Homer and his wife Marge have three children: Bart, Lisa, and Maggie. As the family's provider, he works at the Springfield Nuclear Power Plant. Homer embodies several American working class stereotypes: he is crude, bald, overweight, incompetent, clumsy, lazy, a heavy drinker, and ignorant; however, he is essentially a decent man and fiercely devoted to his family. Despite the suburban blue-collar routine of his life, he has had a number of remarkable experiences.

Homer is one of the most influential characters in the history of television. The British newspaper The Sunday Times described him as "the greatest comic creation of [modern] time". He was named the greatest character "of the last 20 years" in 2010 by Entertainment Weekly, was ranked the second greatest cartoon character by TV Guide, behind Bugs Bunny, and was voted the greatest television character of all time by Channel 4 viewers. For voicing Homer, Castellaneta has won four Primetime Emmy Awards for Outstanding Voice-Over Performance and a special-achievement Annie Award. In 2000, Homer and his family were awarded a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame.