

## **Unit Seventeen**

# Taking Care of Yourself: Finding Housing & Preventing Homelessness

# UNIT SEVENTEEN: FINDING HOUSING & AVOIDING HOMELESSNESS

## *Suggestions for the Instructor*

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### **Pg. 17-11 -17-12 -- Writing about Home**

Tell students that poets write in order to express deep and important feelings. Poems can evoke happy or sad memories; they can also express longing for things we wish for that we do not have. Have students study the models on the handout called "I Remember Home." Ask: How do the poems make you feel? Are there images or ideas in the poems that you can relate to?

Then have students use the poem starters to write poems about home -- either memories of real experiences or dreams of a home they long for. Ask volunteers to share their writing with the class.

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### **Pg. 17-13 -- "Ballad of the Landlord" by Langston Hughes**

"Ballad of the Landlord" by Langston Hughes

[www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-ballad-of-the-landlord/](http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-ballad-of-the-landlord/)

Watch the illustrated YouTube video of Ballad of the Landlord:

[www.bing.com/videos/search?q=ballad+of+the+landlord+langston+hughes&mid=491C04C573A6A1E8D8CD491C04C573A6A1E8D8CD&view=detail&FORM=VIRE5](http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=ballad+of+the+landlord+langston+hughes&mid=491C04C573A6A1E8D8CD491C04C573A6A1E8D8CD&view=detail&FORM=VIRE5)

Langston Hughes recites Ballad of the Landlord:

[www.bing.com/videos/search?q=ballad+of+the+landlord+langston+hughes&mid=491C04C573A6A1E8D8CD491C04C573A6A1E8D8CD&view=detail&FORM=VIRE5](http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=ballad+of+the+landlord+langston+hughes&mid=491C04C573A6A1E8D8CD491C04C573A6A1E8D8CD&view=detail&FORM=VIRE5)

Copy and distribute the poem "Ballad of the Landlord" by Langston Hughes. If possible, show students the illustrated YouTube videos of the poem being recited. Read it aloud with students (twice is best) and then ask them to answer the questions on the handout as a large group or in small groups. Discuss their answers.

#### **ANSWERS:**

1. Who is the speaker in the poem? Whom is the speaker addressing?

**The speaker is a tenant who is talking to his landlord.**

2. What are the tenant's complaints?

**His roof leaks and his steps are broken.**

(continued)

3. What is the speaker telling the landlord he will do if his complaints aren't addressed? And how does the landlord reply?

**The speaker says he won't pay him till the problems are fixed and the landlord replies that he will evict him, cut off his heat, take his furniture and throw it in the street.**

4. What happens to the speaker after he threatens the landlord?

**The landlord calls the police, gets the man arrested and sent to jail for ninety days without bail.**

5. What do you think the poet feels about this situation and how things turned out for the tenant?

**He seems to think the situation is unfair, that the tenant has a right to be angry with the landlord, and that he got a heavy punishment for demanding his right to a decent apartment.**

6. This poem was written by Langston Hughes over fifty years ago. What parts of the story told by the poem are out of date? What parts of the poem are still true or relevant today?

**Answers may vary.**

**Rent costs more than ten dollars today.**

**The terms "copper" and "Negro" aren't used much anymore.**

**There are still landlords who don't take care of their property.**

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### **Pg. 17-14 -- "Madam and the Rent Man" by Langston Hughes**

"Madam and the Rent Man" by Langston Hughes

[www.poemhunter.com/poem/madam-and-the-rent-man/](http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/madam-and-the-rent-man/)

Watch the illustrated YouTube video of a reading of "Madam and the Rent Man:"

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=6T3VXvaQGDI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6T3VXvaQGDI)

Copy and distribute the poem "Madam and the Rent Man" by Langston Hughes. If possible, show students the illustrated YouTube video of the poem being recited. Read the poem aloud with students. This poem works well in two voices. One reader can be the speaker / tenant; the other can read all the lines that begin with "He said" in the voice of the "rent man."

Ask students to answer the questions on the handout as a large group or in small groups. Discuss their answers.

