



Homeless

Anna Quindlen¹

1 Her name was Ann, and we met in the Port Authority Bus Terminal several Januarys ago. I was doing a story on homeless people. She said I was wasting my time talking to her; she was just passing through, although she'd been passing through for more than two weeks. To prove to me that this was true, she rummaged through a tote bag and a manila envelope and finally unfolded a sheet of typing paper and brought out her photographs.²

2 They were not pictures of family, or friends, or even a dog or cat, its eyes brown-red in the flashbulb's light. They were pictures of a house. It was like a thousand houses in a hundred towns, not suburb, not city, but somewhere in between, with aluminum siding and a chain-link fence, a narrow driveway running up to a one-car garage and a patch of backyard.³ The house was yellow. I looked on the back for a date or a name, but neither was there. There was no need for discussion. I knew what she was trying to tell me, for it was something I had often felt. She was not adrift, alone, anonymous, although her bags and her raincoat with the grime shadowing its creases had made me believe she was. She had a house, or at least once upon a time had had one. Inside were curtains, a couch, a stove, potholders. You are where you live. She was somebody.⁴

3 I've never been very good at looking at the big picture, taking the global view, and I've always been a person with an overactive sense of place, the legacy of an Irish grandfather. So it is natural that the thing that seems most wrong with the world to me right now is that there are so many people with no homes. I'm not simply talking about shelter from the elements, or three square meals a day or a mailing address to which the welfare people can send the check — although I know that all these are important for survival.⁵ I'm talking about a home, about precisely those kinds of feelings that have wound up in cross-stitch and French knots on samplers over the years.⁶

4 Home is where the heart is. There's no place like it. I love my home with a ferocity totally out of proportion to its appearance or location. I love dumb things about: the hot-water heater, the plastic rack you drain dishes in, the roof over my head, which occasionally leaks. And yet it is precisely those dumb things that make it what it is — a place of certainty, stability, predictability, privacy, for me and for my family. It is where I live. What more can you say about a place than that? That is everything.

5 Yet it is something that we have been edging away from gradually during my lifetime and the lifetimes of my parents and grandparents. There was a time when where you lived often was where you worked and where you grew the food you ate and even where you were buried. When that era passed, where you lived at least was where your parents had lived and where you would live with your children when you became enfeebled. Then, suddenly where you lived was where you lived for three years, until you could move on to something else and something else again.

6 And so we have come to something else again, to children who do not understand what it means to go to their rooms because they have never had a room, to men and women whose fantasy is a wall they can paint a color of their own choosing, to old people reduced to sitting on molded plastic chairs, their skin blue-white in the lights of a bus station, who pull pictures of houses out of their bags.⁷ Homes have stopped being homes. Now they are real estate.

7 People find it curious that those without homes would rather sleep sitting up on benches or huddled in doorways than go to shelters. Certainly some prefer to do so because they are emotionally ill, because they have been locked in before and they are damned if they will be locked in again. Others are afraid of the violence and trouble they may find there. But some seem to want something that is not available in shelters, and they will not compromise, not for a cot, or oatmeal, or a shower with special soap that kills the bugs. “One room,” a woman with a baby who was sleeping on her sister’s floor, once told me, “painted blue.” That was the *crux* of it; not size or location, but pride of ownership. Painted blue.⁸

8 This is a difficult problem, and some wise and compassionate people are working hard at it. But in the main I think we work around it⁹, just as we walk around it when it is lying on the sidewalk or sitting in the bus terminal — the problem, that is. It has been customary to take people’s pain and lessen our own participation in it by turning it into an issue, not a collection of human beings. We turn an adjective into a noun: the poor, not poor people; the homeless, not Ann or the man who lives in the box or the woman who sleeps on the subway grate.

9 Sometimes I think we would be better off if we forgot about the broad strokes and concentrated on the details. Here is a woman without a bureau. There is a man with no mirror, no wall to hang it on. They are not the homeless. They are people who have no homes. No drawer that holds the spoons. No window to look out upon the world. My God. That is everything.

