



**Kids Without Homes:
A School District Responds**

***Prince's Unwelcome Disguise –
The Trials of a Pup Without a Home***
A Homeless Awareness Lesson

Grades K – 2



Lesson Plan for Teachers

Prince's Unwelcome Disguise: The Trials of a Pup Without a Home

Subjects: Social Studies; Language Arts and Reading

Grade Levels: K – 2

Rationale or Purpose:

Students will listen to the story of a dog that, for a few days, loses his family and his home. The story introduces young students to the difficulties of homelessness and invites them to respond with empathy and compassion.

Why study homeless issues?

It is important to introduce even young students to homeless issues because homelessness is on the rise in Texas and across the nation. The fastest growing segment of over three million people experiencing homelessness in the U. S. is now the single-parent family, which makes up approximately 67% of the homeless population. Like the other 1.2 million homeless children across our nation, 147,000 highly mobile children in Texas experience academic, social, and emotional difficulties that are worsened when classmates ridicule and ostracize them.

Materials:

- *Prince's Unwelcome Disguise* – a story that invites young children to relate to the difficulties of homelessness without feeling threatened that they themselves may lose their homes
- *Coloring page* – a coloring activity that, in the first story segment, draws students' attention to Prince's possessions. In the fifth story segment, students are asked to cross out these possessions to emphasize their loss.
- Crayons
- *Certificate of Appreciation* – a document to acknowledge what students have learned and bring closure to the lesson
- **Optional:** A durable, artificial dog bone to be held by a student who is talking during class discussion
- **Optional:** A large-font version of *Prince's Unwelcome Disguise* for Grade 2, if teacher decides to have students read the story alone or in pairs.

Lesson Duration for 6 Story Segments: 2 classroom hours

Objectives: Social Studies; Language Arts and Reading

Co-Curricular Connections/TEKS: Social Studies

Source: Chapter 113. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies – Subchapter A. Elementary School
www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter113/ch113a.html

§113.2(b). Social Studies, Kindergarten – Knowledge & skills.

(6)(A) *Economics*. The student understands that basic human needs are met in many ways. The student is expected to identify basic human needs.

§113.3(b). Social Studies, Grade 1 – Knowledge & skills.

(8)(A) *Economics*. The student understands the condition of not being able to have all the goods and services one wants.

(18)(A) *Social studies skills*. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. The student is expected to express ideas orally based on knowledge and experiences.

§113.4(b). Social Studies, Grade 2 – Knowledge & skills.

(17)(A) *Social studies skills*. The student applies critical-thinking skills to organize and use information acquired from a variety of sources including electronic technology. The student is expected to obtain information about a topic using a variety of oral sources such as conversations ...

(18)(A) *Social studies skills*. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. The student is expected to express ideas orally based on knowledge and experiences.

Co-Curricular Connections/TEKS: Language Arts and Reading

Source: Chapter 110. Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Language Arts and Reading – Subchapter A. Elementary School
www.tea.state.tx.us/rules/tac/chapter110/ch110a.html

§110.2(b). English Language Arts and Reading, Kindergarten – Knowledge & skills.

(10) *Reading/literary response*. The student responds to various texts. The student is expected to:

- (A) listen to stories being read aloud
- (B) participate actively (react, speculate, join in, read along) when predictable and patterned selections are read aloud
- (C) respond through talk, movement, music, art, drama, and writing to a variety of stories and poems in ways that reflect understanding and interpretation

§110.3(b). English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 1 – Knowledge & skills.

(13) *Reading/literary response*. The student responds to various texts. The student is expected to:

- (A) listen to stories being read aloud
- (B) participate actively (react, speculate, join in, read along) when predictable and patterned selections are read aloud
- (C) respond through talk, movement, music, art, drama, and writing to a variety of stories and poems in ways that reflect understanding and interpretation
- (D) connect ideas and themes across texts

§110.3(b). English Language Arts and Reading, Grade 2 – Knowledge & skills.

