From Packing a Suitcase to Living and Surviving on the Street

An exploration of the issue of Homelessness in Toronto using issues-based and processed drama

“Homelessness has nothing to do with lack of shelter.”

Unit Plan and lesson outlines
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From Packing a Suitcase to Living on the Street

An exploration of Homelessness in Toronto using issues-based and processed drama

Course: Dramatic Arts, Grade 10, Open (ADA 20)

Course description: This course requires students to actively explore dramatic forms and techniques, using their own ideas and concerns, as well as sources selected from a wide range of authors, genres, and cultures. Student learning will include: identifying and using the principles of space, time, voice and movement in creating, sustaining, and communicating authentic roles within a drama. Students will assume responsibility for decisions made in the creation and presentation of the drama, and will analyze and reflect on the experience.

Curriculum Expectations

Strand: Theory

Overall expectations:
- Demonstrate an understanding of the conventions of role playing and structuring of dramatic works
- Demonstrate an understanding of the elements and principles of dramatic expression (voice, movement, production values)

Specific expectations:

Role
- Demonstrate an understanding of the process of structuring drama (selection of source, choice of roles, negotiation of actions)

Elements and principles
- Demonstrate an understanding of the control of volume, tone, pace, and intention in an expressive speech
- Demonstrate the use of movement, gesture, and non-verbal communication to express ideas in a drama

Dramatic forms and sources
- Demonstrate an understanding of criteria for selecting forms in the construction and communication of a drama
- Explain how dramatic forms may effectively communicate more than one perspective.

Creation

Overall expectations:
- Demonstrate an understanding of group responsibility in the creation of a drama.
- Create and perform dramatic presentations using knowledge of conventions, performance spaces and audience perspectives.

Specific expectations:

Constructing:
- Demonstrate an understanding of methods for developing roles that clearly express a range of feelings, attitudes, and beliefs
- Demonstrate an understanding of the element of risk in playing a role
Demonstrate an understanding of how role is communicated through language, gesture, costumes, props, and symbol.

Demonstrates an understanding of their own and others respective functions in collaborative work on a drama.

Communicating and presenting

Demonstrate an understanding of the effect of various forms in the interpretation and communication of a source or idea.

Demonstrate an understanding of audience, perspective in the communication of a drama.

Analysis

Overall expectations:
Students will:

• Generate and apply criteria to evaluate their own dramatic presentations
• Use the vocabulary of dramatic arts to discuss and review drama presentations in the school and in the community.
• Demonstrate an understanding of how role taking and the processes of drama are connected to their lives.

Specific expectations:
Evaluation:

• Use specific criteria to evaluate their work in the creation and communication of a drama

Reflection

• Explain between their own lives and the metaphor or theme in a drama

Lesson 1: What is a home?

Warm up activity: Atom... build me a home!

Instructions:
Part I: Warm-Up
Students stand in a neutral position, hands by their sides, and faces expressionless (they will need to create a variety of objects using their bodies, so they need to ready to react at any time.

- Walk around the space with a moderate pace and follow the teacher’s instructions.
- Speeding up or slowing down
- Change direction
- Touch a wall
- Touch the floor
- Make eye contact with different students for short periods of time
- Move around the space as if you have a big decision to make
- Stop in place and find a place where you can think about it

Part II:
- Get up from your seat as if you are an architect—follow my instructions
  - Organize your building materials (should be down low, gathering your tools, taking stock of your supplies)
  - Measure (should be at a variety of levels, measuring different parts of your building
  - Build (should begin at the foundation, using a variety of different tools—a spade, a hammer, a cement mixer, a trowel)

Transition to the Atom... build me a home!
- Get up and walk around in the space again without talking or touching
- Teacher calls out “Atom and a number.” Each time students group up and create a freeze frame of the following structures using their bodies.

NOTE: Think about levels, windows and doorways, and the structure of the buildings as if they were created by a highly skilled architect

Here are some suggestions of the types of homes that the students may be asked to construct:
- Tent, Igloo, Cabin, Apartment, Mansion, Condominium, Row-house/ townhouse, Semi-detached, Lean-to, Castle, Park, Fort, Tree house, Boat, Hut

(Adapted from a Drama Structure presented by Kay Sanders at the Ash Green School, July 2010)
Activity 1: Small group brainstorming, discussion and response to the question: “What is a home?”

Instructions:
- Divide students into groups of four and give each group a large piece of chart paper and a marker for each student.
- Graffiti exercise to brainstorm what a home is, what it might look like, how it is built, who belongs in the home, what types of emotions or attitudes might exist there.

Some additional guiding questions to help students along might include:
- What does a home look like?
- What is it made of?
- Where is it located?
- Who creates or builds a home?
- Does it include certain appliances? Heat or light source?
- Does it require people? If so who?
- Does it require animals? If so what ones?
- Does a home evolve or does it always maintain the same shape and features?

Debrief
Discuss the different responses to “What is a home?” Have students within groups share their responses and look for commonalities. A representative from each group will share with the larger group. Create a thought/idea wall for the students to refer back to.

Activity 2: What does a home look like for a homeless person?

Instructions:
- Give each group a large cardboard box or a 3 or 4 pieces of Bristol board.
- Students graffiti on the box using words or images their responses to the questions above about a “home”

Debrief
- Discussion points to be addressed in the Debrief:
  - Types of accommodation: squatter camps, abandoned buildings, hostels, tents, cardboard boxes, street grates, subsidized housing or tenements, multi-family
  - Locations: under bridges or overpasses, highly disputed land use areas
  - Visibility: illegal, most politicians and land owners turn a blind eye
  - Building materials: scraps of cardboard, metal or whatever recyclable materials can be found
  - Other: don’t meet construction building standards, made for transiency-easy transportation

Cardboard boxes or pieces of Bristol board can be attached together or used as props at a later date, so hold on to the boxes.
Creative Writing assignment: “Without a home” Written piece.

- Students are to write a 100-150 word written piece called “Without a home”, addressing what would it be like not to have a home?

- Students should consider where they would go, how it would feel, what they would miss, their feelings and attitude about their situation.

- This is a differentiated activity so students have their choice as to the format of their work. However, the word limit should be considered as a frame of reference as to the length of the writing accompanying their work.

Here are the suggested format options:

- Dialogue between two characters
- A collage with an accompanying explanation
- A photo album with captions
- An editorial
- A personal letter
- A poem
- A piece of spoken word
- Format of your choosing, pending teacher approval

See Rubric on the next page for evaluation.
Rubric for “Without a home” writing piece

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BLM 3.5-6</th>
<th>Response Journal Rubric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Categories</td>
<td>Level 1 50-59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge/Understanding</td>
<td>- demonstrates limited knowledge - demonstrates limited understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking/Inquiry</td>
<td>- uses critical thinking skills with limited effectiveness - uses inquiry skills with limited effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>- communicates information and ideas with limited clarity - demonstrates limited command of various forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application</td>
<td>- uses language conventions with limited accuracy and effectiveness - connection of personal ideas to writing is limited</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A student whose achievement is below level 1 (50%) has not met the expectations for this assignment or activity.

Source: Grade 10 English, Academic Course Profile.
Lesson 2: Image making—What does the street look like?
Creating a streetscape

Warm Up Activity: Martha Game

The purpose of this warm up activity is to help students to visualize how they might create the different components of a streetscape.

Instructions:
• Everyone in the class is to stand in a circle.
• One person will move into the space and use their body to create an object and announce what they are. For example, “I am a traffic light”
• Second person immediately runs in and adds another object to the picture that is connected to or that could exist in the same. They too state what they are and add on to the original phrase. “I am a mailbox under the traffic light”
• Third person adds themselves into the picture, “I am a homeless man next to the mailbox under the traffic light.”
• Continue the activity until the entire group is part of the picture.
• Debrief: After each created picture ask the students what elements they like best, what would they keep and what might they replace.

Variation:
  o One student can act as the architect or city planner who will create an illustration of the different components as they are added to the picture. This will be helpful with the debrief discussion.
  o This is a fast activity, so students shouldn’t think too long about what they want to add or how they are going to do it.

Extension: Once everyone is comfortable, teacher can announce to the group that they are going to modify the picture to become either a moving picture or even further a moving and talking picture where the students bring the scene/picture to life!

(Adapted from: The Martha Game, activity shared in ABQ by Lana Hewer)
Activity 1: Creating a streetscape:

Students need to be actively involved in creating the streetscape within which they are going to be doing their rehearsals and collage collective final performance.

Most people who live on the street carry with them a variety of recyclable materials including: scraps of cardboard, newspapers, glass bottles, plastic bottles, plastic bags, old suitcases or bags, secondhand clothing, winter clothing etc. These materials will be used in this activity.

Instructions:
Brainstorm and discuss the importance of Setting in creating an appropriate scene and what types of objects they might include:

For example:
Setting: Main Street, sidewalk, gutter, road, brick wall, storefront, alcoves
Objects: garbage cans, fire hydrants, traffic lights,
Street Art: Graffiti, signage, advertisements

Provide a whole ream of materials and have them create the streetscape. If you have any stage pieces-boxes, benches or risers they can be incorporated.

Students need to keep in mind that they are going to need to move in this space whenever in the unit they are doing image or improvised work on the street.

Extension: Guided Tour of the Streetscape

Once the streetscape has been completed, ask the architects to take the class on a “Guided Tour” of the street to highlight its features, components etc.

Each architectural group is to provide a detailed picture and highly descriptive explanation of the environment in which the drama is to take place.
(see: Jonothan Neelands. “Guided Tour”. Structuring Drama Work. p. 18)

Extension: Adding “Soundtracking” to the Streetscape
Students can create realistic or stylistic sounds to bring life to the street and help describe the environment. One group of students can create a series of sounds or repeated words throughout the guided tour. The teacher may choose to direct this as the “orchestral director” or enlist one of the students to do so. This will also help other students in the class to be “active participants” in the lesson. Students may choose to use a variety of rhythmic instruments and other soundmakers if they so wish.
(see: Jonothan Neelands. “Soundtracking”. Structuring Drama Work. p. 24)

Peer Assessment: Students will be assessed by their peers for their Guided tour and Soundtracking structures using the Drama Peer Evaluation Rubrics found on the following 2 pages
**DRAMA PEER EVALUATION - Using your voice to good effect**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What to look for...</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Okay</th>
<th>Needs Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I could clearly hear them.</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They varied the tone of their voice.</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They pronounced every word (enunciating)</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The speed varied from time to time (pace)</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some words were emphasized for effect.</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
<td>![emoji]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One thing they did well...

One thing they need to work on...

Well done!

