

SO WHAT DO YOU DO? Synopsis

Concept: Thirteen-year-old Charlie Fuller discovers his beloved third-grade teacher, Mr. Adams, panhandling and living on the streets, and vows to help him in the same caring manner as his teacher helped him.

Charlie Fuller, age 13, walks down Fourth Street dwelling upon the numerous homeless people he passes. How did they become homeless? Why doesn't the government help them? Why aren't they working? So what do you do?

When one of the panhandlers--a bearded man in a ragged, tweed jacket—looks faintly familiar, Charlie follows him into the local library. That's when he's sure who this man is—Mr. Adams, his third-grade teacher. Mr. Adams, however, acts crazy and shoos away his former student.

After this disturbing encounter, Charlie bikes to his old grade school and tells Ray, the custodian, who he's seen. Longingly, he peers into the third grade classroom and recalls the best school year of his life.

At dinner that evening, Charlie informs his father, mother, and little sister about his discovery. Mrs. Fuller, doubtful that the man could have been Mr. Adams, scolds Charlie for being so careless. After dinner, Charlie leaves the house in search of his former teacher. In a cafe, he asks a waitress if he's seen the tall bearded man. She mentioned People's Park, and despite knowing the risks, Charlie enters the park where many homeless people spend the night. After passing scores of men in sleeping bags, he hears opera music coming from a cardboard shack. Inside the shake, he finds Mr. Adams passed out from drink.

The next day at school, Charlie tells Colleen Martin about his visit to the park. Colleen, also a former Mr. Adams student, insists that they try to assist him. After school, the pair takes the filthy and deranged man to the cafe for a hamburger dinner. Smelly and crass, the man ends up embarrassing Charlie.

Colleen, however, persists. The next day she talks Charlie into returning to the park with food, blankets, and clothing for Mr. Adams. With the man is absent, the two students fix up the shack. While they work, Otto, a young black man, appears. He tells Charlie and Colleen about being a "professional panhandler" and about his friendship with Mr. Adams, who he calls The Professor.

For the following month, Colleen and Charlie bring food to the shack and learn more from Otto about life on the streets. On Thanksgiving they bring Mr. Adams a TV dinner, and for the first time he appears coherent and enjoys the company.

A week later, a drugged teenager mugs Colleen and Charlie in the park. Before harm is done, Mr. Adams rescues them. Afterwards teacher and students return to the cafe for a meal. This time, mentally healthier, Mr. Adams tells the pair what they've been wondering—how he ended up this way? He explains the series of setbacks he had—illness, a school scandal, and an unfaithful wife—and how, without a safety net, he ended up homeless. It happens.

Colleen and Charlie continue to help Mr. Adams throughout the winter and gradually his mental health improves. They discover that he's been teaching Otto how to read and has been keeping a journal.

During Spring Break, Charlie receives a frantic call from Colleen who's in the park. Teenagers from their rich neighborhood have attacked the homeless people. Charlie bikes to the park to find Mr. Adams gone and his shack demolished. He concludes that Colleen has taken their teacher to their former school. On the moonlit night, Charlie arrives at the school and

enters the third-grade classroom through an open window. There he finds Colleen on the reading-corner rug with the sleeping Mr. Adams. The young pair decides that the classroom would be a good place to stay for the rest of Spring Break. Charlie volunteers to spend the night in the classroom.

The following morning, Charlie wakes up to find Colleen cooking pancakes on the classroom stove. Mr. Adams, who has a sprained ankle, awakes, and Ray arrives. The four eat breakfast together and discuss the situation. Charlie gives Mr. Adams his journal that he recovered from the park, and Mr. Adams decides to begin writing again on the classroom computer.

That evening, while Charlie, Ray, and Mr. Adams eat pizza and watch DVD's, a police officer, Alan Vega, shows up. Officer Vega, another former student, offers assistance and protection to the teacher.

Still Charlie wonders, so what do you do? The next night, he receives a call from Jack Keller, who also had Mr. Adams for third grade. Through, Alan Vega, word has gotten around the suburb about Joe Adams homelessness and the community wants to help. Jack Keller is taking up donations and finding an apartment for Mr. Adams. He asks Charlie to care for the teacher at the school until Friday when students from his twenty years of teaching at the school will hold a ceremony of appreciation in the gym.

During the week at school, Mr. Adams ankle improves. But on Friday morning, Charlie discovers that Mr. Adams has disappeared. Ray and Charlie ride around town on Ray's motorcycle in search on him. They find him inside a boxcar in the rail yard. Mr. Adams explains that he was too ashamed to face the community in his present state. Charlie leaves him there, believing that the ceremony that night, without the guest of honor, will be a disaster.

Still, Charlie dresses for the occasion and drives to the school with his proud parents. The gym is packed with Mr. Adam's former students. Colleen and her sister has decorated the place and furnished refreshments. Charlie mills around, but is suddenly astonished by the appearance of Mr. Adams. Even more surprising, the teacher works the crowd, remembering all his former students names. Later, Ray tells him that the teacher decided to come if only he could clean up and do some studying from the office files.

Jack Keller presents Mr. Adams with the donation check and keys to the new apartment and the ceremony is a success. Afterward Charlie finds Otto in the school parking lot panhandling. Otto tells him that he's going back to school and getting a job. Life on the streets isn't as glamorous as Charlie thought.

