

# Teaching and Reading Guide

Once there was a house, a house that was a . . .

# Home

by Alex T. Smith



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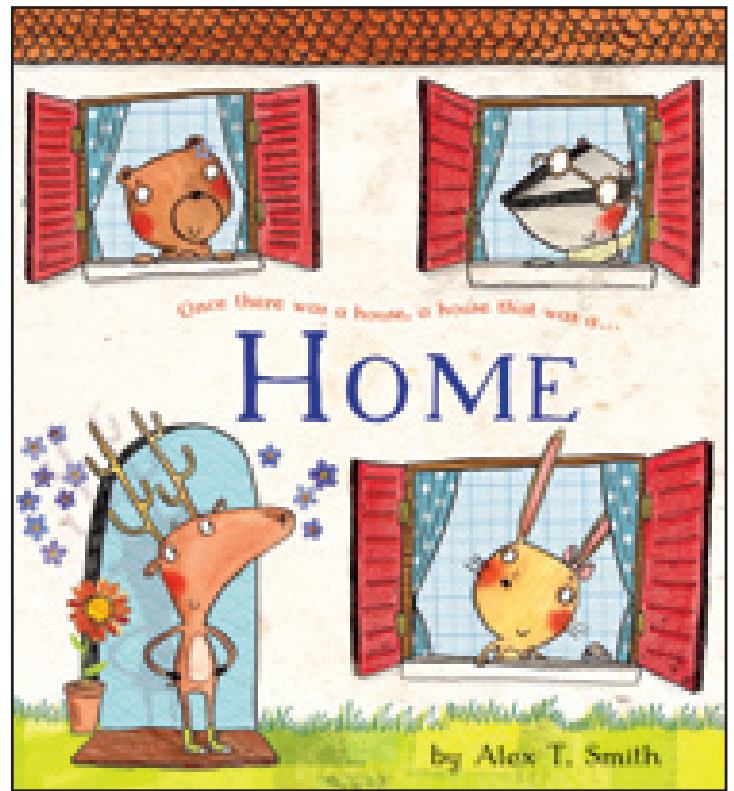
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## Synopsis:

Four friends live together in a house. But it is more than a house; it is a home. That is, until one friend decides to move to the sea and become a pirate. Another friend wants to move to the top of a mountain. The friends can't agree on where to live, so they all take a piece of the house with them and move away. The friends learn that a house is not a home without the people who love you.



## Content Themes:

- **Friendship:** The four best friends have been living happily together in their home. Their friendship is challenged when each one decides to live somewhere else. In the end, they learn about the importance of friendship. For these four, friendship is family. *Ask:* What does friendship mean to you? Do you have friends that live near you? Do you like living close to your friends? Has anyone had a friend that moved away? What did that feel like?
- **Family:** These four friends have formed a family. They are all different kinds of animals with different personalities, but their differences do not matter. Ask students to talk about their family members. Do they all look alike? Do they like to do the same things? How do they handle these differences?
- **Home:** Home is more than a house. It is where you live with your family.
- **Problem Solving:** The four friends confront a problem – they each want to live in a different place. But they work together to figure out a solution.

## Extension Activities:

- Where Would You Live?
- Same/Different
- Build a House



# Activity 1 – Where Would You Live?

## Objective:

Students will use their imaginations to create pictures of where they would choose to live if they could move anywhere.

## Materials:

- Poster board
- Drawing materials (markers, crayons, etc.)

**Time:** 1 hour (2 thirty-minute class periods)

## Directions:

1. After reading the story, point out to your students that one friend wanted to move to the sea to become a pirate. Another friend wanted to live in a dark, dark cave and collect creepy-crawlies.
2. Ask your students to think about where they would move if they could live anywhere. The place can be real or imaginary.
3. Ask your students to think about what they would do in their new place.
4. Provide drawing materials so students can create pictures of the place they would live.
5. Encourage students to share their drawings (from direction #4 above) and discuss why they chose the place they drew.



# Activity 2 – Same/Different

## Objective:

Students will think about what makes a family. They will create collages to help compare their family to the families of others.

## Materials:

- Poster board
- Glue
- Scissors
- Scrap paper
- Drawing materials (markers, crayons, etc.)

**Time:** 1½ hours (3 thirty-minute class periods)

## Directions:

1. Families come in all shapes and sizes and may mean different things to different people. This activity will give students the chance to share and compare their families. One week prior to reading *Home* to your students, send a note home requesting that they bring a collection of photos of themselves and their family members to school. Be sure to note that the photos will be used to make a collage. Be sure to note that the photos will be used to make a collage and may NOT be returned.
2. After reading (or re-reading) *Home* with your class, point out that the four friends act as a family even though they are not a family in the traditional sense.
3. Ask students to think about what family means to them. Can they come up with one word to describe family? Love? Security? Togetherness?
4. Provide materials and time for your students to create collages using their family photos. Have them write their family word on the top of the poster board.
5. Encourage them to be creative using scrap paper and drawing materials to enhance their collages.
6. Invite students to come in front of the class to share their collages and point out the members of their families.



# Activity 3 – Build a House

## Objective:

A house is a home, but houses come in all different shapes and sizes. In this activity, children will use their imaginations to build homes.

## Materials:

- Photos of homes from all around the world. Use sources such as *National Geographic* magazine, library books, etc.
- Recyclable materials, such as cardboard tubes, foam, strips of wood, egg cartons, etc.
- Fabric and paper scraps
- Glue, tape

**Time:** 1½ hours (3 thirty-minute class periods)

## Directions:

1. Spend a class period discussing and sharing what homes look like in different parts of the world. Point out how things like weather, economy, and available materials influence the types of homes people live in. Encourage discussion on how these homes are similar or different from the homes your students live in.
2. Using a variety of recyclable materials, children will design and build homes. They can build a home that is inspired by one from another part of the world, or use their imaginations to create a home of their own.
3. Have students share the home they've created with the other students.

