



GRATITUDE ACTIVITY FOR TWEENS & TEENS

Lesson 2

See The Good Challenge

Students discuss what gratitude means and why it is important.

Time Required

1 class period

Grade Level

6th – 12th grade

Materials

- [Lesson 2 PowerPoint slideshow](#)
- Computer and monitor or projector to show video(s)
- Gratitude Challenge and Journal handout for each student
- Optional: Gift of the Magi handout for each student and Gift of the Magi discussion questions for the teacher

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Define gratitude and why it's important
- Understand the costs of kindness and the benefits of receiving it

SEL Competencies

- Social Awareness
 - Practicing empathy, including perspective taking
- Responsible Decision-Making
 - Understanding the motivations for actions and their realistic consequences

**Getting Ready
For This Activity**

Educators:

Keep a gratitude journal for a week, recording twice a week at least three things or people for whom you are grateful. At least once, consider the cost to someone who did something for you and how his or her action benefitted you. How does keeping a gratitude journal make you feel?



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How To Do It

Slide 1 Introduce the Lesson

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See The Good Challenge

Let's learn what gratitude is and why it can make us feel better.

- Introduce the lesson.
 - *Today we're going to talk about what gratitude is. Can anyone tell me what gratitude is?*

Slide 2 Definition of Gratitude

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Gratitude

Gratitude = The ability to recognize and acknowledge the good things, people, and places in our lives.

- After several students offer their definitions of gratitude, offer them this definition.



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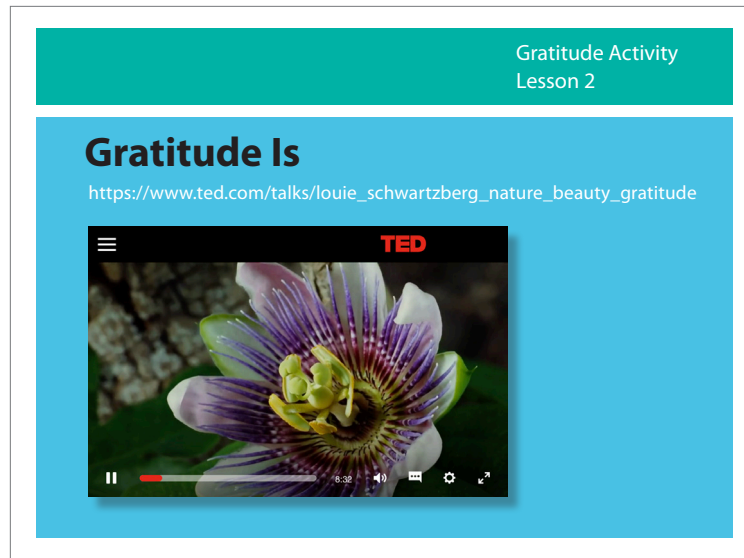
Slide 2

Definition of Gratitude (cont'd)

- *Gratitude is the ability to recognize and acknowledge the good things, people, and places in our lives.*
- *For example, if your friend goes out of their way to do you a favor, you would probably feel grateful towards them.*
- *Now I know you've heard of this before, but what you might not know is that it can have enormous implications for your physical and mental health.*

Slide 3

Gratitude Video



- Have students watch this video "[Nature. Beauty. Gratitude](https://www.ted.com/talks/louie_schwartzberg_nature_beauty_gratitude)" (9:47 minutes.)
- For a shorter version of the video, start at 3:31.
- Please note: In the longer version of the video, there is a brief moment of nudity (:29 to :32).



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Slide 4

Why Gratitude Is Good

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Why Gratitude Is Good

- It feels good!
- Better physical health
- It makes relationships stronger
- It makes people feel happier in the long-run



- After watching the videos, share with students what science has discovered about why gratitude is good for us.
 - *There have been many studies on the effects of gratitude, and they confirm a few main effects.*
 - *First, gratitude is a positive emotion, so it feels good to be grateful. Positive emotions like gratitude can also make you feel more open, creative, and energized.*
 - *Second, feeling grateful has been linked to physical health outcomes such as lower blood pressure and stronger immune system functioning.*
 - *Next, because gratitude involves recognizing other people for their kindness, feeling and expressing gratitude can help strengthen relationships.*
 - *And, because of all these factors, people who feel and express gratitude more often tend to feel happier overall.*



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Slide 5 Gratitude Warmup

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Warmup

Turn to a partner and share three things you are grateful for today.



