

A HOME

Kristi Franson

[Assignment: Mead's essay, "Home and Travel," might be seen as a definition of what home means to her. Write an essay about what the word "home" means to you. You might create your own definition or specifically take issue with Mead's view.]

(1) Margaret Mead defines a home as a place a person enjoys being no matter how long he or she is there. There is much truth in Mead's description, yet for me home has other associations and meanings as well. These meanings of home were sharpened for me for the first time when I went to West Georgia College. This experience of moving into a dorm was a new, exciting, and even an overwhelming adventure but more than anything else it led me to reflect on what home means to me. I came to realize that home is not merely a place where I like being or a place where there are other people I love being with. A home is not only a house with special rooms and windows, but rather it extends to the area of the town around the house. A home is a familiar place that has been known intimately and loved over an extended period of time. Above all, a home is a storehouse for memories.

(2) Familiarity is an important aspect of what makes a place a home. To be at home is to know a place well. For example, I enjoy knowing that if a friend calls and asks me to meet her somewhere I don't have to worry about getting lost. Getting lost is one of my worst fears and always causes me great stress. I detest having to stop and ask directions because it makes me feel stupid. Maps frustrate me because I do not judge distances well. Also, knowing my way around a town helps me if I am running late to work or to babysit because I know all the short cuts and back roads. I feel irresponsible when I am late. Therefore, the comfort of knowing my way around an area is not a minor detail to me when I define a home, specially since this sense of comfort translates into my functioning at my best and avoiding the stresses and tensions caused by unfamiliarity.

(3) A home to me means that the community in which I live is familiar to me and my family. For instance, in Milledgeville, Georgia, I can go into the A & P grocery store and do a week's shopping and give the cashier my mom's pre-signed check without the cashier asking for a driver's license, major credit card, birth certificate, and blood sample. My dad can call in a prescription to Lakeside Pharmacy and I can pick it up without any questions asked because the pharmacist knows my family. I can walk in to Stage One Hair Dressers and get a hair cut without any money. Beverly has cut my hair for seven years and knows my mom will come in later that day to pay for the cut. If something happens to my car, I can call R & M Service Station and get my car towed and repaired without any questions or cash because Allen knows my

parents will pay the bill. I know when my parents go out of town that our next-door neighbors, the Pineots, will be there should something happen. It is wonderful to go into the dry cleaners and not have to spell my last name seven times before the person at the counter figures out which clothes are mine.

(4) Finally, a home is where I can store all my memories. In my home, every inch reminds me of a special moment. For instance, I remember my dog, Sadie, giving birth to her first litter of puppies on the ugly golden couch in the living room. I remember my mom inviting all the neighborhood kids in to watch. Everytime I walk down my driveway, I remember roller skating down the biggest hill in the neighborhood and how showing off my roller skates cost me a broken arm. When I sit outside on the back deck, I giggle thinking about my first kiss; then I groan with disgust when I remember who it was that gave it to me. In my closet is a wooden doll house I keep to remind myself that I once believed in Santa Claus. I can relive the feelings of the one special Christmas morning when I ran downstairs to find my new, big oak doll house so magically delivered overnight by Santa Claus. And then I remember that I spent a whole week after Christmas trying to figure out how Santa Claus got that clunky house down the chimney. In the living room there is an iron mark branded into the carpet. I dropped a hot iron there two weeks after new carpet had been laid down. I remember my mother's laughter and my dad's anger when I finally got up the nerve to tell them about it. There are hundreds of little markers that make me have quick flashbacks from time to time. These are the markers of a life lived in a stable and enduring place. They provide comfort and security but they also always refresh me and revitalize my life by knitting my past with my present. A home is to cherish and keep memories, memories that give continuity and stability to my existence. I find these comforting and secure, but still refreshing because I know that no matter what I do or where I go, I will always have a stable place to come back to. A home is to cherish and keep memories.

(5) Certainly, home can mean different things to different people. For the wandering anthropologist, Margaret Mead, home could be wherever she was at the moment surrounded by people she loved. I feel the need to have stronger ties with my home. For me home has to be a familiar, enduring place, a place which allows me to feel a continual flow of memories.