

NOVEL STUDY: NO FIXED ADDRESS



GROUP ACTIVITIES HANDOUT

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- One or more copies of Susin Nielsen's novel *No Fixed Address*
- Large sheets of paper and markers (if making "graffiti boards")
- A laptop or other device with access to YouTube

INTRODUCTION

Homelessness is an issue that can take many different forms, and look different for different people. According to Homelesshub.ca, there are four different types of homelessness:



1. **Unsheltered:** People who lack housing and do not stay in shelters. People who are unsheltered may live on sidewalks, in parks, in vehicles, or other structures not designed for living in permanently.
2. **Emergency Sheltered:** People who use emergency shelters and system supports. People who are emergency sheltered may live in emergency or overnight shelters, shelters for families and individuals in crisis, or emergency shelters for people fleeing from natural disasters.
3. **Provisionally Accommodated:** People who are technically without permanent shelter and are living in impermanent accommodations. People who are provisionally accommodated might stay temporarily with friends or family, or stay in motels or hostels.
4. **At Risk of Homelessness:** People whose current housing situations are unstable due to poverty, personal crisis, or lack of affordable housing. People who are at risk of homelessness may have unstable employment, be facing eviction, or be dealing with personal challenges such as addictions or mental health issues which can impact their housing.

With this in mind, read Susin Nielsen's novel *No Fixed Address* with your group, or encourage group members to read it individually. While reading, encourage group members to write down any thoughts or questions they may have either individually or on group "graffiti boards", and use them for discussion or reflection.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

After reading, use the following questions for discussion with your group:

1. The narration is from Felix's point of view. Why do you think the author, Susin Nielsen, chose to tell the story this way? How did this help you understand issues of homelessness?
2. *No Fixed Address* has many characters who turn out to be very different from what Felix or the reader thinks at first. Think about how these characters defy the readers expectations of them. How does this relate to being called to love our neighbours?
3. Discuss the themes of shame and guilt in *No Fixed Address*.
4. *No Fixed Address* takes a look at the lives of the "hidden homeless" – people without a permanent home who must find alternatives. If you were Felix, what aspect of your living situation would you find hardest to deal with?
5. Think about the different levels of homelessness. How do we see Felix experience them throughout the book?
6. Read the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37). Who are the "Good Samaritans" in *No Fixed Address*? How have you been called to be a "Good Samaritan" in your own life?
7. Watch the Ted Talk *Becky Blanton: The Year I Was Homeless* (available on YouTube). How are Becky's experiences similar or different to the experiences of Felix and Astrid? (**Content warning: This video briefly discusses issues of depression and suicide. There is no graphic content. You know your group best—feel free to show this video only if you feel it is suitable for your group members.**)

Questions have been adapted from the No Fixed Address Discussion Guide, found in the novel.