Reminders:**

* Include your SACE number (not your name)
* Use the essay question as your title
* Double spacing
* Size 12 font
* A blank line between paragraphs
* Include a word count at the end
* No bibliography required
* Submit draft via email
* Submit final version via Turnitin

**CHARACTERS  
and LOCATIONS**

Jeffrey (Jed) White

(17 at time of story, 19 when telling it)

His father (nickname “Blackie”)

His mother

Work at service station

Ashley Page

Her father Bob

Live at George Mansfield’s old estate

Christine (Chrissy) Nickels

Her father Len

Live in caravan

Raymond Douglas (R.D.) Hogg

Shire President

and daughter Logan

Peggy Powell

Publican

Sergeant Goodwin

Police officer

Ron Marney

Butcher

Ted Sawkins

Newsagent

Pam and Rod Coot

‘The Friendly Grocer’

and daughters Sandra and Renee

Bill Draper

Asian restaurant

Celia and Duncan Hodder

Bakery/pie shop

Finn Boyd

‘Jailbird’(‘Old’) Mrs Lewincamp

Son Lyle served in Afghanistan

Jack Rough

Barry Strange

Fishermen

Merrimen twins (Adrianna and ?)

Kade Jordan and his uncle

Pru and Melvin Leech

Buddhists

Reverend and Jacqui Fish, son Jack

‘Raper Street Aboriginals’

e.g. Gumboot Smith

Lumpy Stevenson

Jan Tenbensel

Horrie Lester

Trevor Sprigg and wife

Post office

Diane

Charcoal Chicken shop

Mrs Ling

Dr Patek

Bumper Triffit

Cannery

Cinema

Bait and Tackle

Plentiful Café

Motel

Dutch B&B

Caravan Park

Malcolm McGuiness

*The London Times* journalist

Refugee lawyer

from Melbourne

**QUOTES**

**CHAPTER 1**

‘Some people say we were too isolated and estranged from other places and that’s what went wrong, but I’m not so sure.’ (p. 1)

‘The main highway was thirty-five kilometres back along a treacherous mountain road … and the nearest big town was over an hour away’ (p. 2)

‘In that respect we were no different from any other knockabout Australian town’ (p. 2)

‘hemmed in between the mountain and the sea’ (pp. 2-3)

‘”Big storm’s brewing,” Dad said (p. 5)

‘the Plenty Hotel was the site of pretty much every big event that happened in our town’ (p. 13)

‘Chrissy and I hooked up when I repeated year 10. On our first date she said I was stuck-up because my family had sewage and running water and didn’t have to go out to a fibro shed to shit and shower.’ (pp. 15-16)

‘the council’s long-term strategy to civilise us’ (p. 18)

‘[Dad] never drank alone; he preferred the company of rough-neck, semi-literate men in dirty blue singlets’ (p. 12)

‘”You bogans killed our horse!” (Ashley p. 14)

‘”What’s wrong with you people?” The silver-haired man shook his head’ (p. 21)

‘Just because we got drunk on Saturday night and let off steam didn’t mean out-of-towners could look down their noses at us’ (p. 21)

‘Surrounded by the bush and the sea, Plenty slept.’ (p. 22)

‘It never occurred to me that our little town was about to change forever.’ (p. 23)

**CHAPTER 2**

‘”Beer makes you stupid like all the other rednecks in this town … you’re white trash”’ (Ashley, p. 31)

‘“You’ve got a killer tattoo of the southern cross on your back, you go spear-fishing, roo shooting and play touch footy with your mates. Your ambition is to finish your brickie’s apprenticeship, honeymoon in Bali and one day own a pub”’ (Ashley, p. 32)

‘We don’t need outsiders telling us what to do’ (Jed, speaking to Ashley, p. 32)

**CHAPTER 3**

‘Everything seemed normal for a Monday. But of course it wasn’t.’ (pp. 35-36)

‘Business was slow’ (p. 37 – at the service station. See also p. 16 re the cannery closing and p. 35 re the café being for sale. Consider symbolism of termites p. 34)

‘On Wednesday night I was locking up the garage when a kookaburra landed on top of the unleaded pump. The bird puffed out its fluffy chest and looked at me side-on. We locked eyes – neither of us backing down I took this as a sign.’ (p. 38)

‘I was glad to be living on the coast and I resented these city folk with their negative ideas about us.’ (p. 39)

‘Normally, I liked walking at night, but this whole boat business was messing with my head.’ (p. 44)