Adapted from Kay Sanders, Ash Green School, Coventry, July 2010.
DRAMA PEER EVALUATION - Facial Expressions and Body Language

Good use of facial and body language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What to look for...</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Okay</th>
<th>Needs Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Their facial expressions changed.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Smiley" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Smiley" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Sad" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Their facial expressions reflected the character they were playing.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Smiley" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Smiley" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Sad" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The body language was appropriate for the character</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Smiley" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Smiley" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Sad" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They paid attention to detail</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Smiley" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Smiley" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Sad" /></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some words were emphasized for effect.</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Smiley" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Smiley" /></td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Sad" /></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One thing they did well...

One thing they need to work on...

Well done!

Adapted from Kay Sanders, Ash Green School, Coventry, July 2010.
Lesson 3: Packing up the suitcase with objects to survive on the street

Warm up: “This is for you…” Survival gifts for going on a trip or a journey

This warm-up activity will give students a starting point for doing short improve sketches.

Instructions:
- Divide students into groups of two.
- Task:
  - Take turns giving each other a survival gift.
  - The giver is not to indicate the size or weight of the imaginary object.
  - The receiver will open the gift to determine what it is.
  - Both partners are to use appropriate dialogue in the scene about what the object looks like, its features/components and why it will help the receiver to survive on their journey.
  - A gift will appear as soon as the receiver reaches into the box

Students are reminded to:
- commit to their first idea; it is often the best one
- don’t second guess themselves or plan what is to happen next; go with it and be willing to take a risk and trust the dialogue

(Activity adapted from Talia Pura’s Stages, P. 111-112)

Activity 1: Packing your suitcase/knapsack in 5 minutes

Introduction: There are a variety of reasons why people find themselves homeless
- job loss—caused by downsizing or other economic factors
- eviction because not enough money to pay rent
- mental health illnesses
- natural disasters—hurricanes, earthquakes, war
- dictatorship
- family violence
- addictions to drugs and alcohol
- abuse—verbal, physical, sexual, social
- other
For the purpose of this activity, students can select the scenario which is causing them to become homeless

**Instructions:**
1. Distribute a piece of chart paper or large paper to each student. On one side of the page have the students draw both parts of the suitcase in whatever shape they like—so that when the sheet is folded it will look like a complete suitcase. Keeping in mind that the size of the suitcase will determine how much they can bring and what will fit into the suitcase.

2. Student draw on the paper as many of their most valuable possessions that they wish to bring with them (could be as identification, possessions of sentimental value, as well as objects that will be useful to them in helping them to survive).

3. Students are to fold finished work in half with the possessions on the inside.

4. Divide students into groups of 3 and improvise three scenes:
   a) Receiving the news of their eviction or loss of job (worker, boss and co-worker)
   b) Packing and reminiscing about the importance of the objects as they are placed inside the bag
   c) Jump forward to using at least 5 of the objects while “on the street” (a group of homeless people on the street or in a shelter/hostel)

**Notes to the players:**
- Each scene should reveal the stress and anxiety, frustration or disbelief of the homeless person in transitioning from a life of stability to a life of instability.
- A different student should take on the role of the homeless person in each scenario.
- After each scene has been improvised ask each group to work on a specific scene, to shape it into a short performance which demonstrates the transition of a person moving from a life of stability, to packing to leave and to living on the street.

(Note: This activity has been adapted from a drama structure introduced by Professor Joe Winston’s workshop on Debra Ellis’ *The Breadwinner*, Warwick University, July 2010)
Activity 3: The Suitcase Story—Whoosh Activity

Instructions:
- Everyone stands in a circle. Teacher explains that he/she is going to narrate the story about a suitcase.
- As the story is read and different objects are revealed in the story. Students are to step into the circle and to assume the role of the different objects. Students can take on the movements and actions of the objects, demonstrate the emotions of the “characters”/“objects” or make sound effects throughout.
- When the teacher says *Whoosh*, like a wave coming over the middle of the circle, the students are to return to their place in the circle.
- As the narration continues, new students are invited to come into the circle and take on the roles.

The Suitcase Story (for Whoosh activity)

Once there was a suitcase. It had been so many places it was covered with stickers. There were so many address labels on the suitcase that it wasn’t sure which address label was right. This made the suitcase very scared because it thought it would get lost.

*Whoosh*

The suitcase remembered that once it was brown with a brass trim around its lid. When it looked in the mirror it could tell that it still looked like that. The problem was that more and more it was collecting address labels and stickers. After a while, the suitcase figured all of its brown leather would be covered. Then it would forget what colour it used to be. This bothered the suitcase.

*Whoosh*

The suitcase didn’t like it when different people carried it around. Sometimes people left the suitcase out in the rain. They didn’t mean to do it on purpose. Other times it would be clear and sunny outside but then the clouds would gather and the rain would start. The people who had left the suitcase would come back and dry it off. But it took a long time for the suitcase to be really dry and its brass trim would start to rust.

*Whoosh*

Sometimes the owner of the suitcase would put it down really hard and hurt the suitcase. Once a lady tore off and old address label and put on a new one. The lady tore it off so fast that it hurt and left some pieces of the label still attached. The lady then stuck a new label on top of the old glue without cleaning it off. Because the lady didn’t clean off the old glue, the new label didn’t stick.

*Whoosh*

One day the suitcase got very angry and decided to get even. It wait until its owner had everything packed up and closed the suitcase. But then as the man was walking away, the suitcase opened itself up. All of the man’s
baggage fell out (his clothes, his toiletries, his shoes etc.) Boy was the man mad! It took him a long time to put everything back into the suitcase (that he had packed so carefully). Just as he was almost packed up again, the suitcase fell open again!

Whoosh

For awhile, the suitcase was glad it had gotten even. It even thought of more ways of making trouble. It planned ways to make its handle fall off, and waited until it was suit would land on a person’s toes. The suitcase would wait until it was all packed with different items. That way it was heavy so that when it fell on a person’s toes it would hurt. This was its way for getting even for the times when the address labels would be ripped off and replaced with new ones.

Whoosh

After a while, people didn’t trust the suitcase. They tied it together with a rope so that it wouldn’t fall apart. The rope didn’t feel good. It made the suitcase madder. With the rope tied around it, no one could see the suitcase’s brass trim. It looked ugly with the rope all around it and the suitcase didn’t like it at all! The suitcase much preferred when people would come by and comment on how shiny its trim was and how nice its brown leather was.

Whoosh

Time passed, and the suitcase got moved around some more. Every time it fell on someone else’s toes or let all of its baggage fall out, its owner would sell the suitcase. That would mean that yet again, the suitcase would get more stickers from all the places it went. Sadly, the suitcase got some dents in its brass trim and even some scratches on its leather. The suitcase started to forget what it was like when it was new!

Whoosh

One day something unusual happened. A person named Jean bought the suitcase. The old owner, said to Jean, “Watch out for this suitcase. The handle falls off, and the latch flies open.” This made Jean take a minute to inspect the suitcase closely. “No wonder it suddenly opens,” she said. “People expect it to hold too much. I won’t put so much inside.” Jean looked at the handle. “No wonder it falls off. The case is too heavy for such a small handle.” The suitcase could hardly believe it!

Whoosh

Jean took the suitcase and only put inside the suitcase what it could easily hold. When she knew it was getting too full, she carried it in her arms instead of tying it with a rope. Jean and the suitcase started to get used to each other. One day, Jean said, “There are so many labels on this suitcase. Someone might not know its mine.” Jean took off all the many address labels on the suitcase and she did it very carefully. Then she polished the brass trim. For the first time in a very long time, the suitcase looked in the mirror and smiled. “I look okay,” it thought.

Whoosh
One day Jean said, “I wish this suitcase could talk. It’s been so many places; I bet it has had some interesting adventures.” “Some adventures!” thought the suitcase. “I’ve been dropped, left out in the rain, lost, rusted, dented and scratched.” …

Whoosh

The suitcase thought a lot about its travels and all of the things that happened to it. It remembered all of the things it learned. It knew how to find a room for itself when the baggage compartments on buses and planes were full. It knew how not to get stepped on when its owner left it in the aisle on a bus. It learned how to find its way in new places. It knew how to get even when it was mad and how to make the mad go away so it didn’t have to get even any more. It knew that, even if it got scratched and dented, it could be fixed again. It just needed to stay in the hands of an owner who cared for it!

Whoosh

Adapted from: “The Suitcase Story” Institute for Human Services of Ohio, December 1, 2005.
http://www.rainbowkids.com/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=105
Lesson 4: Bringing Street Signs to life-A lesson in tableaux

Warm Up: Walk about and Freeze with actions and emotions relating to home and homelessness and the experience of street life.

Instructions:
- Students walk around the room finding their own path and filling in the empty spaces without talking or touching each other.
- When teacher calls out freeze the students are to stop and pose. Repeat initial direction of walking and freezing in place several times to ensure that students are comfortable moving about and coming to quick stop and to freeze in place.
- Students are to use their whole bodies as well as to incorporate the emotion or action through their facial expressions.
- When the teacher calls out freeze now, the students are to embody the emotion, occupation or description of a person in a particular context.

Examples:
- Emotions: anger, desperation, frustration, hopelessness, hopeful, cold, despondent, lonely, misunderstood, denial, ignored by strangers who fail to acknowledge them
- Responses to various climates: hot, cold, rain, snow, sleet, cool, wind
- Actions: seeking food, building a shelter, hiding, eating at a community meal, begging for money, selling newspapers, lining up for a shelter or a meal,

Note: Teacher may choose to use a soundtrack of music to set the tone or pacing (fast, slow, medium) for the movement. Selections from the August Rush movie soundtrack would be good. Any instrumental

Teacher will remind students of the drama structure of tableau and its usefulness in preparation for the following up activity using photographs as stimulus

- Define: Tableau is a French word meaning picture; like a snapshot taking at the moment that they freeze in place
- Outline the differences between a group tableau, statue tableau and picture tableau. Statue tableau requires students to work together as if one ball of clay to create a structure or object; whereas, a picture tableau is used to tell a story
- Discuss some of the key elements to consider in the creation of a tableau: balance (literal and visual), symmetry/ asymmetry (formal vs. informal), line (static vs. dynamic) and mass (positive vs. negative space)

(Adapted from Talia Pura. Stages: Creative Ideas for Teaching Drama, pages 80-83)
Activity 1: Tableaux--Bringing Street Signs to life

Homeless Signs by Mark Daye

Background: In Spring 2007, Mark Daye, Graphic design student at the Ontario College of Art and Design decided as part of his 4th year thesis project, to create a series of public signs which brought to light the issues of the homeless in Toronto. He wanted to “represent a local population that usually gets overlooked.” He created 30 signs and posted them on telephone poles in the downtown core with messages about the struggles of the homeless population using short statements and statistics. His wanted onlookers to consider the “codes of behaviour, conformity, and acceptance” and to think about the homeless who are often ignored by society and blend into the backdrop of our city like the signs he created. Sadly, the City very quickly removed the signage.

