

# Thumbprints

Mum left Sāmoa in 1952.

To'ono drove her to the harbour in a jeep abandoned by American marines.

I have a sepia photo of that day – everything's the colour of spilled coffee, though Mum had black hair and green eyes.

She was nineteen, so excited.

She wore a white Pālāgi frock, leis around her neck.

Her mother cried when the *Matua* tipped over the horizon.

Her father refused to wave goodbye – incarcerated for ten years in Aotearoa before he had a single grey hair.

The first time on Motuihe Island, the second on Matiu because his father was German.

Mum arrived in Auckland on a hazy autumn morning with a letter of introduction from the family priest, an empty stomach, wobbly legs.

At the police station, she gave her thumbprint and was issued with an identification booklet, to be carried at all times.

*There are strict rules about what you can and cannot do, the officer says. According to New Zealand law, you are an alien.*

*Serie Barford*



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by Serie Barford

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## Thumbprints

Mum left Sāmoa in 1952.  
To'ono drove her to the harbour in a jeep  
abandoned by American marines.

I have a sepia photo of that day –  
everything the colour of spilled coffee,  
though Mum had black hair and green eyes.

She was nineteen, so excited.  
She wore a white palagi frock, leis around her neck.  
Her mother cried when the *Matua* tipped over the horizon.

Her father refused to wave goodbye –  
incarcerated for ten years in Aotearoa  
before he had a single grey hair.

The first time on Motuihe Island,  
the second on Somes.  
His father, a German architect.

She arrived in Auckland on a hazy autumn morning  
with a letter of introduction from the family priest,  
an empty stomach, wobbly legs.

At the police station, she gave her thumbprint  
and was issued with an identification booklet,  
to be carried at all times.

*There are strict rules about what you can and cannot do, the officer says.  
According to New Zealand law, you are an alien.*

Serie Barford

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## SCHOOL JOURNAL LEVEL 3 MAY 2017

### Curriculum learning areas

English  
Health and Physical Education

### Reading year level

Year 6

### Keywords

change, difference, ethnic diversity,  
family, First World War, German ancestry,  
heritage, identity, immigration, individuality,  
internment, New Zealand history, poetry,  
race, relationships, respect, Sāmoa,  
Second World War, World War 1, World War 2