



THANK YOU FOR BELIEVING IN ME

"At times our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us."

— Albert Schweitzer

OVERVIEW

Students evaluate the costs, benefits, and intentions of another person's kind act, then write a story about a time someone helped them that includes these three elements. (Gratitude for Tweens & Teens – Lesson 4)

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- Anytime during the year

TIME REQUIRED

- 1 class period

LEVEL

- Middle School
- High School

MATERIALS

- [Lesson 4 PowerPoint slideshow](#)
- Computer and monitor or projector to show video: "[Science Behind Gratitude Expression](#)"
- [Thank You, Mr. Falker](#) by Patricia Polacco
- [Handout "HW Gratitude Letter"](#) for each student

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Understand how benefactors are significant in our lives by learning to think gratefully through the three perceptions that make up gratitude: personal value of benefits, cost to benefactors, and prosocial intentions of benefactors

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Management
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Think of someone who saw your potential and helped you achieve it. What was the cost to this person for helping you and what did they intend for you? How did you benefit from this person's help? How did it make you feel?

INSTRUCTIONS

Notes:

- This lesson is part of a [series on gratitude](#); however, the lesson can be done on its own to help cultivate positive relationships between students and adults.
- The instructions below refer to the slides in the [Lesson 4 PowerPoint slideshow](#).

SLIDE 1 – INTRODUCE THE LESSON

- Introduce the lesson.
 - *Today the focus is on learning to think gratefully. But first, let's review...*

SLIDE 2 – BENEFIT APPRAISALS

- Review benefit appraisals from [lesson 2](#) with students.
 - *Benefit appraisals refer to the process of evaluating what it means when someone helps another person.*
 - *When someone helps another person, it usually costs them something – time, effort, or money.*
 - *In addition, the person's help actually benefits the other person, which means that they understand what that person needs and decides that it is worthwhile to help out.*
 - *Finally, the fact that a person helps another means that they care enough to want to make that other person do or feel better. For example, if your friend helps you study for a big test, then your friend is probably sacrificing their own time to help you do better because they care about you.*
 - *Recognizing all of these elements can help you feel more grateful.*

SLIDE 3 – THANK YOU, MR. FALKER

- Before reading the *Thank You, Mr. Falker*, ask students:
 - *Why is it better to face up to challenges and ask people for help rather than avoid challenges?*
 - *How can we reframe struggle to keep trying?*
 - *How can we appreciate our mentors or benefactors?*
- Read the story *Thank You, Mr. Falker* to the whole class. Wait to read the last two paragraphs to the students until after the following discussion.
- After reading the story, discuss with students:
 - *What did the main character **need**? What difficulty or hardships did she face?*
 - *As reading got harder for Trisha, what did she do instead? Why?*
 - *Who influenced her and how? (Mr. Falker, family, kinder friends)*
 - *Trisha learned to read and write, but what else happened to her? How did she feel? (joyous, proud) How did her life change? (no more teasing/bullying)*
 - *What was the **value of benefit**? (she was no longer teased/bullied or alone/ashamed, able to succeed past a major struggle)*
 - *What was the **cost to the benefactor**? (Mr. Falker's time and effort)*
 - *What was the **benefactor's intention**? (He saw her strengths of courage and cunning, believed in her, and wanted to help her.)*
- Now mention that there is a secret ending. Read the last page and discuss further:
 - *What did the girl **do** with her new skill?*
 - *How did it affect her later in her life?*
 - *How did she turn the gift Mr. Falker gave her into an act of gratitude?*
 - *How do you think Mr. Falker felt when he learned about her life?*

SLIDE 4 – YOUR HELPERS

- Give a personal example of a time when someone helped you.
- Break students into small groups to discuss:
 - *Have you ever had a need like the girl in the story? What is a struggle or hardship you've faced? Have you ever not asked for help when you needed it? Why?*
 - *Have you ever overcome a big challenge thanks to someone's help? Explain.*
 - *What did it **cost** the person who helped you? (Time? Effort?)*
 - *What did the person **intent** (want) to help you? What talents did they see in you?*
 - *How did the person notice? How did they help or encourage you?*
 - *How did it change you? Why did it matter? (**value**) How did this event make you feel?*
- Have students watch this video: [Science Behind Gratitude Expression](#)
- Introduce the autobiographical part of the homework assignment: writing and delivering a special, personalized gratitude letter for a significant person in their lives.
 - *Some relationships are special. They're not all equal. Expressing thanks is like a gift we can give to these special people in our lives.*
- Be sure to have students include the three aspects of grateful thinking in the letter: value of the benefit, cost to the benefactor, and intention of the benefactor. Students should use this [Gratitude Letter Template](#) to help them write it.
- After writing the letter, students should add images or symbols that represent their own top character strengths and that inspire them. Students could also choose to draw a short comic strip in their letter to represent the special role the significant person plays in their life.

- This thank you letter will be a special gift for students to give to their benefactors.

CLOSURE

- Ask students to reflect on how it felt to write and then personally deliver a thank you letter to someone who benefited them.

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

Do you notice whether students are more actively practicing gratitude after this practice? Are they noticing or discussing the “costs and benefits” of kind acts?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

One study discovered that students who were [taught to think](#) gratefully by considering the costs, benefits, and intentions behind a kind act were found, in comparison to a control group, to be happier and more grateful, and to show more grateful thinking. They also were more likely to write gratitude letters to PTA members.

Another study in which students [wrote and delivered a gratitude letter](#) expressed more gratitude and experienced more positive emotions both immediately and two months after in comparison to a group of students who kept a journal.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Helping students to recognize the effort and benevolent intentions of the adults in schools may help to build a stronger school community and, as research suggests, may [reduce burnout among teachers](#). In addition, when the adults in schools receive the gratitude of students, they, in turn, may be more committed to their work, helping students to thrive.

SOURCE

Thanks! A Strengths-Based Gratitude Curriculum for Tweens and Teens developed by Dr. Giacomo Bono and Yvonne Huffaker, in partnership with the Greater Good Science Center and the John Templeton Foundation. Slide design by Susan Mangan and Rachel Baumsteiger.

For the entire curriculum, click [here](#).