Source: http://www.tdrc.net/resources/public/Crowe-Newsletter_apr_07.htm

Instructions:

• Brief students on the artistic work of Mark Daye and his objectives for designing these street signs.
• Divide students into groups of 3 or 4 and ask them to select one of the street sign photographs provided.

The goal of the task: to represent the text on the signs by creating a tableau or series of 2 tableaux to bring the statement on the signage to life. Students may take on the roles of human beings or inanimate objects in the tableau

• Students will present these tableaux as if they were in the midst of a streetscape (to put the street signs in their context).

Variation: Students can do the tableau frozen or may move into a frozen tableau by adding in the different elements one at a time.

Students may also choose to include 1 one or phrase thought tracking of the different elements in the tableau.

Debrief: Following the presentation of each tableau, the whole group might guess what statement or message the group’s tableau is trying to convey.

Discussion of the different individuals or representations of different objects may be revealed and feedback provided as to the effectiveness of the tableau in conveying the message.
BLACKLINE MASTER: Street Signs by Mark Daye

The following are photographs taken by graphic artist Mark Daye of the Homeless Street Signs he created and posted in downtown Toronto in March and April 2007. The location where the images are posted is indicated by the artist.

Street Sign 1: Homeless Sleeping Quiet (location: Victoria and Queen Streets, St. Michael’s Hospital)

Street Sign 2: Please keep our streets clean, over 818 people have to sleep on them. (Location: Baldwin Street)

Street sign 3: Homelessness has nothing to do with lack of shelter. (Location: Queen and John Streets, Chum City)
Street Sign 4: Homeless Warming Grate, Please Keep Clear Oct-May. (Location: Queen and Bay, Old City Hall)

Street sign 5: Approximately 5052 homeless living in Toronto as of April 2006. McCaul & Queen streets

Street sign 6: Please have change ready for homeless. Location: Bay Street

Source: All images are found on Mark Daye’s Flickr Photostream. http://www.flickr.com/photos/7742877@N04/
Designer signs of the times  Published Tuesday, April 3, 2007

The signs sprang up suddenly under the cover of night.

Official-looking and made of hard plastic and aluminum, they were bolted to posts at major intersections along Lake Shore Blvd.

Other turned up at busy downtown hubs.

"Quiet," read one, in front of a downtown hospital. "Homeless people sleeping."

Another advised, "Homeless warming grate. Please keep clear."

For Mark Daye, who created the series of seven signs, it seemed a master stroke of subversion. How do you draw attention to an age-old urban issue, especially when passersby have long been conditioned to ignore the usual signage – those tattered posters glued to poles and construction sites?

"I started thinking about the way sign systems work," says the 30-year-old Toronto student. "There's official signage. There's advertising.

"So I thought, what would happen if I used official-looking signage, but I put an unofficial message in it?"

"The most obvious thing I could think of is homelessness because it's all around."

After all, if posters and paper signs inviting people to take part in homeless forums are not catching any eyes, why not bring the message to a completely different frontier: officialdom?

Daye's signs – stark messages on hard plastic plates – seemed the perfect subterfuge.

Officialdom, however, is not amused.

"You can't do that," says Brad Ross, a spokesperson for the City of Toronto. "We have an encroachment bylaw, so we've been removing them as we come across them.

"The signs that the city (has) are way-finding and also letting people know what the restrictions are with respect to parking and stopping and turning and those kinds of things. They're strictly for motorists to understand what the bylaws are on the roads."

The signs, however, are lingering long enough to get their message out and now they're being trumpeted throughout the blogosphere.
Websites such as flickr.com, blogto.com and torontoist.com have all lauded the campaign.

And public space champions are hailing it as "genius."

"I love it when I see art subvert something in a very meaningful and direct kind of way," Matthew Blackett, publisher of Spacing magazine.

"And this certainly does. Using way-finding signs like that and the iconography of it is genius."

"It's using the power of design to get across its message in a very substantive way."

No stranger to subversion, Spacing unleashed its own series of way-finding signs about a year and a half ago. Created by artist Marc Ngui, the signs used familiar shapes – yellow triangles, blue boxes and green circles – to convey fresh ideas.

One sign, for example, portrayed a man on the ground, holding his hand out for a donation.

Surrounded by a blue box, it was designed to be posted around City Hall, at about the time when anti-panhandling bylaws were being proposed.

"We started seeing these all over the place," Blackett says of the downloadable signs.

But for Daye, who created the signs as part of a project for the Ontario College of Art and Design, there was a certain reward in putting up his work on city poles personally.

While Daye was installing a final sign at Queen St. W. and Bay St., for instance, a homeless man suddenly sat up from his grate to inspect his handiwork.

"He told me in the winter a friend of his got his foot run over (by a car) while he slept on the ground," Daye recalls.

"And he thought these signs would be good to help protect him ... It was something I never thought of."

Extension: Creating their own street signs with text and illustrations

Assignment and activity to be shared in class the following day

1. Consider the neighbourhood where you live in and if there are any homeless people, who live there, or shelters or residences that provide services to people who live in poverty or on the street. If you are unfamiliar with the services and the homeless issues in their neighbourhoods, you may want to do some internet research. (see below for some useful websites)

2. Based on your research findings, create a unique street sign with a clear graphic and short line of text which illuminates some of the challenges or statistics about homeless people in your community (it might be more effective to focus on youth)

3. Write a list of concrete suggestions that could be used to coach a small group of your classmates into creating a tableau which illustrates your picture and the message of your signage. Your suggestions should be clear and constructive and can be written in short sentences or be accompanied by diagrams as you will be expected lead your peers in creating your corresponding tableau.
Lesson 5: Looking at Stereotypes and understanding feelings of exclusion and lack of belonging, as they relate to street life.

Warm-Up Activity-Zip, Zap, Woop, Bop

Game is played with a large group and begins with students standing side by side in a circle. The purpose is to pass the energy around the circle as quickly as possible, but decisions need to be made as to how the energy is to be passed.

Here are the options for movement:

Zip—both hands are held together as in prayer. The zip is sent to the person on either side of the sender (to the left or to the right). When passed in sequence the energy is passed right around the circle and everyone is “included.”

Zap—hands are held together as in prayer. The zap is sent to someone across the circle and not immediately beside the sender. It is then passed around at random. While more creative and fun, some people will not receive this type of sequence.

Woop—one hand is put over one’s head in either the right or left direction. The woop symbolizes that the signal will skip over one person and the flow of energy will then continue with the next person.

Bop—When the energy signal is passed, and the person on the receiving end doesn’t want to receive it, the receiver raises both their hands to block/reject the signal and the sender then needs to choose another method of sending it around the circle

Debrief:
What do each of these signals represent in terms of the way energy flows in our city—in our workplaces, schools, on the street?

Zip—consistent pattern, everyone is included.

Zap—changes the pattern up a bit to make it more fun and creative but often times people start getting excluded.

Woop-pattern skips over someone. A visible exclusion of someone from the game.

Bop—signifies rejection to the sender.
Useful questions to assist with the debrief

Who are the people in our school/workplace/community who often receive Zips and Zaps?

How does it feel to receive a woop? Who are these people in our school who we are excluding and looking over? How might we become more aware of those people who are being excluded?

How did it feel to be on the receiving end of a bop? Next time you received the signal were you wishing you could bop the person who had previously bopped you?

Did you often choose to continue the same signal you were sent? Why is that?

What can we learn from this activity?

What things can we do as people and citizens in our city toward inclusion and building stronger connections with each other and members of our community by showing appreciation and acknowledgement rather than exclusion and rejection?

Activity 1: Discussion in class about stereotypes

Definition of a stereotype: an overly generalized image of a particular person or group; could be positive or negative; assumes that everyone is the same within that group

1. Hand out strips of paper to each student and have them complete the statement “Homeless people are...” Each student should write 3 sentence endings to this statement.

2. When finished, students hand in their strips of paper and teacher will read through each statement aloud. Determine with the students using critical thinking, which statements are true and which are stereotypes.

Activity 2: Guest speaker from a homeless shelter or service which helps people who are homeless or living in poverty.

Having a guest speaker this would be a good opportunity to allow students to ask some important questions they might have about street life while having someone with knowledge and experience to effectively answer their questions and address their concerns.

Some suggestions:

- Nick Saul, THE STOP Community Food Centre, Davenport-Perth United Church
  Websites: http://www.thestop.org/
- Youth Without Shelter, Website: http://www.yws.on.ca/
- Evergreen, Yonge Street Mission, Website: http://www.ysm.ca/
- Horizons for Youth, Website: http://www.horizonsforyouth.org/index.php
Lesson 6: Getting to know some of the homeless in Toronto and other urban centres in Ontario and You be the Journalist

As a follow up to the previous lesson of a visit with a Toronto homeless street worker, it is important for students get some understanding of the reality that anyone can become homeless and live on the street. However, it is also true that many of these individuals are not helpless or hopeless, but rather helpful and hopeful.

As an introduction to the next couple of lessons on choral speaking the words of homeless poets and also a process drama on The Suitcase Lady, the teacher can introduce these two individuals who despite their tragic pasts are legends in their communities.

“Crazzy” Dave Dessler

Crazzy Dave Dessler is a homeless poet who lives at the corner of Sussex Drive and George Street in Ottawa. At 46 years old, he has shovelled his own stretch of pavement in the winter and even cleared the litter from the flower boxes that sit near his stretch of the sidewalk since October 2006. He sits on a blue milk crate outside of the Chapter’s Bookstore and often he writes poems. He says “it’s poetry, it’s my art”. Dave has also been known to busk by doing some music or mime, but mostly he sells his poems on cardboard. Sadly in April, a downtown resident in Ottawa known as “R.F. Cartier” came and disposed of Dessler’s belonging. He had apparently complained to the city and in his words came to “clean the filth that Dave called home”. Because of Cartier’s anger and actions Crazzy Dave lost dozens of his poems, his clothes, sleeping bag, blankets and important documents.

Fortunately for Dave, Guy Berube, the art gallery curator of a downtown gallery who had acquired some of his poetry, some of Dave’s works were saved. Berube has also worked to collect funds to support Dessler and get him back the belonging he lost.

This is one of Crazzy Dave’s poems.

