

*Gratitude*

Thankfulness in  
Action

“To speak gratitude is  
courteous and  
pleasant, to enact  
gratitude is generous  
and noble, but to live  
gratitude is to touch  
heaven.”

**--Elizabeth Carter**



## November 2004 Character Connection Theme: Gratitude

### Definitions

Gratitude is “an appreciative awareness and thankfulness, as for kindness shown or something received.”<sup>1</sup> It is having an attitude of thankfulness and appreciation, appreciating your abilities and gifts, and acknowledgement of the sacrifice of others. Gratitude is thankfulness in action.

### Information

For thousands of years, the peoples of the earth have held festivals to express gratitude for harvest. In America, The pilgrims of Plymouth Rock held a three day Thanksgiving in 1621 to thank the Wampanoag Indian tribe for helping them survive in their new land. George Washington declared a one-time Thanksgiving holiday on Thursday, the 18th day of December 1777, for solemn thanksgiving and praise.<sup>2</sup> In the midst of the tragedy of the American Civil War in 1863, Abraham Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday in November to be "...a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens." Franklin D. Roosevelt moved America's Thanksgiving celebration to the fourth Thursday of November in 1939, to prevent a five-week November from shortening the Christmas shopping season.<sup>3</sup>

In “Teaching Gratitude: It’s more than just a word,” Cindy Webb writes:

David D. Burns, M.D., in his book *FEELING GOOD: THE NEW MOOD THERAPY* identifies ten cognitive distortions that can lead to depression. They include such things as "all or nothing thinking" (the belief that one bad performance indicates total failure), "over-generalization" (seeing a single event as a never-ending pattern of defeat) and "magnification" (catastrophizing). An attitude of gratitude can help shift the mind from these self-defeating patterns of thinking to a more healthy and realistic point of view. According to Burns, "all your moods are created by your 'cognitions' or thoughts." Therefore, changing your thoughts profoundly changes your mood.<sup>4</sup>

### Quotes

"The essence of all beautiful art, all great art, is gratitude." -*Friedrich Nietzsche*<sup>5</sup>

**“Both abundance and lack exist simultaneously in our lives, as parallel realities. It is always our conscious choice which secret garden we will tend... when we choose not to focus on what is missing from our lives but are grateful for the abundance that's present -- love, health, family, friends, work, the joys of nature and personal pursuits that bring us pleasure -- the wasteland of illusion falls away and we experience Heaven on earth.” ~ Sarah Ban Breathnach**

“Remember that not to be happy is not to be grateful.” ~ Elizabeth Carter

“Feeling grateful or appreciative of someone or something in your life actually attracts more of the things that you appreciate and value into your life.” ~ Northrup Christiane

***“To speak gratitude is courteous and pleasant, to enact gratitude is generous and noble, but to live gratitude is to touch Heaven.” - Johannes A. Gaertner***

“Gratitude is the heart's memory.” ~ French Proverb<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “gratitude” *The American Heritage Dictionary*

<sup>2</sup> <http://www16.geocities.com/Athens/Troy/9087/thanks/tquotes.html>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.execpc.com/~shepler/thanksgiving.html>

<sup>4</sup> [http://family.go.com/Features/family\\_1998\\_11/tuls/tuls118grat/tuls118grat.html](http://family.go.com/Features/family_1998_11/tuls/tuls118grat/tuls118grat.html)

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.quoteland.com/quotes/search/search.cgi?query=gratitude>

## Activities

\*\*As a class, memorize **The Inscription on Plymouth Rock Monument:**

"This Monument Marks the First Burying Ground in Plymouth  
of the Passengers of the Mayflower"



"Here, under the cover of darkness, the fast dwindling company laid their dead, leveling the earth above them lest the Indians should know how many were the graves. Reader! History records no nobler venture for faith and freedom than this Pilgrim band. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings, often in hunger and cold, they laid the foundations of a state wherein every man, through countless ages, should have liberty to worship God in his own way. May their example inspire thee to do thy part in perpetuating and spreading the lofty ideals of our republic throughout the world!"<sup>7</sup>

