Gratitude Spotlight
Introduction

grades 3-5 | 45 minutes

Students will Examine

- What gratitude means and why it matters.
- How slowing down and noticing leads to gratitude.
- The everyday things around us that deserve appreciation.

Lesson Summary

- Students explore gratitude by reading an ode to shoes and reflecting on their appreciation for everyday things.
- They write their own ode to an object they often overlook, discovering how attention can spark gratitude.
- Then they reflect on why practicing gratitude—not just feeling it—matters.

Pre-Lesson Prep

- (Optional) Print and hang a ThinkGive Three poster (Yellow PDF | Purple PDF).
- (Offline programs) Print the Participant Profile Template (PDF) (1/student) and print or display the Sample (PDF) to guide students (SHARE section).
- Choose which ode to project (see slides #4 and #5): "Ode to My Shoes" (PDF) or "Ode to Pablo's Tennis Shoes" (PDF) (THINK.GIVE section).
- Print the Worksheet: My Ode (PDF) (1/student) (THINK.GIVE section).

MATERIALS

ThinkGive Three Posters (Yellow PDF | Purple PDF)
ThinkGive Journals | Guide (PDF) | Cover Template (PDF)
Participant Profile Template (PDF) | Sample (PDF)
Quote Image (PDF)
Poem: "Ode to My Shoes" (PDF)
Poem: "Ode to Pablo's Tennis Shoes" (PDF)
Worksheet: My Ode (PDF)

MEDIA TO PREP

Slides: Introduction | Slide Notes (PDF)
(Digging Deeper) Video: A Grateful Day with Brother David Steindl-Rast (5:22)

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SHARE

SUGGESTED TIME: 5 MINUTES

Set Up Student Profiles

IF USING THE ONLINE PORTAL

Students log in to their My Page to set up their User Profile. They can choose a color, upload an image, and write about themselves in the "About Me" section.

IF WORKING ONLINE

Hand out the Participant Profile Template (PDF) (1/student). Students create their profiles. When finished, post them on a wall or bulletin board where student actions will be displayed throughout the program. For inspiration, show the Sample Participant Profile (PDF).

TEACHER TIP

Having students create and display a user profile helps build a sense of ownership and belonging. It's a simple way to start building trust, connection, and community.

OPEN

SUGGESTED TIME: 5 MINUTES

Quote/Image

Display the Image (PDF) and/or read the quote or invite a volunteer to read it (see slides): "We often take for granted the very things that most deserve our gratitude." – Cynthia Ozick

ASK: What does this image/quote mean to you?

THINK · GIVE

SUGGESTED TIME: 20 MINUTES

Activity: Read an Ode!

Project and read one of these poems aloud—or invite a volunteer to read:

- "Ode to My Shoes"(PDF) by Francisco X. Alcarón (slide #4)
- "Ode to Pablo's Tennis Shoes" (PDF) by Gary Soto (slide #5)

DISCUSS

- Why would someone write an ode to their shoes?
- What does the poem say about shoes?
- How does the author feel about his shoes? How can you tell?

ODE

noun; a poem written to celebrate or honor a particular person, place, or thing.

Explain: We can feel grateful for everyday things—big or small. Let's brainstorm 10-20 ordinary objects we use all the time but rarely think about (food, clothing, furniture).

Write the list on the board as students share so everyone can refer to it. Encourage variety and have fun with it—the more unexpected, the better!

TEACHER TIP

For students who don't connect with poetry, offer alternatives—a drawing, a short song, or a list of what makes their object special.

Activity: Write an Ode!

Hand out the Worksheet: My Ode (PDF) (1/student). Students choose one item from the group list (or their own) and complete Side 1 to explore its qualities, uses, and why they appreciate it. Then they write their ode on Side 2—any form, any length, no rules! When finished, students share with a partner, small group, or the full group. After each share, invite brief reflection using the questions below.

DISCUSS

- How did you choose your object?
- Was it hard to write an ode to it? Why or why not?
- Did your perspective shift as you wrote? What did you notice?
- Why does noticing everyday things matter?

Digging Deeper

Students research their object and create a poster or short paragraph to share their findings.

GUIDING QUESTIONS

- When and where was it invented?
- Why was it created?
- How is it made?

DISCUSS

- How did learning more about your object change how you see it?
- How can learning the story behind something shift the way we appreciate it?

REFLECT

SUGGESTED TIME: 10 MINUTES

What is Gratitude?

DISCUSS

- What does gratitude mean to you?
- Describe a time when you felt genuinely grateful.

Introduce or reinforce these ideas:

- Gratitude means noticing and appreciating something or someone.
- We can feel grateful for anything—big or small.
- Gratitude grows when we slow down and pay attention.
- Practicing gratitude can lift your mood and strengthen connections with others.

DISCUSS

- Did you feel grateful for your object while writing your ode? How did that come through—or what made it challenging?
- How does paying attention to details help you notice more to be thankful for?
- What does gratitude feel like in your body and mind?
- Why is it important to practice gratitude, not just feel it?

GRATITUDE

noun; the quality of being thankful; readiness to show appreciation for and to return kindness.

Digging Deeper

Watch: A Grateful Day with Brother David Steindl-Rast (5:22). A short film about appreciating the small moments in everyday life.

DISCUSS

- What does this line mean to you: "Today. It's a gift."?
- Did the film change how you think about daily gratitude? How?
- What small things might you start noticing or appreciating more?

CONNECT + CLOSE

Take Action

Explain: Between now and our next ThinkGive session on [date], notice and appreciate people, objects, or experiences you might usually overlook. Pay attention to how your gratitude feels.

THINK.GIVE THREE

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

Things to Consider

- We often overlook many things we have to be grateful for.
- When we slow down and notice everything around us, our appreciation grows.
- The more we notice, the more we find to be grateful for.

Closing Quote/Image

Use this Quote/Image (PDF) to close. “We often take for granted the very things that most deserve our gratitude.” – Cynthia Ozick

DISCUSS

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

Reflective Questions

- What did you notice that you usually don't pay attention to? What did you appreciate about it?
- When you took a moment to appreciate that person, object, or experience, how did your body feel?
- How, if at all, did showing appreciation for someone or something affect your mood or outlook?

Journal Questions

- What is something in nature (like a tree, animal, or flower) that you feel grateful for? How does it make you feel when you see it?
- What is a favorite memory that makes you feel thankful when you think about it?
- Who is someone you feel grateful for, and what is something kind they have done for you?