Mindlessly Adrift

Mindlessly Adrift, On Life’s Turbulent Sea,
Mindful of Nothing, ‘cause Nothing Minds Me,
Goals Uncompleted, Plenty Of Those,
No Fixed Direction, Not Worried About Home,
Stuck Out In Limbo, With Some Hedonistic Style, Dancing In the Moonlight, Screaming Once In A While,
Searching For My Center, My Soul Partially Corrupt, Maybe My Freedom, 4me Is 2Much,

But That’s 4 Tomorrow, I’ll Worry About It Then, I See Land On The Horizon, I Know This Sea Will End.

Crazzy Dave
James Kagoshima
James Kagoshima has slept on the street, on a sidewalk, a subway gate, under a bridge and also in a homeless shelter. In November 2003, the Toronto Police gave him a ticket for “dwelling in a park” without a permit. James was a very strong support of the Toronto Disaster Relief Committee who was often seen giving out sleeping bags and supporting the 1% campaign to the homeless. He was also the one who often reported on the deaths of the homeless on the street. In 2000 James spoke at City hall about the need for a state of emergency to be declared on the issue of homelessness in Toronto.

James actually chose to sleep outside, partly because there were no shelter beds available but also because of his intolerance of the living conditions inside the shelter and not wanting to follow the curfew rules. In fact, James’ favourite book was Evelyn Lau’s Runaway.

According to Toronto Street nurse Cathy Crowe, James is creative, hopeful, determined, and kind. He was in fact a former soldier of the 3PPCLI (Princess Patricia’s Light Infantry). He was an advocate for Toronto’s homeless who would speak to local politicians about the challenges of the poor and offer solutions for helping them. Sadly, despite his influence on the mayor and the city’s politicians, James didn’t live to Toronto’s first summit on Housing and Homelessness. He died on February 17th, 2004. Toronto Star journalist, Catherine Dunphy wrote after his passing that “[James] fought for homelessness from the front lines for another reason: He lived it.”


Activity 1: You be the journalist...

Instructions:
• Distribute to students the Blackline Master of Images of Homeless people.
• Student’s job is to be the journalist who has been requested to interview one of the 5 individuals who is depicted in the photographs.
• Create 5 questions you would want to ask the homeless person relating to their life experience.
• Teacher should pair off students according to the photograph they have chosen.
• Have the students improvise the interview as part of a Documentary Drama format on a CBC Special
• Keep in mind the importance of maintaining the integrity of the task and the dignity of the homeless person in trying to understand their life experience and not in judging the circumstances.

See Rubric on the following page for evaluation of Improvisation with a partner in role.
### Improvisation Scene with Partner(s)

This rubric might be used with students as a basis for developing a task-specific rubric, or as a starting point for teacher assessment and evaluation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Level 1 (50-59%)</th>
<th>Level 2 (60-69%)</th>
<th>Level 3 (70-79%)</th>
<th>Level 4 (80-100%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Voice, Volume</td>
<td>- can rarely be heard by audience</td>
<td>- sometimes heard by audience</td>
<td>- usually heard by audience</td>
<td>- (almost) always heard by audience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Movement</td>
<td>- uses a limited range of movement</td>
<td>- uses a small range of movement</td>
<td>- uses a considerable range of movement</td>
<td>- uses an extensive range of movement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>- rarely responds to the content of another actor’s contribution</td>
<td>- sometimes responds to the content of another actor’s contribution</td>
<td>- usually responds to the content of another actor’s contribution</td>
<td>- always responds to the content of another actor’s contribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking in Role</td>
<td>- contributes to the scene with limited logic, actions inappropriate for the character and situation</td>
<td>- contributes to the scene with inconsistent logic</td>
<td>- contributes to the scene logically</td>
<td>- contributes to the scene in complex and logical ways</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voice Clarity</td>
<td>- speaks unclearly</td>
<td>- speaks with some clarity</td>
<td>- speech is clear</td>
<td>- (almost) always speaks clearly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gesture</td>
<td>- gestures have little or no connection to the apparent meaning of the scene</td>
<td>- gestures have some connection to the apparent meaning of the scene</td>
<td>- gestures consistently connect to the apparent meaning of the scene</td>
<td>- gestures (almost) always connect to the apparent meaning of the scene</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** A student whose achievement is below level 1 (50%) has not met the expectations for this assignment or activity.

Source: Grade 10 Dramatic Arts, Open, Course Profile.  
BLACKLINE MASTER: Images of Homeless people to be used to assist with writing in role and character development throughout the unit

Source A: Meal time on the street
Source: http://img85.imageshack.us/i/homeless20dinnerzi8.jpg/

Source B: Ignored by passers-by
Source: http://ulsu.files.wordpress.com/2009/03/homeless-streets.jpg
Source C: A box for a shelter

Source: http://sithbear.files.wordpress.com/2008/10/new-york-homeless.jpg

Source D: Winter Requests

Source:
http://wvs.topleftpixel.com/photos/homeless_in_snow.jpg

Source E: Taking the time to chat

Source: http://www.yesmagazine.org/.../47Quote_Homeless555.jpg
Lesson 7: Choral Reading of Poetry by Homeless Poets

Presentation Task: Choral Dramatization of Dri’s Poem: The Cold...

Instructions:

- Divide students into groups of four and assign Dri’s Poem “The Cold…” (Dying for a Home, p. 63-65)
- Each group will present their variation on the poem using an interesting choral interpretation and movement

Students may choose to use the Choral Dramatization Checklist as an organizer of their work

While practicing:

- We experimented with the choral dramatization elements:
  1. Tempo-variations of fast and slow
  2. Volume-variations of loud and soft
  3. Colour-atmosphere, mood, feelings behind the words
  4. Rhythm-clapping, stamping, pastching, vocal patterns
  5. Voices-keywords, many voices, single voice
  6. Movement/formation – body placement or movement

Steps for organizing the Choral Presentation:

- We discussed the meaning of the text.
- We chose keywords and phrases to emphasize.
- We decided how we were standing or moving.
- We assigned parts equally.
- We decided how we wanted to read the text.
- We decided on an effective beginning and ending.
- We practiced many times.
- We made changes and improvements by listening to each other’s feedback and the insight of our teacher and other peers.

During the performance:

- We focused and concentrated on the task at hand.
- We could be heard by the audience.
- We had an effective beginning and ending as well as meaningful and effective transitions throughout.

(Adapted from ETFO ARTS-page 29)

Note: Depending on the comfort level of the students in doing Choral Speaking, the teacher may choose to distribute the Choral Speaking Techniques handout and review techniques with the class prior to beginning their preparations for this choral reading and dramatization.

Some of the techniques that could be useful here include: a refrain, unison, cumulative, solo lines, alternate, emphasize, pause, unity, articulation, sound effects and body movements.
Choral Reading and Dramatization of Dri’s poem “The cold...cold.... World of white”

The cold.......cold......
...... world of white
He struggles through cold, cold world of blowing snow.
The world of blowing........
...........blowing............swirling........
...........white
Cold and bright...........the swirling white........
...............cold..............
The Neolithic hunter struggles and stumbles in his quest........
he falls into the bed of white........
...............he struggles to his feet again to fight his way through the world of blowing......swirling white

...............but knows not why........
His mate has surrendered herself to the cold blowing world of white.... cold......
.....cold......blowing...........world
...............of.............
...............his two children........
...............gone..............
...............lost to the Cold world of swirling white........
...............children...............children........
...............he loved and wanted........
...............lost........
...............lost to the cold...........the unending cold
...............lost to the cold...........the unending cold clear world of white.............
His spear drops from frozen fingers into a bright...........blinding...........swirling world of white

...............cold...........swirling world
...............of white
He must go on........
...............on to the sea
The wondrous sea......
The sea will be his salvation........
The sea will provide food to nourish him
........food in the cold.......cold
........world of bright white
He stumbles again……

……

tries to rise……

…… rise up to the world of white……

…… He tries to rise……

……He tries to rise.... he must find

the sea.........

………………

………………

He awakens.... It’s another

Nightmare.......

………………..he lies in his sleeping bag

on the cold, cold......cold...... concrete.....

………………..under a piece of plastic blowing

In the winter wind.......

……. His mate………………

And beloved children are a memory

Of a long time ago and very bitter divorce

……………long time ago...... bitter........

…………….the bitter swirling........

………………..cold...............

…………….the whirling world of

Blowing white swirls about him and

His torn tarp as he shudders

And trembles in the cold..... cold....

…………….world of white

………………..Maybe tonight the cold will claim him........

………………..may be tonight the torment will end........

…………….end in the cold........

…………….white...............

………………..may be tonight he

Will find……

…………….eternal peace...........

………………..

Background on the homeless poet:

Rainer (DRI) Drimeyer was born in Germany in 1949 and immigrated to Canada with his two parents when he was four.

He and his family were displaced persons. He moved around a lot as a child and attended 16 different schools and even held a variety of different jobs both in the Yukon and in Ontario. He married Kathy when he was 34 and they had two children Matthew and Terri-Lynn (they divorced when Terri-Lynn was 10 years old. In the 1990s, his life started to collapse. His relationship with his family worsened, his health deteriorated and he turned to alcohol. This is when he moved to a men’s shelter, but due to low security, he and a friend of his decided to get a few tarps and settle on an empty field near Toronto’s Waterfront. This area became known as Tent City in 1999 (land which was in fact owned by the Home Depot, but they didn’t know this). Many people continued to join them over the years and they even received support services from the Anishnawbe Health who would provide food. Living in Tent City was very cold, especially in the winter when temperatures dropped to -20C -- -30C. Dri explains that “there are so many little things about being homeless and sleeping on the street that people wouldn’t understand…” (Dying for a Home, p. 55)
Lesson 8: Process Drama-The Suitcase Lady

BLACKLINE MASTER: The Suitcase Lady by Christie McLaren

Night after night, the woman with the red hair and the purple dress sits in the harsh light of a 24-hour doughnut shop on Queen Street West.

Somewhere in her bleary eyes and in the deep lines of her face is a story that probably no one will ever really know. She is taking pains to write something on a notepad and crying steadily.

She calls herself Vicomtesse Antonia The Lindsays. She's the suitcase lady of Queen Street.

No one knows how many women there are like her in Toronto. They carry their belongings in shopping bags and spend their days and nights scrounging for food. They have no one and nowhere to go.

This night, in a warm corner with a pot of tea and a pack of Player's, the Vicomtesse is in a mood to talk.

Out of her past come a few scraps: a mother named Savaria; the child of a poor family in Montreal; a brief marriage when she was 20; a son in Toronto who is now 40. “We never got along well because I didn’t bring him up. I was too poor. He never call me mama.”

She looks out the window. She's 60 years old.

