

### **Writing Sample: How does place impact identity?**

Place and identity are inevitably bound to one another. It's like how your bones and teeth carry environmental markers that indicate in which area you live. Place identity is a versatile concept that directly influences your personality and how you identify. I believe that this process is complex and fluid which means that everyone's experience is vastly different. But place itself is not something singular. It is comprised of Family, Location, and Community.

Family is a substantial influence in everyone's life, but it is one of the biggest contributors to how people act, think, and identify. Family, especially your parents, are the ones who influence your identity the most because they raise you. They raise you the best they can by teaching you respect, giving you advice and preparing you for life in this world. My parents always told me valuable sayings like "don't be so quick to judge people" or to "learn from your mistakes" which has stuck with me and it's something I always try to live by. Your parents are also your direct connection to your heritage which normally would lead them to try and immerse you culturally. In my case, I was born in South Korea, and I grew up in a Korean Canadian household where I was encouraged to explore the culture of Korea by my mom. This resulted in Korean being my first spoken language and now I am a proud trilingual teenager with dual citizenship. This being my experience brings me to conclude that some part of your identity can be influenced by your parents, but they aren't your only outlet for identity.

Location is the second outlet that can determine how you choose to identify. Location seems like an obvious contribution towards your identity, but I think that it's worth mentioning. When someone tells you where they are from, it tells you a lot about them just by knowing a tiny piece of information they choose to give you. I recently learned this new quote that I really liked by Winston Churchill that says, "We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us." This quote for me brings in an emotional part to identity because meaningful places in your area have influenced you. Whether it be a park where you met an important person in your life or a swimming pool where you made a core memory with your family, everyone has a place that they have held meaning to because of an emotional reaction that stuck with you. Regardless of if the reaction was positive or negative, the experience will morph and evolve your sense of self.

Community is the last subcategory of place and it's an influence that mostly happens in your pre-teen and teenage years. Friend groups are important to maintain a social life which is why they impact your identity. The way you identify yourself as you get older in middle school and high school rides mostly on whom you have as friends and how accepting they are. How your friends think about and respond to you will, over time, have a strong influence on your perceptions of yourself. If they aren't as accepting towards some forms of identity, then maybe you will be uncomfortable sharing who you truly are. This may cripple your sense of self which would be detrimental to your mental health. Your mental health is something that should always be a

priority, even as you become an adult because taking mental breaks and spending time relaxing your mind is important. Having healthy relationships with your friends and respecting everyone's identity is the most important and even one of the most overlooked standards in friend relationships.

Thus, to conclude my analysis of this topic, place has many ways that impact identity but which way it does impact you is your own journey. Perceptions, self-worth, and acceptance are all interconnected with your identity and mental health, which is why a positive and welcoming approach to all people is best in the end, you should always be proud to be who you truly are, and you should accept everyone's forms of identification because it could really help them and make their day.