

Give Gratitude to Someone You've Taken for Granted



grades: 6-8



35 minutes

“When it comes to life, the critical thing is whether you take things for granted or take them with gratitude.” – G.K Chesterton

Lesson Summary

This lesson invites students to write about a person they’ve taken for granted and reflect on how this person serves as a window and/or a mirror for them. To help them develop their ideas, students watch the “Experiment in Gratitude” video and write a letter of gratitude. As an action, they can either read their letter to the person they wrote about or find a different way to express their appreciation for someone they’ve taken for granted.

Students will Examine

- What it means to take someone for granted, and why they might do so unintentionally.
- How is gratitude the opposite of taking people and things for granted?
- The impact that their gratitude can have on others.

Pre-Activity Prep

- (Optional) Print Share Tickets ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (1/student) (SHARE section).
- Print or digitally prepare the Worksheet: Showing Gratitude ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (1/student) (THINK.GIVE section).
- (Optional) Complete a sample Showing Gratitude worksheet (THINK.GIVE section).
- (Optional) Print or digitally share the Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (CONNECT + CLOSE section).



MATERIALS

ThinkGive Journals
Share Tickets ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))
Worksheet: Showing Gratitude ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))
Exit Ticket ([PDF](#) | [Google](#))



MEDIA TO PREP

Slides: [Give Gratitude to Someone You've Taken for Granted](#)
Video: [An Experiment in Gratitude](#) (7:13)

SHARE

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Think about your Last Action

Discuss or use Share Tickets ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) to explore how previous actions connected to the Windows + Mirrors theme.

- How did your action help you look in a mirror and see yourself more clearly?
- How did your action help you see through a window to understand someone else (their experience, beliefs, life, culture, etc.)?
- What character trait(s) did your action(s) highlight inside of you?
- What character trait(s) did your action(s) highlight in the recipient?

★ TEACHER TIP

To make the Windows and Mirrors concept more visual, create a public space where students can post Share Tickets ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)).

★ 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!

THINK • GIVE

Suggested time: 20 minutes

Ask: What if you woke up tomorrow and everyone you expressed gratitude for today was standing in front of you? Who would be there?

Record the answers as a group or have students create individual lists on paper.

Discuss/Journal:

- How often do you let these people know you appreciate who they are and what they do for you?
- Do these people act as a mirror for you by reflecting who you are or a window by teaching you about new ideas, experiences, and cultures?
- Is anyone missing? Are they missing because you tend to take them for granted?

NOTE: If needed, take some time to define and give examples of what it means to take someone or something for granted.

Give students time to add those they are taking for granted to the list (group or personal).

★ TEACHER TIP

If you kept the T-charts/worksheets from the "Appreciate a Kindness Someone Give to You" lesson, use them to help direct this lesson.

★ TEACHER TIP

If students have trouble choosing a person, encourage them to consider someone they care about or someone they've taken for granted who has been kind and helpful.

Write a Letter

Hand out or digitally share the Worksheet: Showing Gratitude ([PDF](#) | [Google](#)) (1/student). Students choose someone they've taken for granted from their list and respond to the sentence starters on Page 1 to prepare their writing.

Students use Page 2 to organize their thoughts, and then on Page 3, they compose a letter to express their gratitude for this person. Encourage them to focus on micro-moments as they write. Point out that this activity is challenging. It can be hard to express our feelings in writing.

NOTE: Consider writing and sharing a sample letter as a model for the format and content of a letter, allowing students to connect with you.

Discuss:

- How does the person you wrote to reflect who you are?
- How does the person act as a window and teach you about unfamiliar experiences?



TEACHER TIP

Students might prefer to write a poem, create a comic strip, or draw a portrait of the person. The key is that their work explains why the person is important.

REFLECT

Suggested time: 15 minutes

Watch: [An Experiment in Gratitude](#) (7:13) by SoulPancake. This video takes an experimental approach to examining what makes people happier.

Discuss:

- Why were the letter-writers nervous?
- If you were in their position, how would you feel? Why?
- What was the result for the letter-writers?
- What was the result for the people they wrote to?

Give students another few minutes to polish their writing, using the video as inspiration. Ask for student volunteers to share their letters.