With her words she spins herself a cocoon. She talks about drapes and carpets, castles and kings. She often lapses into French. She lets her tea get cold. Her hands are big, rough, farmer’s hands. How she ended up in the doughnut shop remains a mystery, maybe even to her.

“Before, I had a kitchen and a room and my own furniture. I had to leave everything and go.”

It’s two years that she’s been on the go, since the rooming houses stopped taking her. “I don’t have no place to stay.”

So she walks. A sturdy coat covers her dress and worn leather boots are on her feet. But her big legs are bare and chapped and she has a ragged cough.

Yes, she says, her legs get tired. She has swollen ankles and, with no socks in her boots, she has blisters. She says she has socks—in the suitcase—but they make her feet itch.

As for money, “I bum on the street. I don’t like it, but I have to. I have to survive. The only pleasure I got is my cigarette.” She lights another one. “It’s not a life.”

She recalls the Saturday, a long time ago, when she made $27, and laughs when she tells about how she had to make the money last through Sunday, too. Now she gets “maybe $7 or $8,” and eats “very poor.”

When she is asked how people treat her, the answer is very matter-of-fact: “Some give money. Some are very polite and some are rude.”

In warm weather, she passes her time at the big square in front of City Hall. When it’s cold she takes her suitcase west to the doughnut shop.

The waitresses who bring food to the woman look upon her with compassion. They persuaded their boss that her sitting does no harm.

Where does she sleep? “Any place I can find a place to sleep. In the park, in stores—like here I stay and sit, on Yonge Street.” She shrugs. Sometimes she goes into an underground parking garage.

She doesn’t look like she knows what sleep is. “This week I sleep three hours in four days. I feel tired but I wash my face with cold water and I feel okay.” Some questions make her eyes turn from the window and stare hard. Then they well over with tears. Like the one about loneliness. “I don’t talk much to people,” she answers. “Just the elderly, sometimes, in the park.”
Her suitcase is full of dreams.
Carefully, she unzips it and pulls out a sheaf of papers—"my concertos."
Each page is crammed with neatly written musical notes—the careful writing she does on the
doughnut shop table—but the bar lines are missing. Questions about missing bar lines she tosses
aside. Each "concerto" has a French name—Tresor, La Tempete, Le Retour—and each one bears the
signature of the Vicomtesse. She smiles and points to one. "A very lovely piece of music. I like it."
She digs in her suitcase again, almost shyly, and produces a round plastic box. Out of it emerges
a tiara. Like a little girl, she smooths back her dirty hair and proudly puts it on. No one in the
doughnut shop seems to notice.
She cares passionately about the young, the old, and the ones who suffer. So who take care of the
suitcase lady?
"God takes care of me, that's for sure," she says, nodding thoughtfully. "But I'm not what you
call crazy about religion. I believe always try to do the best to help people—the elderly, and kids, and
my country, and my city of Toronto, Ontario."

Background on the author:
Christie McLaren was a student at the University of Waterloo, reporting for the Toronto Globe
and Mail as a part of her English co-op work experience. McLaren spent several nights with "the
Vicomtesse" before hearing the story she reports in this selection. The article and photograph first

Warm Up: Personal Effects... To whom do they belong?

Instructions:
- Teacher arrives to class with a suitcase full of objects belonging to Person X
- Teacher explains to the students that their job is to be a group of expert detectives who are to piece together, using the objects as evidence to whom do the items belong?
- The objects may be displayed or taken out one by one.
- Students are to come up with a justification for why this object would have been a meaningful possession for its owner.

Connection to The Suitcase Lady: This is a list of the objects that must be collected
- Notepad
- Paper tea cup with a teabag
- Shopping bags
- Teapot
- Package of Player Cigarettes
- Pair of worn wool socks
- Loose change-coins (pennies, dimes, nickels, quarters, a couple of loonies and twoonies)
- Round Tupperware container
- Tiara
- Scraps of paper with music notes written on them

Activity 1: Teacher in Role telling the story as “The Suitcase Lady”

- Explain to the class that you are Vicomtesse Antonia The Lindsays, “The Suitcase Lady of Queen Street” and that you are sitting in a 24 hour donut shop on Queen Street West tonight and you are in the mood to talk.
- Invite students to take on the collective role of interviewer Christie McLaren and to ask you some questions about your past. Because the class is playing a collective role all their questions/responses should be consistent.
- Students will guide the conversation as the interviewer and their goal is to find out as much as they can about the life experience of Vicomtesse Antonia
- The Teacher-in-Role will reveal to the class some aspects of her past-her living conditions, her family, her dreams, her health, and her strategies to survive on the streets and hopefully what is inside her “suitcase of dreams”.

Activity 2: Character/Role- on-the-wall

Instructions:

• The teacher will divide students into groups of 3 or 4 and will give them a copy of the newspaper article of The Suitcase Lady.

• A large piece of chart paper will be given to each group and they will trace out an outline of The Suitcase Lady’s entire body with sufficient space to be able to write on the inside and outside of the outline.

• On the other side of the page, the students are to begin by writing or drawing in the physical characteristics of the Vicomtesse.

Note: Some of the things they might take note of are: red hair, bleary eyes, deep lines on her face, her tears, her big rough farmer’s hands, sturdy coat and purple dress, bare and chapped legs and ragged cough.

• On the other side of the page they are to write in or draw the personality traits of the Vicomtesse.

Note: Some of the personality traits or characteristics the students may take note of: sadness, talkative, French speaking, homeless, smoker, exhaustion, loneliness, hopeful, dreamer, belief in God...

These Role-on-the-wall can be displayed throughout the classroom as anchor charts.

Activity 3: Creating scenes in the donut shop and then crosscutting to flashback scenes of the life experience of the Suitcase Lady

Instructions:

• Divide students into groups of 6 to create a piece of theatre which they begin sitting in the donut shop and then cross-cut to a flashback to the past of the Vicomtesse.

• Students should use all the skills and knowledge they have learned in this unit about creating believable characters and tension between them using voice, spoken language and intentional body language.

• The drama should cross-cut between the actions in the donut shop where the Vicomtesse is talking about her past to a flashback of the actual events she is describing.

• Music will be chosen by the students based on a pre-determined set list to create atmosphere and help the students to stay on task.

• Students will work on spontaneously improvising the scenes and are to ensure that there is a clear signal or a cue to indicate when to cross cut.
Lesson 9: Being on the street... Character development in preparation for the final performance task as part of a Collective Collage... “From packing the suitcase to surviving on the streets”

Warm Up: The Change of age

- Students will be divided into triads or quads.
- Teacher will provide the students with an activity and an age as their scenario.
- The students are to play out the scene.
- After a few minutes, the teacher will call out freeze, and will tell the students to continue to do the activity but at a different age group.
- Throughout the teacher may call out freeze, but ask the students to flip back and forth between the ages.
- As the activity evolves the characters and their relationship to their activity changes.

For example:

Activity: Packing a knapsack to go on a trip
- as a five year old going to school for the first time.
- as a student going off to university
- as a senior going on a bus trip

Activity: Building a shelter
- as an 8 year old building a tree fort
- as teenagers setting up a tent
- as adults building a cottage

Activity: Travelling or going on a journey
- as a 6 year old in a car with their parents
- as a teenager in his/ her first car
- as a homeless person on the TTC
Activity 1: Using Photographs of Graffiti art depicting homeless people as a means of choosing characters for writing in role and role play.

Instructions:
- Using the photographs provided in the Blackline Masters of graffiti images of homeless people holding key messages about their life experiences, the students are to select one of the individuals who they might want to further get to know or to develop.
- Students should choose one of the 6 characters provided and further investigate who they are and why they have come to live on the street.
- Students may choose to complete one of the following structures as they investigate their character: role-on-the-wall, play the journalist by creating a series of questions they would want to ask of their character etc.

Activity 2: 24 Hour Clock

Instructions:
- Activity helps students come up with the context for their character who needs to pack up and leave and to also further develop the anticipated experiences of their character while living on the streets (in a shelter, in a hostel, in an alley way etc.)
- Teacher—Ask each student to find a place in the room where they are comfortable, either sitting in a chair or lying down on the floor.
- Explain that students are to use their imaginations to “experience” what happens to their character over a 24 hour period.
- Beginning with 12 midnight and continuing on hour by hour, announce the time and ask the students to role play what their character is doing: sleeping, walking or moving about, working, eating etc... Pause for approximately 60 seconds for each time interval.
- Remind students to work independently on the development of their character.
- After all hours on the 24 hour clock have been visited, ask students to imagine a box or a suitcase, or some container. They are to show the size and weight of the container using their hands.
- There are many items in the box, but we are going to focus on 3 objects. The first object is a photograph of the character when they were younger. The second object is a something that is the most prized possession of the character. The third is a piece of writing in any form. The teacher will facilitate what the students are to do in miming their actions, and in thinking about the objects they have in the box.
Activity 3: Writing in Role

Instructions:
• This activity is designed in this way as a follow up to the 24 hour clock, for the student to consolidate some of the ideas, thoughts and images they came up with for the life experience of their character. They are to consider the critical events in the life of their character—their childhood, upbringing, education, teenager years, successes and failures and ultimately what lead them to the street.
• This activity has been differentiated so the students have options as to the formatting of their writing in role. They may format their writing as poetry, as a series of Twitter or Facebook status updates, a speech, a letter, a diary entry, a song, a photo essay with captions etc.
• This activity will likely be started in the classroom and then completed as homework.

Teachers may choose to evaluate the student’s writing-in-role as a way of dialoguing with their students through a series of questions and answers to further develop their characters.

Activity 4: Hot Seating

Instructions:
• Now that the students have completed their writing in role, the students will each take turns hot-seating their classmates to learn a bit about the personality traits and life of their characters.
• The student in the hot-seat is to answer the questions of their classmates, while remaining in character.
BLACKLINE MASTER OF GRAFFITI ART DISPLAYING CHARACTERS WITH KEY MESSAGING ON ISSUES AFFECTING or FEELINGS OF HOMELESS PEOPLE

Note: All images come from: Source: www.unurth.com/filter/Homelessness

Source 1: Middle aged woman-People hear disaster

Text says: People hear disaster and they think earthquake. I hear disaster and I think homeless in Toronto.

Source 2: Middle aged man, “I’d rather beg...”

Text says: “I’d rather beg than steal.”

Source 3: Aboriginal Man, “If thou shalt not give...”

Text says: “If thou shalt not give, then at least verbally acknowledge me!!”
Source 4: Old man, “Don’t you dare…”

Text says: “Don’t U Dare Deny My Existence”

Source 5: Young man, “For me…”

Text says: “For Me This Was Not A Choice!”

