

# TEACHERS ACTIVITIES

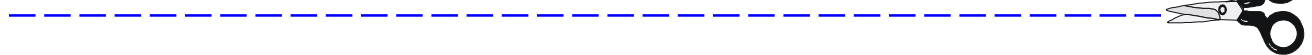


## Theme:

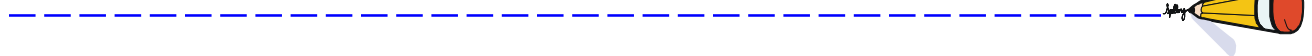
Homelessness results from a variety of situations, and opportunities exist for people of all ages to make a difference in seeking solutions.

## Topics For Discussion:

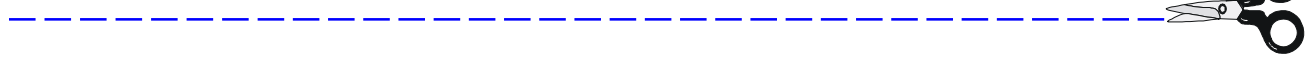
Before viewing, explore with the students the concept of "What is 'home'?" What is needed in order to have a home? Who makes up a home?



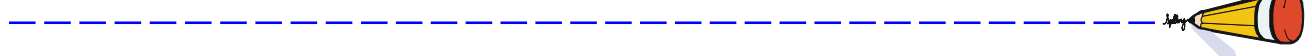
Obtain a copy of the book and read it to the students. The story presents opportunities for students to engage in some critical thinking: What do we know about large airports that makes them a possible living space for homeless persons? Would all airports serve equally well for the homeless? Why or why not? Why do the boy and his father dress in blue? What new problems will be created when it is time for Andrew to start school? What is the significance of the bird in the story?



The boy and his father try to make themselves as inconspicuous as possible in the story. Consider other places, besides an airport, that could be a "home" for a homeless person—places where large groups of people pass through who are preoccupied with their own lives. What would that person have to do in order to remain unnoticed in that setting?



Discuss the variety of situations that might cause a family to become homeless. (The program will offer some ideas.) Include in the discussion the understanding that living without a home is short term for some people, but may be longlasting for others.



After viewing the program, discuss different emotions that the homeless young people on the video were experiencing (e.g., fear, anger, sadness, joy, envy, etc.) Have students identify circumstances under which these emotions might surface.

## Curriculum Extension Activities:

Create a semantic map of the word "home." Begin with "home" as the center of the map. Brainstorm words connected with home and write them on lines radiating from the center. Have students justify their choice of words by explaining why certain words come to mind when they think of "home."



Have students collect newspaper and magazine articles related to homelessness and make a bulletin board. One side of the board may be information related to issues about homelessness; on the other side, may be strategies and activities of people working toward solutions.



Using the information they gather, have students devise a plan for raising the awareness of people in their community about the issue of homelessness. What types of information do they want people to know? How do they want to share it—a newsletter, letters to the editor of the newspaper, public service announcements? Once they make a decision, have them prepare some materials for dissemination. Investigate the possibility of a business underwriting this activity.



Organize a food collecting drive for the local food bank. This drive may be sponsored by a single classroom, grade level, or whole school. Invite a representative from the food bank to school to talk about their needs and the kinds of items they prefer. Students should take the responsibility for all aspects of the event: deciding what information should go on signs and advertisement flyers, making signs and flyers, setting up collection sites, and recording daily contributions. Individual classrooms might estimate the amount of food they collect daily and then weigh it to find the actual total. Teams of students could compile the daily weights from each room and add the information to a graph posted in a main hallway where everyone could see how the drive is progressing.



Invite an administrator from a homeless shelter to the classroom to talk about the regulations, facilities, and needs of a shelter. Students might use information from this person to get ideas for items besides food and pennies that they could gather (e.g., clothing, books, linens, kitchen utensils, etc.). The students could then decide on strategies for collecting these items and conduct a drive.

In the program, young people collected pennies as a donation to the homeless. An activity of this type could be sponsored by a single classroom, grade level, or whole school. Use the empty jar (or jars) as an estimation jar, and have students estimate the number of pennies the jar will hold. Record the estimates and save for comparison later when the jar is full. As the pennies accumulate, use them for other math activities, including counting money and posing problems such as, "How many pennies make a pound?"



Have students investigate the resources, including agencies and organizations in their own community that assist people who have serious needs. They might start with the telephone directory for a listing. Contact these resources for information about the requirements of the people who need help and the services these resources provide. They may also be interested in contacting Common Cents, 685 West End Ave., New York, NY 10025, about their programs that assist homeless families.



Have students brainstorm a list of different types of dwellings, e.g., apartment, cabin, condo, house, mobile home, mansion, etc. Although all of them are places in which people live, discuss the characteristics that make them different from one another.