(961 words)



Words and Expressions

aluminum /ə'ljʊ:mɪnəm/ *n.* the chemical element of atomic number 13, a light silvery-grey metal

anonymous /ə'nɒnɪməs/ *a.* (of a person) not identified by name; of unknown name

bureau /'bjʊərəʊ/ *n.* a chest of drawers, esp. a dresser for holding clothes

compassionate /kəm'pæʃənət/ *a.* feeling or showing sympathy and concern for others

cot /kɒt/ *n.* a narrow bed, esp. one made of canvas on a collapsible frame

crease /kri:s/ *n.* a line made by pressing, folding, or wrinkling

cross-stitch /'krɒsstɪtʃ/ *n.* an embroidery made by stitches forming a cross

crux /kɹʌks/ *n.* the basic, central, or critical point

or feature

enfeeble /m'fi:bl/ *v.* make weak and feeble

ferocity /fə'rɒsəti/ *n.* intensity; fierceness

flashbulb /'flæʃbʌlb/ *n.* a bulb for a flashgun, of a type that is used only once

grime /gram/ *n.* black dirt or soot, esp. such dirt clinging to or ingrained in a surface

huddle /'hʌdl/ *v.* draw or curl one's limbs close to one's body

oatmeal /'əʊtmil/ *n.* meal made from ground oats, used in porridge, oatcakes, or other food

sampler /'sɑ:mplə/ *n.* a decorative piece of cloth embroidered with various designs or mottoes in a variety of stitches, serving as an example of skill at needlework

French knot an ornamental stitch made by looping the thread three or four times around the needle before putting it into the fabric

tote bag a large bag used for carrying a number of items

Notes

1. About the author and the text: Anna Marie Quindlen (1952–) is an American author, journalist and opinion columnist, whose *New York Times* column, "Public and Private," won the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary in 1992. She began her journalism career in 1974 as a reporter with *The New York Post*. Between 1977 and 1994 she held several posts at *The New York Times*. She left journalism in 1995 to become a full-time novelist. For some years, she wrote a bi-weekly column for *Newsweek* (she announced her retirement in the 18 May 2009 issue of the magazine) and is known as a critic of what she perceives to be the fast-paced and increasingly materialistic nature of modern American life. "Homeless" was first published in 1998.
2. ... finally unfolded a sheet of typing paper and brought out her photographs. (Paragraph 1): Ann was doing this just to show that she had a home.
3. It was like a thousand houses in a hundred towns, not suburb, not city, but somewhere in between, with aluminum siding and a chain-link fence, a narrow driveway running up to a one-car garage and a patch of backyard. (Paragraph 2): With the description of a very ordinary house which can be found almost anywhere in the U.S., the author wants to indicate Ann's real situation: what she had really got was a house, not a home in the real sense of the word.

4. You are where you live. She was somebody. (Paragraph 2): One belongs to the place where he lives. The place where one lives gives him his identity. So Ann claims her own identity, given the house she had and everything inside it.
5. I'm not simply talking about shelter from the elements, or three square meals a day or a mailing address to which the welfare people can send the check — although I know that all these are important for survival. (Paragraph 3): A home goes beyond its physical construction, the food one has, and the mailing address. A home means more than these, although they are the essentials for life.
6. ... feelings that have wound up in cross-stitch and French knots on samplers over the years. (Paragraph 3): ... feelings for one's home that are embodied in cross-stitch and French knots on samplers over the years. Cross-stitch and French knots are both common forms of embroidery, especially in the West. Embroidering samplers was a traditional domestic pastime.
7. ... old people reduced to sitting on molded plastic chairs, their skin blue-white in the lights of a bus station, who pull pictures of houses out of their bags. (Paragraph 6): ... old people who have no home but refuse to stay in shelters would sit on plastic chairs at bus stations. They still keep pictures of the houses they once owned, which they think can prove that they at least once had a home.
8. Painted blue. (Paragraph 7): This elliptical sentence emphatically repeats what the woman longs to have — one room painted blue, a color of her own choice.
9. But in the main I think we work around it ... (Paragraph 8): But on the whole I think we have not addressed the issue honestly and directly ...

