

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

# Why there's no place like home for the holidays

By Frank T. McAndrew

2017

*There's no better place to spend the holidays than home. In this informational text, Frank T. McAndrew discusses the significance of home. As you read, take notes on the significance of home to different people.*

- [1] While Christmas playlists often include cheesy favorites like “Rockin’ Around the Christmas Tree” and “I Saw Mommy Kissing Santa Claus,” there are also a handful of wistful tracks that go a little bit deeper.

Listen closely to “I’ll Be Home for Christmas” or “White Christmas,” and you’ll hear a deep yearning for home and sorrow at having to spend the holidays somewhere else.



*"Untitled" by Wesley Tingey is licensed under CC0.*

Strip away the cursory<sup>1</sup> Christmas rituals — the TV specials, the lights, the gifts, the music — and what remains is home. It is the beating heart of the holiday, and its importance reflects our primal need to have a meaningful relationship with a setting — a place that transcends<sup>2</sup> the boundary between the self and the physical world.

## Can you love a place like a person?

Most of us can probably name at least one place we feel an emotional connection to. But you probably don't realize just how much a place can influence your sense of who you are, or how essential it is for your psychological well-being.

- [5] Psychologists even possess an entire vocabulary for the affectionate bonds between people and places: There's “topophilia,” “rootedness” and “attachment to place,” which are all used to describe the feelings of comfort and security that bind us to a place.

1. superficial

2. **Transcend (verb)** to go beyond the limits of something

Your fondness for a place — whether it's the house where you lived your whole life, or the fields and woods where you played as a child – can even mimic the affection you feel for other people.

Studies have shown that a forced relocation can elicit heartbreak and distress every bit as intense as the loss of a loved one. Another study found that if you feel a strong attachment to your town or city, you'll be more satisfied with your house and you'll also be less anxious about your future.

Our physical surroundings play an important role in creating meaning and organization in our lives; much of how we view our lives and what we have become depends on where we've lived, and the experiences we've had there.

So it's no surprise that architecture professor Kim Dovey, who has studied the concept of home and the experience of homelessness, confirmed that where we live is closely tied to our sense of who we are.

## **An anchor of order and comfort**

[10] At the same time, the concept of home can be slippery.

One of the first questions we ask when we meet someone new is "Where are you from?" But we seldom pause to consider how complicated that question is. Does it mean where you currently live? Where you were born? Where you grew up?

Environmental psychologists have long understood that the word "home" clearly connotes<sup>3</sup> more than just a house. It encompasses people, places, objects and memories.

So what or where, exactly, do people consider "home"?

A 2008 Pew study asked people to identify "the place in your heart you consider to be home." Twenty-six percent reported that home was where they were born or raised; only 22 percent said that it was where they currently lived. Eighteen percent identified home as the place that they had lived the longest, and 15 percent felt that it was where most of their extended family had come from.

[15] But if you look at different cultures across time, a common thread emerges.

No matter where they come from, people tend to think about home as a central place that represents order, a counterbalance to the chaos that exists elsewhere. This might explain why,

---

3. to imply or suggest

when asked to draw a picture of “where you live,” children and adolescents around the world invariably place their house in the center of the sheet of paper. In short, it’s what everything else revolves around.

Anthropologists Charles Hart and Arnold Pilling lived among the the Tiwi People of Bathurst Island off the coast of Northern Australia during the 1920s. They noted that the Tiwi thought their island was the only habitable place in the world; to them, everywhere else was the “land of the dead.”

The Zuni of the American Southwest, meanwhile, have long viewed the house as a living thing. It’s where they raise their kids and communicate with spirits, and there’s an annual ritual — called the *Shalako* — in which homes are blessed and consecrated<sup>4</sup> as part of the year-end winter solstice celebration.

The ceremony strengthens bonds to the community, to the family (including dead ancestors), and to the spirits and gods by dramatizing the connection each party has to the home.

- [20] During the holidays, we might not officially bless our home like the Zuni. But our holiday traditions probably sound familiar: eating with family, exchanging gifts, catching up with old friends and visiting old haunts.<sup>5</sup> These homecoming rituals affirm and renew a person’s place in the family and often are a key way to strengthen the family’s social fabric.

Home, therefore, is a predictable and secure place where you feel in control and properly oriented in space and time; it is a bridge between your past and your present, an enduring tether to your family and friends.

It is a place where, as the poet Robert Frost aptly wrote, “When you have to go there, they have to take you in.”

*["Why there's no place like home for the holidays"](#) by Frank T. McAndrew, Knox College, December 13, 2017. Copyright © The Conversation 2017, CC-BY-ND.*

*Unless otherwise noted, this content is licensed under the [CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license](#)*

- 
- 4. to make or declare something sacred
  - 5. a place frequented by a person

## Text-Dependent Questions

**Directions:** For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. PART A: Which statement expresses the central idea of the text?
  - A. Home isn't the place you grew up or spent the most time, it's the people who you feel the most emotionally close to.
  - B. Spending holidays at home is important to people, as home is the place that they feel emotionally connected to and where they are the most comfortable.
  - C. Holidays have become more superficial in recent years, focusing on presents and decorations rather than family, friends, and emotional stability.
  - D. While leaving home can be a difficult experience, it's important to go out on your own to find and establish your own home.
  
2. PART B: Which detail from the text best supports the answer to Part A?
  - A. "Strip away the cursory Christmas rituals — the TV specials, the lights, the gifts, the music — and what remains is home. It is the beating heart of the holiday, and its importance reflects our primal need to have a meaningful relationship with a setting" (Paragraph 3)
  - B. "Studies have shown that a forced relocation can elicit heartbreak and distress every bit as intense as the loss of a loved one." (Paragraph 7)
  - C. "Twenty-six percent reported that home was where they were born or raised; only 22 percent said that it was where they currently lived." (Paragraph 14)
  - D. "Home, therefore, is a predictable and secure place where you feel in control and properly oriented in space and time; it is a bridge between your past and your present, an enduring tether to your family and friends." (Paragraph 21)
  
3. What is the author's main purpose in the text?
  - A. to encourage people to spend their holidays at home, around their family
  - B. to explore the idea of home and why people spend the holidays there
  - C. to help readers understand the difference between a house and a home
  - D. to explore how being home affects a person's mental and physical health

4. What connection does the author draw between home and holidays?
- A. Holidays typically have traditions that strengthen the relationships people value at home.
  - B. Holidays celebrate family and friends, encouraging people to take the time to foster those relationships.
  - C. Holidays are a time of joy for most people, making them view their childhood homes through a more positive lens.
  - D. Holidays are spent with family and friends, making it so that, no matter where you are, you are home.
5. How does the author's discussion of the Tiwi and Zuni contribute to his discussion of the significance of home (Paragraphs 17-18)? Cite evidence from the text in your response.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Discussion Questions

***Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.***

1. In the text, the author discusses how where a person grows up affects the person they become. How big of an impact do you think where you grew up has had on your identity? Which aspects of your identity stem from where you grew up?
2. In the text, the author discusses how home can be different places for different people. Where do you consider home? Why? How do you feel when you come home?