(continued)

**ANSWERS:**

1. Who are the two speakers in the poem? How do you know?  
**One is Madam, a tenant; the other is a rent collector. Madam's lines begin with "I said." The rent collector's lines begin with "He said."**
2. What are Madam's complaints?  
**The sink is broken  
The water doesn't run.  
The back window is cracked.  
The kitchen floor squeaks.  
There are rats in the cellar.  
The attic leaks."**
3. How does the rent collector respond to Madam's complaints?  
**He says it isn't his responsibility; he's just the agent.**
4. How does Madam feel about his response?  
**She complains that he is passing the buck and not taking responsibility.  
She says she won't pay him.**
5. In both "Ballad of the Landlord" and "Madam and the Rent Man" by Langston Hughes, the tenants refuse to pay their rent until their demands are met. Is this a good strategy? Why or why not?  
**Answers will vary. Refusing to pay rent may not end well for the tenants because they may be evicted; on the other hand, protesting poor conditions may be a way to get the landlord to change; maybe collective action with other tenants would work better, etc.**
6. This poem was written over fifty years ago. Are there still similar housing problems today? Give examples from your experience or those of people you know.  
**Answers may vary.**

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**Pg. 17-15 -- "Reply to an Eviction Notice" by Robert Flanagan**

Distribute the poem "Reply to an Eviction Notice" by Robert Flanagan. Read it aloud with students (twice is best) and then ask them to answer the questions on the handout as a large group or in small groups. Discuss their answers.

**ANSWERS:**

1. What does the title tell you the poem is going to be about?  
**The poem is going to be about the speaker's responses to an eviction notice.**
2. To whom is the speaker talking in this poem?  
**The speaker is addressing the landlord who is evicting his family.**

(continued)

3. Why is the landlord called a “promoter of cramped endurances”?  
**The landlord rents houses that are small, cramped and full of suffering.**
4. What is the “rightful inheritance” the speaker is referring to?  
**He may mean that the landlord inherited the properties and is now making money by renting them to other people. This comment may be seen as ironic, because the speaker seems to question whether the landlord really does have a right to rent such cramped quarters and then evict the tenants who are poor and can’t pay.**
5. What do you think the speaker means by the line “Your father / purchased shrewdly and practiced ungiving / well. Mine did not.”?  
**Answers will vary. The speaker may be reflecting on the fact that the landlord is rich because his father was a good business man, but also maybe not a generous or caring person; he may think his own father, by contrast, was not so “shrewd” but also was more generous.**
6. How does the speaker describe the difference between his living space and the landlord’s? How would you describe their different situations in your own words? How much difference is there between being an “owner” and a “renter”?  
**The owner has a sense of security and power; the renter is insecure about his future. The landlord’s home is “landscaped and architect-designed” (big, beautiful, well cared for, in a powerful place in the community.) The tenant’s rooms are “gauged like parking meters, narrow as coin slots” (because of the precarious existence of paying month to month for small places, knowing they will have to leave soon.)**
7. Why do you think the speaker feels that ownership is the landlord’s “reward and punishment”? What does the speaker say is his own reward and punishment? Why?  
**Answers will vary. The speaker may feel that ownership is both good and bad for the landlord, giving him benefits but also difficulties (such as the guilt of evicting people.) The speaker’s reward and punishment is “movement” from place to place because of poverty and eviction. It has been hard on him and his family, but he may feel stronger and more aware as a result of the eviction.**
8. Have you ever been in a situation similar to the one described in the poem? How did it make you feel?  
**Answers will vary.**

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**Pg. 17-16 - 17-18 -- Finding a Place to Live After Release**

Discuss with students the realities of finding a place to live after release. Finding a place to live after release can be difficult for some ex-offenders. Encourage students to use the time while they are incarcerated to start the process of planning and researching where they will live after release. Read this handout aloud, discussing with students the importance of thinking hard about the issues they will face after release: Will they have someone to stay with? Will they have to live in transitional housing? Will they need to stay in a shelter? Will they be able to live independently?

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**Pg. 17-19 - 17-20 -- Vocabulary of Housing**

Ask students to read the story of Joseph Freeman who is about to be released from jail and needs to find a place to live. Throughout the story are key vocabulary terms related to housing. Discuss the terms as they read, if necessary. After students have completed the reading, ask them to complete "Vocabulary of Housing: Matching Terms." Have students match the terms on the left with the definitions on the right.

**ANSWERS:**

A	tenant	P	to rent a property to a tenant who is not on the current lease
B	landlord	M	work that is done regularly to keep a building in good condition
C	Lessee	C	a person who agrees to a lease, usually a tenant of rental property
D	Lessor	L	land and the buildings on it
E	lease (noun)	D	the landlord or person who rents his or her property under the terms and conditions of a lease
F	lease (verb)	J	used as a place to live, not as a business
G	security deposit	Q	temporary housing for people in need of services and support; may provide counseling and referrals
H	liable	B	a person or organization that owns and leases apartments to others
I	evict	A	a person who rents and occupies land, a house, a business or an office for a period of time
J	residential	H	responsible
K	resident	G	money paid in advance to protect a landlord against damage or non-payment
L	premises	K	a person who lives in a place
M	maintenance	O	services such as electricity, gas, or water
N	damages	I	to expel a tenant from land, a building, etc., by legal process, as for nonpayment of rent

O	utilities	F	to sign a legal agreement to rent a property for a period of time
P	sublet	E	a contract renting property signed by a landlord and a tenant
Q	transitional housing	N	physical harm to a place that requires repair

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### **Pg. 17-21- 17-22 -- Reading a Lease Agreement**

Individually or in small groups, ask students to review the sample lease agreement. After reading, ask students to complete the comprehension questions which follow.