Text comprehension

I Decide which of the following best states the text's underlying purpose. _____

- A. To describe the homeless and investigate their conditions.
- B. To prove that there are people without homes.
- C. To suggest a desirable approach to homelessness.

II Answer the following questions.

1. Why did Ann produce the pictures? How did the author know that she had no home at all?

2. What is a home according to the author?

3. What has changed, or been changing, in the U.S. as regards homes?

4. Try to find out the meaning of "real estate," and tell how a home is different from real estate.

5. What do you think Quindlen wants the reader to do or to believe when she says, "It has been customary to take people's pain and lessen our own participation in it by turning it into an issue, not a collection of human beings"?

III Explain the following sentences in your own words.

1. She said I was wasting my time talking to her; she was just passing through, although she'd been passing through for more than two weeks. (Paragraph 1)

2. I love my home with a ferocity totally out of proportion to its appearance or location. (Paragraph 4)

3. But some seem to want something that is not available in shelters, and they will not compromise, not for a cot, or oatmeal, or a shower with special soap that kills

the bugs. (Paragraph 7)

Structural analysis of the text

The purpose of this article is to introduce a new definition of the word “home,” therefore enabling people to see the long-ignored side of the common social problem of “homelessness.” The author starts with a specific example and then naturally moves on to the discussion of the topic. In the second part, she gives a broadened definition of home, reminding the reader of its emotional aspects and spiritual functions. Then she points out the current problems concerning home. In the third part, the ending of the text, she does not offer a solution to the problem, but suggests that people regard the problem from a new perspective. All three parts are well-organized and serve the author’s purpose very effectively. Identify the paragraphs that fall into each part.

Rhetorical features of the text

In this article, a profound meditation is presented in natural and simple words. One of the most conspicuous features of this article is some kind of loose structure, in which a general statement is followed by some specific details, which serve as a minor adjustment of the statement so as to make it more exact, or as supporting evidence, or as a further explanation. It leaves an impression of a crystalline stream meandering in a beautiful motion. The following three instances are among the typical. 1) “She had a house, or at least once upon a time had had one.” (Paragraph 2) Here the phrase “once upon a time” indicates the fact that most probably in the remote past, she had a house. 2) “And yet it is precisely those dumb things that make what it is — a place of certainty, stability, predictability, privacy, for me and for my family.” (Paragraph 4) In this sentence, the part after the dash is intended to signify the metaphysical values of a home. 3) “Then, suddenly where you lived was where you lived for three years, until you could move on to something else and something else again.” (Paragraph 5) Here “something else again” is a repetition of “something else” that precedes it, with only the addition of the word “again,” which looks simple, but conveys a fundamental message, a problem that plagues modern society: people suffer identity crisis one way or another, for they are more or less homeless and rootless, with the loss of their cultural heritage and the lack of a permanent physical shelter. Would you please find another two similar instances from the text?

Words and expressions focused on in the exercises below

pass through	rummage	unfold	adrift	anonymous	shelter
wind up	ferocity	out of proportion	predictability	edge away	enfeeble
fantasy	reduced to	crux	customary	drain	

Vocabulary

I Explain the underlined part(s) in each sentence in your own words.

1. She was somebody.
_____ appearance or location.
2. I'm not simply talking about shelter from the elements, or three square meals a day or a mailing address to which the welfare people can send the check — although I know that all these are important for survival.

3. I love my home with a ferocity totally out of proportion to its

4. But in the main I think we work around it, just as we walk around it when it is lying on the sidewalk or sitting in the bus terminal — the problem, that is.

