

Vail School District  
7<sup>th</sup>Grade  
Writing Practice #2  
Argumentative

**DIRECTIONS:** Read the information and writing prompt below. Then use scratch paper for your prewriting/planning and your draft.

**PROMPT: Each of these texts explores different ways someone can define the concept of “home”. Persuade the audience of the most accurate definition of “home” and include evidence from the texts to support your ideas.**

Your essay should include:

- an introduction, body, and conclusion
- an explanation of your reasons with supporting details from the text
- content and selected details that are appropriate to audience

Remember to edit for spelling, grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.

**Homesick by Sheridan M.**

I have two residences: a house and a college dorm. In both these places I have a bed, a shower, and food. Every night when I go to sleep I don't have to worry that my things will be stolen or wonder where I will sleep the next night. I have a place to live – two of them in fact. Yet I still feel homeless at times.

Home isn't a physical structure like a house or an apartment, nor is it a region or country. Actually, home isn't a physical entity at all. After moving three times in a year and half, I've learned that home is more than a physical dwelling; it's a mental and emotional state. A state in which one feels safe and accepted, comforted and in control. We are at home when we're able to let our true identity show without fear of judgment.

Up until two months ago, I'd always had a home. In the past when I walked through the door of my house after school, my black lab would pin me against the wall and lovingly lick me until I managed to escape. My mom would shout “hey” over the noise echoing from my brother's Xbox as I grabbed an apple and sat down to tell her about my day.

I was always at home when I was among my family. However, with college, home has disappeared. Now I'm occasionally greeted with a quick hello from my roommate. Rather than try to have a conversation, I just throw my stuff down, put my iPod in, and take out my homework. There is no sense of comfort or belonging, just a feeling of tolerance as we count down the days 'til summer. I live here, but this is not my home. My family home has changed too. I lie on my bed, study in my room, but I'm still out of place.

Though I feel homeless, I'm fortunate to have a place to live. Many individuals around the world have to live in a park, behind a dumpster, or under a bridge. Though they may not have a house, they are not necessarily without a home. Sean Kidd and Josh Evan's survey, encompassing 208 "homeless" individuals from Toronto and New York City, examined the varying perceptions of home. These individuals, both young and old, believed that having a home differed from having a fixed residence. Instead many perceived home as "the environment where you can let your hair down and let all those defenses drop." Though all the individuals in this study were "houseless," not all were homeless. Some found safety, comfort, control, and a sense of belonging in the streets of Toronto and New York City.

Feelings of security, acceptance, comfort, and control aren't the only aspects of life that create a sense of home. "Cultural home," a term introduced in Hart Mechthild and Miriam Ben-Yoseph's article "Introduction: Shifting Meanings of Home," refers to the connotations of home across populations and conveys the idea of individuals feeling at home with respect to food, music, and cultural traditions. Individuals across the globe rely on their cultures to establish the actions with which they feel at home. Though the yearning to feel at home is a universal human trait, the attainment of the sense of home depends on feeling accepted, secure, and comforted as well as fulfilling cultural traditions, norms, and values.

Growing up, I always believed that being with family or walking into my house automatically meant I was home. I never imagined that the day would come when I'd feel homeless. I lived in four houses growing up and never felt without a home, so the thought of college being any different never occurred to me. Though I have a place to sleep, shower, and eat at college, I still feel out of place.

After settling in and discovering my longing for home, I thought perhaps not having my family and the support they constantly gave, or maybe the lack of personal space, was the cause of my homesickness. But when I return to my family's house, I don't feel at home there either. Rather, I drift between my dorm and my house, hoping to find the feeling of home somewhere. Eventually I will find the comfort and acceptance I seek and once more feel at home. Until then, I remain a drifter, searching for that one person, that one environment, where I'll be able to anchor myself and let my defenses drop.

M., Sheridan. "Homesick". Teen Ink Magazine. Emerson Media. Web. 17 July 2014.

