

TEACHABLE BOOKS

Global Issues: Housing Insecurity and Homelessness

By Jonelle St. Aubyn

GRADE LEVEL: Middle (7-10)

THEME: Global Issues

SUB-THEMES:

People Experiencing Homelessness
– Home Insecurity

LEARNING FOCUS

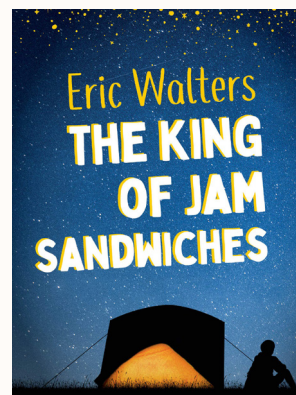
This novel study unit will explore:

- The meaning of the term “hidden homelessness”
- The factors that can lead to people experiencing homelessness
- Possible solutions to the problem of people experiencing homelessness

FEATURED BOOKS



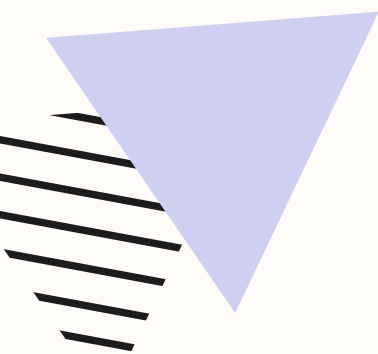
Firefly by Philippa Dowling
(DCB, 2021)

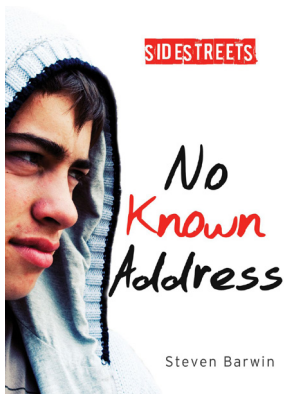


The King of Jam Sandwiches
by Eric Walters
(Orca Book Publishers, 2020)



No Fixed Address by Susin Nielsen
(Tundra Books, 2020)

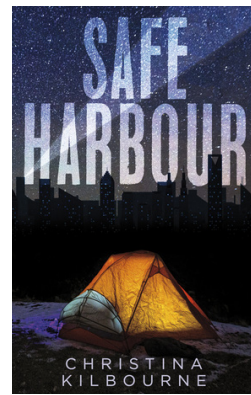




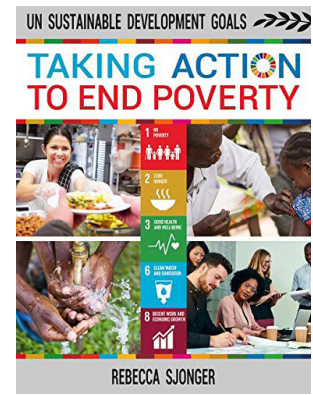
No Known Address by Steven Barwin (James Lorimer and Company, 2020)



The Girl Who Was Convinced Beyond All Reason That She Could Fly by Sybil Lamb (Arsenal Pulp Press, 2020)



Safe Harbour by Christina Kilbourne (Dundurn Press, 2019)



Taking Action to End Poverty by Rebecca Sjonger (Crabtree Publishing Company, 2019)

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

MINDS ON PROVOCATION

This can be done as a think-pair-share activity or a whole class discussion. Students are encouraged to consider the following questions and what the terminology means to them:

- Some people say that those who are experiencing homelessness are “invisible people” or are “hidden.” What do you think this means?
- Have you heard the term “no fixed address” before? What do you think it means?

Teachers can use the following videos to introduce the idea of the “hidden homeless” and what it means to have no fixed address. Students are encouraged to make note of the things that can lead to people experiencing homelessness.

- [No fixed address: Affordable housing is scarce in Toronto](#) – CBC reporter Shannon Martin and tenant advocate Bahar Shadpour discuss the precarious life of a renter in Canada’s biggest city.
- [Hidden Homeless – Day in the life of a homeless family](#) – Donna Pinault and her kids have been homeless in Vancouver since 2012. They have stayed with family, in shelters and in a tent. In this video, The Columbian followed Donna and her kids through a typical day.

READ, PLAN, AND PRACTICE

Since there are so many great texts for middle grade students that look at the issue of people experiencing homelessness, teachers have the option of choosing one as a class novel, or allowing students to choose from the list of the novels provided. This lesson can be used with one or all of the novels. The non-fiction book was selected to help students learn about what youth activists are doing around the world to help address the issue of people experiencing homelessness and to inspire them to be agents of change themselves.



MAKE, TINKER, AND MODIFY

After reading the book(s), students will read the following article about hidden homelessness, [Understanding Hidden Homelessness](#), and they will make connections between the article and situations of the characters that they are reading about in the novel(s). In a journal article, blog, vlog or podcast, students will explain how the characters in their novel have become part of the “hidden homeless.”

Next, using the article provided, [Homelessness in Canada](#), all students will read the following section: What Leads People to Become Homeless? Depending on their novel, students will then look at the sections that apply to their character(s) (i.e. Indigenous populations, youth, women, mental health or single men) and why those groups tend to experience homelessness more than others.

Students will then look at either the federal, provincial or municipal response to people experiencing homelessness and determine the positives and the negatives of the approaches that have been taken, and come up with an action plan of ideas that they think we should be taking. The book, “Taking Action to End Poverty” can be used for this part of the lesson. Students are encouraged to do additional research for their action plan.

REFLECT AND CONNECT

Once students have developed their action plan and have determined how they want to present their ideas, they are encouraged to share the plan with their classmates, community organizations and government officials. They can even start a social media campaign if they choose. The goal is to empower students to be changemakers and to be aware that people experiencing homelessness are more common than we might think.

Once the lesson is complete and students have a better understanding of what people who are experiencing homelessness are going through, student are encouraged to complete an exit ticket with the following prompts:

- What are three things that you have learned in this unit?
- What are some additional questions that you have about people experiencing homelessness?
- What is one goal that you have to improve your learning about people experiencing homelessness?



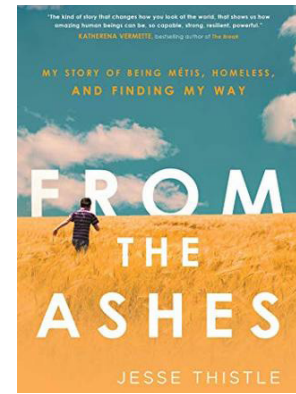
ADDITIONAL CANADIAN BOOKS AND BOOK LISTS TO SUPPORT THESE SUB-THEMES



Almost Invisible by Maureen Garvie
(Groundwood Books, 2018)



Push Back by Karen Spafford-Fitz
(James Lorimer and Company, 2018)



From the Ashes: My Story of Being Métis, Homeless, and Finding My Way by Jesse Thistle
(Simon and Schuster Canada, 2019)

BOOK LISTS

- [Homelessness in Children's Fiction](#) (Goodreads)
- [25 Best Middle-Grade Books About Homelessness and Poverty](#) (Reading Middle Grade)
- [15 Books About Homelessness for Children](#) (Raising the Roof)

ADAPTATIONS FOR THIS LESSON

Students are encouraged to go beyond the issue of people experiencing homelessness in Canada, and look at it from a global context as well. Make use of district-approved collaborative digital workspaces to pair up with a class in another school, region or country to work on this unit.

MORE RESOURCES

- [No Fixed Address: Educator's Guide](#) by Susin Nielsen

Want to learn more about the author and the other books that she has written? You can find out more about Susin Nielsen and how to connect with her [here](#).