5. Sometimes I think we would be better off if we forgot about the broad strokes and concentrated on the details.

II Fill in the blank in each sentence with a word taken from the box in its appropriate form. Note that two are extra.

adrift	unfold	anonymous	bureau	crux
customary	drain	fantasy	enfeeble	rummage

1. The Senator stressed that the _____ of the matter was economic policy.
2. For reasons of personal safety, the informant wishes to remain _____.
3. He _____ through his brain for proper words to lodge his complaints.
4. Internal conflicts are _____ the administration of the company.
5. The lawyer _____ the facts in court slowly and steadily.
6. The statesman dismissed the idea as a wild _____.
7. Oliver has the growing sense that he is _____ and isolated.
8. I had never seen my father so shaken out of his _____ calm.

III Fill in the blanks with the appropriate forms of the given words.

1. This American author has chosen to live in relative _____ on a Pacific island. (anonymous)
2. The stillness of the night was broken by the _____ barking of a dog. (ferocity)
3. New infectious diseases have _____ appeared. (predictability)
4. I don't think we can afford the cost of repairing the _____ roof. (leak)
5. A _____ of sugar helps the medicine go down. (spoon)
6. It was _____ unfair that the villagers should suffer so much. (damn)
7. He was convicted of corruption, and would be _____ from office for seven years. (qualify)
8. This train will _____ at the next stop — passengers who wish to continue should change trains. (terminal)

IV Fill in the blank(s) in each sentence with an appropriate phrasal verb or collocation taken from the text.

1. The leader has been praised for _____ his party _____ from extremist right-wing policies.
2. It's not that you're so asocial, but a man who likes people doesn't _____ in the Antarctic.
3. It's not ideal, but we will find a way to _____ your absence next week.
4. Please go ahead. I am not in the line — I am just _____.
5. It is difficult to understand how lava could have been _____ dust.
6. The novel was so intriguing that I _____ all night reading it.
7. Shawn was a real estate agent for five years before deciding to _____ fresh challenges.
8. The front door slammed behind our daughter, and she was _____ for about an hour.

V Give a synonym or an antonym of the word underlined in each sentence in the sense it is used.

1. She was not adrift, alone, anonymous, although her bags and her raincoat with the grime shadowing its creases had made me believe she was.
Synonym: _____
2. I've never been very good at looking at the big picture, taking the global view, and I've always been a person with an overactive sense of place, the legacy of an Irish grandfather.

- Antonym: _____
3. I love my home with a ferocity totally out of proportion to its appearance or location.
Synonym: _____
4. And yet it is precisely those dumb things that make it what it is — a place of certainty, stability, predictability, privacy, for me and for my family.
Synonym: _____
5. People find it curious that those without homes would rather sleep sitting up on benches or huddled in doorways than go to shelters.
Synonym: _____
6. But some seem to want something that is not available in shelters, and they will not compromise, not for a cot, or oatmeal, or a shower with special soap that kills the bugs.
Antonym: _____
7. This is a difficult problem, and some wise and compassionate people are working hard at it.
Antonym: _____
8. Sometimes I think we would be better off if we forgot about the broad strokes and concentrated on the details.
Synonym: _____

VI Explain the underlined phrasal verbs in your own words.

1. They're the kind of parents who harp on the terrible expenses of everything.

2. I trust him to do the right thing and will be quite happy to fall in with anything he might suggest.

3. They were the sort of people who twenty-five years ago would have been deferred to because they were gents.

4. The harsh realities of the bad old days were never alluded to.

5. However cool and contained you think you're being, there is a host of little telltale gestures and expressions that give you away.

6. Increasingly, smoking is frowned on in public buildings.

7. Scientists have reason to think that a man can put up with far more radiation than 0.1 rem without being damaged.

8. The newly industrialized nations are gearing themselves up for entry into international markets.

Grammar

Focus of the unit

If-clauses

I Recast the sentences below by using *if*.

- Lie down for a few minutes, and you'll feel much better.

- Drive more carefully, or you'll cause an accident.

- Had the government acted earlier, the present crisis could have been avoided.

- Should the flight be delayed, passengers will be informed immediately.

- The money had better arrive before Thursday, otherwise there'll be trouble.

- Had I known the address, I would have called into the office.