Source 6: Older man, “Every deserves respect”

Source 7: Young Woman, “Homeless doesn’t not mean dirty!”
Field Trip:

Play Study: The Middle Place

Canadian playwright Andrew Kushnir wanted to illuminate the life experiences and challenges of Toronto’s street youth. In 2008 he went to the Youth Without Shelter in Rexdale and interviewed the residents. Based on the responses of the youth to his questioning Kushnir created a documentary drama featuring the lives of 16 youth, 3 of their case workers and even wrote in himself as the outside observer. Through his production, he reveals the aspirations, frustrations and the tenacity of the youth to survive.

The Middle Place was first previewed at the Summerworks Theatre Festival in 2009. It is part of the play bill for Theatre Passe Muraille and Canstage for the 2010-2011 Season.

As part of our study of homeless issues in Toronto in this course, students will be expected to attend our school trip to see this production at Theatre Passe Muraille.

Each student will be required to complete the 5W Play Review as well as to choose one of the learning activities from the Creative Choice Board.

See attached for the assignment expectations (Based on the assignment sheets created by K. Snider and colleagues at Rosedale Heights School for the Arts)
THE MIDDLE PLACE
by Andrew Kushnir

Directed by Alan Dilworth
Lighting Design by Kimberly Purtell
Set and Costume Design by Jung-Hye Kim
Movement Design by Monica Dottor
Interview Transcription by Andrew Kushnir and Catherine Murray
Developed through Project: Humanity’s De-Shelter Initiative

2010/2011 sees The Middle Place break new ground in Toronto by being presented at 2 major theatre’s in the same season.

The Middle Place will run at Theatre Passe Muraille from October 21st to November 20th, 2010.

and then...

Premiere at Canadian Stage February 14th to March 12th, 2011.

Further to that, we will then travel to Victoria to be a part of the Spark Festival at the Belfry Theatre, and then on to Ottawa where we will show The Middle Place to new audiences at the Great Canadian Theatre Company (GCTC).

A bit about the play...

In 2007, Project: Humanity brought a young, middled class playwright into one of Toronto’s roughest neighbourhoods to conduct on-camera interviews with the residents of a youth shelter.

THE MIDDLE PLACE is the documentary theatre piece that emerged from those encounters. Constructed by Andrew Kushnir (writer of the acclaimed Foto, SummerWorks 2008) and directed by Alan Dilworth (If We Were Birds, SummerWorks/Tarragon), the play has five actors portray 16 remarkable youth, 3 caseworkers and one outsider.

Unexpectedly funny and poetic, THE MIDDLE PLACE deconstructs both an obscure part of Canada’s largest centre and the very familiar stigma surrounding youth and the homeless.

The play emphatically connects with a broad audience base: youth, at-risk youth, adults of all ages, a blend of all three. Audience members have described this theatrical experience as one of having both the imagination and conscience firing simultaneously. The play’s first outing in August 2009 was a critical success, an audience favourite and was honoured with two SummerWorks Festival Jury Prizes.

For complete reviews contact Creative Director Andrew Kushnir at andrew@projecthumanity.ca

Dramatic Arts Play Review Assignment for The Middle Earth

The play review assignment is composed of two parts: Part A, the 5W Write-up, and Part B, the Creative Choice Board. Both parts must be submitted on the assigned due date.

PART A: THE 5W WRITE-UP (/100)

Answer the following questions (who, what, when, where, why) in full sentences in your best writing. Be as specific and detailed as you can in your responses and use the program from your play to help you answer the questions. Your write-up should be 1-2 pages in length, double-spaced.

WHO
Who wrote the play? Who directed it? Who designed it?
Who are the lead performers in the play and which characters do they play?

WHAT
What is the play about?
What are your opinions of the acting, directing, writing and technical design choices in the play (write about at least two).

WHEN
When did you see the play?
When is the production playing (how long is the run?)
When is the play set? (year, decade)

WHERE
Where did you see the play?
Where is it set? (location-city, town, neighbourhood)

WHY
Why did you go to see this particular production?
Why did it or did it not appeal to you?

PART B: CREATIVE CHOICE BOARD (/100)

Choose one option from the Choice Board listed on the other side of this sheet. Hand it in with your 5W write-up.
Name: ______________________  Due Date: ________________

### Dramatic Arts Grade 10: Play Review Choice Board

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative Assignment</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create an original poster advertising <em>The Middle Earth</em>.</td>
<td>It should include a high-interest visual, as well as all the necessary information viewers would need to know to see it (title of play, venue, dates, name of playwright, director, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write in role as one of the street youth from Youth Without Shelter at a key moment in the story or write from Andrew Kushnir’s point of view as the interviewer offering their thoughts on what is happening in the play.</td>
<td>Your writing in role piece should be one page in length, and should include a one paragraph explanation of who the character is and why you chose to write about this particular moment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create and draw costume or set designs for a new stage version of the play set in a different locale or time period if you wish.</td>
<td>Write an explanation for each design that connects it to the premise of your version.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write a 1-2 page play review for this production in the style of a news article (short paragraphs, catchy headline, visual, etc.)</td>
<td>Be sure to express your opinion on <em>The Middle Earth</em> and why you would recommend others see this show.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Play Review Choice Board</strong></td>
<td><strong>Choose one</strong> of the following creative assignments and complete it along with the 5W write up of your play.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choose 10 pieces of music that fit the mood and subject matter of the play.</td>
<td>For each piece, write a short description of why you chose it and how you might use it in the play (e.g. as intro music, during a specific scene, during the curtain call).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a list of seven interview questions you would ask the cast and crew of this production.</td>
<td>For each, write a short description of why you would like to know this information or what you think they would answer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduct research on 1 aspect of this play (ex. Documentary Drama) and production, such as the playwright, past productions of the show, the time period in which it is set or a particular issue or event that is addressed in the play.</td>
<td>Assemble your research into a display board or booklet.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from K. Snider’s Play Review Task sheets, Rosedale Heights School of the Arts, July 2010.
Final performance Task: Creating a Collage Collective of Street Life to give “Life” to and acknowledge the plight of the homeless in our city.

A collage collective is a piece of theatre created by a group of people who have researched and collected material and formed it into a collective whole. In considering the transiency and myriad of different experiences of those individuals who live on the street, the collage collective allows students to review the work they have created throughout this unit and to showcase what they believe is the best representation of their work and skills in a variety of drama structures, both individual and collective.

For the purpose of this Collective Collage

Theme: Homelessness in Toronto

Material: photographs, newspaper articles, poetry, graffiti art, street signage, first hand accounts

Setting: Streetscape created at the beginning of the unit

Drama Structures:

- Tableaux (with thought tracking)
- Writing-in-role
- Hot-seating
- Choral speaking
- Soundtracking
- Others structures to be chosen by the students individually and collectively

Students will be required to contribute one individual act and be involved in one collective presentation in a group.

Students will:

- determine which students will perform which roles
- determine the appropriate sequence and order
- create logical transitions
- coordinate the rehearsals
- select and coordinate appropriate music and technical support needs
- select props and set pieces
- present their work for the entire class

Note: Students are to consider the performance space which will determine the movement and technical aspects of the show.

Because this work is a collage, lighting, sets and props should be kept minimalist to reduce the need for set changes etc.
The presentation for each group of students (5-6 people)
- should be 10-15 minutes in length
- material should be from a minimum of 6 different sources (a combination of original and found materials)
  Material format: story, improve, poem, play excerpt, dance, song, etc.

Rubric: Individual Performance in the Creative Collective presentation
Taken from the Dramatic Arts, Grade 10 Open Course Profile from Unit 5


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Ensemble Work</th>
<th>Level 1 (50-59%)</th>
<th>Level 2 (60-69%)</th>
<th>Level 3 (70-79%)</th>
<th>Level 4 (80-100%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creation</td>
<td>- numerous props and/or cues are forgotten</td>
<td>- a few minor props or cues are forgotten or delayed</td>
<td>- one minor prop or cue is forgotten or delayed; the presentation runs smoothly</td>
<td>- all props used effectively; all cues are executed flawlessly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- performance space is used to enhance few meanings and/or audience interest</td>
<td>- the performance space is used to enhance some meanings and/or audience interest</td>
<td>- the performance space is used to enhance meaning and/or audience interest</td>
<td>- the performance space is used to create new meaning and audience interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>- the anthology continues without stopping; no transitional devices used</td>
<td>- transitions link pieces with minimal disruption; possible lack of attention to detail or to transitional device</td>
<td>- transitions link pieces effectively without disrupting the flow of the anthology</td>
<td>- transitions add meaning to the anthology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of Transitions</td>
<td>- limited use of forms to convey meaning</td>
<td>- forms chosen convey meaning in the source material</td>
<td>- forms chosen convey meaning in the source material</td>
<td>- forms chosen extend meaning in the source material</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thinking/Inquiry</td>
<td>effective use of connections between form and content</td>
<td>effective use of forms to convey meaning</td>
<td>effective use of forms to convey meaning in the source material</td>
<td>effective use of forms to convey meaning in the source material</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: A student whose achievement is below level 1 (50%) has not met the expectations for this assignment or activity.
## Group Work Rubric
(adapted from Grade 9 Public Dramatic Arts Course Profile)

This rubric might be used with students as a basis for developing a task-specific rubric, or as a starting point for teacher assessment and evaluation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task-Specific Criteria</th>
<th>Level 1 (50-59%)</th>
<th>Level 2 (60-69%)</th>
<th>Level 3 (70-79%)</th>
<th>Level 4 (80-100%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>- rarely listens to others</td>
<td>- sometimes listens others</td>
<td>- usually listens to others</td>
<td>- consistently listens to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encouragement</td>
<td>- rarely uses encouraging phrases</td>
<td>- sometimes uses encouraging phrases</td>
<td>- usually uses encouraging phrases</td>
<td>- consistently uses encouraging phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- encourages inappropriate actions or contributions of others</td>
<td>- encourages some appropriate actions or contributions of others</td>
<td>- encourages only appropriate actions or contributions of others</td>
<td>- encourages appropriate actions or contributions of others, discourages inappropriate work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task commitment</td>
<td>- needs encouragement to stay on task</td>
<td>- needs some encouragement to stay on task</td>
<td>- stays on task</td>
<td>- stays on task and contributes beyond the assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negotiation</td>
<td>- rarely negotiates toward consensus</td>
<td>- sometimes negotiates effectively toward consensus</td>
<td>- negotiates effectively toward consensus</td>
<td>- leads negotiation effectively toward consensus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation</td>
<td>- rarely expresses ideas</td>
<td>- sometimes expresses some ideas</td>
<td>- often articulates ideas</td>
<td>- clearly articulates ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- takes on limited share of work</td>
<td>- takes on a small share of the work</td>
<td>- takes responsibility for a fair share of the work</td>
<td>- puts needs of group above own needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- limited work as part of the group</td>
<td>- sometimes works as part of the group</td>
<td>- regularly works as part of the group</td>
<td>- consistently works as part of the group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** A student whose achievement is below level 1 (50%) has not met the expectations for this assignment or activity.

