



Lights, Camera, Action: At a glance (grades 7-8)

Welcome to ThinkGive!

This packet provides an overview of our Lights, Camera, Action! program for grades 7-8. The program encourages students to see themselves as the main characters in their unique stories, surrounded by a supporting cast and extras that enrich their daily lives. At the same time, they learn that they also play supporting roles in the stories of those around them. By stepping back and recognizing that everyone leads vivid and complex lives, students develop deeper connections and are empowered to take thoughtful, kind actions.

Included in this packet:

- Scope + Sequence (12 lessons / 16 lessons)
- Sample Lesson Plan (Introduction)
- Program Overview + Impact

Connect with us!

[Facebook](#) [Instagram](#) [LinkedIn](#)

Questions? info@thinkgiveproject.org

We look forward to connecting with you!
- The ThinkGive Team



Scope + Sequence: Lights, Camera, Action! (ThinkGive® Middle School, grades 7-8)

Students are encouraged to view themselves and others as main characters in their unique stories. Each person has a supporting cast and extras who contribute to their daily experiences. At the same time, we all play supporting roles and extras in the stories of those around us. Taking a step back to recognize that others lead vivid and complex lives fosters deeper connections and inspires us to take meaningful, kind actions.

Lesson name	Lesson Summary	Students will Examine	Take Action "Before our next ThinkGive session on [give date]..."	Themes
* Note: rows in grey are not included in the 12-prompt program				
Introduction	This lesson introduces students to the central program theme: "sonder." The accompanying video explores how everyone exists as the main character of their stories, each with their "supporting cast" and "extras." By the end of the lesson, students will understand that they play different roles in others' lives, all of whom are also experiencing complex and vivid lives of their own.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The idea that everyone is living a vivid and complex life. - The roles they play in the lives of others. - What opportunities do they have to impact others positively? 	<i>Notice the supportive roles that others play in your life and the roles you play for others. Pay attention to what makes the person's supportive role stand out to you and its positive impact.</i>	Self-management: Personal agency Social awareness: Empathy Relationship skills: Interdependence
Celebrate Your Main Character Energy	Students build a Main Character slideshow to appreciate and share the various aspects of their identities. They will add to these slides as they learn more about themselves over the ThinkGive program. By the end of the lesson, students will better understand who they are as the main characters of their lives and what they need to recharge (care for) their main character energy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who they are, and how do they express their hopes and dreams? - How understanding themselves can help them relate to others. - What choices can they make to care for themselves when they need to recharge? 	<i>Take a self-care action to recharge. You could even start building a new self-care habit!</i>	Self-awareness: Accurate self-perception Self-management: Self-regulation Responsible decision-making: Advocacy
Share What's Behind Your Mask	In this lesson, students continue to explore their identities by examining the masks they wear. They consider how everyone wears masks to hide their insecurities and emphasize certain aspects of themselves to appear more appealing to others. By revealing the parts of themselves that they usually conceal behind their masks, they can connect with others and feel more genuine.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How everyone wears masks. - What are the challenges of staying true to oneself? What is the value of authenticity? - Ways to share who they are behind their masks. 	<i>Share some part of your inner self that you've kept hidden behind your mask. Sharing our authentic selves not only helps us but also inspires others. Remember the ThinkGive Three: Be True, be Brave, and remember that Small is all—what you share from your inner self can be as small or big as you feel comfortable showing to others.</i>	Self-awareness: Authenticity Social awareness: Examining norms Self-management: Risk-taking
Challenge a Limiting Belief	Limiting beliefs are everywhere—filling our heads and society. In this lesson, students learn about how Katherine Johnson challenged a limiting belief and explore their own limiting beliefs. Finally, they collectively generate a list of limiting beliefs and ways to challenge them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What limiting beliefs do they hold? - People who have challenged limiting beliefs. - Ways they can challenge limiting beliefs. 	<i>Challenging a limiting belief can be a compassionate act for yourself or someone else. Take a moment to confront a limiting belief that is holding you back.</i>	Self-awareness: Growth mindset Self-management: Persistence Self-management: Personal agency
Celebrate Someone in Your Supporting Cast	Students explore what it means to be supported by others by watching an acceptance speech and identifying the winner's supporting cast. They form small groups, brainstorm a list of their supporting cast members, and then generate ideas for celebrating one of these individuals in True, Small, and Brave ways.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Who is in their supporting cast? - What are ways to celebrate someone in a meaningful way? - What types of support are true, small, and brave? 	<i>Find a True, Small, or Brave way to celebrate someone in your supporting cast, recognizing and showing gratitude for all they do for you.</i>	Social awareness: Gratitude Relationship skills: Relationship-building Relationship skills: Effective communication

