

Communities All Around



grades 2-3



35 minutes

Heart of the Lesson

- What is a community, and why does it matter?
- Different types of communities and the people or living things that are part of them.
- Ways to notice and appreciate the helpers in our communities.

Lesson Summary

- Students explore what it means to be part of a community by examining a forest ecosystem, where plants, animals, and fungi depend on one another to thrive.
- They identify the different communities they belong to and consider the roles people play within them.
- They then use a freeze-frame activity to reflect on ways to support, appreciate, and contribute to the communities they are part of.

Pre-Lesson Prep

- Print Leaf and Fruit Templates ([PDF](#)) (1/student) (SHARE section).
- Prepare to display the Image: Tree Poses ([PDF](#)) (OPEN section).
- Prepare to display the Worksheet: Forest Community ([PDF](#)) (THINK.GIVE section).
- Prepare to display the Worksheet: Communities ([PDF](#)) (THINK.GIVE section).



MATERIALS

ThinkGive Journals | Guide ([PDF](#))
 Leaf and Fruit Templates ([PDF](#))
 Image ([PDF](#))
 Image: Tree Poses ([PDF](#))
 Worksheet: Forest Community ([PDF](#))
 Worksheet: Communities ([PDF](#))



MEDIA TO PREP

Slides: Communities All Around |
 Slide Notes ([PDF](#))

SHARE

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Hand out Paper Leaf and Fruit Templates ([PDF](#)) (1/student). Give students a few minutes to write or draw how they communicated with someone in a kind way since the last lesson. When they're ready, they can attach their leaf or fruit to the Tree Bulletin Board. Wrap up by inviting a few students to share the action they took with the group.



TEACHER TIP

If students feel dissatisfied with their actions or have yet to act, remind them that small, consistent actions help develop kindness muscles (ThinkGive Three), so keep trying!

OPEN

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Image

Show the Image ([PDF](#)).

Ask: What does this image mean to you?

Forest Check-In

Ask: How is everyone feeling today? Strong like a tree? Swaying like branches in the wind? Light and floaty like leaves drifting? Still and peaceful like rocks or tree trunks? Or energetic and quick like a squirrel or chipmunk?

Show the Image: Tree Poses ([PDF](#)).

Explain: Let's move our bodies to match how we feel. Stand tall if you feel strong. Sway gently like branches if you feel wiggly. Move lightly like drifting leaves if you feel floaty. Stay still and calm if you feel peaceful. Move quickly and playfully if you feel lively and full of energy.

Say: Now choose a pose from the picture—or create your own—hold it still and strong like a tree in the forest.



TEACHER TIP

The Open section helps students warm up their minds and bodies, preparing them to engage fully with the lesson.

THINK • GIVE

Suggested time: 20 minutes

Read aloud the definition of community (see sidebar).

Ask: Is there anything you would add to this definition?

Activity: Meet the Forest Team

Display the [Worksheet: Forest Community \(PDF\)](#). Read the page together, then invite five volunteers to represent different parts of the forest community: a tree, roots, a squirrel or owl, a fungus, and an insect.

Students strike and hold a pose that shows their role. Tap one student at a time. When tapped, the student unfreezes and completes the sentence: "I help my community by _____. " After each student shares, discuss how their role helps other members of the forest community survive and thrive.

Activity: Community Helpers Freeze-Frame

Display the [Worksheet: Communities \(PDF\)](#).



VOCAB

Community: noun; a group of people (or living things) who share something in common. They may live near each other or far away, and they help take care of one another.



CONNECTION

Take a walk around your school or building and notice the people who help your community. Think about the jobs they do and how they help others each day. As you observe, consider how you might show that you appreciate what they do.

Explain: Some of these are entire communities—places where people live, work, and help one another. Others are smaller groups within a community where we can more easily see people helping and working together. Let's think of more examples together.

