

LESSON PLANS: Introduction and Theme

This month's lesson plans revolve around the theme of Gratitude.

G R A T I T U D E

RELATED VALUES

LOVE: Affection, Care, Compassion, Consideration, Empathy, Friendship, Generosity, Interdependence, Kindness, Reverence, Sacrifice, Sympathy, Thoughtfulness, Unselfishness.

TRUTH: Fairness, Fearlessness, Integrity, Intuition, Justice, Self-Awareness.

RIGHT CONDUCT: Social Skills: Good behaviour, Politeness, Relationships.
Ethical Skills: Code of conduct, Courage, Duty, Respect for all, Responsibility.

PEACE: Dignity, Focus, Gratitude, Harmony, Humility, Reflection, Self-control, Self-discipline, Self-respect, Surrender, Virtue.

NON-VIOLENCE: Psychological: Benevolence, Compassion, Concern for others, Consideration, Co-operation, Loyalty, Morality.
Social: Brother/Sisterhood, Universal Love.

Background to the theme by Zita Starkie, Primary School Teacher

The value GRATITUDE can best be encouraged in children by presenting them with positive role models, not only through value stories, but also through the teacher's own exemplary behaviour. Gratitude is a value that is often neglected. We may remember to say "thank you" as an automatic response to help, but gratitude does not only involve remembering to thank people for their service to us on a daily basis. It also involves being constantly mindful of those people, such as parents, who have supported us in the past and therefore have enabled us to reach the position that we are in today. We are all only here because of both of our natural parents. For that alone we should feel indebted to them. To show gratitude to our parents or relations could, for example, take the form of regular visits/letters/phone calls. In those acts, however small, our gratitude is subtly expressed. Sometimes it may be hard for us to feel gratitude if we have not had a good relationship with a person. We may even resent behaving in a friendly or caring manner towards them. At these times it is perhaps helpful to remember that if we allow our love to flow, without putting up barriers, we ourselves will be the beneficiaries because we will feel good about our actions.

Gratitude cannot be seen as an act of generosity or altruism because it is only a correct and natural acknowledgement and response to having received something in the first place. Gratitude can be hard to practice because it requires a degree of humility.

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It requires us to look at the interdependencies in our lives. It requires us to admit that we have needed help in the past and are also likely to need it in the future. It requires us to see ourselves part of a social unit and not as completely autonomous individuals.

We often spend our days complaining about what we do not have or dreaming about what we would like. This may not necessarily be about possessions; it may be that we would like our life circumstances to be different. In this discontent we do not acknowledge what we do have. None of us need to be reminded of those people in the world who are less fortunate than ourselves. We have only to remember their hardships to remind us of how we should be grateful for what we have. A friend of mine, who has worked with Mother Teresa, told me how that saintly lady was once reduced to tears when a man said thank you to her. She had found the man dying by the road. His legs had been eaten, presumably by rats. No one had bothered to help him. Yet this man showed no bitterness, but only gratitude for the help and comfort that he now received in the final moments of his life.

QUOTES

Be grateful for small mercies.

The grass often seems greener on the other side of the fence.

For any act of help, whether small or big, one must be grateful *(Sathya Sai)*

STORY

The Wonder of Things*by Kay Challenor*

The horse chestnut tree had been there as long as the children could remember. It had also been there as long as their parents could remember and even the children's grandparents could remember playing around its trunk. Climbing between the large gnarled roots that twisted and coiled around its base. Such fun they had, games of pirates, Robin Hood and wild animals of a deep dark forest. All the time the children played, the tree watched, looking over them. Watching as each generation grew up and became men and women, shading them with its branches of leaves which turned from green buds to an array of reds and gold in flow with the seasons.

Now it was conker season. The children were searching underneath the tree, seeking out the green prickly cases and prising them open to reveal the dark treasures.

"Found one!" Timmy yelled holding up his find to show the others.

"Bout time...Wow! What a whopper!"

Timmy held the chestnut in his hand. The sun caught the deep brown surface and it shone beautifully. It almost looked good enough to eat.

"Bet that will be a champion. Well done, Timmy, lucky you!"

Timmy smiled at his brother and stuffed the large conker into his coat pocket. The others had found a lot of conkers. Some even had bags full. All of them were eager to win the annual school conker championships. Every year some children tried to find ways of making their conkers harder, to withstand the continuous knocking from others and so becoming the champion, the strongest conker of all. Some children tried to dry, or bake, their conkers and others even tried to drill holes into them and fill them with cement. However, they never won. It was realised that the only true champion conkers grew naturally and they were the biggest and ripest ones to fall from the tree.