#### **ANSWERS:**

1. When was this lease signed? **August 15, 2013**
2. When can the tenant move in? **September 1, 2013**
3. What is the length of the lease? **One year**
4. What is the monthly rent? **\$650.00**
5. Who is responsible for paying the utilities? **The tenant**
6. How much is the security deposit? **\$650.00**
7. How much does the tenant have to pay before he or she can move in? **\$1,300**
8. Can the tenant get the security deposit back? How?  
**Yes, if a) residence is in clean condition, b) property shows no signs of damage, c) rent has been paid.**
9. Is the landlord allowed to enter the property during the time of the lease? If so, under what conditions can he or she enter the property?  
**The Landlord, after giving the proper notice required by law, may enter the apartment and remove any property and people if the tenant defaults on the agreements in the lease.**
10. Is there anything in this rental agreement you would change? Is there anything you would want to add to this rental agreement? **Answers will vary.**
11. Would you sign this lease? Why or why not? **Answers will vary.**

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### **Pg. 17-23 – 17-24 -- Reading a Rental Agreement**

Individually or in small groups, ask students to review the sample rental agreement. After reading, ask students to complete the reading comprehension questions.

#### **ANSWERS:**

1. When was this rental agreement signed? **March 22, 2015**
2. When can the tenant move in? **April 1, 2015**
3. What is the monthly rent? **\$400.00 per month**
4. When is the rent due? **Rent is due in advance of the first day of each and every month.**
5. When is the rent considered to be “late”? What happens if the rent is late?  
**The rent is late if it is five (5) or more days after the due date. The Owner may terminate the tenancy (evict the tenant) by law.**
6. Is the resident responsible for paying the utilities?  
**Yes, the resident is responsible for paying all utilities, except monthly water bills.**
7. How much is the security deposit? How much does the tenant have to pay in total before he or she can move in?  
**The security deposit is the amount of one month’s rent (\$400.00.)  
S/he has to pay \$400.00 rent + \$400.00 security deposit = \$800.00 total.**
8. Can the resident operate a business out of his or her apartment?  
**No, it is for residential use only.**
9. Can the tenant get the security deposit back? How?  
**Yes, at the end of the tenancy, if there is not damage to the apartment.**
10. Is the landlord allowed to enter the property during the time of the lease?  
If so, under what conditions can he or she enter the property?  
**Yes, the owner has the right to enter the apartment to make necessary repairs or improvements or in case of emergency.**
11. What should the resident do if he or she wants to have a barbecue and hang Christmas lights? **The resident needs to get written consent of the owner.**
12. What should the resident do if he or she wants to leave for a month and rent the apartment to a friend? **The resident needs to get written consent of the owner.**
13. Is there anything in this rental agreement you would change? Is there anything you would want to add to this rental agreement? **Answers will vary.**
14. Would you sign this lease? **Answers will vary.**

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**Pg.17-25 -- Homeless Self-Help & Empowerment Projects**

This handout, reprinted with permission from the National Coalition for the Homeless, offers information both for people who have experienced homelessness and others who may want to get involved with local organizations working to end and prevent homelessness. Review the handout with students, discussing which of the action steps might interest them.

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## **Unit Seventeen**

# Taking Care of Yourself: Finding Housing & Preventing Homelessness

## **Student Activities**

# Writing about Home

*Poets write in order to express deep and important feelings. Poems can evoke happy or sad memories; they can also express longing for things we wish for that we do not have. Study the models below for writing about home. How do the poems make you feel? Are there images or ideas in the poems that you can relate to?*

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## I Remember Home

**I remember home.**

**I remember the sounds of eggs sizzling, my little brother laughing,  
my mother singing an old gospel song.**

**I remember the smell of my grandfather's cigar, the dog's wet fur.**

**I remember the sights: the dogwood tree outside my window,  
thgrey sidewalk, the cluster of young men on the corner.**

**I remember the tastes of home: fried chicken, angel food cake,  
hot chocolate on a cold night.**

**For me, home is full of people who care, love, get angry, screw up,  
say they're sorry, forgive.**

**For me, home is a warm place where I can rest after a day in the cold wind.**

**For me, home is a feeling of rough peace.**

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## I Dream of Home

**I dream of home.**

**I dream of the sounds of children playing in the yard.**

**I dream of clean laundry, the sweet smell of vanilla cake baking.**

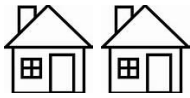
**I dream of blue and yellow walls, a garden sprouting healthy greens.**

**I dream of sweet and salty foods, cooking on my own stove.**

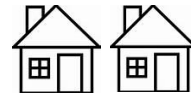
**The home I dream of is full of people who love and protect each other.**

**The home I dream of is a place where I can feel free.**

**The home I dream of is full of soft blankets and kind words.**



# Writing about Home



Use the poem starters below to write poems about home -- either memories of real experiences or dreams of a home you long for. Or try both! Share your poems with the class.