- In pairs, have students take about one minute to list three things they're grateful for.
 - *You can be grateful for big things, like having supportive parents, or small things, like being able to say "hi" to your friend before class started.*
- After a minute, ask for volunteers to share what they were grateful for.
 - *Gratitude seems pretty simple, right? Let's take a closer look at what we might ask ourselves when we feel gratitude...*



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Slide 6

When Should You Feel Grateful?

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When Should You Feel Grateful?

- Someone helps you on purpose
- The help that person offers benefits you
- Helping you cost that person something
 - Costs can include time, money, effort, etc.



- Discuss with students the intention, cost, and benefit--or "benefit appraisals"--when someone does something kind for you.
 - *First, did the person do it on purpose? There's a big difference between someone doing something to help you for selfish reasons (like needing a favor later) versus for selfless reasons (like deciding ahead of time to do something helpful just for you).*
 - *Second, did the person's help benefit you? Think about it: For someone to help you, he or she has to really think about what you need or want. You wouldn't be super grateful if someone brought you a tissue when you didn't need one.*
 - *And finally, what did that act cost the other person? We often think of costs in terms of money, but it also includes people's time and effort. For instance, if your mom gives you a ride to the mall, she not only spends money on gas, but also spends her time, which she could use to do something more fun for her.*
 - *Altogether, we may feel particularly grateful towards someone who sacrifices his or her own time, money, or effort to do something on purpose that benefits us.*
 - *Now we're going to watch a video to demonstrate what we've been talking about.*



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Slide 7

When Should You Feel Grateful?

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Video



- Have students watch Sesame Street's [Gift of the Magi](#) (9:25) OR read the story.
- After the video, discuss how it's appropriate to feel grateful to people when it COSTS them to give you something and it's VALUABLE to you.
- Introduce the GRATITUDE CHALLENGE, letting them know that their homework for the week is to write in their gratitude journals at least four times about specific people and things for which they feel grateful.
 - Watch this [video](#) to introduce the gratitude journal (2:24).
 - If there are students skeptical about gratitude journaling, watch this [video](#) (2:04).

Reflection After The Activity

Ask students to reflect either verbally or in written form about something that they discovered about gratitude or that surprised them from this lesson.

Gift Of The Magi

By O. Henry



ONE DOLLAR AND EIGHTY-SEVEN CENTS.

That was all. She had put it aside, one cent and then another and then another, in her careful buying of meat and other food. Della counted it three times. One dollar and eighty-seven cents. And the next day would be **Christmas**.

There was nothing to do but fall on the bed and cry. So Della did it.

While the lady of the home is slowly growing quieter, we can look at the home. **Furnished** rooms at a cost of \$8 a week. There is little more to say about it.

In the hall below was a letter-box too small to hold a letter. There was an electric bell, but it could not make a sound. Also there was a name beside the door: "Mr. James Dillingham Young."

Gift Of The Magi

When the name was placed there, Mr. James Dillingham Young was being paid \$30 a week. Now, when he was being paid only \$20 a week, the name seemed too long and important. It should perhaps have been "Mr. James D. Young." But when Mr. James Dillingham Young entered the furnished rooms, his name became very short indeed. Mrs. James Dillingham Young put her arms warmly about him and called him "Jim." You have already met her. She is Della.

Della finished her crying and cleaned the marks of it from her face. She stood by the window and looked out with no interest. Tomorrow would be Christmas Day, and she had only \$1.87 with which to buy Jim a gift. She had put aside as much as she could for months, with this result. Twenty dollars a week is not much. Everything had cost more than she had expected. It always happened like that.

Only \$ 1.87 to buy a gift for Jim. Her Jim. She had had many happy hours planning something nice for him. Something nearly good enough. Something almost worth the honor of belonging to Jim.

There was a looking-glass between the windows of the room. Perhaps you have seen the kind of looking-glass that is placed in \$8 furnished rooms. It was very narrow. A person could see only a little of himself at a time. However, if he was very thin and moved very quickly, he might be able to get a good view of himself. Della, being quite thin, had mastered this art.

Suddenly she turned from the window and stood before the glass. Her eyes were shining brightly, but her face had lost its color. Quickly she pulled down her hair and let it fall to its complete length.

The James Dillingham Youngs were very proud of two things which they owned. One thing was Jim's gold watch. It had once belonged to his father. And, long ago, it had belonged to his father's father. The other thing was Della's hair.

If a queen had lived in the rooms near theirs, Della would have washed and dried her hair where the queen could see it. Della knew her hair was more beautiful than any queen's **jewels** and gifts.

If a king had lived in the same house, with all his riches, Jim would have looked at his watch every time they met. Jim knew that no king

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had anything so valuable.

