



## UNIT 2

# What Causes Homelessness?

- Who is currently experiencing homelessness?*
- What are the root causes of homelessness?*
- Who or what is responsible for homelessness?*

# Elementary School

## UNIT 2: Living Outside of a Home

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### Essential Questions

1. Who is currently experiencing homelessness?
2. What are the causes of homelessness?
3. What are the reasons that people experience homelessness?

### Overview

- Students will explore the reasons that people experience homelessness and the way we think about those people, building an understanding that homelessness can happen to anyone and does not change or define who you are as a person.
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### Materials

Teachers:

- One-Pager: Why is it important to talk to your child about homelessness?
- Illustrated Statistics Cards

Students:

- Blank paper
- Crayons, colored pencils, or other coloring supplies

### Prep

Read through procedure to determine which of the provided materials will be most helpful in framing the lesson based on the needs of your student group, making sure to be sensitive to any of your students who have or are experiencing homelessness.

Watch the linked videos to ensure that the stories presented are appropriate for the ages and needs of your students.

## UNIT 2: Living Outside of a Home

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### Procedure

*There are a lot of reasons why people experience homelessness. Most of the time, a person experiences homelessness because they do not have enough money to pay for a home. They might work very hard every day of the week and still not have the money to pay for a place for them to live. Some people have families to take care of and that can cost a lot of money. Some people have a disability so they can't take care of themselves or work and make money. Today we're going to talk about the reasons that people experience homelessness and sometimes have to live in a place that isn't a home.*

1. Show your students the video about [Yvette \("Big Mama"\)](#)
2. Ask students to share what they noticed about the video. Some examples may include:
  - a. She is friendly and kind
  - b. She's happy even though she had some hard things happen to her
  - c. Living outside sounds hard and even dangerous
  - d. Big Mama made a good life for herself even though some hard things happened
3. Explain to your students that you'll be learning about some of the reasons that people who used to have a house might have to live outside or in one of the other places that you talked about last lesson:
  - a. In a tent
  - b. On a park bench
  - c. In an alley
  - d. In a car
  - e. On a friend's couch
  - f. In a shelter
4. Ask students to share out some reasons they think people experience homelessness and write them on the board, you can use the one-pager for some help with framing. Some answers may come from students' own experience or from things that they have heard other people say. The list may include:
  - a. Housing is very expensive, their rent may have gone up or they may have been unable to find a home they could afford
  - b. They have an illness or an injury that means they can't work or earn money
  - c. They have a mental health condition and aren't getting the treatment they need
  - d. They have to leave their home because it wasn't a safe place to stay
  - e. They lost their job
  - f. Someone in their family had a medical emergency that they had to pay for and they couldn't afford to pay rent

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### Procedure (cont'd)

5. Use the Illustrated Statistics Cards included in this lesson to help your students visualize some of the reasons people might experience homelessness:

**Wages haven't kept pace with rising rent.** Someone renting an apartment in Los Angeles and earning minimum wage (\$13.25/hour) would need to work 79 hours a week to afford rent on a 1-bedroom apartment. That would be like having a 16 hour school day five days a week.

**40% of Americans are one paycheck away from homelessness.** Imagine being in a school with 100 people and 40 students were one report card away from being kicked out of school.

6. Ask students to think about whether any of the things listed during step 4 have happened to them or someone they know. If one of those things happened to a friend and that friend lost their house and had to live somewhere else for awhile, does that change anything about that person?
  - Guide discussion among your students so that they begin to understand that anyone can experience homelessness, and that does not make them a bad person. In fact, it isn't even the most important thing about that person. That's why we say someone "experiences homelessness" rather than calling someone a "homeless person". The one-pager can help guide framing here as well.
  - Let your students know that even when someone has a mental health condition that causes them to live outside, that person deserves to have a home just as much as anyone else. You can use the example of someone having a broken leg and needing treatment—no one would think that person is bad for having a broken leg, instead they would help that person. The same is true when someone needs a doctor for a mental illness— that person deserves to get the medical care they need and for people to treat them with compassion just like the person with the broken leg. Sometimes people don't get the care they need for their mental illness and that is why they live outside. In the next lesson we'll talk about the workers that are helping bring care to people experiencing homelessness and about what each of us can do to help.
7. Pass out drawing supplies and paper to your students and ask them to draw one of the reasons that people experience homelessness. Have students share out what they drew afterward and consider displaying the drawings around the classroom as a visual reminder and discussion starter.