Tim sat down on the tree roots leaning his back against the trunk. His hand held the conker in his pocket. He could feel the smooth surface against his fingers and he knew that his conker was special.

Two bigger children joined the group. They had already been and collected conkers, but they wanted some more.

"Let's see what you have got," one demanded. He peered into the bag that was offered up for his inspection. "They are not worth anything," he scoffed, "is that the biggest you have got?"

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“Well Timmy found the biggest. He has got it in his pocket.”

Timmy watched as the boy walked over towards him scowling.

“Show me,” the boy said, leering down over him.

Timmy held the conker in his clenched fist. He knew that the boy was a bully and if he took the conker out from his pocket the boy was likely to snatch it from him.

“No.”

The boy glared down at Timmy, a flash of anger on his face. For a moment everything was tense and still, then to Timmy’s relief the boy relaxed. “Suit yourself,” he said turning to his companion with a shrug. “This kid has found a whopper. There must be more than one, so let’s find the others.”

“But Si. We have looked everywhere.”

The larger boy scowled again. “Then they must be on the tree. Come on. Let’s knock them down.”

He hunted for a large stick and began to jump up at the overhanging branches, lashing out at the conkers still hanging from the tree.

Timmy jumped startled. With his back against the tree trunk he was sure that he had felt the tree shudder.

The bigger boy began to get more frustrated. The conkers were beyond his reach and because they were not properly ripe, were stuck fast to the branches. He decided to try a new tactic and, gathering stones, began to hurl them at the tree.

Tim jumped again as he felt a deep rumble beneath him. He could feel the pain of the tree as energy rushed through the tree trunk leaving his back prickling with heat. He flew to his feet.

“Stop it!”

Surprised by his outburst the boy stood still in amazement. Timmy went red in the face but something within him was stirred to take action and speak his truth.

“You are hurting the tree. Don’t you realise that this tree is a living organism and is sensitive to pain?”

The boy gathered himself together. He didn’t want to lose face through being shown up by this slip of a child and so picked up another stone. “Yeah right! Sure this lump of wood has got feelings!” He threw back his arm ready to launch his missile. Then an amazing thing happened.

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A sudden gust of wind blew around the tree. It blew through the leaves causing them to move and rustle and around the branches causing them to creak and clap together. The entire tree appeared to come to life, one moving mass of energy and sound.

The boy stood still in amazement.

“See,” said Timmy. “Just because the tree doesn’t talk like you and me, just because it doesn’t walk and move around them same way we do, doesn’t mean that it isn’t alive and has feelings.”

Timmy felt his conker grow hot in his hand, he took it out from his pocket and reluctantly held it out to the boy. “Here. Don’t hurt the tree anymore. You can have my conker.”



The boy looked down at Timmy’s intense face and at the beautiful conker in his hand. Part of him wanted to snatch it. He could see that it was a special conker and was bound to win all the school tournaments. However, he shook his head.

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“Thanks, Tim, but no. It’s OK. I had no idea.” He looked up at the tree which once again stood motionless and held out his hand to the trunk. He felt the rough bark etched with markings of growth and he studied the gnarled trunk that reflected the tree’s history and experiences. As he focused on the tree, the boy became motionless too. Transfixed, as if he was part of the tree himself, part of its stillness and experience. Slowly a large smile began to spread across his face and he seemed happy and content as he took his hand away. All his previous anger and tension seeming to have melted from him. “Wow! I felt the tree talk. I could feel a subtle pulsation beneath my fingers and my hand went all hot. Isn’t it amazing!”

Timmy smiled, “...and to think,” he said. “All that started from one seed just like this!” he held out his conker as it glistened and gleamed. “Magic!”

The other boy grinned. “That really is a beauty Tim. Let’s plant it and we can watch it grow. Maybe in the future it will be as large and as amazing as this tree.”

Timmy agreed, “Let’s!”

The tree responded, rustling its leaves and gently swaying its branches in approval.

Questions:

1. Why were the children collecting conkers?
 2. Which conkers usually became champions?
 3. Why didn’t the conkers fall off the tree, even though the boy threw sticks and stones?
 4. How did the tree feel when it was being hit?
 5. What did Timmy say to the larger boy?
 6. How did the large boy feel when he touched the tree?
 7. What did Timmy and the boy agree to do with the conker?
 8. What did the large boy learn?
 9. How did you feel when you heard the story?
 10. Did it remind you of anything in your own life?
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POEM

This poem is aimed at children of junior level

T H A N K Y O U *by Zita Starkie*

Thank you, God. I'm grateful
For everything you've done.
You've given me the sunshine
And brought me lots of fun.

