

PS 39 Diversity and Inclusion Book of the Month: January

Theme: Socioeconomic Difference

Book Title: A Shelter in Our Car
By Monica Gunning

Grade Level: 2nd / 3rd

Book Summary:

Zettie and her Mama left their warm and comfortable home in Jamaica for an uncertain life in the United States. With Papa gone, Mama can't find a steady job that will sustain them and so they are forced to live in their car. But Mama's unwavering love, support, and gutsy determination give Zettie the confidence that, together, she and her mother can meet all challenges.

Discussion Questions:

- Based on the cover, what do you think this book is about?
- Why do Zettie and her mother live in their car? Can a car be a home?
- What is the meaning of the word “shelter”? Why do people need shelter (ie. bad weather, physical safety, privacy)?
- What are the different types of shelters that people might live in? Can love be a kind of shelter?
- Why does Zettie want Mama to drop her off at the corner instead of in front of the school?
- Why do some of Zettie’s classmates call her “Junk Car Zettie”?
- Does Zettie feel safe? Why or why not? What do we need in order to feel safe?
- Why can’t Zettie’s mother “do some other kind of work”?
- What do you know about Benjie?
- What does it mean to be homeless? What does the word homelessness make you think or feel? What questions do you have about people who don’t have a home?
- Why might some people do not have a home? What might their shelters be like?
- What would a perfect home look like to you? Do you think perfect homes exist?
- Imagine what Zettie’s perfect home would look like. What might you see, hear, smell, and touch in this home?
- What are the most important things people need in life?

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