**I remember home.**

**I remember the sounds of** \_\_\_\_\_

**I remember smells** \_\_\_\_\_

**I remember sights** \_\_\_\_\_

**I remember the tastes of home, like** \_\_\_\_\_

**For me, home is full of people who** \_\_\_\_\_

**For me, home is a place where** \_\_\_\_\_

**For me, home is a feeling of** \_\_\_\_\_

*or*

**I dream of home.**

**I dream of the sounds of** \_\_\_\_\_

**I dream of smells** \_\_\_\_\_

**I dream of sights** \_\_\_\_\_

**I dream of the tastes of home, like** \_\_\_\_\_

**The home I dream of is full of people who** \_\_\_\_\_

**The home I dream of is a place where** \_\_\_\_\_

**The home I dream of is full of** \_\_\_\_\_



# Ballad of the Landlord

by Langston Hughes



Read the poem by Langston Hughes:

[www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-ballad-of-the-landlord/](http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/the-ballad-of-the-landlord/)

Watch the illustrated YouTube video of *Ballad of the Landlord*:

[www.bing.com/videos/search?q=ballad+of+the+landlord+langston+hughes&mid=491C04C573A6A1E8D8CD491C04C573A6A1E8D8CD&view=detail&FORM=VIRE5](http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=ballad+of+the+landlord+langston+hughes&mid=491C04C573A6A1E8D8CD491C04C573A6A1E8D8CD&view=detail&FORM=VIRE5)

Listen to Langston Hughes recite *Ballad of the Landlord*:

[www.bing.com/videos/search?q=ballad+of+the+landlord+langston+hughes&mid=491C04C573A6A1E8D8CD491C04C573A6A1E8D8CD&view=detail&FORM=VIRE5](http://www.bing.com/videos/search?q=ballad+of+the+landlord+langston+hughes&mid=491C04C573A6A1E8D8CD491C04C573A6A1E8D8CD&view=detail&FORM=VIRE5)

1. Who is the speaker in the poem? Whom is the speaker addressing?
2. What are the tenant's complaints?
3. What is the speaker telling the landlord he will do if his complaints aren't addressed? And how does the landlord reply?
4. What happens to the speaker after he threatens the landlord?
5. What do you think the poet feels about this situation and how things turned out for the tenant?
6. This poem was written by Langston Hughes over fifty years ago. What parts of the story told by the poem are out of date? What parts of the poem are still true or relevant today?

# Madam and the Rent Man

by Langston Hughes

Read the poem by Langston Hughes:

[www.poemhunter.com/poem/madam-and-the-rent-man/](http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/madam-and-the-rent-man/)

Watch the illustrated YouTube video of a reading of Madam and the Rent Man:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=6T3VXvaQGDI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6T3VXvaQGDI)



- 1.** Who are the two speakers in the poem? How do you know?
- 2.** What are Madam's complaints?
- 3.** How does the rent collector respond to Madam's complaints?
- 4.** How does Madam feel about his response?
- 5.** In both "Ballad of the Landlord" and "Madam and the Rent Man" by Langston Hughes, the tenants refuse to pay their rent until their demands are met. Is this a good strategy? Why or why not?
- 6.** This poem was written over 50 years ago. Are there still similar housing problems today? Give examples from your experience or those of people you know.

# REPLY TO AN EVICTION NOTICE

Robert Flanagan

My mother and father camped in such apartments  
in their time, landlord, promoter  
of cramped endurances,  
your rightful inheritance. Your father  
purchased shrewdly and practiced ungiving  
well. Mine did not.  
So my sweaty bursts of living  
are managed in rooms  
gauged like parking meters, narrow as coin slots,  
while from the landscaped, architect-designed  
vantage of your home  
the town lies before a Monopoly board.  
Ownership is your reward  
and punishment; movement mine.



