



The Family Under the Bridge

Written by Natalie Savage Carlson Illustrated by Garth Williams

The Family Under the Bridge shares a great message about what makes life meaningful, our friends and family. It inspires us to live simply, be thankful and show kindness to others.

READ

Before: Introduce the book and tell the children a little bit about it. Follow with a comment or question that is related to the story such as, what do you think this story is about? Encourage a discussion so the children can comment, ask questions, and express their feelings. Set the stage for listening by asking an “I wonder” statement based on the cover illustration.

I wonder where they are all going?

During: Encourage the children to comment on the illustrations, ask questions, and predict what will happen next in the story. Children gain confidence and a sense of achievement through being able to correctly predict how a story will end. Point out “rare words” (e.g., those words that are not commonly used in everyday conversation) and help the children relate the meaning in a way that makes sense to them.

Rare Words

- Notre Dame cathedral – famous church in Paris
- gratitude - thankful
- fastidiously – doing something with great care
- trundled – transported in a wheeled vehicle
- gypsy – a person who wanders from place to place
- abide – to wait patiently
- urchins – mischievous and often poor and raggedly clothed youngsters
- gargoyles – grotesquely carved figures

- After:**
- How would you describe Armand?
 - What does it mean to be homeless?
 - Where is Armand going to live for the winter?
 - Did Armand like children or was he afraid as the gypsy Mireli mentioned?
 - Who did Armand find when he went to his usual spot under the bridge?
 - Who were the starlings? What did the youngest want to pretend Armand was?
 - Why didn't the starlings go to school?
 - What did the starlings ask of Father Christmas?
 - What was the Court of Miracles and why was it called that?
 - How did Madame Calcet feel when she found out her children were with the gypsies?
 - What was in Nikki's wallet that the policeman tried to return?
 - What does Armand decide to do to help his new family?



DO

Writing prompt

This book is a great conversation starter for students to explore how other people live. Have students answer one of the following questions, either through a guided discussion or in a written response:

Pick a character and write about how life is different for you versus them.
Pick a scene and describe how it made you feel or what it made you think about.
How have things changed since the 1900's, when this story took place?

Have students do research in your local area to find organizations that help families in similar situations. Ask them to think about how they can help or who they can share this information with.

