

Gratitude

Syllables
grat•i•tude

Pronunciation
grat-i-tood

Definition

Being grateful.

(Claude showed his **gratitude** for the pie by giving his grandmother a big hug.)

Simply put: Gee, thanks!

Related Terms

Appreciation: Thankfulness.

Recognition: Attention or credit given to someone who has helped in some way.

Fundamental Question: For what am I grateful?

Students will investigate the idea that gratitude is an attitude (a mindset of thankfulness that comes from the way in which we look at things in our lives) and not merely a reaction that occurs when good things happen to us; and that rather than waiting for things to become perfect before we are grateful, we must realize that the act of being grateful itself may make us more aware of and receptive to those things in life that we should appreciate.

Objectives

Each student will:

1. Recognize in him/herself and in another attributes for which (s)he is grateful;
2. Reflect on the things that make him or her smile;
3. Contribute to a list of ways to show gratitude; and
4. Compose a note of thanks.

Before you begin

- (Optional) Gather a sheet of stationery and an envelope for each child; and
- Print out a copy of *What a Difference!* for each student.

Suggested Sidebars:

Speaking of Gratitude (Discussion Idea)

Discuss: What are you grateful for in your life? Are you satisfied with what you have?

For more advanced discussion: How might a sense of entitlement (thinking that life owes us more than we have) get in the way of our ability to be grateful?

Taking It to the Next Level

Learn to write and pronounce the word(s) for “thank you” in at least five languages other than your own ... better yet, in at least five languages from five different continents! Use each of the words in conversation or written correspondence today.

Gratitude

Procedure

1. Instruct the students to sit in a large circle on the floor. Say: “This is going to be our gratitude chain. Each link (that’s *you*) strengthens the chain. When it is your turn, say ‘I am thankful for’ and tell something that you appreciate about *yourself*. You might be thankful for your special talents or for the ways in which you have touched someone else’s life. I’ll start. I am thankful that I have the ability to be a great, fabulous, world-class teacher.” Then look at the child to your left and say “Your turn.” Be sure that, in as much as possible, the children adhere to the idea of gratitude about aspects and attributes of themselves (as opposed to “I am thankful for my dog,” for instance.)
2. When each student has had the opportunity to respond, say: “This time, when we go around the circle, look at the child sitting directly on your left. Again, say ‘I am thankful for,’ but this time tell something about that child ... or teacher! I’ll start.” Look at the child at your left and say, for example, “I am thankful for Hannah’s stick-to-it attitude about learning her math facts” (or “Hannah’s having been such a good friend to our newest student this week” or whatever is appropriate). Then say “Your turn.”
3. Optional: Say: “Think about who or what you really appreciate in your life. What makes you smile?” Repeat the I-am-thankful-for procedure if desired for topics related to people (my grandpa’s fuzzy beard), places (my secret hideout), activities (getting my cat to chase a beam of light from my flashlight), and others.
4. Ask: “What are many, varied, and even unusual ways to show gratitude?” Record the responses on the board. Say: “One of the most common ways to show our gratitude is by sending someone a thank-you note. What *is* a thank-you note?” Discuss.
5. Distribute the *What a Difference!* sheets and review the directions with your students.

(Optional) Perhaps you would like the children, using their best handwriting skills, to copy their notes onto stationery for display on the bulletin board ... or to actually send!

6. **Follow Up:** Read aloud and discuss *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein.

Name _____

Reminder: Gratitude means being grateful.

What A Difference!

Make a list of people (such as family, teachers, neighbors, doctors, librarians, or others) who have made a difference in your life; who made your life better in some way. Pick one of the people on your list. Write a note to say thank you. Here's an example:

Dear Mrs. Lichtman,

I have been thinking about people who have made a difference in my life. I decided to write this letter to you to tell you how happy I was to be in your class last year. I didn't know that math could really be fun! This year, I learned about integers. I also got an A- for math on my report card!

Thank you for being my teacher and for taking the extra time to help me understand the difference between a multiplicand and a multiplier.

Fondly,
Ellen Dion

My list:

Dear _____ ,

Today's Thought: *Let us rise up and be thankful, for if we didn't learn a lot today, at least we learned a little, and if we didn't learn a little, at least we didn't get sick, and if we got sick, at least we didn't die; so, let us all be thankful.* — **Siddhartha Gautama, Buddha Shakyamuni**