*Talk about the blessings that the pilgrims, even in their grim circumstances, would have been grateful for.*

*Brainstorm on how gratitude can be shown for the abundance that is part of living in America today.*

\*\*Play Line Tag in a basketball court marked gym. (One player is "it." Participants that step off the lines are out. The person tagged by "it" becomes "it.") Then have the players play on their knees, hopping on one foot, and other variations. *Talk about the physical abilities that we can be grateful for, as well as the compassion that we can express for those who may not have as much.*

## Stories

### **Gratitude Brings a Smile and Becomes a Gift**

Mother Teresa's years of humble service to the poor, particularly to those in India, were recognized when she was given the 1979 Nobel Peace Prize. At the 1994 National Prayer Breakfast she made these remarks to America's leaders:

"One evening we picked up four people from the street. One of them was in the most terrible condition. I told the others with me, 'You take care of the other three; I will take care of the one who looks worst.'"

"I did all that my love could do. I put her in bed, and she had a beautiful smile on her face. She took hold of my hand as she said two words: 'Thank you.' Then she died."

"I asked myself, what would I say if I were in her place? I would have tried to draw a little attention to myself. I would have said, 'I am hungry, I am dying, I am in pain.' But she gave me much more; she gave me her grateful love. And she died with a smile on her face.

"Gratitude brings a smile and becomes a gift."

### **An Appreciated Expression of Gratitude**

On January 16, 2000, the Provo Daily Herald published this story of gratitude in the Dear Abby column. It was written by Oscar Ortiz of San Francisco:

**"Dear Abby:** I am a veteran of World War II. I have a bumper sticker on my vehicle announcing a past reunion of my Army unit. Recently, while shopping, I was approached by an employee of the firm I was in who asked me, "Did you serve, sir?" I replied that I had, indeed, served in WWII. The young man then said, 'I would like to thank you, sir, for what you did for our country.'

"I was stunned. In 55 years, this is the first time I have ever been thanked by a fellow American.

"I lost three friends at Normandy, one of whom died at my side. When I look back at the fulfilling life that I have enjoyed in this country that I love, I regard with lasting sorrow the memory of those friends who were denied that opportunity.

"The considerate words uttered by that young man meant more to me than I could ever convey to him. In some manner, the pain of remembrance has been made less painful by his kindness.

"I returned to visit that young man and gave him my combat medic's badge as a token of my gratitude."

*Are there those around us who would also appreciate our gratitude?*

## Writing or Discussion Topics

\*\*Melody Beattie said, "Gratitude unlocks the fullness of life. It turns what we have into enough, and more. It turns denial into acceptance, chaos to order, confusion to clarity. It can turn a meal into a feast, a house into a

<sup>6</sup> [www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes\\_gratitude](http://www.cyber-nation.com/victory/quotations/subjects/quotes_gratitude)

<sup>7</sup> <http://vboston.com/VBoston/Content/Quotes/q-insrck.cfm>

home, a stranger into a friend. Gratitude makes sense of our past, brings peace for today, and creates a vision for tomorrow.” *Talk about the beauty that occurs as light passes through a prism. Life experiences can also be seen as exquisite when seen through gratitude. Have students think about an unpleasant or difficult experience in the past, then write about the reasons to be grateful or “silver lining” of that experience. Was that event a necessary part of our life education?*

**\*\***During the first morning break, new logging foreman Sherman Rogers expressed gratitude to Tony, the difficult and rough employee. At the end of the day, Tony had outperformed the other workers and a new attitude transformed his subsequent relationships with fellow employees and work ethic. Read about the story at <http://www.innerlifewellness.com/inspiration/docs/1minute.html> then have students talk to their parents about how their sense of gratitude for those around them affects their work. *Does their gratitude for a particular friendship in their company relate to the way they treat their clients or staff? Do their clients and staff react differently when gratitude for their efforts is expressed? How does gratitude affect friendships and relationships in a school or social environment? How can focusing on gratitude change the emotions and mood of the mind and interactions?*

**\*\***In his book, Stand For Something, (page 89) Gordon B. Hinckley writes:

Although we acknowledge that far too many people live at the edge of survival, still we must admit that never before in the history of the world has a nation or a people enjoyed such riches and liberties.