So now Della's beautiful hair fell about her, shining like a falling stream of brown water. It reached below her knee. It almost made itself into a dress for her.

And then she put it up on her head again, nervously and quickly. Once she stopped for a moment and stood still while a tear or two ran down her face.

She put on her old brown coat. She put on her old brown hat. With the bright light still in her eyes, she moved quickly out the door and down to the street.

Where she stopped, the sign said: "Mrs. Sofronie. Hair Articles of all Kinds."

Up to the second floor Della ran, and stopped to get her breath.

Mrs. Sofronie, large, too white, cold-eyed, looked at her.

"Will you buy my hair?" asked Della.

"I buy hair," said Mrs. Sofronie. "Take your hat off and let me look at it."

Down fell the brown waterfall.

"Twenty dollars," said Mrs. Sofronie, lifting the hair to feel its weight.

"Give it to me quick," said Della.

Oh, and the next two hours seemed to fly. She was going from one shop to another, to find a gift for Jim.

She found it at last. It surely had been made for Jim and no one else. There was no other like it in any of the shops, and she had looked in every shop in the city.

It was a gold watch chain, very simply made. Its value was in its rich and pure material. Because it was so plain and simple, you knew that it was very valuable. All good things are like this.

It was good enough for The Watch.

As soon as she saw it, she knew that Jim must have it. It was like him. Quietness and value—Jim and the chain both had quietness and value. She paid twenty-one dollars for it. And she hurried home with the chain and eighty-seven cents.

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With that chain on his watch, Jim could look at his watch and learn the time anywhere he might be. Though the watch was so fine, it had never had a fine chain. He sometimes took it out and looked at it only when no one could see him do it.

When Della arrived home, her mind quieted a little. She began to think more reasonably. She started to try to cover the sad marks of what she had done. Love and large-hearted giving, when added together, can leave deep marks. It is never easy to cover these marks, dear friends—never easy.

Within forty minutes her head looked a little better. With her short hair, she looked wonderfully like a schoolboy. She stood at the looking-glass for a long time.

“If Jim doesn’t kill me,” she said to herself, “before he looks at me a second time, he’ll say I look like a girl who sings and dances for money. But what could I do—oh! What could I do with a dollar and eighty-seven cents?”

At seven, Jim’s dinner was ready for him.

Jim was never late. Della held the watch chain in her hand and sat near the door where he always entered. Then she heard his step in the hall and her face lost color for a moment. She often said little prayers quietly, about simple everyday things. And now she said: “Please God, make him think I’m still pretty.”

The door opened and Jim stepped in. He looked very thin and he was not smiling. Poor fellow, he was only twenty-two—and with a family to take care of! He needed a new coat and he had nothing to cover his cold hands.

Jim stopped inside the door. He was as quiet as a hunting dog when it is near a bird. His eyes looked strangely at Della, and there was an expression in them that she could not understand. It filled her with fear. It was not anger, nor surprise, nor anything she had been ready for. He simply looked at her with that strange expression on his face.

Della went to him.

“Jim, dear,” she cried, “don’t look at me like that. I had my hair cut off and sold it. I couldn’t live through Christmas without giving you a

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gift. My hair will grow again. You won't care, will you? My hair grows very fast. It's Christmas, Jim. Let's be happy. You don't know what a nice—what a beautiful nice gift I got for you.”

“You've cut off your hair?” asked Jim slowly. He seemed to labor to understand what had happened. He seemed not to feel sure he knew.

“Cut it off and sold it,” said Della. “Don't you like me now? I'm me, Jim. I'm the same without my hair.”

Jim looked around the room.

“You say your hair is gone?” he said.

“You don't have to look for it,” said Della. “It's sold, I tell you—sold and gone, too. It's the night before Christmas, boy. Be good to me, because I sold it for you. Maybe the hairs of my head could be counted,” she said, “but no one could ever count my love for you. Shall we eat dinner, Jim?”

Jim put his arms around his Della. For ten seconds let us look in another direction. Eight dollars a week or a million dollars a year—how different are they? Someone may give you an answer, but it will be wrong. The **magi** brought valuable gifts, but that was not among them. My meaning will be explained soon.

From inside the coat, Jim took something tied in paper. He threw it upon the table.

“I want you to understand me, Dell,” he said. “Nothing like a haircut could make me love you any less. But if you'll open that, you may know what I felt when I came in.”

White fingers pulled off the paper. And then a cry of joy; and then a change to tears.