Additional Resource Materials relating to the issue of homelessness in Toronto or about the individuals whose stories are shared in this unit

Contents:

- Suggested Songs about Homelessness that could be useful as background throughout this Unit on Homelessness
- Song Lyrics to “Another Day in Paradise” by Phil Collins
- Song Lyrics to “Eleanor Rigby” by The Beatles
- Necessary Burdens Poem
- Home Is... Reflection by Michael Rosen
- Newspaper Articles about the Homeless Poet, Crazzy Dave Dessler
- Crazzy Dave Poems
- Understanding Homelessness
- 2006 City of Toronto Street Needs Assessment Results and Key Findings
Suggested Songs about Homelessness that could be useful as background throughout this Unit on Homelessness

- Another Day in Paradise - Phil Collins
- Brother can you spare a Dime - Al Jolson
- Fast Car - Tracy Chapman
- Forgotten Victims - Musica Universalis
- I Take a Lot of Pride in What I Am - Merle Haggard
- Institution - Burning Spear
- Johnny Ryall - Beastie Boys
- Las Nubes performed - Little Joe Y La Familia
- Melissa performed - Greg and Duane Allman in the 31st of September
- More Vacancy - Culture
- Nobody Loves You When You're Down And Out - 31st of September band performed by Steppenwolf
- Snowblind Friend - Black Uhuru
- Solidarity - Jack Tempchin
- Streets of LA - Claudio Abbado and the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra
- Verdi - Nabucco - Chorus of Hebrew Slaves
- Land of 10,000 Homeless - Give Us Your Poor
- Show me the Way - Jon Bon Jovi et al.
- Baby Don’t Let Me Go Homeless - Eagle Park Slim/ Keb’ Mo’
- There Is No Good Reason - Natalie Merchant
- So Lonely - Sonya Kitchell
- Becky’s Tune - Michael Sullivan/ Michelle Shocked
- My Name is Not “Those People” - Danny Glover
- I think It’s Going to Rain Today - Madeleine Peyroux
- Portable Man - Delmark Goldfarb et. al
- Boll Weevil - Kyla Middleton
- 1,000 Miles Away - Jewel
- Impossible Boulevard - Tim Robbins
- Feels Like Home - Mario Frangoulis
She calls out to the man on the street
"Sir, can you help me?
It's cold and I've nowhere to sleep,
Is there somewhere you can tell me?"

He walks on, doesn't look back
He pretends he can't hear her
Starts to whistle as he crosses the street
Seems embarrassed to be there

Oh think twice, it's another day for
You and me in paradise
Oh think twice, it's just another day for you,
You and me in paradise

She calls out to the man on the street
He can see she's been crying
She's got blisters on the soles of her feet
Can't walk but she's trying

Oh think twice...

Oh lord, is there nothing more anybody can do
Oh lord, there must be something you can say

You can tell from the lines on her face
You can see that she's been there
Probably been moved on from every place
'Cos she didn't fit in there

Oh think twice...
BLACKLINE MASTER: Song Lyrics Eleanor Rigby, The Beatles

I look at all the lonely people
I look at all the lonely people

Eleanor Rigby picks up the rice in the church where a wedding has been
Lives in a dream
Waits at the window, wearing the face that she keeps in a jar by the door
Who is it for?

All the lonely people
Where do they all come from?
All the lonely people
Where do they all belong?

Father McKenzie writing the words of a sermon that no one will hear
No one comes near.
Look at him working, darning his socks in the night when there's nobody there
What does he care?

All the lonely people
Where do they all come from?
All the lonely people
Where do they all belong?

Ah, look at all the lonely people
Ah, look at all the lonely people

Eleanor Rigby died in the church and was buried along with her name
Nobody came
Father McKenzie wiping the dirt from his hands as he walks from the grave
No one was saved

All the lonely people
Where do they all come from?
All the lonely people
Where do they all belong?
Necessary Burdens

I’m not sure where we started out.  
I know we used to stay with different folks 
Here and there. 
Now we live in the city, 
Just mama and me. 
We live in the hard poor middle of the city 
With a suitcase 
On the stoop-sitting, gutter-spitting streets.

The suitcase, Mama says, makes it look like 
We’re going somewhere. 
Looks to me like where at 
The end of the line. 
And suitcase or no suitcase, 
I don’t think we’re fooling any body. 
Not even ourselves any more. 

That suitcase is a burden 
With its wobbly wheels and zipper off-track 
But it’s a burden we have to bear, Mama says 

That’s where mama came from 
And she’s never been back 
It must have been bad, if this 
Is better 

Now that suitcase is all we’ve got 
We used to have more, 
But little by little things fell away 
People too. 
Some we left behind on purpose, I think 
Others—I don’t know 
They used to be with us 
Now they’re not 

Don’t add to my burden, mama says, 
When we take a book about stars 
From the church give away box. 
We have to travel light, she says 
Only what’s necessary 
It try not be a burden. 

I try to be necessary.
BLACKLINE MASTER: “HOME IS...” By Michael J. Rosen.

Home is what you take away each time you leave the house. Like a wristwatch, it ticks beside the ticking that is your heart. Whether or not you hear it, look at its face, or feel its hold, we’re with you is what the minute, hour and second hands of home have to tell.

   Home is the place that goes where you go, yet it welcomes you upon your return. Like a dog overjoyed at the door, we’ve missed you is what you hear, no matter how long you’ve been gone.

   Home is all the things you know by name: a family of dishes, books, and clothes that waits for you to choose among them every day. We’re ready for you is the chorus in your house sings. Your fingerprints are grinning on their faces.

   And home is all the names that know you, the one and only person who does just what you do. Home is all the words that call you in for dinner, over to help, into a hug, out of a dream.

   Come in, come in, wherever you’ve been...

   This is the poem in which you’re a part.

   This the home that knows you by heart.

Source: Rosen, Michael J. Home—a collaboration of Thirty Distinguished Authors and Illustrators of Children’s Books to Aid the Homeless. Toronto: Charlotte Zolotow Books.
On a fresh, clear-eyed morning in May, 'Crazzy' Dave Dessler is alone on a milk crate on George Street with his cardboard poems, his tin of coins, his concrete comforts -- home sweet home.

By The Ottawa Citizen May 7, 2008

"I'm a guy sleeping on the sidewalk," he says, voice about to snap the whip, "and they're robbing me blind."

It is a puzzle, like many things about Mr. Dessler, a fixture on the city's homeless scene with his messianic hair and quick, acerbic wit.

As a poet, he might appreciate the clash of sympathies now playing out in his life: should we help the homeless with stray money and small comfort or hustle them along in a tough-love effort to prod them into housing?

Mr. Dessler, 46, finds himself exactly there.

He has been in this prominent spot, just east of Sussex, since October 2006. He is a busker, too, performing not music or mime, but dispensing poems, usually written on pieces of cardboard retrieved from the urban jungle.

Over time, his pile of belongings grew, as did his reputation, stretching along the sidewalk below the rear of the Chapters store.

On April 23, a downtown resident claiming to be "R.F. Cartier" decided he'd had enough of the so-called sidewalk psychiatrist.

In a letter delivered to Guy Bérubé, a Dessler supporter, our Cartier character (male, one supposes?) said he disposed of the homeless man's belongings in less than five minutes.

"I am a private tax paying citizen living downtown and after many complaints to the city of Ottawa, I took it upon myself to clean the filth that Dave called home," he wrote.

"I will continue to keep our streets clean and safe and shame on you for perpetuating the homeless crisis here in Ottawa. And shame on you for giving him a free pass while others have to live by the rules."

Mr. Dessler lost dozens of his poems, his clothing, sleeping bag, blankets, and various publications in which he was depicted.

He bristles at the suggestion that Mr. Cartier was merely exercising his right as a responsible citizen to safe, clean streets.
“I pay little attention to what this guy is trying to say. I mean, what a moron! Who is going to feel safe on the street when this guy is going around stealing your stuff?”

In the days following the theft, he managed to find one of his journals, stuck on the bottom of an adjacent garbage bin. The rest are gone.

There was, later, an outpouring of support; much of it funneled toward Mr. Bérubé, who once exhibited and sold some of Mr. Dessler’s poetry in his gallery, La Petite Mort, on Cumberland Street.

The two men are friends and Mr. Bérubé is hoping he can help his friend get off the street.

“I’m not trying to give him a makeover, I’m trying to give him a hand,” said the gallery owner.

He admits he is learning much about the complex problem of homelessness as the weeks unfold. He is now trying to direct the right resources toward Mr. Dessler, who probably would require ongoing support once he has a roof over his head.

“He needs a helping hand, like we’ve all needed at one time or other.”

The poet is, in fact, tired of life on the street. “I’m so mentally and emotionally beat to sh--, I don’t know how much longer I can do this.”

He has a proud streak. He refuses to collect welfare, calling the level of monetary support “a farce.” Nor does he like emergency shelters.

Percy Rowe has heard it all before. He is the chairman of the Alliance to end Homelessness in Ottawa.

The long-term homeless have complicated lives, he explained. There may be addictions, mental illness, a deep mistrust of support systems, an aversion to shelters. “It is difficult for you and I to understand.”

On top of this, there is simply a shortage of affordable housing with adequate social supports in place, he added.

A lifeline may be on the way. Mr. Dessler is collaborating with photographer Jean Boulay on a book, expected to be published this month.

It is to be a mixture of his poems and Mr. Boulay’s images, shot over many months and seasons.

Mr. Dessler, who admits to a “checkered past,” hopes the proceeds from the book will be enough to provide a small nest egg to establish his own housing. From there, he hopes to cobble together enough income -- his street poetry, possibly a small home business -- to get by on his own.

Mindlessly Adrift is to be the title poem. It ends like this:

Searching For My Centre, My soul partially corrupt,

Maybe My Freedom, For Me, Is Too Much,

But Thats For Tomorrow, I’ll Worry About It Then,

I See Land On The Horizon, I Knew This Sea Would End.

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http://www.canada.com/ottawacitizen/news/city/story.html?id=304550da-7183-4aba-9f6a-6cb6271c7c21&amp;p=1
And now, from the man on the street

Crazzy Dave Dessler has to be one of the city's most unconventional artists. The 45-year-old self-styled poet sits on the street and composes his verses on pieces of cardboard box.