As a group, add more communities and parts of communities to the list. Then divide students into small groups. Assign each group a community or allow them to choose one. Give groups a few minutes to discuss:

- Who lives and works in this community?
- What roles do they play?
- How do they help others?

Each student chooses a community helper and creates a pose that shows their role (e.g., a librarian shelving books, a crossing guard helping students cross the street, a firefighter using a hose).

When groups are ready, bring everyone back together. One group at a time comes forward and freezes in position like a photograph. Walk around and tap one student at a time. When tapped, the student unfreezes and completes the sentence: "I help my community by _____."

Discuss (after each group):

- What community did we see? What clues helped you figure it out?
- How do the different helpers work together to support this community?
- What might happen if one of these helpers were missing?
- How could you show appreciation for someone who helps your community?

Invite the next group to present; repeat until each group has had a turn.

Community Kindness Brainstorm

Ask: How can we show kindness to people in our communities—including people we know well and people we may not know, such as store workers, crossing guards, school custodians, park workers, or referees?

Record students' ideas where everyone can see (e.g., saying thank you, smiling, waving, writing a note, drawing a picture, offering help, holding a door, or asking a trusted adult to help share appreciation).

DIGGING DEEPER

Discuss:

- How might a community change if people stopped noticing or appreciating the people who help it run?
- Do you think someone has to know you personally to be impacted by your kindness? Why or why not?
- What does choosing to show kindness to someone you barely know say about the kind of person you want to be?



CONNECTION

Read-aloud book: [Because of an Acorn](#) (1:35) by Lola M. Shaefer and Adam Schaefer. This story shows how plants and animals in a forest are all connected. Discuss: What parts of the forest did you see in the story? How do the plants and animals help each other? What do you think the last line means: "Because of an acorn, a forest"?

CONNECT + CLOSE

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Take Action

Explain: Before our next ThinkGive session on [give date], notice the communities you are part of and the people who help in them. Choose one helper and show them you appreciate them.

Things to Consider

- You are part of many communities.
- Look for the helpers around you.
- Taking care of a community space is one way to show appreciation.

Brainstorm Actions

Here are some action ideas to inspire students. Brainstorm more together if needed to build confidence in taking true, small, and brave actions.

- I said thank you to the clerk at the store.
- When my neighbor dropped a dollar bill, I picked it up and gave it back to her.
- I drew a picture for the school nurse.

Image

Show the Image ([PDF](#)).

Discuss:

- What does this image mean to you now?
- How does this image connect to the lesson?

★ THINKGIVE THREE

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

★ CONNECTION

Use journaling to deepen reflection and strengthen writing skills—see the Journal Questions: Communities All Around ([PDF](#)).

Student Journal Questions

-  What communities are you part of, and what role do you play in them?
-  Why are communities important?
-  If you wanted to join a new community, what steps could you take to become involved?

Extensions

DO

Interview a Community Helper

Invite a community helper from your school, organization, or neighborhood to visit the group. As a group or in pairs, students prepare questions such as:

- What is your job in this community?
- What do you like about your work?
- What is hard about your job?
- How can we help you?

Discuss (after the visit):

- What did you learn from our visitor?
- How does this person help their community?

Create a group thank-you card to show your appreciation for their visit.

WATCH

Video: [On The Job with #NewYorksStrongest](#) (0:58). Sanitation worker Alicia Shorter talks about her favorite part of her job.

Discuss:

- Why are sanitation workers important in our community?
- What surprised you in the video?
- How would our world be different without sanitation workers?

READ/LISTEN

Song: [“Heart of the Woods”](#) (2:16) by Kacey Musgraves (see lyrics ([PDF](#))). This song connects how trees communicate underground with how people naturally take care of each other.

Discuss:

- What is this song about?
- What does the singer mean when she talks about a “neighborhood under the ground”?
- What does this mean to you? “It’s in our nature to look out for each other.”
- Why do you think this song is called “Heart of the Woods”?