

Gratitude: wellbeing and literacy activities

Key Stage 2

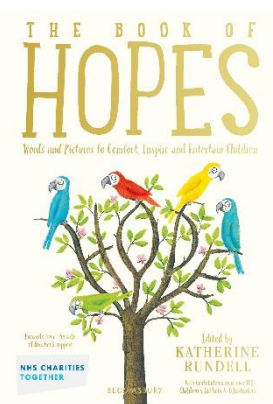
Introduction

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 with younger children. You can use the questions and comments below 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. It's not always easy to feel grateful when times are tough, but focusing on what we are grateful for can make us feel better when we are going through a difficult time, even if it's only little things.

There may be things that are difficult about coming back to school, but there is lots to be grateful for, and 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. Some children may have clapped for key workers on a Thursday during lockdown, which is a good example of how giving thanks brought people together.



Yasmin and Sila by Marianne Levy

Read the story on page 312 of *The Book of Hopes* to your pupils.

Discussion about the story

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

What was the story about?

Are there any parts you liked?

Who were the characters in the story?

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

How did Yasmin feel at the beginning of the story? What are the clues in the text?

Why had Yasmin been walking for miles and miles? Where was she coming from? Why might she have disappeared in the morning? Where did she go?

How did Sila feel about Yasmin to begin with? What about when she left? Why did Sila think she would never stop looking for Yasmin?

Who was the other woman sitting in the café at the end of the story?

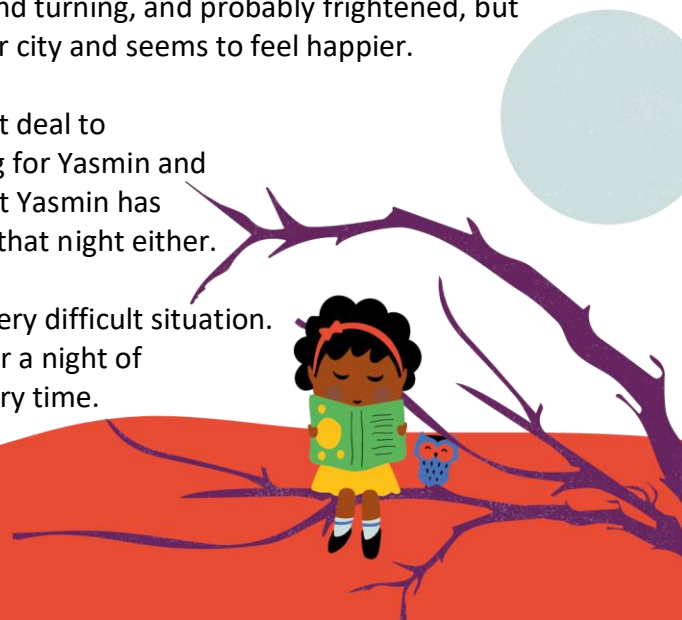
Why did Yasmin call her daughter Sila?

It's never explicitly said, but the clues in the text indicate that Yasmin was fleeing from her city and had to leave Sila's house secretly.

We never hear from Yasmin what that night with Sila meant to her but we can guess that it was important from the clues in the text. At first she was tossing and turning, and probably frightened, but when Sila tells her to think of something nice she describes her city and seems to feel happier.

We can guess that this interaction, though brief, meant a great deal to Yasmin and Sila, because Sila thinks she will never stop looking for Yasmin and remembers her even when she is an old woman. We learn that Yasmin has named her daughter after Sila, which means she never forgot that night either.

Both Yasmin and Sila found something to be grateful for in a very difficult situation. Naming her daughter Sila was Yasmin's way of thanking Sila for a night of friendship when she was going through a very difficult and scary time.



Dear Sila, Dear Yasmin

If Sila and Yasmin had been able to write letters to each other what might they have said? They were both full of gratitude that they weren't able to express to each other until years later. How would they say thank you in a letter? You can run this activity as a class, in groups or individually, asking the children to choose whether they write as Yasmin or Sila. Writing as Sila might be easier as we know more about her. Writing as Yasmin is an exercise in empathy and imagination.

You can use this exercise to practice official letter writing. Invent fictional addresses for Sila and Yasmin and use the format below:

Recipients address 1
Address 2
Address 3

Senders address 1
Address 2
Address 3

Today's date

Dear Yasmin/Sila,

Your message

Sign off (how would Yasmin or Sila sign off to each other? Yours
thankfully? With love?)



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 next 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.

Gratitude journals

You could decide that as a class you are going to write a “gratitude journal” instead. Allow quiet time at the beginning or end of each day for everyone (including teachers!) to write one thing they are grateful for in a special exercise book. Set aside some time at the end of the year or term to reflect and share.



I am grateful for...



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