Learn About Someone in Your Supporting Cast	Students interview a peer and then respectfully introduce them to the group. This exercise promotes active listening to learn about and understand someone. After the lesson, students take action to learn about someone in their supporting cast so that they can better connect with their vivid and complex lives and stories.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How to use active listening to empathize with others. - Learning about someone offers a glimpse into their vivid and complex life. - What is the value of broadening our perspectives? 	<i>Use your new interviewing skills to learn more about someone in your supporting cast. This will help you better understand their vivid and complex life.</i>	Relationship skills: Effective communication Relationship skills: Relationship-building Responsible decision-making: Curiosity
Be a Friend	This lesson focuses on friendship and what it means to be a friend. Students generate three qualities of a friend and then watch a video about how friendship can inspire people to do great things. Finally, they reflect on how friendships can change and remain the same over time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What does friendship mean to them? - What are the different ways to support a friend? - How do friendships evolve and change over time? 	<i>Find an opportunity to be a great supporting cast member for a friend.</i>	Social awareness: Empathy Relationship skills: Relationship-building Relationship skills: Interdependence
Challenge a Stereotype	This lesson explores the idea that everyone has biases and makes assumptions. Students discuss the concept of stereotypes and why they exist. The lesson begins with a story and leads into a scenario exercise, prompting students to think critically about challenging stereotypes in various situations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How our natural tendency is to make assumptions. - What harm can stereotypes cause and reinforce? - How can empathy be used to challenge stereotypes? 	<i>Challenge a stereotype. Your action might be internal (working to break a stereotype you hold) or external, by speaking up to bring awareness to and challenge a stereotype in your community.</i>	Self-awareness: Examining biases Social awareness: Examining norms Responsible decision-making: Advocacy
Give Your Time	In this lesson, students start by experiencing what a minute feels like, gaining insight into the impact of dedicating just a minute of their time to others. They then reflect on their daily schedules to identify opportunities to engage in kind actions for someone else.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How can the perception of time vary—whether slow or fast? - How can giving their time be a gift? - What pockets of time can they identify to take action and make a positive impact on others? 	<i>Taking the time to support others who are navigating their own vivid and complex lives is one of the kindest actions you can offer. Set aside some time to intentionally dedicate to someone in need of your support.</i>	Social awareness: Empathy Relationship skills: Interdependence Self-management: Personal agency
Meet an Extra	In this lesson, students explore the importance of stepping outside their comfort zones to connect with new people, drawing inspiration from Brandon Stanton's "Humans of New York" project. By engaging with strangers, they discover how these interactions can foster meaningful connections and offer fresh perspectives. Students practice interviewing someone they don't know, reflecting on the challenges and benefits of building new relationships. They also develop strategies to overcome hesitations and handle potential rejection with resilience.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The positive impact of connecting with people outside their usual circle. - How can forming new connections help them experience and understand the concept of sonder? - How can new encounters deepen their understanding of human relationships and the value of diverse perspectives? 	<i>Step into your courage zone to connect with an extra. This person could become a member of your supporting cast!</i>	Relationship skills: Effective communication Self-management: Risk-taking Responsible decision-making: Curiosity
Share a Belief	This lesson invites students to reflect on their core beliefs and values. They watch a video about students pursuing passion projects rooted in their beliefs. Afterward, students identify the values and beliefs that influence their decisions. Encourage them to think about issues that matter to them and their communities, considering how their beliefs can drive meaningful action and impact.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The origins of their values and beliefs. - How understanding their beliefs influences their decisions and actions. - How actions, rather than words, often communicate beliefs. 	<i>Now that you have created an I Believe Statement, put your belief into action. What small action can you take that aligns with and promotes your belief?</i>	Self-awareness: Confidence Self-management: Personal agency Responsible decision-making: Critical thinking

