

New Sesame Street character highlights homelessness

17th December, 2018



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The world-famous children's television show Sesame Street has introduced a new character to highlight the plight of homeless children. The educational TV series, which has been aired since 1969, is helping to tackle the issue of homelessness via a new character called Lily. She is a 7-year-old girl who was left homeless after her family lost their apartment. Lily's plight mirrors that of over 2.5 million children in the USA who are also homeless. Millions more youngsters around the world are in the same situation. A Sesame Street spokeswoman, Sherrie Westin, hoped the character Lily would reduce the stigma associated with homelessness and allow children to identify with her, "and hopefully feel less alone".

The iconic, educational show has a long history of raising awareness of social issues among children. Other tough topics they have addressed include dealing with parents who are in prison, living with autism, and facing bullies at school. Ms Westin stressed the importance of reaching out to children who have no permanent home. She said: "We know children experiencing homelessness are often caught up in a devastating cycle of trauma. As well as the daily hardship of being homeless, those children may suffer due to poverty, domestic violence, or other trauma that caused them to lose their home." She added: "We want homeless children to know that they are not alone."

Sources: today.com / nbcnews.com / bbc.com

Writing

Governments should be heavily fined if children are homeless. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

television shows / character / homeless / character / apartment / situation / identify / iconic / educational / awareness / prison / bully / trauma / hardship / violence / alone

True / False

- a) The new character highlights homeless among war veterans. T / F
- b) Sesame Street first started being broadcast in the early 1970s. T / F
- c) The new character became homeless after her family lost their home. T / F
- d) A Sesame Street spokeswoman wants children to feel less alone. T / F
- e) In the past, Sesame Street has raised awareness of living with autism. T / F
- f) The spokeswoman spoke about the devastating trauma of cycles. T / F
- g) The spokeswoman described homelessness as being a daily hardship. T / F
- h) The spokeswoman wants us to have more children so we are not alone. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| 1. world-famous | a. tackled |
| 2. plight | b. reflects |
| 3. aired | c. consciousness |
| 4. mirrors | d. broadcast |
| 5. reduce | e. secure |
| 6. awareness | f. renowned |
| 7. addressed | g. shock |
| 8. permanent | h. destructive |
| 9. devastating | i. predicament |
| 10. trauma | j. lessen |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What do you think about Sesame Street?
- c) How can we help homeless children?
- d) How can we help children deal with today's issues?
- e) Why does society let bad things happen to children?
- f) What are the daily hardships of being homeless?
- g) Will children suffer more or less in the future?
- h) What questions would you like to ask Sesame Street's bosses?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. highlight the | a. the issue of homelessness |
| 2. which has been aired | b. due to poverty |
| 3. helping to tackle | c. associated with homelessness |
| 4. more youngsters around the world | d. raising awareness |
| 5. reduce the stigma | e. plight of homeless children |
| 6. a long history of | f. reaching out to children |
| 7. dealing with parents | g. are in the same situation |
| 8. stressed the importance of | h. of being homeless |
| 9. the daily hardship | i. since 1969 |
| 10. children may suffer | j. who are in prison |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you know about Sesame Street?
- Who is your favourite Sesame Street character?
- What is your favourite children's TV show?
- How much homelessness is there in your country?
- How can governments reduce homelessness?
- Should governments be fined for having homeless children?
- What's the loneliest you've ever felt?
- What advice do you have for the character Lily?

Spelling

- highlight the gplhit of homeless children
- helping to altkec the issue
- rrrimos that of over 2.5 million children
- more usesgtrnyo around the world
- reduce the mstgai
- allow children to fneitdiy with her
- The ocicin, educational show
- raising sawsrnea
- htugo topics
- children who have no pntenmear home
- a devastating cycle of umaatr
- domestic ecevlino

Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. i	3. d	4. b	5. j
6. c	7. a	8. e	9. h	10. g

Role Play

Role A – Homelessness

You think homelessness is the biggest problem for children. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the easiest of these to deal with (and why): gangs, bullying or a lack of exercise.

Role B – Gangs

You think gangs are the biggest problem for children. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the easiest of these to deal with (and why): homelessness, bullying or a lack of exercise.

Role C – Bullying

You think bullying is the biggest problem for children. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the easiest of these to deal with (and why): gangs, homelessness or a lack of exercise.

Role D – Lack of Exercise

You think a lack of exercise is the biggest problem for children. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them what is wrong with their things. Also, tell the others which is the easiest of these to deal with (and why): gangs, bullying or homelessness.

Speaking – Children

Rank these with your partner. Put the most worrying things for children at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|------------|---------------------|
| • Hunger | • Absentee parents |
| • Obesity | • Lack of exercise |
| • Gangs | • Homelessness |
| • Bullying | • Domestic violence |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	T	e	T	f	F	g	T	h	F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.