‘You can’t keep a secret like that in a small town for long.’ (p. 45)

‘We’d never had a real Muslim, as far as anyone could recall.’ (p. 45)

‘”They ain’t going to fit in here,” Dad said.’ (p. 45)

‘two small white dogs, which belonged to two small elderly widows, began yapping incessantly as if they sensed an intruder’ (p. 47)

‘I wasn’t exactly sure how the blind woman was connected to all of that, but I kept my mouth shut.’ (p. 47)

‘We didn’t know at that stage she was a refugee’ (p. 49)

‘We were used to the government lying to us’ (p. 50)

‘The truth was that our small population and our isolation … meant that the people of Plenty were constantly ignored’ (p. 50)

‘As the days grew longer and as the weather became more hospitable so did the townspeople’ (p. 51)

‘it was generally agreed that she was harmless, even though she was a Muslim’ (p. 52)

‘Something had changed between us since that rough windy night the blind woman arrived in town. Whether we were ashamed of not speaking out, or whatever it was we failed to do, nothing was quite the same afterwards’ (p. 53)

‘Stay away from her, Jed, she’s trouble’ (Chrissy, p. 54)

‘we gotta call a meeting of everyone in town’ (Len Nickels, p. 56)

‘I thought of how much our town had changed already and wondered how many more changes were coming’ (p. 57)

**CHAPTER 4**

‘The sky through the windows was yellow like a fading bruise’ (pp. 58-59)

‘”Today council has received from the government to increase the overflow.”’ (R.D. Hogg p. 59; c.f. p. 68 newspaper report)

‘”Why weren’t we told earlier?” Horrie Lester asked. “Why all the bloody secrecy?”’ (p. 59)

‘the town of Plenty had been steadily declining … Now the thought of 150 foreigners tramping into town filled us with alarm.’ (pp. 59-60)

“Where will we stick ‘em all? … There’s no room”’ (‘Blackie’ White p. 60, c.f. previous paragraph)

‘”We have a choice”’ (R.D. Hogg p. 60)

‘group of disaffected malcontents – my father, Horrie Lester, Len Nickels, Finn Boyd and Lumpy Stevenson – were distrustful of the word *government* being linked with the word *promise.’* (p. 62)

(c.f. ‘a whole bunch of other blokes who didn’t own stores or have anything much to sell’ p. 65; ‘the less educated men in town’ p. 69)

‘”So that means they’re dangerous … They’re Muslims aren’t they?”’ (‘Old’ Mrs , p. 62; c.f. dogs p. 47, reporters p. 71, Sharia law p. 100)

‘”They’re not *genuine* refugees. They come here for our welfare benefits. Why do they spend six months in Indonesia where they’re safe as houses and then sail down here in a rotten fishing boat? Because we’re a bloody soft touch, that’s why.”’ (Horrie Lester p. 63)

‘I think there’s a strong economic case to look at how these asylum seekers can assist our town. For every asylum seeker, you create three jobs. You need people to guard them, people to feed them, people to provide them with education and health services–’

‘There’s good money in refugees these days … for the right town that is willing to help out the government.’(Melvin Leech and R.D. Hogg, p. 63)

‘you start dumping boatloads in a place like this, you gunna lower the quality of life.’ (‘Blackie’ White, pp. 64–5)

‘Outside, the sky darkened as if a fire blanket had been dropped over the town. From the mountain came the thin rumble of thunder overlaid with the clatter of flying foxes spitting pulp and fig seeds onto the iron roof of the school hall’ (p. 65)

‘Just like him, I didn’t want Plenty to change either, but no-one had acknowledged the reason the cannery was closing, or why the mill had shut down. We had run out of fish and cedar and gold. We had even run out of fertile farming land as we had eroded the soil along the river and lowered the water table. Our town was at a crossroads.’ (p. 66)

‘We were painted as simpletons, children who don’t know what was good for them’ (p. 67)

‘”No racial comments. Call them asylum seekers, not illegal immigrants, okay? We don’t want to be tagged as racists.”’ (R.D. Hogg p. 69)

‘The Minister had briefed [R.D. Hogg] that these detailed might be construed in other small towns in bribes, when in fact they were rewards.’ (p. 69)

‘The media expected us to be rednecks’ (p. 70)

‘The TV reporters wore Gore-Tex jackets and R.M. Williams boots to blend in with their idea of what they thought we wore.’ (pp. 70-71)

‘Lumpy Stevenson whispered to me, “We’re being invaded.”’ (p. 72)

‘Most of us were dark-skinned and freckled, weathered by wind, rain and floods and drownings and fatal car accidents and we had done this with bugger all help from the outside world. Now we confronted another event beyond our control.’ (p. 72)

‘They had a steely determination that they’d overcome whatever the government threw at them. People on this part of the coast were distrustful of politicians of all persuasions.’ (p. 73)

‘”It isn’t a prison. Though it feels like it.”’ (Ashley p. 76)

‘”Plenty was an Aboriginal settlement long before the first boats came.”