*Reprinted with permission from Robert Flanagan, Reply to an Eviction Notice,  
Selected Poems, 1969-2009, Bottom Dog Press, [www.robertflanagan.com](http://www.robertflanagan.com)*

1. What does the title tell you the poem is going to be about?
2. To whom is the speaker talking in this poem?
3. Why is the landlord called a “promoter of cramped endurances”?
4. What is the “rightful inheritance” the speaker is referring to?
5. What do you think the speaker means by the line “Your father / purchased shrewdly and practiced ungiving / well. Mine did not.”?
6. How does the speaker describe the difference between his living space and the landlord’s? How would you describe their different situations in your own words?
7. Why do you think the speaker feels that ownership is the landlord’s “reward and punishment”? What does the speaker say is his own reward and punishment? Why?
8. Have you ever been in a situation similar to the one described in the poem? How did it make you feel?

Robert Flanagan’s family was evicted once when he was a boy in the inner-city of Toledo, Ohio. His father was a disabled USMC combat veteran and his mother at that time worked as a line server at a local cafeteria. Later, his mother got a good job on the line at Champion Spark Plug. After high school in Toledo, Flanagan joined the Marines, then went to college, became a teacher and taught literature to prisoners at the Marion, OH Correctional Center. He is now retired and is a full-time writer.

# Finding a Place to Live After Release



Finding a place to live after release can be difficult for some ex-offenders. It is important to use the time while you are incarcerated to start the process of planning and researching where you will live after release. **THINK HARD** before you decide to return to your old neighborhood. Try to avoid the places where people have pulled you into crime in the past and may do so again.

## Do you have someone to stay with?

*It can be helpful to have a supportive family or friend to stay with while you get back of your feet. Do you have someone to stay with? If so, ask yourself:*

Ask yourself:	Yes	No
Do you get along with the person or people who live there?		
Are those people a positive influence on you?		
Are those people supportive?		
Can you stay there legally? (If the place is a rental, does the lease allow another person to stay without paying additional rent?)		
Is the person whose name is on the lease willing to have you stay there without paying rent?		
If so, how long can you stay there without paying rent?		
If not, do you know how much they want you to contribute and when you need to start paying?		
Can you talk to them about money and communicate about problems?		
Have you talked about what you will be responsible for to help out while you are there? (chores, maintenance, food?)		
Is this place close to places where you might find work?		
Is it on a bus line or other public transportation?		
Is it near grocery stores or other stores you may need?		
Is it in a safe neighborhood with little crime?		



## ***Finding a Place to Live After Release, continued***

### **Is transitional housing an option?**

Some people are mandated to go to transitional housing or a halfway house. Some offenders are mandated to return to the county where the crime was committed.

Find out if you are mandated to stay in transitional housing as a condition of your release or if you have the option to stay in a halfway house even if it is not mandatory. Transitional housing can provide structure to returning inmates who are adjusting to life on the outside.

Here's what you should find out about the transitional housing:

- How long do you have to stay there?
- How long can you stay if you choose to?
- What are the rules of the halfway house?
- What programs will you have to attend?
- Will you be able to secure employment while you are there?
- Will the staff at the halfway house help you develop a plan for independent living while you are there?
- Do they offer support services (counseling / job search help?)
- How much does it cost?
- Will you be able to save money from your earnings while you stay there so you can support yourself when you leave?

### **Do you need to stay in a shelter?**

If you do not have a place to stay, you may decide to live in a shelter. Here's what you should find out about the shelter options in your community:

- How long are you allowed to stay there?
- What are the rules of the shelter?
- What programs or religious services will you have to attend?
- Will you be able to secure employment while you are there?
- Will the staff at the shelter help you develop a plan for independent living while you are there?
- Do they offer support services (counseling / job search help?)
- Is it free or is there a cost for housing or meals?
- Will you be able to save money from your earnings while you stay there so you can support yourself when you leave?



***Finding a Place to Live After Release, continued***



**Do you plan to live independently?**



Ask yourself:	Yes	No
Will you need to find a place to live by yourself?		
Do you know what your options are?		
Do you know which organizations can help you find housing? • • • •		
Do you have a safe and crime-free place to stay while you look for an independent living situation?		
Do you have money to be able to rent a place to live after you are released?		
Do you know how to find a place to rent in your city or county?		
Do you know how much it costs to rent an apartment in your city?		
Do you have plans for getting enough money to pay a security deposit and first month's rent?		
Do you know what you will need to do to get enough money to pay the rent on time every month?		

*What additional questions do you have about finding housing after you are released?*

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## \* \* **The Vocabulary of Housing** \* \*

Before Joseph Freeman was released from the county jail, he thought about whether he should move back to his mother's house in his old neighborhood, where he could live rent free. He decided not to stay with her, though, because he knew he would be tempted to hang out with the same guys he had sold drugs with in the past, and he didn't want them to lure him back into trouble.

He decided instead to stay at the local **transitional housing** center for two or three months while he made some money and looked for a place to stay. He asked his instructor at the jail for the number and called them before his release to secure a spot on the waiting list.

