

Gratitude: wellbeing and literacy activities

Key Stage 1

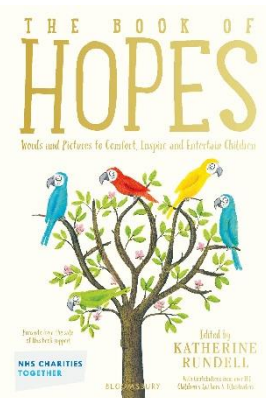
Introduction

Understandably, our thoughts and feelings may be focused on the challenges of recent events and it's not always easy to find things to be grateful for. However, studies suggest that finding things to be thankful for is important for our wellbeing, as well as bringing us together. By exploring the theme of gratitude through these literacy activities you can help children to build coping mechanisms for when times are tough. You can use these teacher notes in partnership with the PowerPoint presentation, or as inspiration to plan your own lessons.

The activities are linked to poems and stories from *The Book of Hopes* (published by Bloomsbury), which you can access at the National Literacy Trust website: literacytrust.org.uk/bookofhopes.

Recovery Curriculum links

The activities in this resource link to the following Recovery Curriculum Levers (Barry Carpenter, 2020)
evidenceforlearning.net/recoverycurriculum/#mentalhealth



Lever 1 Relationships: Allow children to reconnect with each other by sharing what they are grateful for to rebuild relationships after the long break.

Lever 2 Community: Create a sense of community in your classroom by contributing to the gratitude jar. Celebrate the children's home communities by sending thank you cards, strengthening the home/school relationship.

Lever 5 Space: It's important to allow children time to work on their own creative activities that won't be assessed, such as writing messages of thanks. Reflecting on their feelings as they are engaged in the task will provide a sense of space for children to find their voice, settle in to the school environment and encourage self-expression.



Gratitude – discussion

Start by having a discussion with your pupils about gratitude and why it's important. You might wish to use the word "thankfulness" rather than gratitude if that would be easier for your pupils to understand. You can use the questions and comments below and in the accompanying PowerPoint to kick start the conversation.

Starter questions

What does "gratitude" mean?

Why is it important to focus on the good things in our lives?

How might this help us when times are tough?

Is it always easy to be grateful? Why not?

Lockdown was very difficult for lots of people, but was there a time during lockdown when you felt thankful for something? For example, spending more time with family, an activity they enjoyed, having more time to relax.

Is there something you feel thankful for now you are back at school?

How do we show our gratitude?

How does saying "thank you" make you feel?

How does it make others feel?

Key points

Gratitude is a feeling of thankfulness for what we have. Focusing on what we are grateful for can make us feel better when we are going through a difficult time.

There may be things that are difficult about coming back to school, but there is lots to be grateful for. If we focus on these things, that will help us to cope.

Showing gratitude to those around us is important because it makes them feel better too. Many children may have clapped for key workers on a Thursday during lockdown, which is a good example of how giving thanks brought people together.



The Best Feeling Ever by Fleur Hitchcock

Read the story on page 305 of *The Book of Hopes* to the children.

Discussion about the story

Talk to the children about their reaction to the story. You can use the questions below and in the PowerPoint as a starting point.

What was the story about?

Are there any parts you liked?

Were there any pictures in your mind as you heard the story?

What did the main character in the story want for their birthday? What did they get?

How might it feel to really want a pony, but get a bike instead? Has something similar ever happened to you?

What happened to change the main character's mind at the end of the story?

What do you think the title of the story means? What is the "best feeling" ever they are talking about?



Gratitude jar

Regularly recording things you are grateful for has been proven to increase wellbeing and life satisfaction (health.harvard.edu/healthbeat/giving-thanks-can-make-you-happier). Unite your class and celebrate what is good in the world with this gratitude jar.

You will need:

- ☐ A jar
- ☐ A sticky label
- ☐ Optional: stickers and ribbons to decorate the jar
- ☐ Print outs of the template on the next page
- ☐ Scissors

Step one – teacher prep

Label your jar: for example, “Class 1’s Gratitude Jar”. Decorate it to make it look inviting. You could cover it with stickers, and tie ribbons or pompoms around the neck of the jar. You could add a big gift bow to the top of the jar.



Print and cut out the slips of paper from the next page. The amount you need depends on how often you plan on using the gratitude jar.

Step two – filling the jar

Invite the children to write something they are grateful for on a slip of paper and post it into the jar. This can be an object, like a toy they have enjoyed that week, a person, or something more abstract like an act of kindness or something in nature they are thankful for.

Step three – opening the jar

Decide how often you are going to open the gratitude jar. This could be once a week or once a term. Celebrate the children’s gratitude with a “grateful moment” where you select a few slips to read out to the class. Take time to look back and celebrate all things your class was grateful for since you last opened the jar.



I am grateful for...

I am grateful for...

I am grateful for...

I am grateful for...

I am grateful for...

I am grateful for...

I am grateful for...

I am grateful for...

Writing thank you notes

Encourage children to show gratitude to those who have helped them by writing a thank you letter or card. You can use the template below or you could make thank you cards that the children can decorate. The children might like to include a drawing, especially if they are less confident writers.

The children could write to friends, teachers, parents or carers, grandparents or other family members. You might decide as a school to write notes to a local hospital to thank the doctors and staff, to the local post office or supermarket, or to the school kitchen staff, janitors or bus drivers. If children are writing to grown-ups they don't know, make sure personal details are not included and that their parent, carer or the school will help them deliver the note.

When the notes have been delivered, ask the children to reflect on how the activity made them feel and how they think the recipients of the notes felt. Remind them that saying thank you makes us and the other person feel good, and that when times feel tough it can make us feel better to remember things we are thankful for.

We've included some ideas here and in the PowerPoint for people you could thank.

Has someone...

comforted you when you've been sad?

given you a gift?

been a good friend to you?

taken you out on a nice walk?

helped you with your homework?

played games with you?

lent you a toy or book?

cooked you a meal or a treat?

read you a story?

said something nice to you?

made you laugh?



Dear _____,

Thank you for _____

It made me feel _____

From

