

been locked in before and they are determined not to 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 the size or location, but pride of ownership. Painted blue.

This is a difficult problem, and some wise and compassionate people 8 are working hard at it. 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. 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.

Sometimes I think we would be better off if we forgot about the broad 9 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.

. . .

Comprehension

1. Where does Quindlen define *homeless*, *homelessness*, *homeless people*, and *home*? Which of these terms is the primary focus of her essay?
2. In paragraph 3, Quindlen says that "the thing that seems most wrong with the world to me right now is that there are so many people with no homes." What does she mean by *homes* in this context?
3. How does Quindlen define *home* in paragraph 4? Is her meaning here the same as her meaning in paragraph 3?
4. What does Quindlen mean when she says in paragraph 9, "They are not the homeless. They are people who have no homes." What distinction is she making here? Is this a meaningful distinction? Why or why not?

Purpose and Audience

1. Quindlen begins her essay with two paragraphs discussing her encounter with a woman named Ann. Is this an effective opening strategy? Is it likely to engage her audience? Why or why not?
2. In one sentence, state this essay's thesis. Does this thesis appear in the essay? If so, where? If not, do you think an implied thesis is a good strategy here? Explain.
3. What do you think Quindlen hoped to accomplish by writing this essay? Do you think her points are as relevant today as they were in 1987, when she wrote her essay? Are they perhaps *more* relevant?