After three months of working full time doing labor for a temporary agency, he made enough money to pay for the **security deposit** and the first month's rent in an apartment. He searched in the newspaper for apartment listings in a **residential** area and found a few places not too far from his work.

Joseph has a felony. The apartment manager at the first three apartments did a background check and told him he was not allowed to rent from them. He felt discouraged and ready to give up, but thanks to his mother's encouragement and his counselor's advice, he went back to the transitional housing setting and asked for a list of landlords willing to rent to ex-offenders.

After another month of searching, he finally found a **landlord (or lessor)** willing to show him around. The apartment had one bedroom, one bathroom, a small living room, and a kitchen. It had a common room with a washer and dryer shared with six other apartments. The walls were newly painted and the place was pretty clean, so Joseph read the **lease** carefully to understand the conditions he would be agreeing to if he signed.

Joseph read the lease because he wanted to know when the rent was due, what **damages** he would be **liable** for, and what he had to do to avoid being **evicted**. He wanted to know if he could **sublet** the apartment and whether the landlord had a right to enter his place without notice. He wanted to make sure the landlord was responsible for **maintenance** of the **premises**. He wanted to know what the landlord could do if Joseph caused any damage to the apartment.

After he read the agreement, Joseph decided to **lease** the apartment and become a **tenant (or lessee)**. He agreed to pay the **security deposit** and the first month's rent. The rent was \$650 a month, not including **utilities**. He had to pay about \$110 for gas, electricity, water, sewage, and Internet service.

## The Vocabulary of Housing: Matching Terms

Based on the information in the reading, "The Vocabulary of Housing," match the terms on the left with the definitions on the right.

A	tenant		to rent a property to a tenant who is not on the current lease
B	landlord		work that is done regularly to keep a building in good condition
C	lessee		person who agrees to a lease, usually a tenant of rental property
D	lessor		land and the buildings on it
E	lease (noun)		the landlord or person who rents his or her property under the terms and conditions of a lease
F	lease (verb)		used as a place to live, not as a business
G	security deposit		temporary housing for people in need of services and support; may provide counseling and referrals
H	liable		a person or organization that owns and leases apartments to others
I	evict		a person who rents and occupies land, a house, an office, from another for a period of time
J	residential		responsible
K	resident		money paid in advance to protect a landlord against damage or non-payment
L	premises		a person who lives in a place
M	maintenance		services such as electricity, gas, or water
N	damages		to expel (a person, especially a tenant) from land, a building, etc., by legal process, as for nonpayment of rent
O	utilities		to sign a legal agreement to rent a property for a period of time
P	sublet		a contract renting property signed by a landlord and a tenant
Q	transitional housing		physical harm to a place that requires repair

# Reading a Lease Agreement

*Individually or in small groups, review the sample lease agreement. After reading, refer to it to answer the comprehension questions.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## 1. Parties/Premises:

This Lease is made this 15th of August, 2013, by and between David Jones (herein referred to as "Landlord") and Joseph Freeman (herein referred to as "Tenant"). Landlord hereby leases to Tenant certain real property situated in the City of Tallahassee, Florida on 123 Independence Drive and described as One Bedroom Apartment (hereinafter called the "Premises").

## 2. Term:

The term of this Lease shall be for one year commencing on September 1, 2013, and ending on September 1, 2014.

## 3. Rent:

Tenant shall pay to Landlord as rent for the Premises the sum of \$650.00 dollars per month, on the first day of each month. Rent shall be payable without notice or demand at the address as the Landlord may designate to Tenant in writing.

## 4. Security Deposit:

Tenant shall pay the landlord one month's rent to be held until such time as lease expires, and to be returned to tenant if: a) residence is in clean condition, b) property shows no signs of damage, c) rent has been paid.

## 5. Utilities:

Tenant shall make all arrangements and pay for all gas, heat, light, power, telephone, and other utility services supplied to the Premises and for all connection charges.

## 6. Hold Harmless:

Tenant shall hold Landlord harmless from any and all claims arising from Tenant's use of the Premises. Tenant assumes all risk of damage to property or injury to persons in or about the Premises, except in the event of gross negligence on the part of the Landlord.

## 7. Default:

If Tenant shall default and breach any covenant or provision of the Lease, then the Landlord, after giving the proper notice required by law, may enter the Premises and remove any property and any and all persons therefrom. The undersigned Resident, whether or not in actual possession of the premises, is liable for all obligations under this rental agreement.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Landlord (Lessor) Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Tenant (Lessee) Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## **★ ★ ★ Reading a Lease Agreement★ ★ ★**

### **Comprehension Questions**

*After you have read the sample lease agreement, "Reading a Lease Agreement," refer to it to answer the following questions:*

1. When was this lease signed?
  
2. When can the tenant move in?
  
3. What is the length of the lease?
  
4. What is the monthly rent?
  
5. Who is responsible for paying the utilities?
  
6. How much is the security deposit?
  
7. How much does the tenant have to pay before he or she can move in?
  
8. Can the tenant get the security deposit back? How?
  
9. Is the landlord allowed to enter the property during the time of the lease?  
If so, under what conditions can he or she enter the property?
  