### **Supplemental Books:**

(I) THE LEAVES IN OCTOBER  
by Karen Ackerman (Atheneum)

(I) MONKEY ISLAND  
by Paula Fox (Orchard)

(P-I) ERIK IS HOMELESS  
by Keith Elliot Greenberg, photos by Carol Halebian (Lerner)

(P-I) THIS HOME WE HAVE MADE  
by Anna Hammond & Jo Matunis (Crown)

(P-I) WAY HOME  
by Libby Hathorn, illus. by Gregory Rogers (Crown)

(P-I) SHOOTING BACK: A PHOTOGRAPHIC VIEW OF LIFE BY HOMELESS CHILDREN

selected by Jim Hubbard (Chronicle)

(P-I) HOTEL BOY

by Curt Kaufman & Gita Kaufman, photos by Curt Kaufman (Atheneum)

(I) MANIAC MAGEE

by Jerry Spinelli (Little, Brown)

(P) SOMEPLACE TO GO

by Maria Testa, illus. by Karen Ritz (Whitman)

(P-I) SOPHIE AND THE SIDEWALK MAN

by Stephanie Tolan, illus. by Susan Avishai (Four Winds)

(P) SPACE TRAVELLERS

by Margaret Wild, illus. by Gregory Rogers (Scholastic)

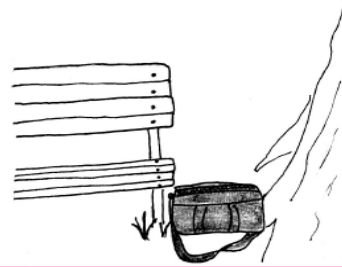
## Description:

The feature book is a touching story of a homeless boy and his father who move from terminal to terminal in an airport, trying not to be noticed and discovered. The boy expresses frustration about being homeless, yet he has hope for the future. Children whose families have been homeless share how this happens and how they feel when they have no place to call home. LeVar encourages us to make a difference in our communities. We meet a boy who volunteers at City Harvest, an organization which gathers prepared food for distribution to the homeless, and the girl who began Common Sense, an organization whose members collect pennies and use them to buy items for homeless shelters.



### Social Studies Concepts:

- ◆ **communities**
- ◆ **homes**
- ◆ **families**
- ◆ **relationships**



Teachers should consider the maturity level and life experiences of their students when viewing this program. Discussion of issues related to homelessness might be sensitive for some students, depending on their past and present home situations. Impressionable younger children might find the issues frightening. It is a good idea to inform parents of your intention to address this topic. Invite them to come into the classroom and view the program with the class, loan them a copy of the video, or inform them of the date and time it will be shown by your local PBS station.

## Classroom Activities:

### Homes

Each student in your class comes from a different home. Discuss how every home is different and special because of the family who lives inside. Have students re-create a favorite room in their home by making a diorama of it. Urge them to include the people who make the room a special place. Provide time for sharing, by inviting each student to explain why the room they've chosen is special.

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### Homes/homelessness



In the story, Fly Away Home, the boy and his father don't have a home so they are living in an airport. They make themselves as inconspicuous as possible so no one will discover their secret. Have students form small groups or work in pairs to talk about other places besides an airport that could be used by a homeless person for shelter. It should be someplace where large groups of people pass through and are so preoccupied that they do not notice someone like the boy and his father. After the students have discussed this in their small groups, bring the class together and make one comprehensive list of the possibilities. Talk about how the boy and his father would need to act so they wouldn't be noticed and how they would get food, clean up and sleep in these various places.

## Families

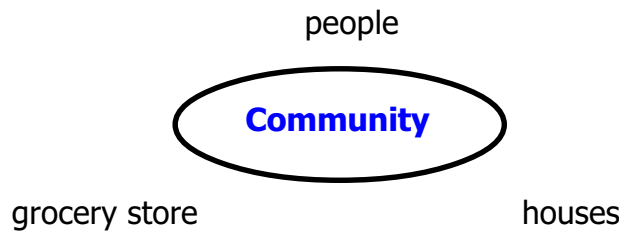
This story and video provides background for a discussion of why a family may find themselves without a home. Explore with students the various reasons for homelessness – loss of a job, illness, not enough money for a house payment or rent, loss of a home due to a fire, tornado, earthquake, flood, or other disaster, etc. (Note: This is a very sensitive issue and should only be discussed if you feel your class is mature enough to handle the topic.)

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## Communities



Introduce the idea that every community is a special place. Brainstorm what students have in mind when they think of a community. Record their responses in an idea web with the word "Community" as the center. Example:



After students have completed the idea web, have them explain to a partner how each topic relates to the other. For example: The family lives in the community so this makes them a part of the community. The grocery store is where people buy food they need in order to live in the community, and so on. Then have each student make an idea web to show their own personal community. Have them put their name in the center and draw lines to people or places who make up their world, for example a student will have lines out to one block that would be family, one that is school, and so on.

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## Relationships



Once the class has discussed relationships within the community, provide them with a problem to solve. For example: What would happen if the job a family depends on suddenly no longer exists? What would happen if a disaster such as a flood destroys the homes and businesses within a community? Discuss possible solutions.

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## Relationships



Have students think of ways they could help people who don't have all of the basics that are needed to live. Perhaps there is a food pantry in town that students can collect for, or a mission that needs clothing.

## Do-At-Home Activities:

### Lend A Helping Hand

Most communities plan special food pantry or shelter drives to help people who are homeless or in need. Invite your students' families to take part in one of these. (Check with your city's Human Services, United Way, Chamber of Commerce, or churches to find out about current drives or needy families. Many communities have a food pantry.)

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### Send-A-Hug



Encourage students to think of others who are alone, sad or who would appreciate a friendly hello by creating a greeting card to send.