### **The Definition of Home by Verlyn Klinkenborg**

When did "home" become embedded in human consciousness? Is our sense of home instinctive? Are we denning animals or nest builders, or are we, at root, nomadic? For much of the earliest history of our species, home may have been nothing more than a small fire and the light it cast on a few familiar faces, surrounded perhaps by the ancient city-mounds of termites. But whatever else home is—and however it entered our consciousness—it's a way of organizing space in our minds. Home is home, and everything else is not-home. That's the way the world is constructed.

Not that you can't feel "at home" in other places. But there's a big psychological difference between feeling at home and being home. Feeling at home on the Tiwi Islands or in Bangalore or Vancouver (if you are not native) is simply a way of saying

that the not-home-ness of those places has diminished since you first arrived. Some people, as they move through their lives, rediscover home again and again. Some people never find another after once leaving home. And, of course, some people never leave the one home they've always known. In America, we don't know quite what to say about those people.

Homesick children know how sharp the boundary between home and not-home can be because they suffer from the difference, as if it were a psychological thermocline. I know because I was one of them. I felt a deep kinship almost everywhere in the small Iowa town I grew up in. But spending the night away from home, at a sleepover with friends, made every street, every house seem alien. And yet there was no rejoicing when I got back home in the morning. Home was as usual. That was the point—home is a place so profoundly familiar you don't even have to notice it. It's everywhere else that takes noticing.

In humans, the idea of home almost completely displaces the idea of habitat. It's easy to grasp the fact that a vireo's nest is not the same as her habitat and that her habitat is her true home. The nest is a temporary annual site for breeding, useful only as long as there are young to raise. But we are such generalists—able to live in so many places—that “habitat,” when applied to humans, is nearly always a metaphor. To say, “My home is my habitat” is true and untrue at the same time.

Yet our psychological habitat is shaped by what you might call the magnetic property of home, the way it aligns everything around us. Perhaps you remember a moment, coming home from a trip, when the house you call home looked, for a moment, like just another house on a street full of houses. For a fraction of a second, you could see your home as a stranger might see it. But then the illusion faded and your house became home again. That, I think, is one of the most basic meanings of home—a place we can never see with a stranger's eyes for more than a moment.

And there's something more. When my father died, my brothers and sisters and I went back to his house, where he'd lived alone. It wasn't only his absence we felt. It was as though something had vanished from every object in the house. They had, in fact, become merely objects. The person whose heart and mind could bind them into a single thing—a home—had gone.

Klinkenborg, Verlyn. “The Definition of Home”. *Smithsonian Magazine*. 12 May 2012.

Print.

### **“Home Is Where the Heart Is”**

Home is where I was raised. Where I played, laughed, cried, and learned. It is where I grew. Where I became me—a strong, intelligent woman—confident in myself, in my future and in my past.

I believe that a home is more than four walls and a roof over head. Home is an environment. It is the feeling that greets me when I walk through the door. It is the people who wait for me to get home. It is my dog whose hind end shakes back and forth when she gets excited because she has practically no tail. My home extends out of the walls and windows of my actual house. It goes down the cracked pavement to my

grandparents' house. It twists and turns with the broken roads of my town. My home is my rock solid foundation, and I will take it with me when I leave.

I believe that home is where individuals become themselves, not primarily physically but mentally. It becomes a mold that forms who they are. Behind the pizza place where I work, there's a stream that runs into the river my town is built around. When it is a really busy night, I sneak down to the river for my precious 20-minute break, stepping carefully along the rocks to the edge of the river. There are cars and people on both sides of the stream, but the stream and I are invisible. Too busy to slow down, they pass me by and I am perfectly content in that moment. I feel at home.

Home for me is made of experiences—moments of my life that helped to change me and to teach me. For that reason, my home is also people and when home takes on a human form, it is called family. I believe that family is a relative term—nothing to do with blood, defined by relationships. When my grandmother died, her best friend, Nancy, became a family friend. She helped us get through the tough time and has become almost an adopted grandmother to my sister and me. I was three when she came into my life and now I would never think of saying that she is a family friend. She is family.

No matter where I go in the future, my foundation will always sit firmly in Maine, in this environment and with these people who have formed me as a person and taught me how to live. I know that I can always come home. After all, home is where the heart is.

“Home is Where the Heart Is.” *ThisIBelieve.org*. 10 June 2008. Web. 17 July 2014.



