

# HOMES



‘All children, from birth to eighteen years of age,  
have the right to enough food, clean water and a home.’

UN General Assembly, November 1989

‘We all have the right to a home, enough money to live on  
and health care if we get ill.’

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights

In 2002 in Dublin, 2,920 adults and 1,140 children were homeless.

The numbers of families with children who are homeless  
increased to 25% of all homeless households identified.

Merchant's Quay Ireland - Homelessness Awareness Campaign

*“It’s a long day when you’re homeless. It’s lonely.  
There’s nothing to do. There’s nowhere to go”*

Joanne, 23, homeless for 4 years



## IDEAS AND ISSUES TO EXPLORE WITH YOUR CLASS

'Home is where the heart is.' Suggest other phrases or proverbs, in as many languages as possible and from as many cultures as possible, that express similar sentiments, eg 'Níl aon tinteán mar do thinteán féin'; 'El verdadero hogar es donde uno tiene a los suyos (your real home is where the people and things belonging to you are).

- Read 'An Old Woman of the Roads' by Irish poet Pádraic Colum and say what you think about the thoughts expressed in the poem.
- Discuss the fact that all families are unique and that the places where they choose to live may give some information about them. List some of the things that homes have in common (physical features, shelter etc) and some of the ways they may differ (location, environment, design etc).
- What is a home? What makes a home? Why don't all people live in similar homes? Why do they choose to live in different homes? Discuss personal choice and personal circumstance, eg homes for large, extended families, homes adapted for physical and other disabilities (no upstairs, bathroom downstairs), homes for people in sheltered accommodation, homes for those who move from place to place. Discuss also how homes and houses are built to suit different physical environments and cultures (houses in hot countries have small, shuttered windows to keep out heat, Travellers or nomads usually prefer to live in homes that move or are transportable). List other factors which influence the variety of homes in the world (family size, wealth and poverty).



• A home might be defined as somewhere to be safe, somewhere we have a certain amount of privacy from others, somewhere that offers comfort, a place to keep possessions in, to be with family, to shelter in, where we feel we belong. It is a place where we have certain responsibilities and where there are certain rules, some peculiar to our own unique family. To some people, home might be a Transit van, to others it might be a three-bedroomed apartment or a flat in a tower-block. To some it means a place where there are arguments, sometimes friendly disagreements, at other times more serious and upsetting rows. Brainstorm the class-definitions of what a home means and write these on flipchart paper – the original definitions may be added to or amended as the discussion about homes continues. **[Not all children or families have access to homes which offer safety and/or people who care about the children, so these discussions will need to be treated with care and sensitivity. Consult**

***the principal or the school's designated liaison person before approaching this topic.]***

- Is there a difference between a house and a home? Check a dictionary and write definitions of both terms. Are all houses places where people live? Or does the definition of 'home' have to include the people who live there, the carers and guardians?
- You might call a cottage, a caravan, a mobile home, a flat, an apartment, a bungalow etc 'home'. Each child might write or suggest what the word 'home' means to them and discuss this with a partner or with the class.
- Discuss basic physical characteristics of a house: size, materials used to build, materials used to furnish etc. Children might list some of the materials used in their home. Suggest advantages and disadvantages of high-rise/apartment/mobile home/bungalow/gated community etc. How many rooms are to be found in the different types of house and what are these rooms generally used for?
- Discuss the idea of a dream home or ideal home. Where would children situate their dream home? Would their friends and family be close by? What might be in their dream home? What might it be made of? Would they like a balcony? A garden? A garage? Who would live in it? Working individually or in groups, the class might make model ideal homes from shoe boxes or similar – these could be joined or placed very close together to produce adjoining farm-dwellings, villages, towns or housing estates.

## SPHE

- Read the RIGHTS listed under the heading 'Homes' above, and ask children to discuss their importance and relevance in the lives of the children/class.
- **Myself and my family:** Sometimes things happen that affect your home and family life. Some members of the family may disagree about something and break contact with the others, someone in the family may die or leave the home for other reasons – you may miss this person very much and feel that home is no longer a safe place where you can be yourself.
- Sometimes a family member becomes critically ill, or loses a job, and there may be tension in the home. Your family may move house and you may not feel at home in your new place of residence. You may be in a one-parent family and your parent might have recently introduced a new or prospective partner – or you may worry that they will do one day. Married





# THE MEMORY BOX

## Teacher's Notes

parents may separate or divorce and you might as a result have two homes and maybe two families – one of these homes might be many miles from the original family home. Have any of these or other changes affected you? Did they affect how you felt about your home?

### Homelessness

Read and discuss the statistics and quotation listed under the heading 'Homes' above. Many children, all over the world, have no place to call home, for a variety of reasons. Some children and young adults leave home because of family violence or serious disagreements. But in October 2006, the MakeRoom Campaign – which is being spearheaded by Focus Ireland, the Simon Communities of Ireland, the Society of St Vincent de Paul and Threshold – said that with strong political leadership, a responsive policy agenda and adequate resources, homelessness could be ended. The year 2010 is the target set by the Government for ending rough sleeping and longterm homelessness – this will be highlighted throughout this campaign.

### Maths

- A house is comprised of basic shapes, mainly rectangles, squares, triangles and semi-circles. From photographs or sketches previously taken of the children's homes, or of similar homes, represent in graph or similar form the number of shapes to be found in each house, or in the houses/homes of all the children in the class.
- Represent, in graph form, the different types of buildings/homes in which children in the class live – do most of them live in housing estates, with three or four-bedroomed houses of very similar design? Or do most live in red-brick or terraced houses? How many, if any, live in farmhouses, trailers, huts or cottages? What, if anything, can we tell about the age of a house from its location? Which might be older: houses in a town or village, or those found in housing estates? What might indicate the age of a block of apartments or flats? What clues can we spot that might indicate the average age of the buildings lived in by the children in the class? Can we find the average age of our homes and add this information to that shown in the previous graph?