Act as an Ally	Students explore the concept of allyship and its various forms, from standing up for others to actively listening and learning. They consider the challenges and opportunities that come with acting as an ally, reflect on how they can integrate these actions into their daily lives, and recognize their ability to make a meaningful impact in addressing societal injustices and supporting marginalized groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What are the different forms of allyship? - How can they be an ally for a cause or a person? - What challenges might arise when acting as an ally? 	<i>Act as an ally for an individual or cause. Remember that an ally supports a person or group that is oppressed or marginalized.</i>	Social awareness: Empathy Relationship skills: Allyship Responsible decision-making: Advocacy
Support a Cause	Students explore the causes they care about and identify ways to take meaningful action to support those causes. They reflect on how their involvement acknowledges those who support them and recognizes the often unseen individuals working behind the scenes. Students are reminded that everyone has a unique and complex story, and we can better overcome challenges when collaborating.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What causes matters to them. - What are some small ways they can support a cause? - How can supporting a cause generate meaningful change? 	<i>Choose a cause and take action to create positive change in your community. Start by researching to deepen your understanding of the issues so that you can determine the most effective ways to contribute. Remember, recognizing injustice and advocating for change often begins with one person!</i>	Self-management: Personal agency Responsible decision-making: Advocacy Responsible decision-making: Critical thinking
Welcome a New Perspective	In this lesson, students consider why people have different perspectives. They first view optical illusions to help them practice considering their perspectives. Then, they practice perspective-taking by looking at some statements and considering the various arguments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Our perspectives stem in part from our lived experiences. - Our perspectives are all unique. - Understanding different perspectives broadens our worldview. 	<i>Challenge yourself to see something from someone else's perspective. The more we understand how different perspectives shape others' experiences, the better we can learn from and connect.</i>	Social awareness: Perspective-taking Responsible decision-making: Curiosity Responsible decision-making: Critical thinking
Empower Your Main Character Energy	Students explore the concept of empowerment by tapping into their "Main Character energy"—embracing their unique strengths and taking control of their narrative. They examine thought-provoking quotes and eight practical tips highlighting ways to empower themselves. Finally, students synthesize their insights into an inspirational poster designed to help others discover their paths to empowerment and embrace their Main Character energy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What does empowerment mean? - Different ways they can empower themselves. - How can they inspire others to embrace their empowerment? 	<i>Take action to care for and empower yourself in a positive, fulfilling way.</i>	Self-awareness: Accurate self-perception Self-awareness: Confidence Self-management: Personal agency
Wrap-up	Students engage in a carousel activity to reflect on their ThinkGive learning journey. Afterward, they craft a newspaper article envisioning their future selves—the main character they aspire to become, the personal story they want to create, and the ways they can uplift and support the "extras" and supporting cast members in their lives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What have they learned about themselves? - What have they learned about others? - How can they be more intentional about creating positive connections? 	<i>Reflect on one or two key lessons from your ThinkGive experience and practice integrating these skills into your life. This might include being an ally, prioritizing self-care, embracing your authentic self, or welcoming new perspectives. Apply these skills to support others and empower yourself to achieve your goals.</i>	Self-awareness: Accurate self-perception Self-awareness: Growth mindset Responsible decision-making: Critical thinking

Introduction



grades 7-8



35 minutes

“But there in the background, faint and out of focus are the extras. The random passerby, each living a life as complex and vivid as your own.”
– Sonder video

Lesson Summary

This lesson introduces students to the central program theme: "sonder." The accompanying video explores how everyone exists as the main character of their stories, each with their "supporting cast" and "extras." By the end of the lesson, students will understand that they play different roles in others' lives, all of whom are also experiencing complex and vivid lives of their own.

