

# S A M P L E

## Questioning Strategy

1. List times in your life when you experienced significant change:

- going from college to graduate school
- moving from graduate school to the professional world
- getting engaged
- my sister's birth—going from being an only child for six years to suddenly not being the only kid around
- when my parents sold the house I grew up in

2. Select a subject or two from that list

- when my parents sold the house I grew up in

3. Getting in touch with dissonance

My Experiences (what kinds of things have happened to me or others concerning this subject?)	My Values (what's important to me regarding the subject I've chosen?)	Social/Cultural Institutions informing (or perhaps opposing) my values	Dissonance (what things don't add up here? What kinds of puzzlements does this chart reveal?)
<p>My parents decided rather quickly to sell the house, after about 20 years looking for houses like it was a hobby.</p> <p>This was the house I grew up in, so it was filled with almost every childhood memory I had.</p> <p>It was difficult to see the house empty.</p> <p>We went from a modest split level house on a tree-lined street to a much bigger townhouse in a subdivision facing a golf course. (And no one in my family golfs!)</p> <p>Our house was sold to a developer who is going to knock it down and build an obnoxious house that's way to big compared to the rest of the homes in the neighborhood.</p>	<p>My family is super important to me.</p> <p>A sense of place is important—I grow very attached to the places I live because of the experiences I had there, so this kind of change is difficult for me.</p> <p>Actually, any kind of change is difficult for me.</p>	<p>I always thought my parents would live on Thornwood Drive forever. And I always thought I would be able to bring my children back to the house that I grew up in.</p> <p>The community is changing and my neighborhood is moving from a small, cozy neighborhood to one that is filled with prefab houses that are ostentatious and ugly.</p>	<p>I was concerned that my family would change because we lived in a different house.</p> <p>I couldn't figure out why I was so sad about moving when it seemed like nearly everyone I knew lived in a house where they didn't grow up in. It seemed like it shouldn't be such a big deal.</p> <p>How will my children know what my life was like as a child if they can't see the house where we grew up?</p>

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4. Analyze your dissonance in a few sentences. What kind of puzzlements are at issue in this subject for you? What do you wish to know more about or understand better/differently?

I want to know why I was so upset about moving, and why I thought my family would change because of it. I felt like I should just be able to take it with a grain of salt, but it felt like I was losing a member of my family. Why is *place* so important to me? What was it about Thornwood Drive that was special, and how can we create something special in a space that seems so foreign.

5. Locate your subject in a writing context/rhetorical situation. What issues/events/people affect this issue, and how you write about it (see the eBook for more about this; we'll also talk about it a great deal in class)?

My family is a huge part of this issue, as is my neighbors in the area and my fiancé, who only got to be in the house once before we moved.

6. Identifying Possibilities: Write a few sentences exploring what you might be able to do with this subject; the writing you do here will help guide you to point 7.

I think I want to write about the importance of place, and how moving from Thornwood Drive really changed the way I think about place. How has this experience changed my assumptions about my family, our memories, and the future?

7. Identifying Questions for Inquiry and Investigation. Based on the work in this strategy, write several questions under the following categories (when appropriate) that you are considering investigating for this project.

A. Questions that could lead to a new understanding:

- What is the significance of place in my life?
- How has this experience changed my assumptions about my family, our memories, and the future?

B. Questions that could lead to a course of action:

- What can I do in the future to change my assumptions? How can I understand this situation better?

C. Questions that could lead to a solution to a problem:

- Are there ways to build memories of family in a place that doesn't feel like home?

8. The Question I have chosen for inquiry (this will guide the rest of your work for this project; you may want to wait until after workshop time to decide this):

- What is the significance of place in my life?
- How has this experience changed my assumptions about my family, our memories, and the future?

## Three Perspectives Strategy

Guiding Question:

- What is the significance of place in my life?
- How has the experience of moving changed my assumptions about my family, our memories, and the future?

### I. Describe and Distinguish

1. What's distinctive to you about your subject? What will make this stand out for those in your writing context? How is it *unlike* other subjects?

I think it's important to show the difference between the place we lived and the place I live now. Before we lived in a homey, modest neighborhood where all the neighbors knew each other and it was beautiful to drive down the tree-lined street. It was hard when we had to cut down a tree in the front yard—that's how important the land was to us.

