

Individual Learning Packet

**Teaching Unit**

**Homecoming**

by Cynthia Voigt

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# Homecoming

## Notes

In this novel four children travel the East Coast of the United States from their home in Provincetown, Massachusetts, to Crisfield, Maryland. Using maps to guide them along the highways, they travel by foot, by boat, and by bus, when they can afford tickets. In their travels, the children explore the true meaning of “home.” Risking everything, they try to find a “home,” rather than just a place to stay.

All references come from the Ballantine Books Edition of *Homecoming*, copyright 1981.

# Homecoming

## Objectives

*By the end of this Unit, the student will be able to:*

1. discuss the believability of the plot and the credibility of the characters' actions.
2. infer meanings of ideas about characters and events when these meanings are not explicitly stated.
3. recognize the literary device flashback and point out how the author uses it to enhance the reader's understanding of the youngest child.
4. define third-person narrative and how it is used to enable the reader to see the inner motivation of all the characters.
5. comment on the significance of the title and its relationship to the children's definition of home.
6. recognize how the author uses the grandmother's house and the paper mulberry tree to support the overall theme that people need to continue living despite life's hardships.
7. support this as a coming-of-age novel by relating events that lead to Dicey's understanding of the true definition of "home."
8. discuss the use of the maps and water as symbols in the story.
9. comment on the following generalizations that serve as life lessons for the children:
  - People are not always what they seem to be.
  - People need to do more than simply survive; they need to live without hurting themselves or others.
  - It is best to live in the present and not dwell in the past.
  - People are not alone; their lives are interconnected.
10. point out how "the journey home" is a popular plot device used in literature.
11. support or refute, by referring to the text, the idea that a major theme in this book is about living one's life with courage, strength, and honesty.

# Homecoming

## Questions for Discussion and Essay

1. Contrast the two youngest children, Maybeth and Sammy. In what different ways do they each help Dicey on their journey to Aunt Cilla's house?
2. Support the following statement with events from the story: Without the map, symbolizing the correct path in life, the young family experiences hardships.
3. Why does Dicey not appreciate Cousin Eunice's offer to sacrifice her dream of becoming a nun in order to help raise the children?
4. Support the following statement with events from the story: Dicey is happy only when she is near the water.
5. What do the children learn about strangers from their experience with Mr. Rudyard?
6. How does Dicey provide the children with food, shelter, and water at each of the following locations: the park, Annapolis, the college campus?
7. List the skills Dicey has that make her a good leader for the family.
8. Briefly describe grandmother and her house. How does the condition of her house mirror the condition of grandmother's life?
9. Why does James want to leave Cousin Eunice's when it is clear he loves being in school and they all love him because he is so smart?
10. Define third-person narrative. Find examples in the story how third-person narrative helps the reader understand the inner motivations of all the characters.
11. What do each of the following children contribute to the survival of the family while they are walking to Aunt Cilla's house: James, Sammy, Maybeth?
12. Support the following statement: Sammy will obey an adult only if he thinks this person loves him.
13. Maybeth could have been Cousin Eunice's pretty doll. Instead, she must go to school and pass difficult tests. Why is it better for Maybeth to live with grandmother and take the tests?
14. Support the following statement: To Dicey, home before the journey means living with her mother; home after the journey means a place to stay where they are free to be themselves.

# Homecoming

## Part One

### Chapter One

#### Vocabulary

**diversion** – something that distracts the mind  
**jowls** – the jaws

1. Briefly identify the children in the Tillerman family.

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2. Who is Aunt Cilla?

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3. List four reasons Dicey is worried that her mother may not return to the car?

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4. Why is Dicey proud of Sammy and also mad at him?

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5. Since James does not believe in ghosts, why does the graveyard make him nervous?

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6. As they sit on the riverbank, Dicey is hungry, tired, blocked by the river, and on the point of losing all hope. What gets her going again?

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## Chapter Six

### Vocabulary

**cacophony** – jarring, discordant sounds  
**reverie** – daydreams

1. Why do the children run to the circus when they see the green truck?

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2. Why is Rudyard surprised that Will is in charge?

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3. What do you think of Will standing up to Rudyard?

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