### History

- Children might investigate the history of their own home or of a home with which they are very familiar. When was it built or made? Who built or made it? If it is a home that can move, was it built by a family member? Was the home or house built by developers/business people? Was it originally built as a family home? (Some large family homes have been converted to flats/apartment blocks/ commercial units while some old school buildings/barns/ farm outhouses/rectories/ parish halls may now be used as family homes etc.) Did anyone else live in the home before their family? Can they find out who lived there first/ before their own family? What was on the site/plot of land before their home?
- *Logainmneacha*/place-names: the names of streets, towns and townlands give clues to their origins. Sometimes the names will tell of past or current importance, eg Main Street, High Street. Other names will tell of the activities that once took place in the area, eg Fishamble Street, Merchant's Quay etc. We can learn about the importance of certain historical characters to an area, eg Ardee (Áth Fhirdhia, the 'Town of Ferdia's Ford'), Donegal (Dún na nGall, 'Fort of the Foreigners'), Oliver Bond flats, Seán McDermott Street, Parnell Square. Children might do some research through photographs and local histories (the local library nearly always has Ordnance Survey maps) and see what they can find out about the history of their home area from the nameplaces.
- In the story of *The Three Little Pigs*, the Big Bad Wolf was able to flatten and destroy the homes made of straw and of wood, but the brick house defeated him. Brick was first baked in the Middle East around six thousand years ago. When fired (baked) at a high temperature, bricks were strong and it was easier to make a brick than to carve a block from stone. By the 1900s, most buildings – and even roads – were made from brick. Identify some of the more modern materials now used to build our homes – corrugated iron, plastic, wood etc.
- Homes in the process of being built – take photos, draw pictures of houses being built in the locality. Compare with older buildings in area – brick (red?), aluminium doors/ windows etc. Ask older family members or neighbours if they have old photographs or postcards showing the area in the past and ask them to share their knowledge. Are there any new blocks of flats in the area? Is there a mobile home camp nearby? Is there a halting site for Travellers?





## THE MEMORY BOX

### HOMES

Are these new to the area? Visit Google Earth to see the bird's-eye view of the locality, showing the variety of homes in the area.

#### Geography

- Homes around the world, eg igloos, yurts, tepees, trailers, caravans, houses etc: discuss traditional homes or homes that might have been much more common fifty years ago than in the twenty-first century. Suggest reasons why fewer people now live in nomadic homes than in previous centuries. See *We Are the World*, a pack for infant classes, containing high-quality photographs of homes around the world [www.waterfordoneworldcentre.com](http://www.waterfordoneworldcentre.com).
- What natural resources (forests, fish, rivers, water supply, shelter, building stones, arable land etc) made the location of your home or home-town desirable? Children might examine the topographic conditions of their home or local village or town. With parental/carer/guardian permission, take a walk around the local village or housing estate or around their farm and look for unusual features, eg old stone roads or lanes, the remains of monuments, storage tanks, docks, old railway tracks. It would be interesting to make sketches or take rubbings or take photographs of the things they find.
- Types of house: from photographs, identify different homes, eg terraced house, cottage, flat, semi-detached, detached, bungalow. Local estate agents might provide some photos of houses in the area and of houses in a contrasting part of the country. Identify the features visible in these different homes/houses, eg doors, windows, chimneys, doorknobs etc. Child could sketch or draw one of the homes they find on a walk in their locality. Discuss why they selected this particular home as a subject. What makes it different from the houses around it?
- Materials used: apart from brick, what other materials are required to build a house? Identify as many as possible (eg mud and snow/ice in some countries). Don't forget that plumbing and wiring is necessary in most houses. If possible, conduct a class survey on services, eg does the water supply come from a group water scheme or private well etc?

#### Visual arts

- Using the children's own outline sketches of their homes, or digital or other photographs preferably taken by the children themselves, mount a collage that would highlight as many different aspects of the buildings discussed in the above sections as possible.
- **Looking and Responding:** the work of Christo and Jeanne-Claude, available in Taschen Portfolio [www.taschen.com](http://www.taschen.com). Examine works such as 'Balcony' (1945), 'House of Stairs' (1951), 'Belvedere' (1958), 'Ascending and Descending' (1960) and 'Waterfall' (1961). What are the children's immediate impressions of these works? They could discuss what might happen if someone were to drape their home or the school building in enormous pieces of fabric.
- Make a model of a house using boxes and collage materials. Perhaps make it possible to take the roof off to show the interior of the house (as with dolls' houses), which children might then furnish.

Paint and Design: Building houses out of construction paper

*You will need:*

15cm x 60cm coloured construction paper (house)

15cm x 23cm coloured construction paper (roof)

Two 15cm x 23cm green construction paper (trees)

Two 7cm x 23cm brown construction paper (trees)

12cm x 15cm construction paper (garage)

23cm x 30cm white paper (windows and doors).

- 1 Discuss different-sized windows, doors, and whatever children might add to make the house decorative, eg shutters, curtains, letterbox, doorknob etc
- 2 They might cut two corners off roof and glue down
- 3 Garage piece might be glued to back or side of house
- 4 Round off two green pieces for treetops. Cut out two small triangles at the top of two brown tree trunks. Glue with green to back of house
- 5 Use crayons and maybe white or light yellow paper for windows and details.