- Were I worried, I would not be playing golf at this moment.

- Should he be found guilty, he will be deprived of the guardianship of his children.

II Put the verbs in brackets into correct forms.

- Sometimes I think we _____ (be) better off if we forgot about the broad strokes and concentrated on the details.
- We came in last just because we got lost. If we _____ (not get) lost, we _____ (come) in somewhere in the middle. We certainly _____ (not be) last.
- I expect you'll see Jack at the lecture tonight. If you _____ (do), _____ (you, please remind) him about tomorrow's meeting?
- Let's speed up the lesson. If we _____ (spend) too long on grammar, we _____ (not have) enough time for oral activities.

5. But he says that if he _____
(have) his life again, he _____
(make) the same choice.
6. If the pain _____ (return),
you'd better take another pill.

III Correct the errors, where found, in the following sentences.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>1. So great the success of the Exhibition has been that all records have been broken.
_____</p> <p>2. It is love that makes the world going round.
_____</p> <p>3. The meeting presided by the vice president was a great success.
_____</p> <p>4. Most people believe that marriage and the family life are the basis of society.
_____</p> <p>5. If you are living here since 1999, it is time you look for somewhere nicer to live.
_____</p> | <p>6. The funny-looking girl was glanced by all the passers-by.
_____</p> <p>7. If the police were to catch him, he will spend at least five years in prison.
_____</p> <p>8. The cake was excellent, as was the coffee.
_____</p> <p>9. Well, I suggested hitch-hike home, but Jack wouldn't hear of it.
_____</p> <p>10. The painting has been reported being missing.
_____</p> |
|---|--|

IV Make sentences of your own after the sentences given below, keeping the italicized parts in your sentences.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>1. <i>There was no need for</i> discussion. I knew what she was trying to tell me.
Your sentences:
_____</p> | <p>2. <i>Sometimes I think we would be better-off if</i> we forgot about the broad strokes and concentrated on the details.
Your sentences:
_____</p> |
|---|---|

Translation

I Translate the following sentences into Chinese.

1. I'm not simply talking about shelter from the elements, or three square meals a day or a mailing address to which the welfare people can send the check — although I know that all these are important for survival.

2. There was a time when where you lived often was where you worked and where you grew the food you ate and even where you were buried.

3. People find it curious that those without homes would rather sleep sitting up on benches or huddled in doorways than go to shelters.

4. But some seem to want something that is not available in shelters, and they will not compromise, not for a cot, or oatmeal, or a shower with special soap that kills the bugs.

II Translate the following sentences into English, using the words and phrases given in brackets.

1. 她翻了五个抽屉之后才找到结婚戒指。(rummage)

2. 我怎么觉得他正逐渐偏离他原来颇为激进的立场。(edge away)

3. 他们新成立的公司运作不太顺利，问题的关键在于缺乏资金和业内知识。(crux)

4. 十多年来，每当遇到新的情况，我习惯于三思而后行。(customary)

5. 他感到纳闷：为什么捐赠者一直隐姓埋名。(anonymous)

6. 盎格鲁-撒克逊(Anglo-Saxon)民族的伟大史诗《贝奥武夫》(*Beowulf*)讲述的是远古时期人们战天斗地的英雄业绩。(the elements)

7. 他自以为会成为第二个比尔·盖茨，在我看来这只是个幻想而已。(fantasy)

8. 他什么事都做得很好，因为他十分重视细节，不粗枝大叶。(the broad strokes)

III Translate the following passage into Chinese.

Though different people may define “home” differently, most people agree that home is a place of comfort and peace. However, nowadays people tend to give priority to a house instead of a home, for ownership of physical possessions is indicative of social position. Only when one has certain social position can one win social esteem. So a spacious house with posh furnishings is what many people dream of.

I believe that home is important, because it is a place where we have shelter from the elements and three square meals a day, and more importantly, it is a place of certainty and privacy. Goethe says, “He is happiest, be he king or peasant, who finds peace in his home.” I miss those days when the home was where one lived from the cradle to the grave, so one could have so many emotional attachments to his home. Nevertheless, one may have a feeling of nostalgia, but one should not live in the past. Instead, we ought to face the realities of a society where one may live a life filled with a broad rainbow of experiences. What is important is that we should not ignore the emotional and spiritual side of whatever we may strive for.

Exercises for integrated skills



I Dictation

II

Cloze Decide which of the words given in the box below would best complete the passage if inserted in the corresponding blanks. In the box there are more words than needed. The words you choose can be used ONCE ONLY.

A. without	B. unaffordable	C. earners	D. flexibility	E. reasoning
F. temporary	G. holidays	H. trust	I. regardless	J. well-being
K. consistent	L. emotionally	M. ladder	N. reinforce	O. sense

There is a reigning American mythology that blunts any concern: that holding a low-wage job is a temporary situation, and that mobility and education will solve whatever problem exists.

The evidence, however, contradicts this myth. Most low-wage workers will never move up the 1. _____ into the middle class. The U.S. economy provides less mobility for low-wage 2. _____, according to an Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development study, than many economically advanced countries.

Inadequate wages are only part of the problem. Most of these workers lack basic job benefits. For low-wage parents with children under 6, one-third do not get paid vacations. And most low-wage jobs fail to provide sick pay or disability pay. These jobs leave little 3. _____ to care for a sick child or deal with an emergency at school, let alone the normal appointments and needs of everyday life. Quality childcare is 4. _____ for most.

Low-wage workplaces are often physically dangerous and 5. _____ degrading. High injury rates are common. Constant surveillance, time clocks, drug testing and rigid rules 6. _____ the workers' pervasive sense that employers do not 7. _____ them. Fear is the chief motivator: Being five minutes late can mean losing a job. A few minutes too long in the bathroom can bring punishment.

In the past, we have established standards and rights to ensure that older Americans would not be impoverished or go 8. _____ healthcare, to prevent young children from working and to ensure equal opportunity in employment 9. _____ of race, religion, national origin, sex or age. Now we must set standards to protect the 10. _____ of all working families and the integrity of the nation.

Oral activity

Homelessness is generally associated with poverty, i.e. some people cannot afford a home. But the fact is that even in some affluent societies, homelessness is still an observable phenomenon. Even more intriguing is that while most homeless people are reduced to homelessness by circumstances, some seem to have chosen to become homeless. Reasons may vary. For instance, a child may feel himself neglected or forgotten in his family when compared with his siblings; a teenager may wish to enjoy uninhibited freedom; and an adult may walk out due to some humiliating failure in love, business, career, etc. In a group of four or five, brainstorm the possible reasons, both social and psychological, why some people are homeless. Suggest some possible solutions. See if you can reach a consensus, then share your ideas with the class.

Writing

Read carefully the following excerpt and then write your response in NO LESS THAN 200 WORDS, in which you should:

- 1) summarize the main message of the excerpt, and then*
- 2) make some comments on the situation discussed in the excerpt.*

Pepper is a 4ft tall approximation of a human being now manufactured and marketed in Japan. He can tell interactive stories, approximate the basics of conversation, and perform everyday gestures while recognising the principal human emotions and adapting his behavior to the mood of his interlocutor. At a nursing home in Tokyo, Pepper is used in the care and entertainment of residents. A quarter of Japan's population is now aged 65 or over. The government predicts a shortage of 380,000 care-workers by 2025. Many other countries are faced with the same situation. In the UK, by 2030 we will need up to 700,000 more care-working roles than we have at the moment.

The idea of robo-care surely threatens some of the most basic principles at the heart of how we look after each other: empathy, altruism, the idea that there is an obligation on younger people to reciprocate the care once given to them by their parents' and grandparents' generations.

As robots manage to convincingly perform such roles as companions to the elderly, home health aides, babysitters, special-needs aides, there arises a fundamental danger: as machines can so closely replicate human thinking and behavior, thought, consciousness and even emotion will be reduced to machine-like processes.