“And now the second boats are here.” (Jed and Ashley, p. 77)

‘”Look, Jed, we might not want ‘em coming here, but that’s no reason to be rude”’ (‘Blackie’ White p. 78)

‘To the outsider, everything was as you’d expect from a sleepy coastal town, but beneath the surface was a newfound wariness, a growing suspicion that the tranquility, the very substance of which had attracted people to live in Plenty, was gone.’ (p. 78)

‘”The benefits to business in this town will be enormous”’ (R.D. Hogg p. 79)

‘On Friday, a hand-printed sign went up in the butchery window: *Welcome Asylum Seekers.* Ron Marney had secured the contract to provide fresh meat weekly to the Mansfield site.’ (p. 79)

‘Where once the town had divided along sectarian lines, it now divided between those who had the potential to make a profit and those who did not.’ (p. 80)

‘”I realise that the government and these ratbag groups will try to keep me quiet, but I think it’s time for someone to make a noise.”’ (Horrie Lester, p. 80)

‘ABC radio described Plenty as unsuitable to accommodate asylum seekers, due to its inaccessible location and the low education levels of its residents.’ (p. 81)

‘semi-literate bogans’ (refugee advocate, p. 81)

‘”That to keep us out? … Or keep them in?”’ (Kade Jordan p. 83)

‘We stood in the sun exposed to the gaze of the asylum seekers as if we were stranded at a border crossing.’ (p. 84)

‘”My father is doing a wonderful thing … He’s turning this town into a sanctuary” (Ashley p. 85)

‘”Knowing these people has given me something that I didn’t have before… It’s given me a sense of belonging … A sense of identity.”’ (Ashley p. 85)

‘Plenty was not a town you associated with fences and guards … mostly you could step into a neighbour’s yard from the front or the side’ (p. 87)

‘If all these Arabs and Afghanis were persecuted in their own countries, did that give them the right to come to our country?’ (p. 87)

‘”Bringing those people out here … was a recipe for disaster”’ (Peggy Powell p. 88)

**CHAPTER 5**

‘[The Minister] spoke of the 15 million dollar development on this site that would initially house 300 asylum seekers and his government’s vision that in the future this accommodation would be converted into self-contained apartments to attract hundreds of high-end tourist from China, Japan and the USA’ (p. 91)

‘Due to [the Minister’s] tight schedule he did not have time to visit the Plenty APOD (Alternative Place of Detention)’ (p. 92)

‘”Why do these people live in such terrible countries? … Surely we should be helping them at the source of their troubles.”’ (Mrs White, p. 93)

‘Since the asylum seekers had arrived there was more squabbling, bickering, and fist fighting than usual’ (p. 95)

‘The boaties were ready to riot. They’d paid tens of thousands of dollars to get here and they were angry at the time it took for their applications to be processed, they were angry at the overcrowded conditions and they were angry that they hadn’t received the permanent residencies they had been promised. They had borrowed and risked everything and now they felt deceived.’ (p. 96)

‘… Dad told him. There’s going to be trouble up there if they keep packing more of these people in.’ (p. 97)

‘”I’ve got nothing against these people, but why not Bambaroo or Burnett Heads?” (Pam Coot, p. 97)

‘Until the boaties arrived, Plenty was known, if at all, for its bakery and the broken-down cemetery which boasted the graves of Captain Elias Mansfield and a well-known bush poet whose name I forget. We weren’t white trash, as Ashley Page reckoned.’ (p. 98)

‘From what I could gather, the boaties came from dusty inland towns and landlocked cities and had no experience of the dangers of the coast.’ (p. 99)

‘Some of them wore veils and this infuriated people. If the asylum seekers wouldn’t show their faces on our beach then how could we accept them?’ (p. 99)

‘”We have plenty of room … in Plenty”’ (R.D. Hogg, p. 101)

‘”These asylum seekers deserve our sympathy,” the stranger said. Many of them face persecution in their own countries.”’ (p. 102; see also p. 121 ‘a little man in a big hat who had an extraordinary ability to make everyone else feel heartless’)

‘”What gives you the right to waltz into our town and tell us what to do?’ Len Nickels asked.