NOTE: Consider providing students with a dedicated ThinkGive notebook for use throughout the program. See the Student Journal Guide ([PDF](#)) for suggestions on incorporating a student notebook in lessons. If students will be using ThinkGive Journals, find a time for them to decorate the front (and back) cover. Use the Journal cover template ([PDF](#)) or model your decorated journal cover to provide design ideas.



MATERIALS

ThinkGive Three Poster (Yellow [PDF](#) | Purple [PDF](#))
ThinkGive Journals
Student Journal Guide ([PDF](#))
Journal cover template ([PDF](#))
Chart paper
Worksheet: The Roles We Play ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))
Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))

Students will Examine

- The idea that everyone is living a vivid and complex life.
- The roles they play in the lives of others.
- What opportunities do they have to impact others positively?

Pre-Activity Prep

- (Optional) Prepare four chart papers using headings from the Worksheet: The Roles We Play ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (REFLECT section).
- (Optional) Print or digitally share the Worksheet: The Roles We Play ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (1/student) (REFLECT section).
- (Optional) Print or digitally share the Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (CONNECT + CLOSE section).



MEDIA TO PREP

Slides: [Introduction](#)
Video: [Sonder: The Realization That Everyone Has A Story \(2:38\)](#)

SHARE

N/A

THINK•GIVE

Suggested time: 10 minutes

Opening Message

Have you ever imagined your life as if it were a movie and you were the main character? If so, you're not alone. We all feel that way! While we are all the main characters in our stories, it's important to remember that everyone feels the same way. We all play the starring role in our movies and exist as characters in other stories. We play many roles, and the interconnection of our stories makes our communities strong.

Warm-up Question

If you wrote a movie about yourself and your life, what would the title be? Why?

Introducing Sonder

Watch: [Sonder: The Realization That Everyone Has A Story](#) (2:38).

"Sonder" is a word in the Dictionary of Obscure Sorrows. This video helps students understand that we are all main characters in our stories, but we also act as supporting cast and extras for others.

Discuss:

- What stood out to you about the video's message? Why?
 - How does recognizing that everyone has their own story and struggles change how we treat others?
 - Why is it important to remember that we are all supporting cast and even extras for others?
 - How might understanding that others live lives as vivid and complex as yours help us connect?
 - How might this connection allow us to offer authentic support and kindness?
-



TEACHER TIP

Every lesson will offer an Opening Message along with a Warm-up Question. Display it for students to read as they transition (see slides). The Warm-up Question could be a quick share, or students could reflect on a Post-it or in their ThinkGive Journals.



VOCAB

Sonder: noun; the realization that each random passerby is living a life as vivid and complex as your own.

Extra: noun; a person engaged temporarily to fill out a scene in a movie or play, especially as one of a crowd.

REFLECT

Suggested time: 25 minutes

A Day in the Life: The Roles We Play

Explain: As the main characters in our stories, we all lead vibrant and

complex lives. We encounter challenges and experience moments of triumph. Through ThinkGive, we will reflect on our roles as main characters and find ways to support the people who play supporting roles in our lives, recognizing that they, too, are the main characters of their own stories.

Brainstorm individuals students have recently interacted with, directly or indirectly (e.g., people in the hallway, street, store, etc.), and record ideas on the whiteboard or chart paper.

OPTION A:

Set up chart paper (one per category on the Worksheet: The Roles We Play ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))). Students form small groups and circulate among the stations, responding to the prompts on each chart.

OPTION B:

Hand out the Worksheet: The Roles We Play ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (1/student). Students work independently to complete the worksheet.

