

**Handout**

# Belonging on Your Own Terms: Connection Questions

**Directions:** After reading the personal narrative, discuss the **Part 1: Expert Group Questions** with the others in your group. Support your ideas with examples from the reading and your own life. Record notes so you can share key points with your classmates who read different narratives. Do not start **Part 2: Teaching Group Questions** until your teacher tells you to do so.

## Part 1: Expert Group Questions

### Reading: “I Am the Only American Indian”

1. What is your “golden line” from Cecelia Rose LaPointe’s story? Each student in your group should share one or two sentences that resonate with them and explain why.
2. A *congregation* is a gathering of people. It can also be used to describe a religious community. When describing the scene in the cafeteria at lunch, LaPointe writes: “There’s a group of White kids over there. A group of Black kids over there. Congregation segregation. A few stragglers, weirdos, hippies, and nerds. I congregate alone.”
  - a. What does this description of the cafeteria suggest about the borders that shape belonging in LaPointe’s school?
  - b. How might it be different to “congregate alone” than to “sit alone” in terms of one’s sense of belonging?
3. What matters most to LaPointe? In other words, what are their values? How do you know?
4. How do you think the author’s values influence their sense of who they are, where they belong, and the decisions they make?

5. What do you think could be changed in the environment of this story to create a more inclusive and accepting space for LaPointe and others?

### **Reading: “I’ve Been Called Worse”**

1. What is your “golden line” in CJ’s story? Each student in your group should share one or two sentences that resonate with them and explain why.
2. In his narrative, CJ recounts his elementary school experience. How does fear shape his choices and sense of belonging? How is his middle school experience different from elementary school? What factors might have contributed to this difference?
3. How does CJ initially respond when kids at his school call him “basic”? How does his thinking about being labeled “basic” change over time?
4. What matters most to CJ? In other words, what are his values? How do you know? How do you think CJ’s values influence his sense of who he is, where he belongs, and the decisions he makes?
5. What do you think could be changed in the environment of this story (for example, CJ’s elementary and middle schools) to create a more inclusive and accepting space for CJ and others?

### **Reading: “Living in Two Worlds”**

1. What is your “golden line” in Stella Wong’s story? Each student in your group should share one or two sentences that resonate with them and explain why.
2. When reflecting on her different middle school friend groups, Wong writes: “I struggled with my cultural identity where I was stuck between being too Asian and not Asian enough. Over time, I changed my lifestyle numerous times to try to fit in.”
  - a. Think back to earlier lessons in this unit. What is the difference between belonging and fitting in?
  - b. How does trying to fit in impact Wong’s sense of who she is and her sense of belonging? How do you know?
  - c. How does Wong resolve this tension between “being too Asian and not Asian enough”?

3. What matters most to Wong? In other words, what are her values? How do you know?
4. How do you think Wong's values influence her sense of who she is, where she belongs, and the decisions she makes?
5. What do you think could be changed in the environment of this story (for example, Wong's school and peer groups) to create a more inclusive and accepting space for Wong and others?

## Part 2: Teaching Group Questions

**Directions:** Start by having each student in your group answer the first question so you can learn about the young people in each other's personal narratives. Then discuss questions 2 and 3. Support your ideas with evidence from the personal narratives, other texts you have studied in this unit, and your own experiences.

1. Whose personal narrative did you read? What is one idea from your group's discussion that you want to share?
2. How do these stories help you answer the question: How do you navigate the tension between your desire to fit in and your need to express your own individual identity? Support your ideas with examples from the personal narratives. Then bring in evidence from other texts you have read and your own experiences.
3. What steps can we take to create a more inclusive and accepting class and school community?