You've even brought the heavy rain
So plants can keep on growing.
And I can drink my fill today
Because the water's flowing

Thank you for the colours
Of the flowers in the spring.
Thank you for the coolness
That the summer breezes bring.

Thank you for the ones who care
Who help me through the day.
Thank you for my cosy bed
And teaching me to pray.

Thank you, for a friendly smile
Or hug, when I feel sad.
For the little cheeky sparrow
Who always makes me glad.

Thank you for school dinners
And their lovely, tasty smell.
For woollen jumpers in the wind
And my summer shorts as well.

But most of all I thank you God
For always being there.
That I can always find you
'Cos I know You're everywhere.

POEM

This poem is for older children.

I WASN'T GRATEFUL *by Zita Starkie*

My teacher's gone now.
It's too late.
Late, late
I thought I'd wait.

I didn't dare
To say the word
Word, word
They may have heard.

You see my mates were
Always there
There, there.
They'd look and stare.

I didn't dare
To say the word
Word, word
They may have heard.

She'd always help me
If she could
Could, could.
She really would.

I didn't dare
To say the word
Word, word
They may have heard.

So I would sit and
Quietly stare.
Stare, stare
I knew she'd care.

My teacher's gone now.
It's too late,
Late, late
I thought she'd wait.

I said it later on my own.
That thank you word.
The word my teacher
Never heard.

CURRICULUM SUGGESTIONS

WHOLE SCHOOL: A day could be set aside as GRATITUDE DAY. The school could prepare for the day by inviting suggestions from the pupils and the staff as to how the day could be marked. A suggestion box could be placed in a prominent place. The children could be inspired by a short brief at assembly or by their class teacher. Students could be encouraged to understand that they are constantly receiving support from all sorts of people; parents, teachers, carers, school helpers, relations, friends and others. Pupils could be invited to talk about the forms in which they receive this support and about the people who give them this support.

To mark GRATITUDE DAY, teachers and staff could be honoured by student presentations in assembly.

In junior schools each class could be asked to do a presentation on their form teacher. Pictures of their teacher, mounted on a display board, could form the background of their presentation. The presentation could take the form of stories/ poems /talks or even a play. The teachers could be honoured by being presented with a Certificate of Appreciation (*see Newsletter 2*) and/or a badge that the pupils had made themselves. At lunchtime a special, brief presentation could be made in the canteen for the lunchtime helpers and canteen staff.

At secondary level, presentations at assembly could follow similar lines, with provision also being made for other teachers and helpers.

ENGLISH: At junior level SSEHV activities could be used as a basis for discussion, activities and work. Lessons can be based on the following sections: Book 1, Lesson 1.13 and book 2, lessons 2.12, and 2.15.

The poem 'Thank you' can also be used as stimulus. Children can be asked to write stories/poems to encourage them to reflect upon the theme of GRATITUDE. Titles of the stories could include Our Caring Teacher, Why I am Grateful to my Mum/Dad, brother/sister, uncle /aunt or friend; I am Grateful to be Myself; (*see Newsletter 3 on Being Myself*) and I've got a lot (*see Newsletter 2 on Appreciation*). Letters and cards of thanks can be written outlining the reasons why the children are grateful to their teacher/parents and so forth (*see Newsletter 5 on Dependability*). These can be read in class and the best pieces can be chosen to read out in assembly on GRATITUDE Day.

At lower secondary levels teachers can use sections of SSEHV Book 3 to help them, in particular Lessons 3.20 (p.187-193) 3.21 (p.193-99) and 3.23 (p.205-213). The above poem, "I Wasn't Grateful" can be used as stimulus for pupils to write their own poem or story, concerning a time when they remembered/failed to show that they were grateful to someone. Pupils could be encouraged to explore some the emotions that arise when resisting being grateful to someone and to look into the possible reasons for this.

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At GCSE level many texts can be used to explore the theme of GRATITUDE or lack of it.

