

Unwrapping History: Exploring Blessings Across Time

Introduction: What is a Blessing? (10 mins)

Let's start by thinking: What does the word 'blessing' mean to you? Is it a special moment? A lucky event? Something you're thankful for? Sometimes people say 'Bless you!' when someone sneezes. Why do you think they do that? (Historically, people thought a sneeze could expel the soul, so the blessing was to protect it!)

A blessing can be many things: a prayer for help or protection, an expression of thanks for good fortune, something that brings happiness, or even a formal approval. Today, we're going on a journey through time to see what 'blessings' looked like in different places and eras!

Activity 1: Ancient Blessings (15 mins)

Imagine living thousands of years ago. What might people have considered a blessing then? Think about survival!

- **Ancient Egypt:** For Egyptians living along the Nile River, the annual flood was a huge blessing! It soaked the land and left behind rich soil, perfect for growing crops. Without that flood, it was hard to grow food. A good harvest was definitely a blessing.
- **Ancient Rome:** Romans believed in many gods and goddesses. They would often pray and make offerings (give gifts) to ask for blessings like safety on a sea voyage, success in battle, or good health for their family. Having the favor of the gods was seen as a major blessing.

Think about it: How are these ancient blessings similar or different from what we might call a blessing today?

Activity 2: Blessings Around the World (15 mins)

Blessings aren't just ancient history! Many cultures have traditions involving blessings:

- **Saying Grace:** In many families and religions, people say a short prayer of thanks (grace) before eating. This is a way of blessing the food and expressing gratitude for it.
- **Holiday Blessings:** Think about holidays like Thanksgiving (focused on gratitude for the harvest and other good things), Hanukkah (blessings over candles), or Christmas (blessings for peace and goodwill). Many celebrations include special words or actions meant as blessings.
- **New Beginnings:** Sometimes people have ceremonies to bless a new house, a new baby, or even a new ship before its first voyage! It's a way to wish for good fortune and happiness.

Think about it: Why do you think expressing thanks or asking for good fortune is important in so many cultures?

Activity 3: Create Your Blessing Scroll (15 mins)

Let's create a record of blessings! Take your piece of paper (you can make it look like an old scroll by rolling the ends if you like!).

Now, draw or write about different kinds of blessings:

- Something you learned about from ancient times (like the Nile flood).
- A blessing tradition from a culture (like saying grace).
- Things *you* consider blessings in *your* life today (like family, friends, pets, sunny days, a fun game, learning something new).

Decorate your scroll! Make it colorful and unique.

Conclusion & Discussion (5 mins)

Look at your scroll! Blessings can be big or small, ancient or modern. They often connect to ideas of hope, gratitude, safety, and happiness. Even though cultures and times change, the human desire for good things and the practice of acknowledging them seems to be something we all share.

What was the most interesting thing you learned about blessings today? What's one thing you feel grateful for right now?

Optional Extension: Research a specific cultural blessing ceremony online or in books (with permission/help).