(2)(A) *Listening/speaking/culture.* The student is expected to connect experiences and ideas with those of others through speaking and listening

Activity #1:

Step 1: Teacher prepares *Certificates of Appreciation*, so that they will be ready for distribution at the end of the lesson.

Step 2: Teacher reads out loud the first story segment, *On the Road*.

Step 3: Teacher distributes coloring page and crayons.

Step 4: Teacher instructs students to color Prince, his doghouse, and all his possessions. (15 minutes)

Step 5: Teacher asks class what in the picture they would keep if they were Prince, and why. Teacher guides the discussion to focus on shelter and food as necessities.

Activity #2:

Step 1: Teacher reads out loud the second story segment, *Escape*.

Step 2: Teacher asks class how they think Prince felt when he realized he had lost his family and his home. Teacher follows up by asking how they think people feel when they lose their homes. Teacher encourages students to express empathy for people experiencing homelessness, often through no fault of their own. Before going on to another activity, teacher observes students' overall reaction to the story and comments, as needed, to make sure students aren't feeling frightened or anxious about being separated from their family or losing their home.

Activity #3:

Step 1: Teacher reads out loud the third story segment, *Slim Pickings*.

Step 2: Teacher asks class how they think Prince felt when he had to eat bits of leftover food and water that wasn't clean and fresh. Teacher encourages class to realize that some people in homeless situations are not sure when and where they will have their next meal. Before going on to another activity, teacher observes students' overall reaction to the story and comments, as needed, to make sure students aren't feeling frightened or anxious about not having enough food to eat.

Activity #4:

Step 1: Teacher reads out loud the fourth story segment, *Lost and Scorned*.

Step 2: Teacher asks class how they think Prince felt when he was snubbed and laughed at by the woman and her dogs because he was dirty and covered with sticky burs. Teacher follows up by asking students how they think people feel when their only clothes are old, torn, or dirty. Teacher asks students how they think these people feel when other people laugh or say mean things about them. Teacher encourages students to understand that, for a variety of reasons, some children are not able to have nice clothes, soap, toothbrushes, or combs.

Activity #5:

Step 1: Teacher reads out loud the fifth story segment, *Wishful Memories*.

Step 2: Teacher tells class that they are going to make changes to the picture they colored before because Prince has lost his family and his possessions. Teacher instructs students to use a dark crayon to cross out the doghouse, the water bowl, the chew-bone, and Prince's new ball.

Step 3: Teacher asks students how they felt when they had to cross out Prince's possessions because he didn't have them anymore. Teacher allows class to express their feelings. Teacher points out that most people feel a great sense of loss when they lose their homes and their possessions.

Activity #6:

Step 1: Teacher reads out loud the sixth story segment, *Always a Prince*.

Step 2: Teacher asks class what they think the friendly man meant when he said to Prince's family, "The minute I saw him I knew he was a prince in disguise." Teacher helps students understand that there is more to a person than what meets the eye.

Teacher encourages them not to judge people by the way they look or what they are wearing. Teacher points out that everyone wants to be liked and accepted.

Step 4: Teacher distributes *Certificates of Appreciation*.

Modification for Grade 2:

At teacher's discretion, students may work alone or in pairs to assist each other in reading story segments.

Student Product:

An empathetic response to difficulties associated with homelessness.

Closure:

Teacher distributes *Certificates of Appreciation* to students in recognition of their participation in activities to understand and ease the difficulties experienced by people in homeless situations.

Assessment or Evaluation:

Were students able to relate to Prince's difficulties and make a compassionate response?

Did they use appropriate words in describing their feelings?

Extension:

Teacher may choose to enrich lesson by discussing ways – such as food and clothing drives – that young people can help homeless people.

Lesson Plan and *Prince's Unwelcome Disguise* written by:

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Acknowledgments:

This project is dedicated to the thousands of children, youth, and families in the United States who experience homelessness each year.