For there lay The **Combs**—the combs that Della had seen in a shop window and loved for a long time. Beautiful combs, with jewels, perfect for her beautiful hair. She had known they cost too much for her to buy them. She had looked at them without the least hope of owning them. And now they were hers, but her hair was gone.

But she held them to her heart, and at last was able to look up and say: “My hair grows so fast, Jim!”

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And then she jumped up and cried, “Oh, oh!”

Jim had not yet seen his beautiful gift. She held it out to him in her open hand. The gold seemed to shine softly as if with her own warm and loving spirit.

“Isn’t it perfect, Jim? I hunted all over town to find it. You’ll have to look at your watch a hundred times a day now. Give me your watch. I want to see how they look together.”

Jim sat down and smiled.

“Della,” said he, “let’s put our Christmas gifts away and keep them a while. They’re too nice to use now. I sold the watch to get the money to buy the combs. And now I think we should have our dinner.”

The magi, as you know, were wise men—wonderfully wise men—who brought gifts to the newborn Christ-child. They were the first to give Christmas gifts. Being wise, their gifts were doubtless wise ones. And here I have told you the story of two children who were not wise. Each sold the most valuable thing he owned in order to buy a gift for the other. But let me speak a last word to the wise of these days: Of all who give gifts, these two were the most wise. Of all who give and receive gifts, such as they are the most wise. Everywhere they are the wise ones. They are the magi.

Gift Of The Magi

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS for “The Gift of the Magi” by O. Henry

1. What does Della’s hair signify to her? Be specific.
2. What does James’s watch signify to him? Be specific.
3. Are Della and James foolish for selling their most prized possessions? Why or why not?
4. Why might Della place more value in the gold chain for James’s watch than her own hair?
5. Why might James place more value in the combs for Della’s hair than his grandfather’s watch?
6. Do you feel James would have appreciated the gold chain given what it cost?
7. Do you feel Della would have appreciated the combs given what it cost?
8. What does O. Henry want his readers to take away from this story about the following:
 - a. Gift giving?
 - b. Altruism?
 - c. Love?

Gratitude Challenge

Instructions

WHO or WHAT are you GRATEFUL for and WHY? Did something good happen recently that you feel grateful for? Do you feel grateful for someone? It can be something special or important, or it can be something small—as long as it's a good thing or makes you feel good. Just be SPECIFIC so that you can record and recall meaningful events!

For example,

At home:

"I ate a delicious breakfast this morning because Mom/Dad took the time to cook me breakfast."

At school:

"A friend (or teacher) held the door open for me because he or she was being nice."

After school:

"My team won a game today because everyone worked hard all week".

"Watching something on YouTube" or "Playing a game because I got to a new level and/or figured out something out."

On the weekend:

"A neighbor (or relative) helped me with something because he or she knew what I needed (or wanted to help me)."

"Watched a movie with family (or friend/s) because it was fun/interesting or something I wanted to see or do."

Challenge yourself to find or see the good in your life every day. The more the better! It could be big or small things. It could be good people or things or it could be bad things that turned out less bad or bad things that thankfully didn't happen. You decide. Challenge yourself regularly and let's see what happens!

Here are different areas in your life that you could challenge yourself to find gratitude in: home, school, health, friendship, things you own, special occasions (for example, a trip or a party), kindness or support from others, an achievement or performance.

Gratitude Journal

Instructions

List 3 THINGS or PEOPLE you are GRATEFUL for today and say WHY. Do this twice a week. *For example, "My grandpa unexpectedly gave me a ride home from school because he didn't want me to walk home in the heat."*

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Date: _____

Good Week Reflection

Instructions

Choose an entry or two from your Gratitude Journal to reflect on. Was it someone who did something nice or helpful for you? Why did this person do it? What did he or she do to make it happen? And how did it affect you? If it didn't involve another person and it was just a good thing that happened, then describe your experience and how it affected you.

For example, "My grandpa unexpectedly gave me a ride home from school because he didn't want me to walk home in the heat. He didn't go play cards with his friends because he cares about me. Thanks to this I got home early and wasn't tired or sweaty. This made me happy because I got to see Grandpa and had extra time to play a game later."

Subtracting Good Things

Instructions

Look back at your Good Week Reflections and choose one to DESCRIBE HOW YOUR LIFE WOULD BE DIFFERENT IF that thing didn't happen or if someone didn't help make it happen. To be done once every other week.

For example, "If my Grandpa did not give me a ride home from school the other day, I would have walked home in the horrible heat, carrying my heavy backpack. I would have gotten tired, sweaty, and hungry and would not have wanted to do anything. It would have been hard to do my homework and I would not have had extra time for myself."