“Yeah, why should we bloody take them?” said someone else.

“Because it’s the right thing to do.”’ (p. 102)

‘”If you’re so keen, why don’t you set up a refugee centre in your own suburb. Then you could hold a meeting to let us know first hand how well it’s going.”’ (Len Nickels p. 103)

‘they volunteered their time at the Bush Fire Brigade and gave to the Salvos and raised their families and drove their kids to footy practice and worked hard at low-paid physical jobs. In the whole town there were only nine people on unemployment benefits, and four of those were Finn Boyd and Lumpy Stevenson. … they believed they were good souls at heart who stood quietly in queues at the bank and kept to themselves at home and helped out their neighbours when necessary. I guess what stung most was the Racist word, for al of us in town had grown up alongside Aboriginal families, unlike some city folk who wouldn’t know an Aboriginal from an Indian.’ (pp. 103, 107)

‘”Send ‘em back!” Finn Boyd yelled.’ (p. 104)

‘The lawyer stood his ground, called the men ruffians, and said there should be no mandatory detention, that we should welcome everybody to this country with open arms.

“Why is it always *we?”* Dad asked’ (p. 104)

‘Most people stood around bewildered – of course they wanted better roads and better services but they were not convinced that bringing 350 Afghanis, Iranians and Iraqis into Plenty was the best way of achieving that. It was not so much that they disliked the boaties – none of us had had any real interaction with them apart from the blind woman – it was more that we were kept in the dark. How did the determination system work, why did some boaties get accepted quickly while others did not, why were our boys fighting and risking their lives in the same countries these boaties were fleeing, and even if someone did get persecuted across the other side of the world, why on earth should they come here and disrupt our lives? Where did their rights end and ours begin? These were the questions people in Plenty wanted answered, but did not dare ask publicly. Already our little down was changing and a carload of agitators who saw us on the news decided on a whim to take the long, dangerous drive up the coastal road to protest. For better or worse the detention centre had marked us on the map. Now here was this smart, eloquent lawyer driving into town with his black Lexus implying that we were narrow-minded and ignorant.’ (p. 105)

‘”You can come here and call us names … but the minute we try to reply, out comes the Racist word. This is our town, and we should look after our own first.”‘ (Horrie Lester p. 106)

‘[The lawyer] said that what he had heard this evening was evidence of entrenched xenophobia. He was saddened to encounter such bigotry in such a pretty little town. … He argued with the guards on duty and rattled the wire and said this was a sad, sad day for the people of Australia.’ (p. 106)

‘”It’s changed the whole atmosphere of the town”’ (Trevor Sprigg p. 110)

‘”We call it the country club”’ (Peggy Powell p. 111)

‘”The only reason we get boaties is because we offer permanent residency … If we didn’t they wouldn’t come.”’ (Horrie Lester p. 111)

‘”People say it’s racist, but it’s got nothing to do with race … it’s got to do with culture.”’ (‘Blackie’ White p. 111)

‘”Resettlement is not a right … There is no obligation on any country to accept people for resettlement.”’ (Jan Tenbensel p. 112)

‘“if they spent as much money helping the blackfellas as they do on the boaties we’d all be better off”’ (Lumpy Stevenson p. 112-3)

‘it was regarded as unmanly in these parts to express your feelings’ (p. 114)

‘No-one believed the centre would close down any time soon and they didn’t blame the boaties so much as the government who was always meddling in people’s lives, taxing their pleasures, penalizing them if they drove too fast or drank too much, ticking them off for this or that.’ (p. 115)

**CHAPTER 6**

‘All weekend there were signs of what lay ahead. … The signs continued all week.’ (pp. 117, 118 – examples follow)

‘There were one or two people in town who could not see that these events were interconnected and that bad luck, which arrives in waves, is heaven sent; others sensed that the detention centre had brought us ill fortune.’ (p. 118)

‘You can’t bring boatloads of strangers from the other side of the world and dump them into an unfamiliar landscape and culture, Dad reckoned, and expect everything to turn out okay.’ (p. 118)

‘”I expect this to be controversial,” the Minister announced, “but we will sit down with the townspeople and talk through their concerns.”’ (p. 118)

‘there was no sign of the proposed multi-million dollar development, no sign of any building plans. For most people this was the last straw.’ (p. 118)

‘”they have to stick these refugees somewhere,” [R.D. Hogg] said, “an extra 150 isn’t much.”