Produced by Educational Service Center, Region 12, Waco, Texas, through a grant from Region 10 Education Service Center, Richardson, Texas, this project was funded 100% by the United States Department of Education. This document may not be reproduced for commercial purposes.

The Texas McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Program is managed collaboratively by:

- Texas Education Agency
- Region 10 Education Service Center
- The University of Texas at Austin, Charles A. Dana Center, Texas Homeless Education Office

The author would like to extend a special thank you to Barbara Wand James, Project Director, Texas Homeless Education Office (THEO), The University of Texas at Austin, Charles A. Dana Center, Austin, Texas, for contributing her subject matter expertise during the development of this project.

Lesson plan format adapted from examples on The University of Texas' *Utopia for Teachers* at <http://utopia.utexas.edu/educators/index.html>

Coloring page modified from free coloring page downloaded from: www.kidscolorpages.com/dogpic4.htm

Special Note for Teachers

Kids Without Homes, a curriculum developed specifically for Texas school district personnel, includes a module especially for teachers. Materials, including a PowerPoint presentation, are available at www.utdanacenter.org/theo/toolkits.html#kidswithouthomes.

Teacher Notes

Story with Discussion Guidelines

Prince's Unwelcome Disguise

Teacher Notes

Activity Time	Reading and Discussion of 6 Story Segments: 2 hours (Time will be longer if Grade 2 students read the story working on their own or in pairs.)
Activity Objective	To help student feel empathy for people living in impoverished and/or homeless situations
Activity Handouts	<i>Coloring page</i> <i>Certificates of Appreciation</i>
Activity Synopsis	Student Activities: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students listen to six segments of a story about a dog that becomes homeless for a few days and respond verbally to discussion questions.• At the end of the first segment, <i>On the Road</i>, students use crayons to color all items on the coloring page.• At the end of the fifth segment, <i>Wishful Memories</i>, students cross through Prince's possessions on the coloring page. Class Discussion: Class answers questions designed to raise awareness about the difficulties of homelessness and create empathy for those in poverty/homeless situations.

Guidelines

Prior to beginning class activity, prepare *Certificates of Appreciation*.

Discussion questions and guidelines are included at the end of each story segment.

Prince's Unwelcome Disguise: The Trials of a Pup Without a Home

Segment 1: On the Road

Prince didn't know why, but this morning was different. Ears perked, he could feel excitement in the air.

Prince's family was in motion. Sarah Jean, who had just turned six, was putting tape on the last of the boxes stacked by the front door. Mom was writing on each box with a big, black pen. Dad was carrying the boxes out to the large van parked in the driveway. Prince had never seen that van before. And he had never seen the house so empty.

Looking out the window, Prince saw Dad put the last box in the van and close the big sliding door.

"Come on, Prince!" Sarah Jean called, holding Prince's leash in her hand.

Oh, boy! Prince thought, wagging his tail. *Time for our morning walk!*

But it turned out to be a very short walk. Sarah Jean took Prince to the family car, opened the back door, and patted the seat. That was their secret signal that he should jump in and sit in his special place.

Mom drove for what seemed like hours. Looking out the back window, Prince could see Dad following in the big van.

At the end of the day, they stayed in a room that smelled like a lot of people had already been there. Prince decided to ignore the strange scents because he was with the people who loved him.

Prince thought everything would be perfect if they would just go back home. He missed the soft cushion in his doghouse. He wished he had his large white bowl instead of the cold metal bowl in the car. And he wanted to chase the shiny ball that Sarah Jean had given him last week.

Activity

1. Distribute coloring pages.
2. Instruct students to color Prince, his doghouse, and all his possessions.
3. Allow students no more than 15 minutes to color the page.

Discussion Questions

If you were Prince and you could have only one thing in the picture you just colored, what would you keep? Why?

Discussion Tip

In guiding the discussion, focus on shelter and food as necessities.

Note

It is recommended that you move directly to the next story segment.