Now we live in a duplex condo that's very prefab. All the homes look the same; Karl says it would be impossible to drive home if you'd had a little too much to drink because it would be impossible to find which house is yours. Now we live on a golf course, and although it's very green, all the trees are little vertical twigs in the ground. Also, the house is really big and open—much different than the house we lived in before. It's really weird to see the furniture we've always had in a different place. Last Christmas was especially weird because we had never had a Christmas in this place and all of the holiday traditions felt different.

I think my subject is different because a lot of people I know moved a lot in their childhood, so it never was a really big deal for them. It just seemed like it was part of life if your dad got transferred and you moved to another part in the country. But for me, it was almost traumatic.

2. How would you describe your subject to someone in that context unfamiliar with it?

I think the best way to describe my experience moving is like the death of someone in your family. I know it sounds dramatic, but it felt like all of the memories of the house would be gone once it got torn down. I knew, rationally, that the memories are in the people, not the place. But emotionally, it felt like a death.

3. What physical features characterize your subject (sights, sounds, etc., emotions, attitudes)? Try using descriptive words to explain your subject and your emotions when you think about it, deal with it, etc.

- A sense of emptiness when I visit home now. It doesn't feel like home; it just feels like where my parents live. (I'll probably have to explain this more, I guess.)
- Our house on Thornwood Drive had a really distinctive smell that I always recognized when I came home. It mostly smelled like brewed Starbucks coffee, but it smelled different in my house. The house we live in now smells like new construction and new carpet, not coffee or anything else comforting.
- The door at our old house made a really distinct noise that you could hear throughout the house. We always knew when someone was coming home, and my parents always knew if I came in late. Now the house has a really quiet door. I know it sounds strange—it's just a really vivid memory in my mind.

4. What bearing do the physical features have on your question? Do the features influence the way you think or talk about your subject?

My memories are always very sensory. Certain smells always remind me of a place or time. For example, Lauren perfume always reminds me of when I was little and my mom and dad were going on a date. I would smell the perfume and hear my mom's heels on the kitchen floor, and I got super excited because I knew my favorite babysitter, Kelly, was coming over. The smell of paper mills always makes me think of college. Suave hairspray reminds me of when I was in musicals in high school and my hair was plastered in unusual hairdos.

Also, trees are important to me. It probably sounds weird, but it's true. I grew up climbing, swinging in, and falling out of trees, so I'm really used to them being around. I'm also used to the sounds of our old house. The door, for one, but

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especially the outside noises. Our neighbor Judy had a door to her garage that she always slammed in the morning that always woke us up. We had horrible crows in our backyard that woke us up too, if Judy's door hadn't already done it, but we also heard beautiful mourning doves. I remember trying to fall asleep at night listening to crickets and cicadas. The smell of freshly mowed grass. Taking a nap in the afternoon and having the sun stream on me and warming me.

5. What sort of day-to-day activities do you associate with this subject?

Basically, just the everyday activities of living in a house with a sister and my parents. Dinners at the kitchen table, watching the kids play in the street; arguments with my sister in the family room about what game we would play; big family discussions on the white couches in the living room about important stuff--usually problems or disagreements--going on with our family; falling asleep on the couch the Cubs game with my dad.

6. What is your attitude toward the values related to this subject, and specifically, the values related to the dissonance you identified? Acceptance? Challenge? Rejection? Indifference? Why?

I was really unhappy with my parents' decision, in part because it seemed like too big of a change in light of the fact that they had both just retired a month earlier. They just kind of sprung it on us, and it seemed like they didn't really think about how it would affect me and my sister, even if we didn't live at home anymore.

7. When you think of your subject, what recurring images come to mind? What feelings are aroused? Do others in your context share these emotions?

Just images of family...a lot of the stuff I talked about in 4 and 5.

## II. Trace Moves and Changes

1. How did your experience with the subject begin?

When my parents first told me we were moving, I was really surprised. They always talked about moving and looked at houses, but I never expected it would really happen. Then when they told me they sold it to a developer, I was angry; one because they said they wouldn't do that, but two because I hated the ideal that the house I grew up in would be torn down.

