

PS 39 Diversity and Inclusion Book of the Month: January
Theme: Socioeconomic Diversity

Book Title: The Can Man
by Laura E. Williams

Grade Level: 2nd / 3rd

Book Introduction:

For his birthday, Tim wants a skateboard more than anything. Tim knows his family cannot afford to buy him one. Tim sees a man, The Can Man, collecting empty cans and decides he will collect cans to earn money to buy a skateboard. After a couple of encounters with The Can Man, Tim changes his mind about how to spend this money.

This book can be used to help children understand the difference between needs and wants and to think about socioeconomic differences. Readers will be encouraged to think beyond themselves and reflect on whether all people have their basic needs met on a daily basis. Children can also be encouraged to challenge their assumptions about homelessness.

Discussion Questions:

Before Reading:

- What is the difference between a need and a want?
- Have you ever encountered a homeless person? How did seeing that person make you feel? Why? What are some reasons someone might be homeless?
- Why do you think the man on the cover of this book is holding a can?

While and After Reading:

- Who is The Can Man? Why is he called The Can Man? What happened to The Can Man?
- How does Tim get the idea for collecting cans?
- What does Mr. Peters do when he sees Tim with all his bags of cans?
- Why did Tim give his money to Mr. Peters? Do you think Tim made the right decision? Why or why not?
- How do you think Tim felt after he gave his money to Mr. Peters? How do you think Mr. Peters felt?
- How does Mr. Peters use the money Tim gives him? How do you know?
- Why do you think Tim begins calling Mr. Peters by his name and not The Can Man? Which do you think is more sensitive? Why?