## UNIT 2: Living Outside of a Home

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### Supplementary Materials

- Illustrated Statistics Cards  
*What are the reasons that people experience homelessness?*
  - Wages haven't kept pace with rising rent. Someone renting an apartment in Los Angeles and earning minimum wage (\$13.25/hour) would need to work 79 hours a week to afford rent on a 1-bedroom apartment. That would be like having a 16 hour school day five days a week.
  - 40% of Americans are one paycheck away from homelessness. Imagine being in a school with 100 people and 40 students were one report card away from being kicked out of school.
- Videos:
  - a. [Yvette](#) (Everyone In)
  - b. [Meet Angelica](#) (Everyone In)
  - c. [Zondre's Story](#) (Everyone In)
- Books
  - *A Shelter in Our Car* by Monica Gunning
  - *Lily and the Paper Man* by Rebecca Upjohn
  - *The Lady in the Box* by Ann McGovern
  - *Still a Family* by Brenda Reeves Sturgis
  - *I See You* by Michael Genhart
  - *On Our Street: Our First Talk About Poverty* by Dr. Jillian Roberts and Jaime Casap
  - *The Very Best Home for Me* by Garth Williams
  - *Scruffy and the Egg: Adventures on the Road* by Angela M. Sanchez

### Sources

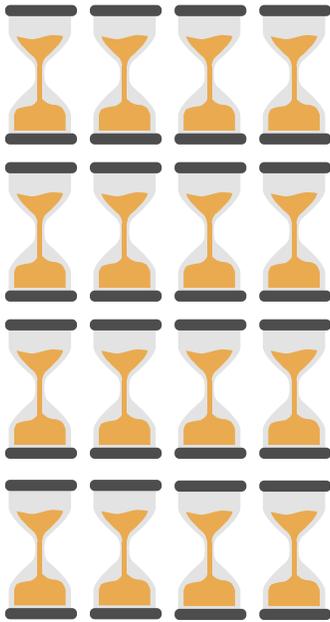
- [Millions of Americans are one missed paycheck away from poverty report says](#) (Forbes)
- [2019 Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count](#) (Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority)

**Wages haven't kept pace with rising rent.**

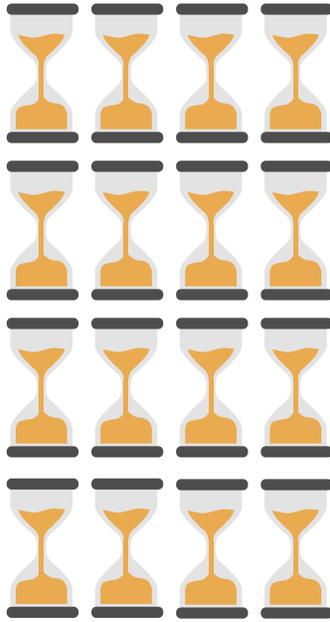
**Someone renting an apartment in Los Angeles and earning minimum wage (\$13.25/hour) would need to work 79 hours a week to afford rent on a 1-bedroom apartment.**

**That would be like having a 16 hour school day five days a week.**

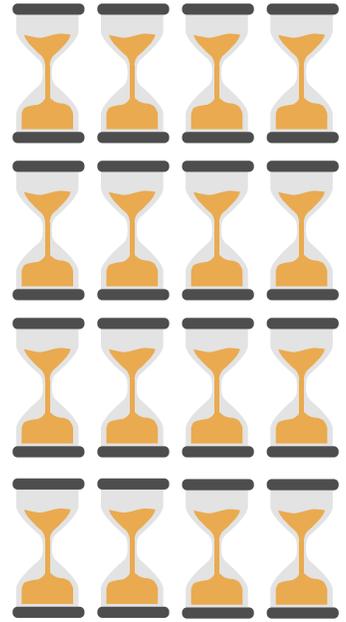
**MONDAY**



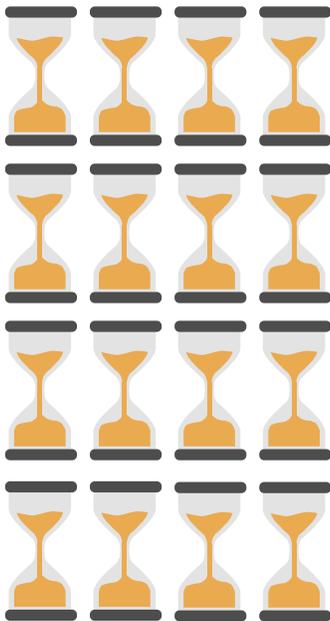
**TUESDAY**



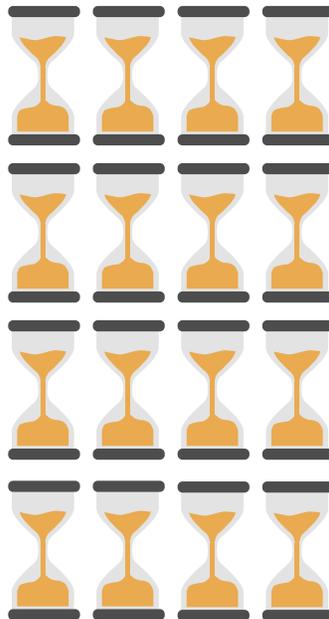
**WEDNESDAY**



**THURSDAY**



**FRIDAY**



**40% (40 out of 100) of Americans are one paycheck away from homelessness.**

