



Room In The Inn: Spread Kindness

Lesson Plan 7th - 9th Grade

Curriculum Connections: Social Studies, English, Language Arts, Reading, Math

Thematic Connections: Citizenship, Community, Responsibility

Overview:

The goal of this lesson is to create an attitude of giving that is year-round, not just in the cold and holiday seasons. The lesson also discusses the snowball effect of giving. It is important for this age group to learn about this for the following reasons:

- Prepares students for engaging in community action in the future
- Fosters regular habits of volunteering and giving
- Begins broadening students' understanding of the impact of their actions

Goals for this unit:

- Build awareness of students' actions
- Begin laying a foundation for understanding the chain reaction of kindness
- Provide tangible means for students to contribute to making their community safe for all people

In this lesson plan we've provided suggested videos, discussion questions, and an activity – we strongly encourage group discussion and the activity to ensure students are learning through participation.

Discussion Questions BEFORE Reading:

- What does it mean to be kind?
- How would you show kindness to someone in your school? Family? To a stranger?
- What happens when we show kindness to others?

Read *Pay It Forward: Young Readers Edition* by Catherine Hyde together:

https://www.amazon.com/Pay-Forward-Catherine-Ryan-Hyde/dp/1481409409/ref=pd_lpo_14_t_0/135-0308792-1431367?_encoding=UTF8&pd_rd_i=1481409409&pd_rd_r=ec1edb94-b28f-408e-8022-fb5a6f347f8e&pd_rd_w=XBApF&pd_rd_wg=3sbd9&pf_rd_p=16b28406-aa34-451d-8a2e-b3930ad-a000c&pf_rd_r=1N9B06A6WJXJDVYSB80C&psc=1&refRID=1N9B06A6WJXJDVYSB80C

Discussion Questions AFTER Reading (adapted from “A Curriculum Guide to Pay It Forward”):

- In small groups, discuss ways you can pay it forward. Choose one idea from your group discussion and work together to develop a plan for implementing the idea.
- Trevor had several different ideas of how to pay it forward; some were good, but others put him in danger. Write about what you would do if you decided to pay it forward. How would you avoid some of Trevor’s mistakes and be sure that your plans were safe?
- Write a letter to Trevor and explain one of the following: a) why you think he is a hero or b) why you think he is not. You might choose instead to write the letter to Arlene, his mother, or to his teacher Reuben.
- Discuss in a small group things you could do to make your school a more inviting place for students, faculty, and staff.
 - How can you make new students feel more welcome?
 - How can you help address bullying behaviors?
 - How can you make students, faculty, and staff feel more valued?
 - Think through one action step you can take on as a group.

OR

Read this article on the science behind gratitude:

https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/pay_it_forward

Discussion Questions AFTER Reading:

- How have you seen gratitude practiced?
- Do you think we practice gratitude enough in our world?
- The article states that society has created the mentality that “We like to think that we are our own creators and that our lives are ours to do with as we please. We take things for granted. We assume that we are totally responsible for all the good that comes our way. After all, we have earned it. We deserve it.” Do you think this is true? Should society see the world this way?
- McCullough’s study determined that there are mental and social benefits to practicing gratitude and practicing gratitude inspires acts of kindness. How have you experienced the practice of gratitude? Is your experience similar to the results from McCullough’s study?
- The article ends by stating “It is gratitude that enables us to receive, and it is gratitude that motivates us to return the goodness that we have been given. In short, it is gratitude that enables us to be fully human.” Do you agree? How can you be more “human” by showing gratitude?

Suggested Videos:

Watch this video made by students from Lake Zurich Middle School North that shows the ripple effect of kindness.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RX4n5xL1QYc> (4:52min)

Discussion Questions:

- The circle of kindness begins when a new student is asked to join a table in the cafeteria. This inspires the new kid to share a pencil with another student later in the day. What small acts of kindness have inspired you to share kindness with others?
- Do you notice when a circle of kindness is created in your life?
- One of the acts of kindness happened in a busy hallway. A student tripped and dropped her books. Only one student stopped to help her. How does our busyness sometimes affect our ability or desire to show kindness to others?
- What is one way you can intentionally start the kindness circle this week?

Learn about what kindness means to kids in this 3 See Film video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UCCb85TgeEU> (3:10 min)

Discussion Questions:

- What does kindness mean to you?
- Why should we be kind?
- How do you think others judge us? How should we be judged?
- Do you think being kind is the “popular thing” in your world?
- How can we show more kindness in our world?

Listen to Maya Angelou talk about what it means to “Be a Rainbow in Somebody Else’s Cloud.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lgTFhijrXgQ>

Discussion Questions:

- What does it mean to be a rainbow in somebody’s cloud?
- What does being a rainbow require of us?
- How has someone else shown up as a rainbow in your cloud?
- How have you shown up as a rainbow for others?
- What is one thing you can do this week to be a rainbow for someone else?

Activity Options:

Multimedia:

- Have students create their own kindness circle video.
- Have students interview multiple people in their community about what it means to be kind. They can write their own interview questions, record their interviews and compile them into a video to share with others.

Art:

- Have students create a collaborative art piece.
- Have students create kindness rocks.

Service Opportunities:

- Have students make "take what you need" signs for school hallways.
- Make snack bags to distribute or donate.

