



Room In The Inn: Factors of Homelessness

Lesson Plan PreK - 3rd 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?

Read the book *A Place to Stay: A Shelter Story* by Erin Gunti

www.youtube.com/watch?v=AlvosznX95I

Discussion Questions AFTER Reading:

- How did Mama help the main character feel more comfortable in her new living space?
- How did the shelter help provide hospitality to their guests?
- What new friends does the main character make in the shelter?
- In the end, the main character ends up creating some adventure for her mom. How do these adventures help with mama and the main character's stay at the shelter?
- What are some of the reasons listed at the end of the book for someone to stay in a Shelter?

Alternative Lesson Options:

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?

Reflection Activity:

For this reflection activity, students will work together in groups or as a class to create "how to" lists for different scenarios in life. They will use these lists to troubleshoot how they would complete these lists if they were experiencing homelessness.

1. Have students break into groups and assign each group a scenario from the list below or create your own
 - Get ready for school
 - Complete a project for school
 - Sick day
 - Snow day
 - Picture day
2. In their groups, have students make a "how to" list of all the steps and things required to get ready for or what that day looks like for them.
3. After the groups have completed their "how to" list for their scenario, assign each group a new living condition for that scenario from the list below:

- Homeless shelter
 - Living at a campsite
 - Living in the family car
 - Couch-surfing
 - Temporarily living with Grandma
4. Have students make a new “how to” list for their scenario, but as if they were living in the condition they were assigned.
 5. Have students share their two lists with the large group.
 6. As a class discuss the following reflection questions:
 - How was your second list different than your first list?
 - What changed? What stayed the same?
 - What would be the difficulty level of completing your first list on a scale of 1-10 (1 being easy, 10 being extremely difficult)? For the second list?
 - What was your experience like making the first list? What about the second list?

Activity Options:

Writing:

- Write a letter, as a class, to local community leader about the need for more affordable housing.

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:

- Have students make snack bags to donate to a local homeless shelter or school feeding program.

