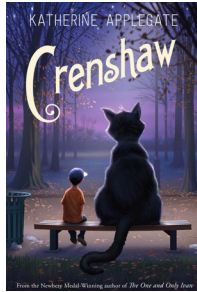


## ***Crenshaw*** by Katrine Applegate



**Story Synopsis:** Nine-year-old Jackson Wade and his family are facing some very real problems; hunger, parental illness, joblessness, unpaid bills, and possible homelessness. When Jackson was five, he and his family were forced to live in their car due to their financial circumstances. Not wanting to repeat this experience, he finds himself assuming the role of an adult and is shouldering major stress. It's no wonder an imaginary friend from childhood shows up to help him cope with the seriousness of his family's situation.

### **Homelessness**

**Introduction:** Jackson's parents are trying their best to manage their financial situation, but they just can't seem to get a break. Money is scarce because Mom lost her full-time teaching job, Dad's been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, and Aretha, the dog, needed emergency surgery.

**Time Required:** 20-30 minutes.

**Grade Level:** 3-5

#### **Materials:**

- Visual- Some Reasons People Lose Their Homes
- Visual – The Wade's Income & Expenses
- Activity Sheet – *Crenshaw* Problem Solving
- *Crenshaw* by Katherine Applegate

#### **Objectives:**

- The student will be introduced to some of the reasons people are homeless and discuss the possible circumstances of these situations.
- The student will review the Wade family's financial situation using the supplied information.

- The student will participate in a creative problem-solving activity aimed to help the Wade family save money and make good choices.

**Procedure:**

1. Explain to the students that Jackson Wade, the main character in *Crenshaw*, is very worried. He is concerned that his family may not be able to make their rent payment. Read Chapter 10 (pages 43-47) to the students.
2. Ask the students if they remember what “clues” Jackson noticed that lead him to believe that his parents were having money problems. (Stacks of bills, parents keeping secrets and selling valuable items, lack of food)
3. Display Visual 1, Homelessness, and review the list with the students. Note: This topic may be uncomfortable for some students. If this be the case, try to keep all discussion focused on the situation and characters in the book.
4. Tell the students that Jackson's parents were trying their best to provide for their family, but they were having some really bad luck. Also explain that Jackson's parents did not share any of their money problems with Jackson and this really bothered him.
5. Ask the students to imagine that Jackson got curious one day and went through the bills and receipts that his parents had left out on the kitchen counter.
6. Display Visual 2, The Wade's Income & Expenses. Review this content with the students.
7. Ask the students the following questions based on information on the displayed visual.
  - How much money did Jackson parents bring in each month on earnings and benefits? [\$5,320.00]
  - What was the total amount of bills and receipts that Jackson found on the kitchen counter? [\$3,710.00]
  - What is the difference of these two amounts? [\$1,610.00]
  - There was money after paying the bills, yet the family did not have enough to pay rent. What do you think happened? [Possible responses: There could have been other things to buy such as clothing, school supplies, and car repairs. There could have been unexpected expenses such as vet bills. Sometimes money is spent without thinking about it, such a buying a comic book or candy bar.
8. Distribute the Activity Sheet and writing tools. Put the students in small groups. Read the activity sheet's content to the students. Allow the time to discuss possible solutions and write them down.
9. Encourage students to share their solutions with the class. Explain to the class that there are no right or wrong answers, that each solution has merit and might be helpful to the Wade family.

**Extension Activity:**

Ask the students if they think Jackson should have looked through the bill and receipts that were on the kitchen counter. Was he being sneaky, curious, or helpful?

**Visual 1-**

## Homelessness

Homelessness is the condition of people who live without a regular dwelling. People who are homeless do not have regular, safe, secure and adequate housing, or lack a "fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence."



### **Some Reasons People Lose Their Homes**

- There is an unplanned major expense
- There is a natural disaster and the family has no insurance.
- The “bread winner” loses a job
- The car breaks down and it’s not possible to get to work
- Rent goes up
- There is a major illness in the family

➤ The family gets behind in monthly payment

Visual 2-

## The Wade Family's Income & Expenses

In the book *Crenshaw*, Jackson Wade is concerned about the choices his parents are making concerning how they manage their money. If he would have taken advantage of the stacks of bills and receipts that were left on the kitchen counter, he would have discovered the information below.

Note: Jackson would have recorded the information in a notebook, rounding up the numbers to make the math easier.

### Wade Family Monthly Income & Benefits:

Dad's Social Security Disability Payment	\$2,380.00
Mom's substitute teacher income	2,000.00
SNAP Benefits (Food Stamps)	940.00
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$5,320.00</b>

### Wade Family Monthly Expenses:

Rent	\$1190.00
Food (Grocery Store)	\$940.00
Paper Goods & Cleaning supplies	200.00
Dog Food & Medication	180.00
Eating Out & Pizza Delivery	320.00
Gas for Van	290.00
Insurance for Van	200.00
Internet & Phone	130.00
Electricity & Water	260.00
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>\$3,710.00</b>

Activity Sheet

*Crenshaw*  
Problem Solving

Jackson does not want his family to get evicted from their apartment because they aren't able to pay the rent. He is very worried and Crenshaw, a human-sized imaginary cat appears to give Jackson good advice. The most important advice that he gives Jackson is to tell the truth. Can you think of some advice Crenshaw would share with Jackson concerning the following situations?

1. Jackson's sister, Robin, is growing fast and needs new shoes. How can she get a pair without spending lots of money?
2. Even though Jackson is nine-years old, he would like to earn some money to help his family. What are some jobs he could do?
3. Are there places to live other than a car if the Wade family has to leave their apartment? If so, what are they?
4. How can the Wade family celebrate Robin's birthday in a fun way without spending too much money?

Bonus: Can you think of any other advice Crenshaw could give Jackson to help him and his family?