



Community of Character

Thankfulness

November

Thankfulness

Character Qualities

- Responsibility
- Respect
- Thankfulness
- Caring
- Perseverance
- Unity
- Integrity
- Service
- Moral Courage
- Citizenship
- Fairness
- Self Control

“I do, therefore, invite my fellow-citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a Day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens.”

1863 Thanksgiving Proclamation by President Abraham Lincoln

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Thankfulness is the character quality of showing our appreciation or gratitude. Two of the most important words in the English language are “thank you!” Research has shown that in addition to brightening the lives of others, expressing *thankfulness* is also good for us! Gratitude can make us stronger, healthier, and more capable. It can lift spirits, decrease depression, and reduce stress. *Thankfulness* may increase your body’s natural antibodies, build your immune system, and possibly extend lifespan! Gratitude at work or in school increases productivity, as the recipient will feel an improved sense of worth, which can lead to performance improvement. As you express *thankfulness*, you are helping yourself as well as others!

The month of November provides many opportunities to express *thankfulness*. We are thankful that we have the right to vote in November. Veterans Day is November 11; thank a veteran for being willing to serve our country. Freedom isn’t free! Think about what our country would be like if brave men and women had not served to protect our freedom. November also brings Thanksgiving, a national holiday which has its roots in the Pilgrims’ experiences after coming to America. While Thanksgiving is a specific time to focus on our many blessings, developing the habit of *thankfulness* every day will enrich our lives and the lives of others.

An aspect of *thankfulness* that we may not think about is being grateful for difficult or negative circumstances or obstacles that come up in our lives. Obstacles, challenges, and difficulties may provide opportunities for growth or a change in direction that will ultimately be better for us.

Thankfulness reminds us of what is important—family, friends, health, security—and not to take these things for granted!

As we focus on *thankfulness* this month, remember our veterans and the members of our military services. We are thankful to these heroes! Remember to thank those who help to keep us safe—our firefighters, police officers, and military. Remember to thank our doctors and nurses for their care when we need it. And thank your teachers and parents who are guiding you through your life journey!

History of Thanksgiving

Pilgrims sailed on the *Mayflower* to escape religious persecution in England. They landed at Plymouth Rock in December of 1620. Their first winter was devastating, and about half of the Pilgrims died. But the harvest of 1621 was a bountiful one, so Governor Bradford declared a 3-day feast! The colonists invited the Native American Indians who had helped them to survive their first year. They ate ducks, geese, turkeys, deer meat, clams, fish, and cornbread! The custom of a Thanksgiving Day spread from Plymouth to other New England colonies in time, but there was no national Thanksgiving Day. In October of 1777 all 13 colonies joined in a Thanksgiving celebration, commemorating the victory over the British at Saratoga. George Washington proclaimed a National Day of Thanksgiving in 1789. But for many years, the country had no regular national Thanksgiving Day.

During the Civil War, Sarah Josepha Hale, who wrote “Mary Had a Little Lamb,” convinced Abraham Lincoln to establish a national Thanksgiving Day. In 1863, President Lincoln proclaimed the last Thursday in November as a national day of Thanksgiving, and every president proclaimed it after Lincoln. In 1939, President Roosevelt set it one week earlier. In 1941, Congress sanctioned Thanksgiving as a legal holiday, on the fourth Thursday in November.

Books and Movies of Character

Fiction Books

Cool Coats by Larry Dane Brimmer
(1st to 2nd grade)

Precious Water: A Book of Thanks
By Brigitte Weninger
(Preschool to 2nd grade)

Thank You, Mr. Falker
by Patricia Polacco
(Preschool to 3rd grade)

Thanksgiving is for Giving Thanks
by Margaret Sutherland
(Preschool to 3rd grade)

Nonfiction Books

Squanto and the Miracle of Thanksgiving by Eric Metaxas

The Book of Giving: Poems of Thanks, Praise and Celebration by Kay Chorao
(Kindergarten to 3rd grade)

Feeling Thankful by Shelley Rotner
(Kindergarten to 3rd grade)

Thanks by Ruth Shannon Odor
(Kindergarten to 2nd grade)

Giving Thanks: The 1621 Harvest Feast
by Kate Waters

Movies

Honor Flight
Pollyanna

What is Thankfulness?

- Expressing your gratitude.
- Acknowledging the efforts of others.
- Appreciating others and what you have.
- Not expecting anything in return for generosity.
- Giving of time and talents.
- Praising the good you see in others.
- Being content with what you have.
- Counting your blessings rather than your burdens.

Quotes

“In ordinary life we hardly realize that we receive a great deal more than we give, and that it is only with gratitude that life becomes rich.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

“The pilgrims made seven times more graves than huts; nevertheless, they set aside a day of Thanksgiving.” *H. W. Westermayer*

“Appreciation can make a day, even change a life. Your willingness to put it into words is all that is necessary.” *Margaret Cousins*

“Not what we say about our blessings, but how we use them, is the true measure of our thanksgiving.” *W. T. Purkiser*

“Nine-tenths of wisdom is appreciation. Go find somebody's hand and squeeze it...while there is still time.” *D. Dauten*

“Life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it.”
Charles Swindoll

“Gratitude is the best attitude.” *Author Unknown*

Practicing Thankfulness

- Say “thank you” often.
- Each morning, as you begin your day, think about several things for which you are grateful.
- Keep a “gratitude journal.” Record a few entries each day.
- Write a letter of appreciation.
- Think of a person from your past who has had an influence on you. Call them or write them a letter to tell them how they have made a difference in your life.
- Make a “Thankfulness Jar.” Ask family members to drop a note in each day with an incident or a person for which they are thankful.

Applying Thankfulness

- Show your appreciation for your meal by washing the dishes.
- Thank the checker in the grocery store, the teller at the bank, your teacher, and everyone who helps you each day.
- Observe the work of others and make a kind comment.
- Give responsibilities to children and then express praise for good work.

- Thank Mom and Dad for the care they provide.
- When you see a police officer, firefighter, or member of the military, thank them for their service. They are real-life heroes!
- Create thankfulness crafts or activities with your children, such as a “gratitude tree,” or a “thankfulness turkey.” There are many ideas on the internet!
- Many families have a tradition at the Thanksgiving dinner table where family members are asked to say one thing for which they are thankful. Do this more often!

Personal commitments to Thankfulness:

- I will be grateful for what I have.
- I will recognize and thank others for their help or efforts every day.
- I will thank my teachers and family for their help, encouragement and kindness.
- I will give back to the community.
- I will attend a Veterans Day event and/or thank veterans for their service to our country.
- I will say “thank you” every day!