Segment 2: Escape

The next day, Prince's family drove on and on. Prince napped as well as he could, but he felt uneasy. He wanted to know when they would go home.

That night, they stayed in another room that smelled of strangers.

Suddenly just as Prince was dreaming of his favorite chew-bone, an alarm went off. Mom and Dad jumped out of bed and shook Sarah Jean awake. People outside the room were yelling, "Fire! Fire!"

Dad grabbed the suitcase. Mom wrapped a blanket around Sarah Jean. They flung the door open and ran into the courtyard with Prince right behind them.

The smoke in the air stung Prince's eyes. The sirens hurt his ears. And the noise was getting louder and louder as people ran in every direction.

Prince knew the only way to get away from the bad sounds was to run until his ears didn't hurt anymore.

So run he did!

Prince ran as hard and as fast as he could. He sped past the swimming pool and all the buildings. He ran until the air was clear and the only thing he heard was the beating of his heart.

Exhausted, Prince eased down onto the prickly ground and fell into an uneasy and dreamless sleep.

The next morning, Prince awoke to the sound of birds chirping about the showers that were turning Prince's grassy bed to mud.

Before long, his once beautiful and shiny coat was matted with muddy clumps. Worse yet, sticky little briars had become tangled in his fur during the night. Worst of all, he was alone.

Prince wanted to get back to Mom and Dad and Sarah Jean as soon as he could. Ears on high alert he stood perfectly still and quiet. He listened for Sarah Jean's call. He listened for Mom's call. He listened for Dad's call. But he heard only the noisy birds.

Prince tried to find his path from the night before when he was running in the dark. But, no matter where he looked, he didn't see anything he recognized or anyone he knew. And the morning rain had washed away his scent.

But Prince wasn't about to give up. If Mom, Dad, and Sarah Jean couldn't call, he could.

At first, he blasted the air with loud, urgent barks.

No answer.

He switched to long, pitiful howls.

No reply.

Prince continued calling until the only sound he could make was a tiny whimper.

For the first time in his life, Prince had no family and he had no home.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you think Prince felt when he realized he had lost his family and his home?
2. How do you think people feel when they lose their homes?

Discussion Tips

Encourage students to express empathy for people experiencing homelessness, often through no fault of their own.

Note

If you choose to continue the story at another time, observe students' reaction to the story and comment, as needed, to make sure students aren't feeling frightened or anxious about being separated from their family or losing their home.

Segment 3: Slim Pickings

Feeling lonely and scared made Prince's stomach hurt. Having nothing to eat made it hurt even worse. But he was too tired to chase the bold birds that were searching the damp grass for insects.

Ears drooping low, Prince started walking. Before long, he came to a place that reminded him of the park back home. He remembered running after the bright red disk that Sarah Jean tossed for him again and again.

A familiar scent led Prince to a large trashcan in the park. The trashcan was full. Bottles, metal cans, and used food bags litter the ground.

One bag drew Prince's attention. Tearing at the greasy paper, he found a small chicken bone that still had some meat on it. In a moment, he gobbled it down.

Encouraged by the tiny snack, Prince sniffed and pawed at the other bags. Within minutes, he found a small bowl of cold mashed potatoes mixed with foul-smelling gravy. But he ate it anyway.

Standing on his hind legs, Prince pulled more garbage from the trashcan. But his only reward was a few cold, stiff fries.

Thirsty from his efforts, Prince ran to a fountain in the center of the park. Edged with green scum, the water wasn't at all like the clear water in his bowl back home. But he drank the slimy water anyway.

Discussion Question

How do you think Prince felt when he had to eat bits of leftover food and drink water that wasn't clean and fresh?

Discussion Tips

Encourage students to realize that some people in homeless situations are not sure when and where they will have their next meal.

Note

If you choose to continue the story at another time, observe students' reaction to the story and comment, as needed, to make sure students aren't feeling frightened or anxious about not having enough food to eat.