10. Is there anything in this rental agreement you would change? Is there anything you would want to add to this rental agreement?
  
11. Would you sign this lease?

# Reading a Rental Agreement

*Individually or in small groups, review the sample rental agreement. After reading, refer to it to answer the comprehension questions.*

\*\*\*\*\*  
This agreement is entered into this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of March, 2015 by and between Mamie Whitman "Owner" (Landlord) and Josephina Freeman "Resident" (Tenant), hereafter referred to as "the parties."

## IN CONSIDERATION OF THEIR MUTUAL PROMISES THE PARTIES AGREE AS FOLLOWS:

1. Owner rents to Resident and Resident rents from Owner, for residential use only, the "premises" on 456 Liberty Lane, Tampa, Florida.
2. Rent is due in advance of the first day of each and every month, at \$400.00 per month, beginning on the first day of April, 2015. If rent is due and unpaid five (5) or more days after the due date, or if default is made by Resident in any of the other covenants contained herein, the Owner may terminate the tenancy by law.
3. Owner has the right to enter the apartment to make necessary repairs or improvements or in case of emergency.
4. No pets, barbecues, or weapons shall be allowed in or about the premises without Owner's written permission.
5. No alterations or decorations shall be made by Resident(s) without Owner's prior written consent.
6. Resident shall pay for any damage to any portion of the premises, common areas, furniture or appliances.
7. Resident shall pay for all utilities, except monthly water bills.
8. Resident shall pay a security deposit equal to the value of one month's rent. Owner may withhold all or part of the security deposit to repair damages to the premises, if necessary, upon termination of the tenancy. The owner will furnish Resident with an itemized written statement of the amount of any security and shall return any remaining portion to Resident.
9. Resident shall not sublet these premises or allow others to occupy the apartment without written consent of Owner.
10. The undersigned Resident is liable for all obligations under this rental agreement and acknowledges having read and understood the foregoing.

**Owner Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Resident Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

## **★ ★ ★ Reading a Rental Agreement★ ★ ★**

### **Comprehension Questions**

*After you have read the sample rental agreement, "Reading a Rental Agreement," refer to it to answer the comprehension questions.*

1. When was this rental agreement signed?
  
2. When can the tenant move in?
  
3. What is the monthly rent?
  
4. When is the rent due? When is the rent considered to be "late"?  
What happens if the rent is late?
  
5. Is the resident responsible for paying the utilities?
  
6. How much is the security deposit? How much does the tenant have to pay in total before he or she can move in?
  
7. Can the resident operate a business out of his or her apartment?
  
8. Can the tenant get the security deposit back? How?
  
9. Is the landlord allowed to enter the property during the time of the lease?  
If so, under what conditions can he or she enter the property?
  
10. What should the resident do if he or she wants to have a barbecue and hang Christmas lights?
  
11. What should the resident do if he or she wants to leave for a month and rent the apartment to a friend?
  
12. Is there anything in this rental agreement you would change? Is there anything you would want to add to this rental agreement?
  
13. Would you sign this lease?



# **Homeless Self-Help & Empowerment Projects**

*Reprinted with permission from the National Coalition for the Homeless*

*Published July 2009*

People who have experienced homelessness may want to get involved with local organizations working to end and prevent homelessness. Many cities have homeless empowerment project offices and you can help by calling your local office and asking how you can help in your community.

## **GET INVOLVED**

### **Become a Volunteer Community Organizer for the National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH)**

NCH seeks to ensure that our work is shaped and supported by people who are experiencing homelessness. In order to make sure that all viewpoints are heard, it is important that we are in touch with as many people on the local level as possible. To get involved with organizing efforts in your community, contact Michael Stoops at (202) 462-4822 or [mstoops@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:mstoops@nationalhomeless.org).

### **Conduct a Homeless Voter Registration Campaign**

People experiencing homelessness must become involved in electing public officials who will represent their concerns. NCH sponsors the "YouDon't Need a Home to Vote" nonpartisan voter registration/education/get-out-the-vote campaign each federal election cycle. To obtain our voting rights registration manual and poster or to learn how to advocate for a homeless voting rights written policy or law in your state, contact Michael Stoops at (202) 462-4822 or [mstoops@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:mstoops@nationalhomeless.org), or visit <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/getinvolved/projects/vote/index.html>.

