

NEWS BREAK

Sunday's News Break selects an article from Sunday, May 15, 2016 of The Seattle Times e-Edition for an in-depth reading of the news. Read the selected article and answer the attached study questions. **Please remember to always preview the content of the article before sharing with your students.**

Article: Squatters taking over homes in Las Vegas (Main, A4)

Pre-Reading and Vocabulary

- What is a squatter? Have you heard that term before? Why are neighbors so concerned about them? What do they generally bring with them into neighborhoods and communities?

Vocabulary: Match the words to the numbered definitions in the chart below.

A. abandoned	1. To cover or disfigure
B. blight	2. Take possession of a mortgaged property as a result of the mortgagor's failure to keep up their mortgage payments
C. collapse	3. A fraudulent imitation of something else; a forgery
D. counterfeit	4. Enter or gain access to (an organization, place, etc.) surreptitiously and gradually, especially in order to acquire secret information
E. foreclosed	5. A plant disease, especially one caused by fungi such as mildews, rusts
F. infiltrate	6. A period of temporary economic decline during which trade and industrial activity are reduced, generally identified by a fall in GDP in two successive quarters.
G. pockmark	7. Feeling or showing caution about possible dangers or problems
H. recession	8. A person who unlawfully occupies an uninhabited building or unused land.
I. squatter	9. Fall down or in; give way
J. wary	10. Having been deserted or cast off

Comprehension

1. LAS VEGAS — On a drive through Las Vegas, the blight from the housing collapse of eight years ago can be seen on almost every block. What are the visible signs?
2. But not all of the dwellings are empty. Squatters have infiltrated every part of the Las Vegas Valley, taking over empty houses. What neighborhoods are they moving into?
3. What do they often bring with them?
4. While some unauthorized tenants are families seeking shelter, police officers say they are more frequently finding what happening in these foreclosed homes?
5. Even as construction cranes have returned to the Las Vegas Strip and the unemployment rate has fallen to single digits, the situation is getting worse: the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department has received more calls about squatters each year since it began tracking the problem; there were more than _____ complaints last year, up _____ percent from 2014 and more than twice as many as in 2012.
6. Residents say the explosion of squatters has shattered their sense of security. Why? What are they doing to establish a sense of control to keep their homes and neighborhoods safe?
7. The problem has grown so acute that the Nevada Legislature passed a law last fall to make it easier to do what?
8. “People drive through neighborhoods and look for houses that appear to be vacant,” said Lt. Nick Farese, who is leading the Police Department’s anti-squatter efforts. He said squatters occupied homes across this entire city of 600,000 people, adding: We have seen a direct correlation between squatter houses and what?
9. But there was little police could do under Nevada law at that time: If the squatters produced a lease, even if it was clearly a fake, and there was no evidence of breaking and entering, it was considered what?

10. Seaman found that across her district in northwestern Las Vegas squatters had infiltrated even wealthier neighborhoods. So she sponsored a law that established new criminal offenses such as unlawful occupancy, which outlaws moving into a vacant home knowing you do not have permission to be there. Violators can face what charges?
11. Local agencies have started to get creative in their efforts to combat squatters. What have they done?

Additional Activities

- Scenario: You were hired to work on the anti-squatter campaign in Las Vegas. Come up with 3 plans that would help the squatter situation in their city. You will be presenting at the City Hall council meeting next week.
- Using the Seattle Times e-Edition, please research about the squatter situation here in Seattle? Is there a problem? What are the statistics?

News Break is posted to the Web on Wednesday and Friday. Please share this NIE News Break program with other teachers. To sign-up for the electronic edition for your class, please [register on-line](#) or call 206/652-6290 or toll-free 1-888/775-2655. Copyright © 2016 The Seattle Times Company

Answer Key to Vocabulary

- A. 10
- B. 5
- C. 9
- D. 3
- E. 2
- F. 4
- G. 1
- H. 6
- I. 8
- J. 7

Answer Key to Comprehension Questions

1. Overgrown yards and boarded-up windows identify the foreclosed and abandoned homes that pockmark southern Nevada.
2. They are moving into struggling working-class neighborhoods, in upscale planned communities such as Summerlin, and everywhere in between.
3. A trail of crime.
4. Chop shops, drug dealers and counterfeiters operating out of foreclosed homes. One man who the police say was squatting has been charged with killing a neighbor during a burglary.
5. 4,000 complaints last year, up 43 percent from 2014 and more than twice as many as in 2012.
6. It's leaving them wary of any new neighbors at a time the city is still trying to climb back from the depths of the recession. "Things get out of hand pretty quickly when these people move in," said Jacquelyn Romero, 59, who has lived in the neighborhood for about 15 years. We're trying to do almost like a neighborhood watch, just to keep ourselves safe."
7. To arrest squatters, who often brandish phony leases in hopes of staying longer in the homes they have taken over.
8. Crime — burglaries, theft, robberies, narcotics.
9. A civil dispute.
10. Misdemeanor or felony charges

11. Banks have slowed a “cash for keys” program that offered residents money to leave foreclosed homes; local elected officials said squatters were making a living moving into one foreclosed house after another, then asking the bank to pay them to move out. Once a home is listed as foreclosed in North Las Vegas, new residents cannot get their water turned on unless they prove legal occupancy.