- In *Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, one of the central characters, George, is aware as he intimates to Slim, that Lennie is the only one who cares about him and therefore plays a vital role in his life. He demonstrates his gratitude to Lennie by taking care of his every need and by acting as a father towards him, but he never thanks Lennie directly for always being there for him and for physically protecting him from attacks.
- In *A View From a Bridge* by Arthur Miller, GRATITUDE plays an important part in the relationship between Eddie and Catherine because Eddie had honoured his promise to Catherine's mother by looking after Catherine as if she were his own child. Catherine is in a dilemma because she believes that she should show her gratitude to Eddie by implicitly obeying him in all matters, but increasingly finds that it is hard for her to do so as she becomes older.
- In *Silas Marner*, by George Elliot, the central character, Silas, shows his gratitude to Eppie for having reawakened his old faith and for having helped him to recover "a consciousness of unity between past and present" by giving her freedom to marry and leave him. Eppie in return shows her gratitude towards Silas for taking her in when she was orphaned, by telling him that she would never ever leave him and by inviting him to stay at her new home.
- In *To kill A Mocking Bird*, by Harper Lee, Atticus' children were not grateful for the way that Atticus had compelled them to behave like a "gentleman and a lady" nor were they grateful to have a father who always followed his conscience. The people of the town, however, showed their GRATITUDE to Atticus by always re-electing him to the State legislature even if they did not agree with his stand for racial equality.
- In *A Welsh Childhood* by Alice Thomas Ellis, the author shows her gratitude towards her mother's strict but loving care throughout the biography.
- In *Hard Times*, Josiah Bounderby finds it difficult to express gratitude even when he is called upon to acknowledge his wedding guests' tributes.
- In *The Merchant of Venice* by Shakespeare, Shylock is deeply hurt because of what he sees as his daughter's ungrateful attitude towards him when she steals from him.
- In *Macbeth*, Duncan shows his gratitude to Macbeth, for his bravery in defence of the realm, by giving him some more titles. On the other hand Shakespeare also shows how Macbeth's ambition prevents him from showing gratitude to Duncan for his new titles.
- In the poem *Overheard in County Sligo* by Gillian Clarke, the writer tells how she feels guilty for not being grateful for all the bounty that she has.

At 'A' level, the theme of GRATITUDE can be explored through the medium of set poetry and texts. Many Romantic poets can be used to illustrate this theme:

- Keats' poetry reflects much gratitude to life as can be seen in his *Odes to Autumn*, *To a Nightingale* and even in *To a Grecian Urn*.
- Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* and *Song to the Men of England* and the *Odes* by William Collins are also good examples.

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- In Shakespeare's play, *Othello*, Othello's jealousy prevents him from showing gratitude towards his wife's actual unswerving loyalty and devotion to him, because he is blind to the truth of the situation.
- In Flaubert's novel *Madame Bovary*, Emma Bovary shows little gratitude toward her husband, as she is bored with him.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

At junior level children could be asked to write "thank you" prayers to God. The poems "Thank you", from this newsletter and "I don't Enjoy", from newsletter 2, can be used as a basis for inspiration and discussion. At lower secondary level children could use the poems "I wasn't grateful" from this newsletter and "Garfield" from newsletter 2. They could also be asked to suggest ways that they could show their gratitude to others. At GCSE and A/S Levels students could look the founders of world religions and great Saints and examine how the world as a whole has benefited from their efforts.

DRAMA

At junior level, children could be divided into small groups and helped to work out a sketch on the theme of GRATITUDE.

At secondary level students could be asked to write and perform their own play based on the theme. They could, for example, depict two contrasting situations to illustrate the topic. The best plays could be performed to the rest of the school.

PSHE: Discussion could be initiated along the lines that have been suggested in the English section. Students could be asked to discuss certain aspects that relate to the main theme, such as the ways we depend on others (*see SSEHV newsletter 5 on Dependability*). They could also be asked to suggest and discuss ways in which they can show gratitude to others and why it is important to do so (*see SSEHV newsletter 2 on Appreciation*).

GEOGRAPHY

At junior and lower secondary levels, children could look at different countries and examine how they support us by providing food and other consumer products that we are unable to produce, or that would not prove economically viable to do so.

At GCSE and A/S levels, students can investigate our dependency on others in greater detail by looking at the theme of GRATITUDE in economic, social and political terms.

HISTORY

At junior and lower secondary levels, children could study individuals and groups who have helped and been an inspiration to mankind through acts of service, heroism, kindness and great leadership such as Florence Nightingale, Martin Luther King and Ghandi.