2. How has your subject changed?

I've gotten more used to the new house, and I don't feel so bad about moving. It's still hard for me to drive down Thornwood Drive and see weird curtains in the windows and unfamiliar cars in the driveway. It probably helps because the house hasn't been torn down yet, so it don't feel as bad about it. It helps, too, that we have had over a year in the new house, because there have been a lot of memories there, too. I still wake up sometimes, though, and think I'm in the old house. Or when I think about going home, I still think about going home to Thornwood Drive rather than the new house.

3. How do these changes relate to the question you are investigating?

I guess I'm seeing a connection between the ideas of family, memories, and place. For me, they're all interconnected, and it's just a matter of adjusting to a new place and building new memories there.

4. How have you, your attitude, or feelings changed? What about those in your context?

I've been able to accept it over time, but it still feels weird to drive home to a different house.

5. What larger cultural changes have influenced your subject? (e.g., the changing roles of women, the end of the Cold War, the introduction of DVD players or the Internet)

Um...I'm not sure if there's any major cultural changes that have influenced the subject. I guess that the fact that younger families are more transient--my grandparents still live in the house that my mom grew up in.

### III. Map Networks and Relationships

#### A. Group your subject:

1. In what groups can you place your subject? For those concerned with your subject, what other issues are important?

People who might be interested in this might also be interested in how families have changed through the generations, how families adapt to change, or some of the economic factors that play a role in housing for families.

2. What *ruptures* set your subject apart from other groups?

A lot of people move around a lot, and so my attachment to my childhood home isn't that big of a deal for them. Others, who might have bad memories of their childhood might not be able to related to my nostalgia for home.

#### B. Create an analogy or metaphor for your subject.

1. To what object, animal, place, or event would you compare it? Why?

Maybe a bird leaving its nest. It's just this intangible feeling, it's hard to think of something physical to describe it to.

2. How would your analogy strike those in your writing context?

Most people have left home and found it strange, so in some ways, they might be bored by my subject. I'll need to come up with a better analogy to make my experience stand out in some way.

#### D. Examine cultural narratives. Think about the people to whom your subject matters. What are they like? What do they believe? What are their attitudes to your subject?

1. How is your subject characterized in your writing context?

2. What cultural narratives govern your subject?

It's part of life to move from home. But at the same time, tv shows and movies often focus on how important family is, or the home they live in. What would the Bradys be without their retro split-level house? What would the Jetsons be without all their futuristic gizmos? For that matter, what would *Friends* be without Monica and Rachel's purple apartment?

3. What assumptions, stereotypes, habits, social practices, and institutions frame your subject, questions, and values?

A lot of people assume that it shouldn't be that big of a deal to move from you childhood home, especially when you're in your late 20s!

4. Relevant stereotypes about gender roles, "families," "communities"?

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I guess the generic version of two parents, two kids, standing in front of a nice house with trees in the yard.

5. Habits and assumptions in communicating and learning?

I always assumed my family would be like my grandparents, never leaving the home I grew up in until they passed away.

6. Church doctrines or practices? Which? Political parties and platforms? Which ones?  
World events? Which? TV series? Which? Movies? Which? Books? Magazines? Newspapers? Which ones?  
Advertising? Which ads? Why? Fashions? Which? Hero figures? Who? Games? Toys? Sports?  
Entertainment? Which? Family rituals?

I think the families (traditional and non) that you see in television and movies are firmly rooted in the home they live in. It's hard to think about the Cosbys living in a house other than their Brooklyn brownstone where Cliff's office is adjacent to the house. The media shows families living in a certain kind of place most of the time, and it's hard to think about them in a different context.

### **Review Your Ideas and Highlight Those That Answer Your Question**

You have just generated a lot of material. While you were doing so, you may not have seen connections between the work you were doing, and the question you are raising. Take time now to look over your Three Perspective notes with the idea of searching for pieces of answers to your question. Note those parts that you may be able to use to create an answer.

### **Allow Your Ideas to Incubate**

Inquiry takes place subconsciously as well as consciously. Allow yourself time to set aside your inquiry and let your non-conscious mind explore for answers.