

Hidden Voices

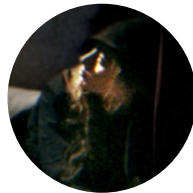
An education resource
for Secondary Schools

Preventing homelessness through
exploration of possible causes, using
creativity and literacy skills.



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Introduction and Context

Engaging students in the classroom is directly linked to outcomes and is the first step to the establishment of a stimulating and energetic learning environment – and to ensuring good learning.

However, creating the right conditions for ‘engagement’ is arguably one of the most difficult and time consuming aspects of any teacher’s role.

‘What will get them talking?’ and ‘How can I get them interested?’ are questions frequently asked by English teachers.

This education pack is designed to address both of those questions.

Using a range of engaging and inspiring stimulus materials, centered around the theme of ‘homelessness’, students are encouraged to develop, refine and extend a selection of the key skills outlined in the new National Curriculum for English.

These activities have been developed to complement the type of learning already underway in most classrooms, but with special emphasis placed on the engagement of the students, setting tasks in a manner designed to draw them into the exercises at hand.

The topic of homelessness has been chosen to align with OFSTED’s aims for developing the social, moral and cultural awareness of students during delivery of the National Curriculum. The intention is for students to develop a better understanding of the communities, cultures and world around them, while simultaneously growing their skills, knowledge and understanding of English.

This education pack was created by Curriculum Plus in partnership with Inspiring healthy lifestyles, in consultation with teachers, senior leadership teams and participants affected by homelessness. The project was funded by Arts Council England, Inspiring healthy lifestyles and Wigan Council Housing Services. Many thanks to the organisations that helped shape this work – The Brick, Riverside ECHG and Coops Foyer.



Notes for Teachers

Each image in this education pack is accompanied by a suggested exercise that will practise key skills in English, but teachers can approach the materials however they wish.

For example, the texts can be collectively explored and compared using reading exercises:

How would you describe the style of writing in each piece?

What was the writer trying to do?

Why do you think have they used this particular writing style? What were they trying to say?

Do you have a favourite piece out of the six?

Why have you chosen that one in particular? Try to give three well thought-out reasons.

Can you think of somewhere you have come across this style of writing before?

*What makes the style similar?
What techniques are the same?*

The materials also lend themselves well to speaking and listening activities, and to a range of activities using Drama, for example:

- As an actor, pretend to be one of characters and answer questions about yourself from the audience, 'hot seat' style.
- Using still images (Tableaux), try to tell the story of a character that explains how they came to be homeless.
- Explore how the character could have avoided homelessness, using Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre techniques.
- Using the characters as a starting point, create a performance aimed at teenagers that explains some of the common routes to homelessness.

These are just a few possible suggestions – you will no doubt have plenty of your own ideas for ways to use the materials in the classroom. We would be really interested to hear about how these resources have been put to use, so please email h.seddon@wlct.org or M.Price@wigan.gov.uk with any interesting ideas.

We hope that you have fun teaching and learning.

The Hidden Voices Team

PS Remember to click on to see the moving image for each character!

Watch
the
Film



Notes for Pupils

When you think of someone who is homeless, what images come into your mind?

Most people will picture the kind of person they might see begging on the street. Maybe they think of an older person, someone with dirty clothes and skin – in other words, a person who is very different from themselves.

The truth is, there are many *different types of people* who are homeless, and there are *many different types of homelessness*.

You might be most familiar with the idea of people who are ‘sleeping rough’ – meaning people who are actually living on the streets – but there is much more to homelessness than that. This pack will help you to gain a better understanding of the complicated issue of homelessness.

How would you handle things if you became homeless?

That’s an irrelevant question, because you’ll never be homeless, right? That’s what everyone thinks, until it happens. Most people who are homeless say the same thing – they never thought it would happen to them.

The truth is, many people are only two bad decisions away from becoming homeless.

So what’s in this pack?

The pack contains six digital images, each one accompanied by a piece of writing. Each one introduces you to a different character whose story relates to homelessness in some way. Have a good look at the images, read the writing, try to take in all of the details, then use your imagination to ‘flesh out’ who that person is. What clues does the writing give you about the situation that each character is in? Can you work out the reason each character has become homeless?

You’ll also find exercises that give you a chance to respond to the characters in your own way, and to help tell the rest of their story.



Jenny

Here are my three favourite ever birthdays:

My 11th: Granddad came all the way from Australia to visit us. I was shy when he first arrived, but when he left I cried. When we had bad times at home Mum would always say, 'We should be in Australia with your Granddad!'. I wonder if things would have turned out differently there. On my birthday, Granddad told me stories I'd forgotten from when I was little. Loads of funny things...! I wish I could remember it all now. When he died, my 11th birthday was the thing I remembered.