Discuss:

- For whom do you play the role of supporting cast?
- For whom do you play the role of extra?
- How might you enrich other people's lives as a member of their supporting cast and/or as an extra?
- What are some things you can say or do to be a great supporting cast member?
- When is it challenging to be a great supporting cast member?

DIGGING DEEPER

Discuss:

- How are sonder and empathy related?
- What would our world be like without the practice of sonder?
- How does the practice of sonder impact our world?

★ TEACHER TIP

After finishing "The Roles We Play," students can engage in role-playing scenarios based on their responses from the activity and then have the group guess the positive impacts.

★ CONNECTION

Scenario: "A Day in the Life" ([PDF](#)). Use this narrative to help students imagine their days. Discuss: When was Randall the main character? When was he the supporting cast or extra?

★ TEACHER TIP

Actions that could positively impact extras include your thanks, a smile, or holding a door.



VOCAB

Empathy: noun; the ability to understand and share the feelings of another.

CONNECT + CLOSE

Suggested time: 10 minutes

At the end of every lesson, challenge students to take positive action to impact someone: themselves, a supporting cast member (family member and/or a friend), or an extra they have yet to meet.

Take Action

Explain: Between now and our next ThinkGive session on [give date], notice the supportive roles that others play in your life and the roles you play for others. Pay attention to what makes the person's supportive role stand out to you and its positive impact.

Things to Consider

- Everyone lives vivid and complex lives—theirs might look different to yours!
- How can you positively impact a supporting cast member or an extra?
- You can impact someone's day, even as an extra.

Closing Quote

Use this quote to close out the lesson. The reflective questions could serve as an Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)).

"But there in the background, faint and out of focus are the extras. The random passerby, each living a life as complex and vivid as your own." – [Sonder video](#)

- How might understanding that others live vivid and complex lives help you connect?

★ THINKGIVE THREE

1. True: be authentic
2. Small: small is all
3. Brave: step into your courage zone

Sample Actions

N/A

Student Journal Questions

- Describe when you realized you were a supporting cast member or an extra in someone else's story. How did you feel?
- How can the idea of sonder inspire you to support a cause or group?

Extensions

DO

Make a Movie Poster/Book Cover/Album Cover

Students should choose a title for their life story and then create a movie poster, book cover, or album cover based on that title. If they make a book cover, they can include a plot description. For a movie poster, they can include reviewer quotes, and for an album cover, they can include song tracks referencing different aspects of their life.

NOTE: Revisit this activity at the end of the program. Do students change anything after examining their lives more closely?

True Colors Personality Assessment

Students take the True Colors Personality Test ([website](#)) to learn more about themselves. Have students complete the test online or pre-print copies of the blank test and have them complete it offline. Each color represents a personality type with tendencies regarding how they act, learn, interact with others, etc.

Discuss:

- What does knowing your color tell you about how you connect to others, either as the main character or as a supporting cast or extra?
- Why is it helpful to understand someone else's color and how they contribute as a supporting cast or extra in your life?

NOTE: Remind students that personality assessments are tools, not a comprehensive description of who we are as individuals. Some color types might feel accurate, and others might not.

WATCH

Video: [Becoming the Main Character](#) (3:06). Simon shares how 24 films gave him insights into being his life's main character.

Discuss:

- What does Simon mean when he says, "The amazing parts of these movies weren't the plots per se, but the small moments of life, joy, sadness, and emotion that they capture" (1:14)?
- Do you agree with Simon when he says, "I think being the main character is less about being a superhero or doing some amazing things and more about appreciating the small aspects of life that we sometimes overlook..." (2:22)? Why or why not?
- Simon suggests ways to become the main character of your own life at 2:36 (consider safety and responsibility to yourself and others first!). What does he suggest?
- How might understanding yourself (as your main character) allow you to impact others (who are their main characters) positively?

Video: [Communication Skills: Empathetic Listening—Inside Out](#) (1:44). This clip illustrates how empathic listening allows us to support those in need, highlighting perspective-taking and feeling validation.

