

Home Begins Within

Sholpan Altybassarova

BEFORE YOU READ:

1. What does the author mean by the title?
2. What is *misfortune*? Consider the prefix and root word. List other words that start with *mis*.

A Special Place

Looking back at my life, I remember only one place that I can truly call home. It was a rented apartment in the city of Almaty in Kazakhstan. My husband and I moved there after our wedding, and that is where our first son was born.

What made that place special? It was the calmness I experienced there. It felt like everything in life was going in the right direction. I had just gotten married, we had our beautiful baby, and our happy story was just beginning.

A Loss

But *misfortune* came our way. Our beautiful baby died of cancer at the age of 14 months. It was the end and the beginning at the same time.

Since our son died, I have been searching for my home. We moved from one city to another, from one apartment to another. We even owned our own house. Later, we left Kazakhstan and moved to the United States.

Every time I moved somewhere new, I would start organizing and decorating my home the way I liked. I also easily made friends. But I still could not find that feeling of home again.

Building Peace Within Myself

Over time, I realized that home does not come from outside. I had to look inside myself and ask some questions: Who are you? What are you running from?

The answers did not come right away. I needed time for reflection.

Now I understand that home, for me, begins



with inner peace — knowing who I am and what I am living for. To build my physical home in the outside world, I first need to build peace within myself.

For the past 14 years since my son passed away, I have been learning that whatever I want in my life must start with me. Everything around me is only decoration. I can create many beautiful and colorful things around me, but the true feeling of home always begins inside.

AFTER YOU READ:

1. In your own words, summarize Sholpan's story.
2. Read the story on p. 16 and pp. 18-19, and compare and contrast them with this one.

Sholpan Altybassarova is a student at Alameda Reads in Alameda County, California. She is Kazakh by nationality, born and raised in Russia. Sholpan is deeply grateful to Alameda Reads for supporting learning and helping her feel more at home in her new community.