**Identity and Belonging context – central ideas**

1. Nature or nurture: what makes us who we are?

* Are we the product of our upbringing, or do our inherited traits – our DNA – determine the sort of person we become?

2. Defining ourselves through others: the paradox of belonging

* Belonging actively gives us a set of recognisable attitudes and values that we can adopt as our own. But do we have to give up our individuality?

*"Nothing of me is original. I am the combined effort of everyone I've ever known." –* Chuck Palahniuk

3. The cost of belonging – must we sacrifice ourselves?

* What must we give up to belong? Is it possible to be an individual and also be part of a larger group? Consider the inherent tensions in the meanings of “individual” and “belonging”

4. Challenging and developing our identity

* To what extent is our identity given to us through outside influences: family, culture, race, education, work, friends, etc? What else influences the development of our identity?

*No man is an island, entire of itself; every man*

*Is a piece of the continent, a part of the main . . .*

*. . . Any man’s death diminishes me*

*Because I am involved in mankind.*  John Donne, poet, 1572-1631

5. Choosing not to belong

* Who doesn’t belong in our society? Why? What happens to those who choose not to belong?
* Is it that some people can’t fit in, or deliberately choose not to?
* What factors help us to develop a sense of belonging?

“*My identity might begin with the fact of my race, but it didn't, couldn't end there. At least that's what I would choose to believe." –* Barack Obama

**Words for Identity and Belonging**

The following “belonging” words are useful for your writing:

Fellowship, membership, community, fraternity, association, comradeship, companionship, camaraderie, familiarity, intimacy, mateship, togetherness, social circle, compatibility, conformity, cordiality, acceptability, expectations

Words related to individuality:

Personality, uniqueness, character, distinctive features, mannerisms, traits, attributes, differences, selfhood, psyche, spirit, idiosyncrasies, qualities, achievements, eccentricities, quirks, peculiarities

**Words for lack of belonging and disconnection from others**

Use the following in your writing:

Disconnection, disintegration, dissolution, withdrawal, split, detachment, isolation, seclusion, avoidance, separateness, breach, rift, split, severance, segregation, displacement, disjointing, dislocation, breakdown, rupture, fracture, partition, alienation, loner, foreigner, nonconformist, misfit

**Key concepts of the Identity and Belonging context**

1. WHAT MAKES AN INDIVIDUAL?
2. WHAT FACTORS SHAPE AND/OR INFLUENCE A SENSE OF SELF?
3. IS IDENTITY FIXED, OR IS IT SUBJECT TO CHANGE?
4. WHAT SACRIFICES, IF ANY, DOES THE INDIVIDUAL MAKE IN ORDER TO BELONG?
5. WHAT HAPPENS TO INDIVIDUALS WHO STRUGGLE TO FIND A SENSE OF BELONGING?

**Things to remember**

This is NOT a text response. You **use** the texts to inform your own writing.

You can choose to write in one of three styles: imaginative, persuasive, expository.

* Imaginative – aims to entertain, provoke thought
* Persuasive – aims to convince reader to share your point of view
* Expository – aims to inform reader of topic of which you are an expert

There are a number of forms you can choose to write in.  
*Forms: speech, letter, article, report, essay, story, script, interview, hybrid, blog, etc.*

**Sample prompts**

* Identity is not static but always changing.
* Our relationships with others help us to define who we are.
* Groups and communities provide a sense of belonging.
* We need to connect with others to discover who we are.
* A solitary life is an unfulfilling life.
* Family and community are the most important elements in our lives.

**You are encouraged to include some form of reflective writing**

* How has your position in your family (eldest, middle, youngest, only child) affected your identity and self of belonging?
* How have you been able to, so far, break away from your parents and form your own identity?
* Do you have any old friends from kinder/primary school that you still keep in contact with? What factors have helped to maintain the connection?
* What changes/developments have occurred in your identity over time? What has caused these changes?