“Why not stick ‘em in the city?” Dad asked.’ (p. 119)

‘”We do not want a detention centre in Plenty. We will not be taking in more asylum seekers. End of story.”’ (Horrie Lester as Acting Shire President, p. 120)

‘A psychiatrist from Monash university appeared on television and said that sending these asylum seekers to faraway detention centres like Plenty traumatised them, but she never mentioned the locals who lived here and had their lives turned upside down.’ (p. 120)

‘Medically, the detainees were treated much better than the locals and blackfellas. That’s what Dad said anyway. One night he got so angry with the lies and propaganda spewing out of our television that Mum had to wipe his spittle off the screen with a tea-towel.’ (pp. 120-1)

‘When our Acting Shire President requested that the boaties be relocated, the Melbourne lawyer went on television and accused the government of pleasing, placating and pandering to extremist elements.’ (p. 121)

‘Feeling under siege, the people of Plenty stopped talking to strangers.’ (p. 121)

‘in the background of every disagreement lay the shadow of what was happening to our little town. It was like the floods, the fires and cyclone Larry all rolled into one.’ (p. 122)

‘My mother … spent night after night researching human trafficking on the world wide web. She concluded that we were part of a long and lucrative pipeline.’ (p. 122)

‘Like many adults, my father confused his own economic prospects with the country’s. The way he saw it, Australia was going downhill and these asylum seekers were a symbol of the decline, wave after wave of lean, able-bodied men breaching our borders and then whistling for their big dependent families to follow.’ (p. 124)

‘[Dad] worked hard all his life for the secondhand ute and few sticks of furniture we owned and here was this government wasting millions on processing these people while locals went without a decent hospital.’ (p. 124)

‘It was almost as if the government wanted to split our community.’ (p. 127)

‘When we turned on the television we got everyone’s opinion in the world apart from the people living here.’ (p. 127)

‘The townspeople blamed the government and the government blamed the opposition and the opposition blamed the United Nations and the United Nations blamed the deteriorating conditions in the Middle East and everyone else blamed the Jews, because there weren’t so many of them.’ (p. 127)

‘I don’t know why I recall that Friday so clearly when so many other Fridays left no impression.’ (p. 128)

‘I don’t know where we had gone wrong, how we had lost sight of what was important.’ (p. 129)

‘The people of Plenty had dealt with bushfires and flood and droughts, they had dealt with pretty much every catastrophe nature could throw at them … but they had never before experienced a threat to their sense of identity.’ (p. 130)

‘For a moment the good people of Plenty were united in a common cause and the feeling of belonging to a place was shared among us all.’ (p. 132)

‘there was another group who took advantage of the turmoil to climb onto the roof to protest … everyone packed into the saloon bar to watch images of the Mansfield estate burning and the detainees sitting outside the broken fence covering their heads with towels and shirts, some of them holding up signs which read, *Help us please.’*’ (pp. 133, 136)

‘the mood of the town remained uneasy.’ (p. 135)

‘It’s said that our memories are constantly changing and every time we recall something it alters a little because it is mixed up with the things that are happening in the present.’ (p. 137)

‘there was a certain pride in our town that we could cope with most calamities that nature threw at us and a belief that if the government left us alone we would be better off.’ (p. 139)

‘Plenty is the last place on earth you would choose to end up as a refugee.’ (from Malcolm McGuinness’s report in *The London Times,* pp. 141-144)

‘”That’s bullshit,” Dad said. “There’s no petrol sniffing.”’ (p. 144)

‘Life would go on, I knew, but I imagined them stuck-up people in the big cities with their fancy shops and glassy malls looking down their noses at us telling us how we ought to live. I felt as if everything good had been stolen.’ (p. 145)

**CHAPTER 7**

‘The asylum seekers who had been treated by the ambulance pitched in’ (p. 149)

‘I do know we starred that night, we stuck together and we were strong.’ (p. 151)

‘I’ll never forget … the people of Plenty and a few of the boaties still asleep in the hollows of the sand dunes with ther arms and legs sprawled over their neighbours’ bodies.’ (pp. 151-2)

**CHAPTER 8**

‘They want to civilise us, Dad reckons, but for everything the government gives you, there’s always something they take away.’ (p. 153)

‘After the fire, the boaties were transferred to other sites where their asylum claims were assessed and approved. Most of them ended up in the big cities.’ (pp. 153-4)

‘Living and working in London, I’ve come to realise the bigger the town, the smaller the view.’ (p. 154)