For all this and much more, we should be grateful. And we ought to express our gratitude daily in countless ways—to each other, to our parents and other family members who have contributed so dramatically to our lives, to friends who have given us the benefit of the doubt again and again, to colleagues and associates who motivate and inspire us to reach higher and do better, to prudent leaders who serve selflessly . . . Gratitude is a sign of maturity. It is an indication of sincere humility. It is a hallmark of civility . . .”<sup>8</sup>

*Talk about ways to express gratitude and efforts of others that merit appreciation. Then have class members write a letter of gratitude to a pivotal person in their life.*



**\*\***It is said that during a particularly trying time, the Plymouth Pilgrims survived on a ration of 5 corn kernels per person, per day. For the month of November, keep a journal of gratitude, writing 5 different blessings daily.

## **Role Plays**

**\*\***George is talking to his friend Michael. George does not have the scooter that Michael has. His home is not as new as the home of his cousin Brett. All around him he sees other people who have more things, better grades, and greater talents. George is discouraged. *How can Michael use “gratitude” to help bring cheer and perspective to George?*

**\*\***Jolyn is lamenting to Brenda about the “B” grade she received on last week’s difficult math exam. *How can Brenda use gratitude to help Jolyn gain a more balanced perspective? How can Jolyn be grateful, yet still strive for an “A” grade on the next test?*

**\*\***Carlie receives a birthday present from Grandpa Bob that she knows she will never use. *What are some appropriate and polite expressions of gratitude for another’s efforts and expressions of love? How can Carlie express gratitude for the present and for Grandpa Bob?*

## **Book List**

*Hannah and the Whistling Teakettle* by Mindy

*Thank You, Mr. Falker* by Patricia Polacco

*Silver Packages* by Cynthia Gylant

*Grandad’s Prayers of the Earth* by Douglas Wood

*Best Friends* by Loretta Krupinski

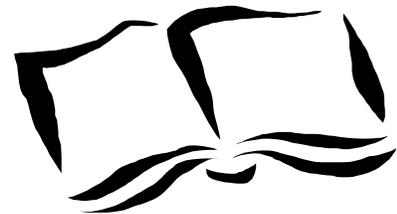
**December: Love**

**January: Dependable**

**February: Truthfulness**

**March: Respect**

**April: Courage**



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<sup>8</sup> Submitted by Pleasant Grove High School PTA representative



Name : \_\_\_\_\_

## November: Gratitude

H Z Y V L Q C W E K C C Z L D C W G Z V  
Q D S T A P P R E C I A T I O N V O M T  
C G R A T I T U D E S H X W X T T N I O  
A B U N D A N C E S D G J W H G D G R K  
T G R E W O L F Y A M T L A S E O S G J  
T N H G T C M S P X N H N I X L X T L M  
U P P N N B E X K Y A K N H F Z A U I R  
F V I I E N I A L A H G O T T Y S P S  
I N I V M S R Y Y Y N T B Q U S Y Q A M  
E S T I E S E M O R C P G B O M F W H I  
R G Y G G E B U O D H Y R R Y M R W O L  
E N A S D N M C B P F E E T A M H T S E  
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L E K H O K N M M F W T L A E T Y C U U  
B L O T N N B O H X L S E R V I C E H L  
J B T E K A Q U U G M T A C U R N U G D  
D B K X C H V T O O O W U C B O O L X F  
N F G B A T S H P K A X Z W W F J U A X

gratitude  
Thanksgiving  
service  
letter  
acknowledgement

appreciation  
thank you  
blessings  
Plymouth

awareness  
grateful  
corn  
Mayflower  
abundance

thankfulness  
Pilgrim  
smile  
November  
feast

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"The sun shines and our car starts and we have a roof over our heads and too much food in our bellies and friends and family that we love and enjoy and flowers that make us smile and sunsets that take our breath away and a heart that is still beating and books to read and walks to go on and service to provide to the community and animals to love and movies to see and on and on and on." --Susan Jeffers, Ph.D.