Discuss:

- How does Sadness demonstrate empathy?
- How might her actions connect to the concept of sonder?
- When have you/how can you offer(ed) empathy to a supporting cast member or extra?

READ/LISTEN

Meditation: [Peace Out: Time to Pause: Monday](#) (end: 6:04). This meditation leads listeners through exercises designed to focus kind and intentional thoughts toward others. Lead students through this meditation or adjust to reflect the concepts of sonder (e.g., think of and repeat messaging to three people in your life: yourself, a supporting actor, and an extra).

Discuss:

- How did this meditation feel? What, if anything, came up for you?
- How might this meditation help us offer empathy towards ourselves and our supporting cast and extras?

- How might you offer the messages of this meditation (“may you be happy,” “may you be healthy,” “may you be safe,” “may you live with ease”) through your actions as supporting actors and/or extras in others’ lives?

Article: “Main Character Energy...?” ([PDF](#) | [website](#)). A 15-year-old writes about “main character energy.”

Discuss:

- What are your thoughts about this article?
- In the second to the last paragraph, pianowriter writes, “Your future is where you are the main character and you dictate what occurs. You dictate whether or not you become an influential figure in society or remain an extra.” Do you agree or disagree? Explain.
- How can one embody the “main character energy” in the present rather than just focusing on the future?
- In what ways has being a supporting character for someone else been as significant as being the main character?



ThinkGive partners with educators to bring social and emotional learning (SEL) to K-8 youth.

Our mission is to empower youth to take actions that positively impact themselves and others; building character, confidence, and connection. Our programs explore inclusion, identity, empathy, and equity to help youth cultivate self-awareness, social awareness, and relationship skills.

Why ThinkGive?_____

We emphasize action. Our programs empower youth to take self-directed and authentic actions that positively impact themselves, others, their communities, and the environment.

We increase access to SEL. We engage youth who need access to programs like ours. Over 75% of our partner educators serve under-resourced youth and receive free programming.



Check if your school or organization qualifies for free programming funded by our SEL for Every Child Fund at thinkgiveproject.org/fund

We make an impact. Students overwhelmingly report that after participating in ThinkGive programming, they feel empowered to be a force of good and positively impact their world. Programs develop prosocial skills, including connection (with peers, friends, family, teachers, and community), belonging, confidence, and empowerment.

We are flexible and adaptable. ThinkGive fits into just about any K-8 learning environment. Our programs are adaptable to your schedule, goals, and student needs. They can be taught standalone or complement and enhance broader SEL initiatives.

We are grounded in research. ThinkGive aligns with CASEL's core competencies and state and common core standards.

We provide exceptional support. The ThinkGive team partners with you and provides hands-on support so that you can implement programs effectively.

Why Now?

Youth mental health has deteriorated nationwide, and this crisis is disproportionately impacting under-resourced youth. In May 2023, the Surgeon General declared loneliness, isolation, and lack of connection a new public health epidemic in the United States. Research shows how teaching youth prosocial behavior is directly associated with positive emotional, social, and academic growth.



OUR IMPACT

STUDENTS REPORT...

84%

will be kinder
to others

81%

will be a force of good
in their schools and
communities

71%

are more willing
to stand up for
what's right

76%

feel more confident to
make a positive impact
on their world

84% felt more connected with family, **78%** with community, **77%** with friends

EDUCATORS REPORT...

100%

students feel more
empowered that they can
be agents of change

85%

students seem
more inclusive

75%

students seem
kinder to each other



“ThinkGive is a revolutionary SEL program that empowers students to immaterially gift kindness. It strengthens their connections to each other and their communities, shapes them as young citizens, and helps them see the impact of their actions.”

– Dana Meyer, educator, Carlisle Public School

“ThinkGive has and will help me be a more considerate, thoughtful, and compassionate person. Knowing the positive effects I can have on a person is truly amazing.”

– 7th grade student