My 14th: I spent the day with my Mum and my brother. It was just the three of us together, before anybody else had come along. They took me clothes shopping. Mum even bought stuff for my brother, but I didn't mind. We went to the cinema and for pizza. My main present was a locket with photographs of my Mum and my brother inside it. I still wear it around my neck every day, even though we haven't been together in a long time.

My 17th: This was only last week. I found a secret corner in the undercover car park and now I have it all to myself. The first night I slept here was on my birthday. I went to see some friends, we had a couple of drinks and afterwards I came to the car park. I fell asleep holding a balloon. I must have let go of it in the night, but when I woke up in the morning it was still there, floating over my head. That's how I knew I'd found a safe place to stay.

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the
Film



Activity – Jenny

Two narrative voices

The piece you have just read is a narrative written from the point of view of one person – Jenny.

Jenny mentions various other people in her story. Choose any two of those other people and write about Jenny from their perspective. Put both of these voices into one piece of writing so the reader can hear a story using two different narrative voices. The story should make sense and tell us something new about Jenny.

Now you can build an authentic narrative voice.

Rusty

If somebody wanted to make a film about my story, I wouldn't even feature the real me in it, I would send them to the canal instead.

It might sound crazy, but everything you want to know about my life, you can learn from the canal.

It's true!

For example:

Sometimes the canal looks calm.

Sometimes it seems wild and deep.

I live under the sky, just like the canal. Sometimes I'm cold, and let's face it, sometimes I'm full of rubbish!

When things go wrong, even the words that I use seem to come from the water. Just listen:

Rock bottom...

In too deep...

Drink like a fish...

Sometimes I imagine that I am living under the water where it's hard to hear properly, and things look fuzzy when I look up at a world I'm not part of.

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the
Film



Activity – Rusty

Is he really a fish..?

Reading between the lines...

Okay, so we know Rusty doesn't *really* live underwater – he'd drown of course! So what does his story mean? Why does he compare himself to a canal? Why is he talking about fish? What sort of tools does Rusty use in his writing? Try 'reading between the lines', then rewrite Rusty's piece *using literal language* to show what Rusty's life is like and how he really feels.

Now you can

- *Identify implicit and explicit meanings*
- *Interpret both literal and figurative ideas: Deduce and infer*

Get to Work

WELCOME!

You are Player One.

You are the only player in this one-player game.

Are you ready to begin?

In this game you only get one life...

SO PLAY CAREFULLY!

The game has lots of rules.

Sometimes you only find out what the rules are when you break them.

LET'S BEGIN!

The first aim of the game is FIND A GOOD JOB.

You need A GOOD EDUCATION before you can find a good job.

Let's go in this direction.

Now this direction.

What's down here?

You have collected a can of beer.

You have collected another can of beer.

You have collected too many cans of beer!

YOU HAVE FAILED AT THIS LEVEL!

Try again.

It's time to re-fuel.

You need food.

Food costs money.

Where does money come from?

A JOB!

Go back to the beginning!

To get a job you need ... an address.

How do you get an address?

You need money for a place to live of course!

Back to the start!

TRY AGAIN PLAYER ONE!

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Activity – Get to work

Why a computer game...? Structure and organisation

This story is all about the difficulties of finding a job, but it's been written as if it's a story from a computer game. Does telling the story in this way help you to understand it better? Can you explain why? How does the style of writing make it different from a normal story? Do you think it makes the story easier or harder to relate to? Can you explain why?

Now you understand how structure and organisation contribute to meaning.

Clive

a strange thing happens to a boy named Clive
whenever his Mum takes his step-dad's side

a rage and an anger begins to build
and shoots through his body with electrical thrills

it starts in his ears where the harsh words land
and crackles like lightning from his neck to his hands

no sooner has Mum said: 'Clive, you're a liar!'
than Clive is alive with a white hot fire

he stands very still, his mouth and hands closed
in order to hide this strange power he holds

out on the street and away from the danger
Clive's angry lightning frightens off strangers

he hasn't been home in a while now, I'm told
but he brings the strange powers wherever he goes

nobody messes with Clive as he roams
but what good is power if you're still all alone?

Watch
the
Film



Activity - Clive

Clive's perspective

You've read the poem about Clive, which tells his story from the perspective of a *third person narrator* – in other words, written by a person who isn't Clive. Write your own poem or a diary entry from Clive's own perspective, so the reader feels as if they are hearing from Clive himself. Put yourself in Clive's place as you are writing and try to imagine clearly what his experiences and feelings might be.

Now you can create a convincing narrative voice.

Bert

One day, not quite out of the blue, poor Bert fell to pieces. His body looked okay (well, sort of). The problem seemed to have come from inside his mind. So, the psychological experts gathered together to gather the pieces of Bert's mind and try to gather what had gone wrong.

