



Room In The Inn: Factors of Homelessness

Lesson Plan 7th - 9th Grade

Curriculum Connections: Social Studies, English, Language Arts, Reading

Thematic Connections: Homelessness, Poverty, Friendship, Community, Responsibility, Tolerance, Self-Esteem

Overview:

The goal of this lesson is to introduce factors that contribute to the reality of homelessness and consider ways to help those in their community who are in need. It is important for this age group to learn about homelessness for the following reasons:

- Prepares students for encountering social issues in the future
- Instills the value of citizenship at a young age.
- Begins breaking down stereotypes and fear of those that are different from them
- Sensitizes students to be more accepting of those in their school or other circles that may be experiencing homelessness

Goals for this unit:

- Build an awareness for homelessness and other social issues
- Begin laying a foundation for understanding factors contributing to homelessness
- Provide tangible means for students to contribute to the cause of ending homelessness

In this lesson plan we've provided suggested videos, discussion questions, and an activity – we strongly encourage group discussion and the activity to ensure students are learning through participation.

Before leading your group through these materials, read the one-pagers "Who are the homeless?: Employment Challenges," and "Who are the homeless?: Housing Challenges." These documents will explain why understanding different factors contributing to homelessness is helpful as we seek to be in community with our neighbors who are experiencing homelessness.

Discussion Questions BEFORE Reading:

- What does it mean to be homeless?
- What do you think of homeless people when you see them?
- What reasons do you think someone might be homeless?
- What are the basic things we need that we might not have if we were homeless?
- How would you feel if you became homeless?
- How do you think we can help those that are homeless?

Suggested reading:

Read the one-pagers "Who are the homeless?: Employment," and "Who are the homeless?: Housing Challenges."

Discussion Questions:

- What surprised you about the info in the one pagers?
- What did you learn? How do you see homelessness differently?
- How does homelessness impact someone's ability to maintain formal employment?
- How does demand for affordable housing impact someone's ability to move forward from homelessness?
- What ways can you get involved in promoting better resources for those experiencing homelessness in your community?

Read the book *A Shelter in Our Car* by Monica Gunning

www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYAFaZwNTtg

Discussion Questions:

- What do you think it would be like to live in your car?
- Think about your morning routine to get ready for school. How would it need to change if you needed to get ready in a park restroom?
- What factors do you see contributing to the homelessness Zettie and her mom are experiencing?
- Why do you think Zettie hides her face when she gets into her mom's car? What emotion do you think she is experiencing? Why?
- If you were given the choice between staying with your family in a car or staying with your family in a shelter, which would you choose? Why?

Suggested Videos:

Watch the movie "The Lady in the Van" (1 hr 45min)

www.amazon.com/gp/video/detail/B01CH3P3FY/ref=atv_hm_hom_1_c_iEgOEZ_2_1

Discussion Questions:

- What event brings significant change to Miss Shepherd's life?
- How do others see Miss Shepherd?
- How does Miss Shepherd's life change when Alan allows her to park her van in his driveway?
- What resources are missing for Miss Shepherd to live like her other neighbors?
- Mr. Bennett sees his mother in Miss Shepherd. How are they similar? How are they different? How do their support systems compare?

Watch this Ted Talk: *The Unexpected Faces of Homelessness* (12.09 min)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=w18ZuellVts

Discussion Questions:

- How do our assumptions about others' situations contribute to the challenge of homelessness in our communities?
- What is your image of someone experiencing homelessness? How does it compare to the stereotype from the video?
- Looking at Bee, the Ted Talk presenter, does she fit the image of someone experiencing homelessness that you described? How is she different?
- Fr. Strobe, founder of Room In The Inn, talks about support systems as nets that catch people when they experience difficult times. People have family, friends, faith communities, job resources, etc. When we experience a difficult time, these nets hold us up so we can get through the difficult time and move forward. When one of our nets is broken, another net will support us. When multiple nets are broken, we may find ourselves struggling like Bee. What nets in Bee's support system were broken?
- How does the language we use around homelessness perpetuate the issues of homelessness in our community?

Watch this Ted Talk: *No One Expects to be Homeless* (15:10)

www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jv57mjjlQD8

Discussion Questions:

- What images do you see when you think of homelessness?
- Why is just having a job not enough to get someone housed?
- How can you get involved in the cause to end homelessness?
- What does homelessness steal from individuals?
- Why is homelessness sometimes invisible in our communities?

Activity Options:

Writing:

- Have students write letters to their local community leaders about the need for affordable housing and a living wage.

Math:

- Have students complete the [Budgeting Worksheet Activity](#)

Art:

- Have students make craft kits to donate to their local women and family shelter. Pick your favorite craft, buy the materials, write the instructions, and make individual kits. If possible, volunteer at the shelter and lead the craft time on-site at the shelter

Service Opportunities:

- Invite a representative from the local housing authority to share about the housing needs in your local community.
- Create snack bags to donate to a local homeless shelter.
- Have students research local organizations that resource those experiencing homelessness to see how they can get involved in their own community.

