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Grade 8

What Makes a House a Home?

The warm scents of cinnamon, nutmeg, and ginger lace the kitchen air. My black lab Luna’s collar clanks against her bowl as she devours her kibble. These are a few of the things that make my house my home. A house is not a home because of the sturdy roof above your head, or the walls that shelter you from the bitter cold, but because of the lives that are lived there, the traditions that are created, and the history of a house that is woven together over time.

A home can come in many different shapes and sizes: perhaps it is a carefully woven nest with fluffy downy feathers tucked into its knots, or a warm and cozy burrow deep underground, or a damp and hollowed out log cloaked in moss and lichen. Large or small, beneath the earth or high up in the tree canopy, what defines a home is the lives that are lived inside it. Whether it is a mother robin feeding worms to her chicks, or a bear snuggling in a den with her cubs, the love that a family shares within a house makes it a warm, safe home.

Every adventure within a house is a memory, and memories, when they repeat, become traditions. In my home, I will always remember baking Christmas cookies and inhaling the sweet smell of gingerbread that fills the kitchen. Each fall, I look forward to bundling up in our backyard for a firepit and football. As I glance across my bookshelf filled with yellowed and dogeared books, I think about my childhood eras in terms of the books that I read in my bedroom. Shared memories and traditions with loved ones are what connect people to their houses.

A home can be a vacant space until you hear the stories it has to tell. The Mather Homestead has an incredible history. Deacon Joseph Mather constructed the Mather Homestead in 1778, and when the British came to their house during the American Revolution, the Mathers hid their precious items. The British discovered the valuables in the well, but did not discover the silver in the chest dresser. Hearing about historical events at the place where they occurred allows you to experience those events as they actually happened, to hear the scuffling as the Mathers hid their valuables and the clinking as the silver dropped into the well.

Lives, traditions, and history turn a house into a home. It does not matter what a house is made of, or where it is-what makes it a home is the love and memories that people share within it. A true home is where your heart lives, and where you can find comfort and strength in the darkest times. Each creaking stair, each scratch on the wall, each stain on the rug holds a thousand words. A home does not need to be perfect- the mistakes that you make and the lessons that you learn will become a part of who you are.