The mixed up pieces turned out to be like the hardest jigsaw puzzle ever. All the separate bits in Bert's head proved more difficult than maybe choosing a blue jigsaw piece and thinking, 'Is that the sky? Or is that a bit of someone's jacket?' Nothing seemed to fit together or make any sense.

For example:

Bert was very nervous and too shy to ask anyone for help when he needed it; and yet every day he loved to talk to strangers on the bus and on the train. Bert felt creative and artistic; and yet his life was bogged down with facts and figures, dates and times, that mixed together and confused him. Bert seemed like a small person stuck in a big world; and yet he was so much more than the sum of all his parts. If all of these pieces don't fit together... well, it's no surprise that poor Bert fell apart.

Watch
the
Film



Activity - Bert

Perform like a pro! Read for meaning

A professional actor would use the clues that the writer has put into a text in order to read it aloud with a good understanding of the meaning behind the words. Practise reading Bert's story out loud. Pay special attention to the punctuation - commas, full stops, brackets - to help you think about your tone of voice and pace of delivery as you read. How can you make your audience feel as if you really mean what you're saying by the way you deliver the lines?

Now you can use punctuation for meaning and effect.

Sebastian

I'm going to tell you a story about a guy I know. His name is Sebastian.

Sebastian had some bad luck. He'd been taking care of his elderly parents full-time, but then they died within a year of each other.

I was very upset about it... I mean Sebastian was very upset... but there wasn't time to be sad, because soon all the money Sebastian had been receiving for looking after Mum and Dad stopped being paid. Before he knew it, the bills piled up: rent, telephone, heating...

Sebastian hadn't had a job outside the house for a long time. He wasn't sure what kind of work he could do. He tried to get money in a hurry, buying lottery tickets and scratch cards. You know how it is, when you're feeling desperate? No luck. He never won.

People chased him for bills and to see how he was doing but eventually he couldn't tell the good message from the bad so he stopped checking his phone. He bottled up his worries until one day some good luck came my way. I mean, Sebastian's way...

His old mate Tom got him an interview at his place of work. He even lent him some trousers to wear to smarten him up. Sebastian was amazed when he got the job. He decided to give it his best shot.

He really honestly meant to give it his best shot...

But one morning in the work kitchen, the box of kitty money was left out, ready to go into the office safe. There was nobody around. The banknotes were sitting there, neatly piled up. Sebastian had debts that gave him bad dreams at night. Before he knew what he'd done, the kitty money was in his pocket... It was the biggest mistake of my life... of Sebastian's life, I mean.

His friend Tom got the blame for stealing the money. Tom was so angry that he quit his job. Once Tom had left, Sebastian realised he'd only got his job as a favour to Tom.

Sebastian lost his job too. No job, no money, no mate Tom. No Mum and Dad. Soon, no place to stay.

I don't blame you if you don't feel sorry for Sebastian. I don't feel sorry for him either.

Watch
the
Film



Activity – Sebastian

Educate teenagers; write for an audience

Sebastian's story teaches us about the 'conveyor belt' – this is a way some people describe the chain of events that can carry people along the path to homelessness, often without them realising it. Sebastian's starting point was his sadness and inability to cope when his parents died. This led to unpaid bills, then to theft, and finally to losing his job. There can be many different starting points. Some young people who become homeless look back on their own stories and realise the first time they were sent out of class for bad behaviour was their own starting point, leading to exclusion from school, no qualifications, and difficulty finding a job. Write a short article to explain how easy it can be to become homeless. The article should be written in a style suitable for teenagers and it should use the 'conveyor belt' metaphor. Try to extend the metaphor by filling it in with detail, or by using it in a number of different ways.

Now you can adapt style for purpose and audience.

Further Information & Useful Links

Project Managers

Inspiring healthy lifestyles - www.inspiringhealthylifestyles.org

Curriculum Plus - www.curriculumplus.co.uk

Project partners

- Riverside - www.riverside.org.uk/national.aspx
- The Brick Homeless Project - www.thebrick.org.uk
- Coops Foyer - www.foyer.net

Useful information about homelessness

- www.homeless.org.uk/facts/homelessness-in-numbers

Additional sites that may be of interest

- Shelter - http://england.shelter.org.uk/get_advice/homelessness
- UK Government statistics on homelessness - www.gov.uk/government/collections/homelessness-statistics
- Homeless Link - www.homeless.org.uk

If any of the homelessness issues in this pack are affecting you or someone you know there is help available, please ring Wigan and Leigh Homes on **01942 489005** or for street homelessness, contact The Brick on **01942 236953**.

We can offer a range of practical workshops for your classroom to accompany this pack. For further information please contact Inspiring healthy lifestyles Community Wellbeing Arts Team: Telephone **01942 488496** or email: h.seddon@wlct.org