### **Join the National Homeless Civil Rights Organizing Project**

NCH's National Homeless Civil Rights Organizing Project (NHCROP) addresses the growing trend of homelessness being criminalized as well as the rise in hate crimes and violence against people experiencing homelessness. NHCROP's nine regional field sites are working to stop these problems through documentation, community organizing, policy advocacy, and litigation. To reach the field site nearest you or to become a civil rights advocate in your area, contact Michael Stoops at (202) 462-4822 or [mstoops@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:mstoops@nationalhomeless.org), or visit <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/getinvolved/projects/nhcrop.html>.

## ***Homeless Self-Help & Empowerment Projects, continued***

### **WORK FOR CHANGE**

#### **Join an NCH Policy Work Group**

NCH has established work groups for civil rights/grassroots organizing and policy to provide direction to the NCH staff and board of directors on public policy issues. To receive regular mailings or become a participant in the monthly, toll-free conference calls of one of our policy workgroups, call (202) 462-4822 or email

[info@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:info@nationalhomeless.org).

#### **Respond to NCH Legislative Action Alerts**

NCH Legislative Action Alerts provide updates about activities in Congress affecting homelessness. When an alert comes out, it will tell you what you can do to influence policies that are made on a national level. To receive NCH Legislative Action Alerts, become an NCH member. To join, contact NCH at (202) 462-4822 or

[info@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:info@nationalhomeless.org), or visit  
[http://www.nationalhomeless.org/about\\_us/membership.html](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/about_us/membership.html).

### **SPEAK OUT AND EDUCATE**

#### **Join or Form a Speakers Bureau**

Through NCH's "*Faces of Homelessness*" panel presentations, people who have experienced homelessness personalize the issue for audiences who may never have spoken to a person who has experienced homelessness. Speakers Bureau presentations also dispel stereotypes about people who experience homelessness and inspire community responses. People who speak on "*Faces of Homelessness*" panels also gain valuable skills and experience. To organize or participate in a "*Faces of Homelessness*" panel in your community or to set up your own Speakers Bureau, contact the Speakers Bureau Coordinator, Michael Stoops, at (202) 462-4822 or

[mstoops@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:mstoops@nationalhomeless.org), or visit  
<http://www.nationalhomeless.org/faces/index.html>.

#### **Start or Contribute to a Street Newspaper**

Street newspapers educate the general public about homelessness and create an outlet for people experiencing homelessness to have their articles, editorials, letters to the editor, cartoons, photos, artwork, and poetry published while providing them with employment opportunities as vendors and writers. To locate the street newspaper nearest you or for assistance in establishing a newspaper in your community, contact Michael Stoops at (202) 462-4822 or

[mstoops@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:mstoops@nationalhomeless.org).

#### **Participate in National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week**

Each year, the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Student Campaign against Hunger and Homelessness co-sponsor an awareness week during the first full week before Thanksgiving to remind people of the problem of homelessness and to talk about how it can be solved. Awareness weeks are organized in more than 500 campuses and communities nationwide. For more information or to order an organizing guide, contact Michael Stoops at

(202) 462-4822 or [mstoops@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:mstoops@nationalhomeless.org).

***Homeless Self-Help & Empowerment Projects, continued***

**Recognize National Homeless Persons' Memorial Day**

Every year, on or around the first day of winter (December 21), nearly 100 communities nationwide hold local memorial services to remember people who have died homeless during that year. To find out more, contact Michael Stoops at (202) 462-4822 or [mstoops@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:mstoops@nationalhomeless.org), or visit <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/projects/memorial/index.html>.

**JOIN A HOMELESS COALITION**

**Join the National Coalition for the Homeless**

If you become a member of NCH, you will receive our quarterly newsletter, *Safety Network*, monthly policy updates, a 50% discount on NCH publications and merchandise, and timely legislative action alerts. *NCH offers low or no cost memberships to low-income people and those who are currently homeless or who have experienced homelessness.* To join, contact NCH at (202) 462-4822 or [info@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:info@nationalhomeless.org), or visit [http://www.nationalhomeless.org/about\\_us/membership.html](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/about_us/membership.html).

**Join your Local or Statewide Homeless/Housing Coalition**

There are nearly 300 local and statewide homeless/housing coalitions in all 50 states, including Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. To find the local or state homeless coalition nearest you, contact NCH at (202) 462-4822 or [info@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:info@nationalhomeless.org) or visit <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/directories/index.html>

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**National Coalition for the Homeless**

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[info@nationalhomeless.org](mailto:info@nationalhomeless.org)

**Florida Coalition for the Homeless**

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[www.fchonline.org](http://www.fchonline.org)

**Florida Housing Coalition, Inc.**

1367 East Lafayette Street, Suite C, Tallahassee, FL 32301-4774  
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[www.flhousing.org](http://www.flhousing.org)