By The Ottawa Citizen July 16, 2007

Crazzy Dave Dessler has to be one of the city's most unconventional artists. The 45-year-old self-styled poet sits on the street and composes his verses on pieces of cardboard box.

He's homeless, crazy -- with two zeds, because he's a little crazier than the guy next to him, he says, nudging a non-existent neighbour and then, with a laugh, adds that he doesn't just have attention deficit disorder, Hepatitis C and arthritis, he's also schizophrenic -- and he lives on the corner of George Street and Sussex Drive, below one of Chapters' windows. But don't call him a panhandler. He doesn't ask for money and that, along with his unique busking, separates him from many in the Byward Market who are just looking for a few dollars for their next hit.

What also separates him from other buskers is the fact that though he doesn't have a home, his art has found one.

Guy Berube, owner of La Petite Mort Gallery, is holding a show of "outsider" art. It's a term that describes art that bucks current artistic fashion but, as promotional material for the show points out, has also been used to describe works created by children, the insane, alien abductees or the incarcerated.

One artist, Rigu Elena, paints depictions of everything from winged monsters to flowers on found objects, including boxes, cupboard doors and styrofoam.

"Art is anything that anyone has spent five minutes on to express how they feel," Mr. Berube said, adding that he owns several pieces of Crazzy Dave's work. "I've been to London, England, where I saw a pile of potatoes that was called art by a very famous artist. Most outsider work is not seen publicly -- it's usually cocooned by the artists themselves."

- 

Trick or Treat Believe it or not, I'm dressed as an eccentric billionaire.

-- Crazzy Dave, 2006

Crazzy Dave, whose real name is Dave Dessler, calls his work at the gallery "A Panner's Perspective."

The title comes from his unique view as a street person. He sits on a couple of pillows and a pile of belongings, as well as a Rubbermaid box full of poems. He wears a ball cap that covers what looks like an aging, now limp, white mohawk. He has a few signs that describe his current state. They tell people that his poems are for sale and whether he's eaten that day.

Stand with him for half an hour on a sunny Sunday afternoon and you'll see teenage girls walking by with their Starbucks Frappuccinos, completely ignoring him, or the older lady who walks by and turns the other way, hoping he doesn't speak to her, or worse, ask her for money. Or you might see a young, well-heeled couple. When he says good afternoon, the man says "I don't have any spare change." Crazzy Dave replies: "I didn't ask you for change, I said, 'good afternoon.'" The guy apologizes and says he didn't hear him. And then Dave offers up one of his signature observations: "You didn't hear me because you weren't listening. You decided 20 metres back that you were going to tell me you didn't have any spare change." The look on the girlfriend's face said Dave nailed it.
They say an artist must suffer and struggle for his work. That doesn't mean you have to help it happen.

-- Crazzy Dave, 15/08/06

Dave Dessler was born in Kitchener and grew up as "the black sheep" of a family he no longer speaks to and won't discuss.

"I'm homeless because of life," he says. "People screw up, tragedies happen, other people screw up and it affects you. It doesn't matter. It's what you do with it."

His past, he says, is his past and it's "irrelevant," although nuggets slip out. He moved to Ottawa 10 years ago and became homeless a year ago. Before that he was a bicycle courier, which is where he got the name Crazzy Dave when at one point the dispatcher called him crazy. All the other couriers heard it and it stuck. He's been in and out of jail; he's schizophrenic; he's an addict. Is he a recovering addict?

"There's no such thing. Once an addict, always an addict. Once you're addicted, no matter what it is, there is no recovering from it, there's only abstaining from it."

His poisons have included alcohol and drugs and, for the most part, he abstains. "I try my damnedest. But sometimes I slip. I can't say I don't."

The artistry that's garnered the attention of a private gallery (although all proceeds go to the artist, in this case) started quite by accident. Last August, when he became homeless, he started panhandling. He was outside Giant Tiger one day when a fellow wandered by and gave him $5. Then he stepped back and asked him if he could sing, dance or play an instrument. "Don't you have a talent?" the man asked. Dave said he wrote poetry and grabbed a piece of cardboard and wrote a poem for the guy. He feels that poem was the best he's ever written.

The poem he wrote that day goes like this:

Just walk on by me, not hearing what I said. Just totally ignore me, I might as well be dead. I could sit here all day, well into the dark of night, It doesn't mean you'll see me, you don't have the insight. I don't have a job or anywhere to live, I try not to be obnoxious, say thank you when you give. I really don't want to be here, begging in this way, So a kind act or word would really make my day. Not all of us are drunkards or addicts or insane in the head, But I made this bed I lay in. That's all that needs to be said.

-- Crazzy Dave, 08/08/06.

"Everything you do in your life makes you who you are," Crazzy Dave says. "But it's all a matter of who you want to be and where you're headed."

And he likes where he's headed. He supports himself, pays for his food, clothing, medical care (he had an abscess from a spider bite last fall and the medication cost him his nest egg of $150) and he's not on welfare. He's sold several poems at the gallery and his future holds a book he plans to co-publish with a local photographer. The book will feature photos of his work, on the cardboard box fragments, not typed in.

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Source: http://www.canada.com/ottawacitizen/news/city/story.html?id=00e0ad3-4bc5-4ef1-9b2d-27ece689258&amp;k=23158&amp;p=1
Crazzy Dave Poems

Tony Spears
The Ottawa Citizen
Sunday, April 27, 2008

OTTAWA - "Homeless poet, sorry no poems, everything stolen while I went to eat. Nice city we live in, eh."

So read 'Crazzy' Dave Dessler's sign after he returned from dinner Friday to find his possessions had vanished.

For two years, Mr. Dessler has been a poem-writing fixture at George Street and Sussex Drive. In the winter, he shovels his stretch of pavement. Recently, he hauled garbage bags full of litter from the shrubs growing opposite his post.

Yesterday, he sat on a blue milk crate next to a few of the poems he'd managed to remember, written on cardboard in marker.

He's had his stuff stolen before, but never his poems. He had hundreds of them on pieces of cardboard and in notebooks.

"It's the poetry, it's my art -- that's what hurts," he said.

Fortunately, Mr. Dessler's friend, Guy Bérubé, director of La Petite Mort gallery on Cumberland Street, kept a few dozen poems. Mr. Bérubé sells Mr. Dessler's work; buyers can pay what they like. They fetch anywhere from $2 to $40, but they're off the market until Mr. Dessler can copy them.

Mr. Bérubé sent out an e-mail soliciting help for Mr. Dessler and he has already collected pants, shirts, underwear, socks, cash, markers and more notebooks.

"It's just helping out a buddy," he said, adding that Mr. Dessler was "very touched by what people had done."

Gift certificates for food are particularly useful -- Mr. Dessler doesn't want to be burdened by possessions.

After the incident, he wrote a poem, Weakening, which ends:

Pulling myself up, it's gonna be pretty tough/ especially this time, when they took all my stuff.

In Canada, homelessness has a thousand faces. The reasons people are homeless in our country are many and varied. Many of the homeless have become disconnected from their families and communities. There are also those who have not been able to find or keep jobs. Sometimes, ongoing changes in the labour market make it difficult to maintain sufficient incomes for rent payments.

A broad base of understanding is required to create and build programs and services that will work towards providing support for each and every person who faces homelessness.

Homelessness can affect people of any age, gender or ethnic background. It does not discriminate.

Reviewing the Numbers

Homelessness is a visible problem in Canada. However, to date, no reliable method for counting the number of people who are homeless can be identified. Canada does not have any accurate national statistics. Efforts are needed to effectively implement ways to gather this information.

The very nature of homelessness means that counting the people affected is difficult. Homelessness seems to have increased in visibility in urban centres, but no one is sure how many people live on the streets or in substandard shelter. The homeless population has no fixed address, is mobile and in many cases, hidden. The face of homelessness changes from community to community.

In order to reduce and prevent homelessness, we need to better understand the situation, the underlying causes and the supports needed. Communities are coming together to do just this and find ways to help.

Understanding the Needs

A whole progression of support steps may be needed to help a person who is homeless. It may start with making appropriate supportive services available to people in difficulty, whether on the street or in risky housing situations. It may be necessary to provide accommodation and assistance in emergency shelters. The goal is to provide homeless persons access to transitional housing, to permanent housing and independence.

In some circumstances, long term housing with continued support is needed. This progression could require continual support as every individual has different needs as they move from their vulnerable circumstances to more stable living conditions. This transition takes time and every individual will progress at a different pace depending on their own circumstances. Even once more permanent housing is achieved continued follow-up support could be required to prevent a return to homelessness.

Source:
http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/homelessness/general_information/understanding_homelessness.shtml
The following are the key findings of the Street Needs Assessment outlined in detail in the body of this report.

a) There were an estimated 5,052 individuals homeless in Toronto on April 19, 2006, comprised of 3,649 (72%) known to be in shelters, 818 (16%) estimated to be on the street, 275 (5%) known to be in health care or treatment facilities, 171 (3%) known to be in Violence Against Women Shelters, and 139 (3%) known to be in correctional facilities. (Note: this a point-in-time study and excludes hidden homeless individuals, e.g. “couch surfers”)

b) While the majority of homeless individuals outdoors were in the central core of the city, 30% were outside the central core

c) Aboriginal people constituted 16% of all people surveyed. Amongst the outdoor population, Aboriginal people constituted 26% of the homeless population. Aboriginal people were homeless longer as well-on average 5.3 years compared to 3.1 years of non-Aboriginal people.

d) Almost 9 out of every 10 individuals surveyed-1,691 people-want permanent housing.

e) The top five responses to what would help an individual find housing were:
   • Help finding an affordable place.
   • More money
   • Transportation to see apartments
   • Help with housing applications
   • Help getting identification.

f) Only 37% of individuals surveyed reported that they were on a waiting list for housing.

g) Individuals who were homeless the longest identified harm reduction programs, detox, alcohol/drug treatment, help with mental health and help addressing health needs as services that would help them find housing.

h) While people in corrections were the second highest group to identify a desire to have permanent housing (96%), they were the lowest group proportionally to be on a waiting list for housing (22%). Of all the groups surveyed indoors, they were the group most likely to have slept outdoors one or more nights in the six months prior to their incarceration. Moreover, 18% of all individuals surveyed (excluding those surveyed while incarcerated) had an interaction with corrections in the previous six months.

i) Drop-ins are the most frequently used service by homeless individuals.

j) There is considerable interaction between homeless individuals and health care systems: 51% had used a health clinic, 50% had used a hospital and 19% had used an ambulance in the last six months.

k) With the exception of the age 61-65, the older an individual is, the longer they have been homeless.
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