

## 2. Whose Backpack?

*This activity uses a (tattered) backpack to introduce students to the idea that there are people who do not have a home in which to live.*

*Teachers can make a choice as to whether to approach an actual homeless shelter for collaboration in returning the “found” backpack to its (fictional) owner. Alternatively, teachers may choose to tell the story of finding the backpack as a clear narrative, inviting the children to solve a mystery story.*



### **Materials Needed:**

A backpack (preferably old and shabby) containing:

Coins (small change)

Water bottle

Food

Clothes (one change of basics)

Cup

Toothbrush

Plate

Long underwear

Blanket

Warm gloves

Socks

Note from a friend (the note is key as it can contain a number of clues to the identity of our backpack owner as a “homeless person”)

1. Set the scene by explaining to students that a bag was found last night outside by the dumpster and should be returned to its owner, but we don't know who the backpack belongs to. How can we find out who it belongs to?
2. Generate a list of “I Wonders” around the backpack:
  - Look inside to see what's in it.
  - Backpack items should reflect the homeless status of the owner.
  - Consider why each item might be in the bag.  
*E.g., a toothbrush suggests this person is prepared to be staying somewhere other than home tonight.*



3. Generate a list of questions around the owner of the bag.

Work on completing a copy of this chart as a class group. Use large paper.

**WHAT WE THINK WE KNOW**

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**WONDERINGS**

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4. Discuss how can students can safely get this bag back to its owner (ideas might include posters, phone calls, letter to the newspaper, waiting by the dumpster, etc.).

*\*There are opportunities here for students to share ideas. If no one comes up with the idea of the bag belonging to a homeless person, don't force the issue. Leave it for a few days and go on with the next activities.*

5. Alternatively, teachers might prefer to bring in a backpack filled with a number of items to explore with the class, sorting the contents into two groups: things we need, and things we want.