Discuss (post-share):

- How did what your peers share act as a window for you about their experiences?
- How did what your peers share act as a mirror for your own experiences?
- How is expressing gratitude for this person the opposite of taking them for granted?
- How do you feel taking time to be grateful for them?
- How might your appreciation impact this person?



TEACHER TIP

Connect the video and letter-writing activity to the ThinkGive Three's TRUE and BRAVE.



TEACHER TIP

Students could share by summarizing, highlighting, or sharing the name of the person they wrote about. They decide what they feel most comfortable sharing, as this activity may feel vulnerable for some.

DIGGING DEEPER

Discuss:

- When might it be challenging to compose a letter of gratitude (e.g., the person is deceased, incarcerated, estranged, the relationship is challenging, etc.)?
 - What might be alternative ways of practicing gratitude if expressing it to a person is challenging? What would be the benefit of this (e.g., writing a letter, even if you won't or can't deliver it to the person, can still be helpful because it allows you to express your internal thoughts externally)?
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CONNECT + CLOSE

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Take Action

Explain: Before our next ThinkGive session on [give date], be brave and read your letter aloud to the person you wrote to. You can also send it by mail or email. If that feels too much, think of another brave way to share your gratitude with someone you take for granted.

Brainstorm

None needed

Things to Consider

- Expressing gratitude takes courage. Grow your bravery!
- Who is someone you take for granted?
- Imagine how you would feel if someone wrote you a gratitude letter!

Closing Quote

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

"When it comes to life, the critical thing is whether you take things for granted or take them with gratitude." – G.K Chesterton

- What does this quote mean to you?
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★ THINKGIVE THREE

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




★ CONNECTION

G.K. Chesterton (1874–1936) was an English writer, often called the "prince of paradox." TIME Magazine said of his writing style: "Whenever possible, Chesterton made his points with popular sayings, proverbs, allegories—first carefully turning them inside out."

Sample Actions

- I wrote my stepdad a letter saying how much I appreciate he's always there for me.
- I sent the most amazing teacher I have ever had a letter describing how she changed my life.
- I stepped out of my comfort zone and told someone I just met how grateful I was to have met them. I hope this will be the start of a friendship.

Student Journal Questions

-  How can showing appreciation reflect who you are? How can your appreciation act as a window for others?
-  How can showing gratitude for someone help that person see themselves more clearly?
-  What is one thing you can do to express gratitude more regularly?

Extensions

DO

Gratitude Surprise

Give students one or more Post-it notes to write something they're grateful for about someone in the school community. Then, students deliver the notes by placing them where the person will see them (e.g., in a locker, phone, or cleaning cart).

Audio: [Guided meditation on Gratitude](#) (7:54). The basic practice of gratitude has three simple steps:

- Settle your body and mind; bring your attention to the present moment.
- Recall something specific you appreciate—the more concrete and tangible, the better.
- Enjoy the sensations that arise and spread through your body.

WATCH

Video: [Kid President's 25 Reasons to Be Thankful](#) (3:47). Life can be challenging. It's important to remember the things that make life extraordinary. What would you put on the list?

Discuss:

- What items seemed ridiculous initially but made sense after you thought about them?
- Why is reflecting on gratitude a helpful practice?
- Create a class slideshow or video with your Reasons to Be Thankful.

Video: [Gratitude in the Classroom](#) (4:12). Middle school students started every morning by writing down something they were grateful for.

Discuss:

- What would happen in our community if we started this gratitude journal practice?
- What would you write in your Gratitude Journal?

As a group, list what you would write in your Gratitude Journal. Consider practicing gratitude as a class for the remainder of your time together.

READ/LISTEN

Short story: "The Seven Wonders of the World" ([PDF](#)). This story is about one young person's interpretation of the Seven Wonders of the World.

Pair-Share:

- What are your thoughts about the story?
- "The things we overlook as simple and ordinary and that we take for granted are truly wondrous." What simple and ordinary things have you overlooked and taken for granted?
- Add to the second list of the wonders of the world and explain why you are adding each new thing.

Poems: "Ode to My Socks" ([PDF](#)) and/or "Ode to the Artichoke" ([PDF](#)) by Pablo Neruda. The famous poet writes odes about seemingly ordinary things.

Discuss:

- Why is it important to be grateful for small things?
- What item(s) would you write an ode to?
- Write an ode to something or someone that you typically take for granted.