At GCSE and A/S levels students could look at the work of the social reformers of the 19th century such as Wilberforce and at the Social legislation that helped to bring improvements in the lives of children and young people, such as the Factory and Mines Acts. Other suitable topics could include the birth and growth of the National Welfare system and the Women's Rights Movement.

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ART

At junior level, children could be asked to paint pictures of teachers, helpers and parents to display next to letters that they have written in English lessons.

At lower secondary level, children could design and make posters to display in the school to illustrate the theme of GRATITUDE. They could also make certificates to be handed out to teachers during assembly.

At higher levels, students could study the work of artists whose work was particularly innovative and inspirational such as Giotto, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Gauguin, Picasso and Dali. They could also be asked to design and paint picture to illustrate the theme of GRATITUDE. The best pictures could be used as a backcloth for the talks and plays for GRATITUDE DAY.

DESIGN TECHNOLOGY

Junior school children could design and make 'thank you' badges which could be given to teachers, helpers and parents on GRATITUDE DAY. Top junior years and lower secondary children could be asked to design and make trophies that can be presented to teachers/helpers/parents as a token of GRATITUDE for their support and help. Deepak Fakey's games (*available through EHV Promotions Ltd.*) can be use as a stimulus for students to devise, design and make games based on the theme of gratitude. Copies of these games could be sold on GRATITUDE day to raise money for the school or for charity.

MATHS

At junior level, children could be given a small sticker by members of staff on GRATITUDE day when they remembered to say thank you without being asked, for example, when receiving their school lunch. They could place stickers on stick/line or bar graphs next to their name. At lower secondary level surveys could be conducted through the schools, in the forms of questionnaires, to ascertain the ways in which students feel that GRATITUDE to others can be best expressed. The findings could be displayed on GRATITUDE DAY in a prominent place, in the form of various types of graphs to act as positive encouragement to students to honour the value of GRATITUDE.

At GCSE level students could be asked to show their gratitude to great mathematicians of the past by displaying their theories in an attractive way for the rest of the school to see. Pythagoras' contribution could be displayed for example along with models of pyramids, ropes knotted to make "3,4,5" right-angled triangles and other eye-catching devices.

BIOLOGY

Junior and lower secondary, pupils could do projects about various pioneers or scientific breakthroughs in the field of biology, which have helped mankind. The best projects could be put on display in a central place on GRATITUDE DAY and read out in Science or other lessons.

At GCSE and A/S level studies related to Ecology could be used to show how our lives are dependent on the maintenance of the delicate balance of nature.

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Diagrams could be constructed and displayed in a prominent place in the school to show, for example, the circulation of carbon and oxygen, illustrating three main reasons why photosynthesis is essential for the survival of humans.

CHEMISTRY

Younger children could be set projects concerning discoveries in the field of chemistry and be encouraged to show why we should be grateful for these discoveries. Suitable topics could be the use of mercury in thermometers, litmus paper to test acidity of soil samples, and carbon dioxide in fizzy drinks.

At lower secondary level pupils could look at how various inventors have facilitated the advance in the field of chemistry. An example of this would be Roy Plunket and his invention of PTFE, which has benefited mankind in an enormous variety of ways: non-stick coating for frying pans, lining for space suits, insulation for telephone and computer cables, and thread for surgeons constructing artificial veins.

GCSE and A/S pupils could investigate the importance of certain natural resources as a basis for many important materials. A suitable substance would be crude oil: pupils could be asked to find, illustrate and name the processes leading to Naptha and Octane + Ethene, and the conversion of Ethene to polyethene by polymerisation.

PHYSICS

Junior and lower secondary school, pupils could be asked to do projects about the various important inventions/inventors that have been of great benefit to us. Suitable topics could include Electricity, Telephone, Radio/TV, X-Rays and Aviation. These projects can be read out in Science lessons, and displayed in a prominent place in the school.

At GCSE and A/S Levels students could be encouraged to understand how certain patterns and order in the universe are necessary for the functioning of our whole solar system.

A suitable topic for study could be gravity and its relation to mass, size and speed. Pupils work could be displayed in an attractive way on GRATITUDE DAY in a prominent place.

MUSIC

During Music lessons at all levels pupils can be encouraged to show their gratitude to different people: players who accompany them, other players in the ensemble, the teacher, conductor and any other helpers. Pictures of famous composers could be put on display to show GRATITUDE to our musical heritage.

LANGUAGES

Pupils at all levels can be asked to write thank you letters which can be mounted N.D. displayed on GRATITUDE DAY.