Segment 4: Lost and Scorned

Prince rolled in the dewy grass to rub off at least some of the mud that had dulled his once shiny coat. He pulled at the sticky briars tangled in his fur. But the briars were so small that they slipped through his teeth.

Suddenly Prince heard a sound. Looking up, he saw a tall woman with two well-groomed dogs.

Wagging his tail, Prince began running towards them. The woman began shouting at him in a harsh, cold voice.

"Get back, you ugly thing! Go away! Go away!!"

The dogs began to snarl at Prince and pull at their leashes.

The woman stroked the dogs and spoke to them in soft, loving tones. "Don't you worry. That dirty old dog is not fit to bother with."

Throwing its head high in the air, the smaller dog laughed at Prince in a way that only another dog can understand. The other dog, a large, well-groomed hound, pointed his nose at the sky as he and his family walked away.

Once again, Prince was alone.

Discussion Questions

1. How do you think Prince felt when he was snubbed, laughed at, and rejected by the woman and her dogs because he was dirty and covered with sticky burs?
2. Sometimes the only clothes people have are old, torn, or dirty. How do you think they feel about having to wear clothes like that?
3. How do you think they feel when other people laugh or say mean things about their clothes?

Discussion Tips

Encourage students to understand that, for a variety of reasons, some children are not able to have nice clothes. Sometimes they don't have soap, toothbrushes, or combs either. They may also have limited access to bathing and laundry facilities.

Note

It is recommended that you move directly to the next story segment.

Segment 5: Wishful Memories

The sun was going down. Prince crawled under a park bench and fell asleep.

When Prince opened his eyes the next morning, he was hungrier than he had ever been in his life. He ran back to the trashcan where he had found food the day before. More litter lay on the ground but none of it had even a morsel of food.

Prince thought of his old life. He missed his doghouse with its soft cushion. He missed his bowl filled to the top with clean, clear water. He missed his favorite chew-bone. Most of all, he missed playing ball with Sarah Jean.

Activity

1. Advise students that they are going to make changes to the page they colored earlier because Prince has lost his family and his possessions.
2. Instruct class to use a dark crayon to cross out the doghouse, the water bowl, the chew-bone, and Prince's new ball.

Discussion Question

How did you feel when you had to cross out Prince's doghouse, his bowl, and his bone, and his new ball because he doesn't have them anymore?

Discussion Tips

Allow students to express their feelings. Suggest that most people feel a great sense of loss when they lose their homes and their possessions.

Note

It is recommended that you move directly to the last story segment.

Segment 6: Always a Prince

Prince was feeling very sad and alone.

Then he heard a gentle voice.

"Come here, boy. Come here."

The man held out a hand. The fingers were open and relaxed.

"Good dog. You're a good dog, aren't you?"

Prince's ears perked up. He always knew when a person was asking him a question.

"Yes, I can see that you are. And smart, too!"

The man took a small bag of crackers out of his pocket and offered one to Prince.

With a big, happy gulp, Prince no longer felt so alone.

That night, clean and well fed, Prince slept on a rug by the man's bed. Prince's collar and dog tags lay on a table next to the telephone.

The next morning, the man took Prince for a walk in the park. When they came back to the man's house, Mom and Dad and Sarah Jean were waiting.

With a happy cry, Sarah Jean ran to Prince and hugged him while Mom and Dad talked with the man.

"Thank goodness he didn't lose his tags," Dad said. "We were hoping that someone would find him and call the vet that has Prince's records."

"He's a great dog!" the man replied. "The minute I saw him, I knew he was a prince in disguise."

Discussion Question

The man told Prince’s family, “The minute I saw him, I knew he was a prince in disguise.”

What do you think the man meant when he said that?

Discussion Tips

Help students understand that there is more to a person than what meets the eye. Encourage them not to judge people by their clothing or their appearance. Point out that, no matter how they look on the outside, all people want other people to like and accept them.

Final Activity Distribute **Certificates of Appreciation.**