

Milly's Marvelous Gratitude Jar

Materials Needed

- A clean, empty jar with a lid (a mason jar, pickle jar, or any clear container works well)
- Craft supplies to decorate the jar (stickers, ribbon, glitter, paint pens, markers, construction paper, glue)
- Small slips of colorful paper or a small notepad
- Pens, colored pencils, or markers for writing
- One piece of nice paper or a blank card with an envelope

Learning Objectives

By the end of this lesson, Milly will be able to:

- Explain in her own words what it means to feel grateful.
- Identify at least five specific things in her life she is thankful for.
- Create a personal "Gratitude Jar" as a tool for practicing daily thankfulness.
- Write and express gratitude to another person through a thoughtful thank-you note.

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) Focus

- **Social Awareness:** Understanding and empathizing with others.
- **Relationship Skills:** Communicating effectively and showing appreciation for others.

Lesson Activities (Approx. 45-60 minutes)

1. Warm-Up: The Story of Squeaky the Squirrel (10 minutes)

Goal: To introduce the concept of gratitude in an engaging way.

Instructions: Read the following short story aloud to Milly. Pause to ask questions and make it interactive.

Once upon a time, in a big oak tree, lived a little squirrel named Squeaky. Squeaky was a very busy squirrel. All day long, he would scurry, scurry, scurry! He was so focused on finding the biggest nut, the fluffiest bit of moss for his bed, and the reddest berry that he never stopped to look around.

One sunny afternoon, an old, wise owl named Hoot saw Squeaky rush right past a beautiful rainbow without even noticing it. "Squeaky," hooted the owl gently. "What are you in such a hurry for?"

"I'm looking for the BEST things!" chattered Squeaky. "I need more nuts! I need a better bed!"

The owl smiled. "But what about all the wonderful things you already have? What about the strong branches that hold you up, the warm sun on your fur, and your friend the bluebird who sings you a song every morning?"

Squeaky stopped scurrying. He had never thought about that before. He looked at his

cozy nest, felt the warm sun, and listened to the bluebird's song. Suddenly, his heart felt warm and full, not with nuts or berries, but with a happy feeling. He realized he had so much to be thankful for right now. From that day on, Squeaky didn't just look for more things; he took time every day to appreciate all the good things he already had.

Discussion Questions:

- Why was Squeaky so busy at the beginning of the story?
- What did the wise owl help Squeaky realize?
- How do you think Squeaky felt when he finally noticed the good things around him? That warm, happy feeling is called **gratitude**.

2. Main Activity: Creating a Gratitude Jar (20 minutes)

Goal: To create a beautiful, physical reminder to practice gratitude daily.

Instructions:

1. **Introduce the Project:** "Just like Squeaky learned to notice the good things, we're going to create a special place to keep track of all the things we are grateful for. We're making a Gratitude Jar!"
2. **Decorate the Jar:** Set out the jar and all the craft supplies. Let Milly decorate her jar however she wants. This is her personal creation. She can give it a title like "Milly's Thankful Jar" or "My Jar of Happiness."
3. **Write the First Gratitude Slips:** While the jar is drying (if needed), take out the small slips of paper. Ask Milly to think of 3-5 things she is grateful for right now. It could be a person, a favorite toy, a fun memory, or something simple like a sunny day.
4. **Guide the Thinking:** If she needs help, use prompts like:
 - "Who is someone who makes you laugh?"
 - "What is your favorite food that you got to eat this week?"
 - "What is something beautiful you saw outside today?"
 - "What is a toy you love playing with?"
5. **Fill the Jar:** Have Milly write (or draw a picture of) one thing on each slip of paper. She can fold them up and place them in her newly decorated jar. Explain that this is a tool she can use every day or every week to add more moments of gratitude.

3. Application: The Power of a Thank You (15 minutes)

Goal: To apply the feeling of gratitude in a direct, meaningful action.

Instructions:

1. **Connect to Others:** "Gratitude isn't just a feeling we keep inside; it's even more powerful when we share it! One of the best ways to do that is by saying 'thank you.' Who is one person you wrote down for your jar? Or someone else you're thankful for?"
2. **Choose a Recipient:** Help Milly decide on one person she would like to thank (e.g., a grandparent, a friend, a parent, a sibling).
3. **Write a Thank-You Note:** Using the nice paper or blank card, guide Milly in writing a simple but specific thank-you note. It doesn't have to be long. A great formula is:
 - **Greeting:** "Dear [Name],"
 - **The Thank You:** "Thank you so much for..."
 - **The Why:** "...It made me feel [happy/special/loved] because..." (This part is key!)
 - **Closing:** "Love, Milly"

Example: "Dear Grandma, Thank you so much for playing board games with me last week. It

made me feel so happy because I love spending time with you. Love, Milly"

4. **Prepare for Delivery:** Help her put the note in the envelope and decide how she will give it to the person.
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Wrap-Up & Assessment (5 minutes)

Goal: To review the lesson's main idea and check for understanding.

Sit with Milly and her new Gratitude Jar. Ask a few simple questions:

- "Can you tell me in your own words what being grateful means?"
- "How do you plan to use your new Gratitude Jar?" (Suggest adding one slip each night before bed or every Sunday).
- "How did it feel to write a thank-you note for someone?"

The successful completion of the jar and the thank-you note, along with her ability to talk about what she's thankful for, serves as the assessment. The goal is heartfelt understanding, not a perfect definition.

Extension Ideas (Optional)

- **Gratitude Walk:** Go for a walk outside with the specific goal of finding as many things as possible to be grateful for (the color of the flowers, the sound of the birds, a cool-looking rock).
- **Read a Book:** Find a picture book about gratitude at the library, such as "The Thankful Book" by Todd Parr or "All the World" by Liz Garton Scanlon.
- **Jar Reading Ritual:** Once the jar has many slips in it, make a special time to pull a few out and read them aloud to remember all the wonderful things in her life. This is especially helpful on a tough day.