
"WHAT IS HOME?"

TO THE TEACHER:

The following activities come from Heritage Canada's "The Spirit of Home".

This activity looks at what home means to students and how comfort and belonging relate to it.

"Home is an ancient Anglo-Saxon word. It brings together the meanings of house and of household, dwelling and refuge, ownership and affection. Home means not only the physical structure, but also everything that's in and around it, as well as the people and the sense of satisfaction and contentment that these contents convey.

Today, Canadian homes are as diverse as our many peoples. To some row housing or highrises define their habitation; to others historic houses are home. Each defines who we are, how we live, where we've been and, perhaps where we are going." *Spirit of Home,*

Heritage Canada 1999 Teachers' Guide

NOTE:

it is important to be sensitive to the student's background while doing these activities as some students may not be comfortable discussing what goes on in their home.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

- discover how 'home' is different for everyone
- learn what makes a house a home (e.g. comfort & belonging)
- gain a sense of belonging to the community
- develop verbal and written communication skills

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

- nothing

ACTIVITY 1:

Defining Home
(grades K-7)

Have the students discuss what makes them feel as if they are "at home". Is it a particular building? A smell or memory? A landscape? Certainly for the young, home is where earliest experiences occur. It's usually where much of their heritage is housed, where they keep their personal and family treasures, where they share their daily rituals, food, language, and day-to-day adventures.

Ask the class to choose five to ten words or expressions that describe what "home" means to them. Using these words, ask them to create a poem to describe their dwelling. Or if the students prefer, suggest they tell a story that begins with "Home is...". Also try having the class list as many "home" clichés as they can (e.g. home is where the heart is, home sweet home, a home is every woman's

or man's castle, make yourself at home) and discuss what they think these phrases mean.

ACTIVITY 2:
Belonging (grades K-7)

Discuss with the students what makes them feel at home or like they belong to something? Is it walking down the same street everyday? Is it the place where they play? The neighbourhood where they live? Is it how the inside of their homes look? How their belongings are positioned around them? Is it a positive and welcoming interaction with the people that share the home with them that provides a sense of home?

After discussing what belonging means to the class, explore what would happen if they're taken to completely unfamiliar territory-a totally new environment with new sounds and sights. Talk about what would help them adapt to their new surroundings. If there are members of the class who have moved around a lot, ask them to share how they learned to continually adapt to new surroundings.

NOTE: *discussion of the home and local landmarks will help form the basis for several of the following activities in this kit by allowing the class to develop a sense that they belong to the community.*

ACTIVITY 3:
Comfort and Home
(grades K-7)

The concepts of home and comfort are closely linked. What makes a home comfortable? It can be a combination of many things. Not only is it a sense of well being that comes from the people who live (or visit) the dwelling, it's also how the home's space and contents are laid out allowing for both intimacy with family members and privacy of the individual. Ask the class to share what makes their homes or favourite spaces comfortable.

As sometimes the student's homes are not places of comfort, discuss with them the following questions: When is a home not comfortable?; When does it not feel like a place of safety, security or refuge?; What needs to change so that this home becomes a place of comfort?

Take the concept of comfort one step further. How can people make the places where they spend the better part of their day (like a classroom or office) more comfortable (e.g. a couch for reading on in the classroom)? Collectively look around the classroom right now. Decide how it can be made more comfortable.

MORE THINGS TO DO:

A. Model Houses (grades 3-7)

Following the construction guidelines for “Model Town” (included in this kit) have the class build models of their homes or landmarks in their community.

After the class has built their models secure them to a piece of card or posterboard. Looking through magazines, have the students cut out images that express who they are and what comfort means to them. Paste the images around their models. If possible, put the models on display (e.g. school library).

NOTE: *for required project materials see “Model Town”.*