

Child and marginal places

[Family](#), [Children](#)



In the short essay “ In Praise of Margins”, Ian Frazier puts himself back to the place in time when he did activities just for the sake of doing them. As a kid, Frazier traveled to the woods behind his house without a real sense of purpose. His main goal for the day or afternoon was just to explore, whatever that word may mean to him. Frazier and his friends spent hours on end in the woods simply breaking thin ice sheets, “ throwing rocks at a fresh mudflat to make craters, shooting frogs with slingshots, making forts, picking blackberries, digging in what we were briefly persuaded was an Indian burial mound” (53).

They weren’t doing anything important, but that was the point, to do something so insignificant but have it mean so much. Frazier explains that the activities he did as a kid “ was a higher sort of unpurpose” (53), or in other words, marginal. I agree with Frazier about the important of marginality, because children in particular need to try out ideas for themselves and have some breathing room on their own. Marginal activities and places are important to kids, because they allow them to try out ideas or purposeless activities.

As an example, Annie Dillard wrote a short essay called “ Hitting Pay Dirt” in which she talks about receiving a microscope as a Christmas present and going down to her basement to play with it endlessly. Dillard received a microscope from her parents because she had wanted one ever since she read “ The Field Book of Ponds and Streams” (82). She was utterly convinced that everyone needed a microscope. At first, Dillard failed and could not use the microscope correctly because the slides she saw were a “ bust. ” Eventually in late spring, Dillard succeeded and saw an amoeba.

Proud of her accomplishment, she rushed upstairs to tell her parents, but they seemed more interested in their coffee than excited (83). From that point on she understood that you do what you do for pure enjoyment and love for the activity itself and that no one really cares, but yourself. The microscope was her marginal activity and the basement was her marginal place where she could do whatever she wanted. Dillard ends her short essay stating: “ Anything was possible. The sky was the limit. ” (83). “ Hitting Pay Dirt” and “ In Praise of Margins” both have the similar idea of doing something for pure enjoyment.

Dillard considers her work in the basement “ play” because she enjoys it, but she didn’t actually realize that she was learning. This is a prime example of a marginal activity because she only used it for her enjoyment without a sense of real purpose. No purpose is needed because marginal activities allow you to be yourself and do something that you like to do, not because there is an end goal. Marginal activities like Dillard’s microscope allow children to try out ideas that they otherwise may never have found. A safe haven or a place to escape reality can be important to children.

As a child, I lived in the typical two-story home in a typical suburbia neighborhood. I never really could keep much to myself or have ultimate freedom. My parents were typical over-protective parents who were scared that the world may danger and hurt their precious young boy. The only source of escape or get away I ever had was found in the play set in my back yard. It was just a little orange and blue play set that featured a slide and landing. Whenever I couldn’t be found, everyone knew that I was in my little play set in the back yard with my siblings and cousins.

My play set was my marginal place because that was where I could come up with crazy imaginations and as soon as I stepped in my thoughts ran free. The play set was a get away from over bearing parents, homework, or even vegetable filled dinners. In that back yard, we could be anyone we wanted to be, think of the craziest adventures, or even just sit and talk. The play set in the back yard didn't consist of judgment or scrutiny; rather, it was filled with bliss and innocence. It was such an important part of my childhood and I honestly don't know if I would be the same person I am today if my play set hadn't exist.

Frazier's woods are equivalent to my play set in the back yard. It was our get away from reality, the pure pleasure of doing nothing and something at the same time. My play set was my marginal activity and place because it allowed me to explore thoughts and try out the craziest of ideas. It is important as a child to have a get away where you can do anything you wanted because sometimes children are brought up to be perfect. Expectations can get to a child and a safe haven from that is all that is needed.

In the words of Ian Frazier " The margin is where you can try out odd ideas that you might be afraid to admit to with people looking on" (54). Marginal places and activities are very important to children because it allows for breathing room. Not everything has to be purpose filled. Activities and places can be purposeless and just as satisfying as if it were purpose filled. Frazier took himself back to a time where everything was much simpler, and realized that marginal activities are very important. Marginal places and activities are important for everyone especially children.