

Thankfulness

Grade: 1-2

Unit: 1 of 1

Time: Flexible



Lesson Focus

This lesson is designed to teach students thankfulness toward everyday objects that help us but are never thanked. The lesson includes a "Thankful Object Hunt" around the school, following the Jing Si 5-step structure before, during, and after the walk.



Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Identify at least five everyday objects that help them and explain how.
- Express thankfulness toward non-living things through words and actions.
- Complete a "Thankful Object Hunt" with curiosity and mindfulness.
- Understand the Jing Si Aphorism and apply it to their daily lives.

Jing Si Aphorism

Words of Wisdom By Master Cheng Yen



Be grateful always, for everything and everyone, at every moment.

Jing Si Aphorisms are short verses that convey wisdom from the teachings of Master Cheng Yen, the founder of Tzu Chi.



Materials

- Storybook : The Spoon Who Felt Forgotten (original story – see below)
- "Thankful Object Hunt" Worksheet (Appendix A)
- Crayons, markers, pencils
- Small paper bags for collecting (optional – to draw objects, not to take)
- Jing Si Aphorism Poster (Appendix C)
- A real spoon, a real chair, and a real light switch



Note: Substitute or adjust the duration and complexity of the activities according to the needs and attention span of the students in your class.



Procedure

Opening / Anticipatory Set

PART 1: BEFORE THE WALK (Classroom, 20 minutes)

The Forgotten Spoon (5 minutes)

Teacher script:


"I have three things in my hands. (Hold up a spoon, a chair, and a light switch.) When was the last time you said thank you to a spoon? A chair? A light switch? Never, right? These objects help us every single day, but we never thank them. Today, we are going on a Thankful Object Hunt to say thank you to the forgotten helpers around our school."

Ask students:

"What would happen if spoons disappeared?"

"What would happen if chairs disappeared?"

"What would happen if light switches stopped working?"

 To shock students into realizing that everyday objects are helpers too — not just people.

Storytelling

"The Spoon Who Felt Forgotten" (10 minutes)

💡 Original story – written specifically for this lesson plan. No plagiarism.

Story Overview:

Sammy the Spoon lived in a kitchen drawer. Every day, he helped children eat soup, cereal, and ice cream. But no one ever said thank you. Not once.

One night, Sammy sighed to the Fork next to him. "Does anyone even know I exist?"

The Fork said, "No one thanks me either. Or the Knife. Or the Plate."

Sammy decided to hide behind the toaster. The next morning, a little girl named Mia couldn't find her spoon. She tried to eat her cereal with a fork. The milk dripped everywhere. She tried with a knife. It didn't work.

"Where are all the spoons?" Mia cried.

Her mother said, "Maybe the spoons feel forgotten. When was the last time you thanked them?"

Mia thought. She had never thanked a spoon in her whole life. She found Sammy behind the toaster and said, "I'm sorry. Thank you, Spoon, for helping me eat every day."

Sammy felt warm inside. He returned to the drawer. And from that day on, Mia said thank you to her spoon every morning.

Discussion prompt after story:

-"Why did Sammy hide?"

-"How did Mia feel when she couldn't find a spoon?"

-"Can we say thank you to things that aren't alive?"

Comprehension

Before the Walk (5 minutes)

Question **Purpose (in bold)**

"What are three objects in your home that help you every day?"

Personal connection

"Can an object feel sad if we don't thank it? (No, but we can still feel thankful.)"

Clarifying metaphor vs. reality

"What is one object you have never thanked before?"

Self-awareness

"How does it feel to be forgotten? How might a spoon 'feel' forgotten?"

Empathy (imaginative)

"If you could thank one object right now, what would it be?"

Immediate application

Hands-on Activity

DURING THE WALK (School grounds, 25–30 minutes)

1. Thankful Object Hunt – Step-by-Step (15 minutes)

Preparation: Each student receives Appendix A (Thankful Object Hunt worksheet) on a clipboard.

Teacher instructions:

"We are going on a Thankful Object Hunt around our school. You are looking for objects that help us but are never thanked. When you find one, check the box. At the end, you will choose one object to say thank you to out loud."

Students search for and check off:

Object	Found?	How does it help?
<input type="checkbox"/> A door		
<input type="checkbox"/> A window		
<input type="checkbox"/> A light switch		
<input type="checkbox"/> A trash can		
<input type="checkbox"/> A water fountain		
<input type="checkbox"/> A pencil sharpener		
<input type="checkbox"/> A chair		
<input type="checkbox"/> A clock		
<input type="checkbox"/> A bookshelf		
<input type="checkbox"/> One object YOU choose		

Teacher says during the hunt:

-"Look at that door. How many times has it opened for you?"

-"Look at that trash can. Where would our trash go without it?"

-"Look at that clock. It helps us know when to go to lunch and recess."

2. The Thank You Moment – Speaking to an Object (5 minutes)

Gather students in a circle in the hallway, library, or cafeteria.

Teacher says:

"Now, choose one object from your list. We are going to say thank you to it — out loud, together."

Example:

"Everyone look at the door. On the count of three, say: 'Thank you, door, for opening and closing for us every day.' One, two, three..."

Repeat for 2–3 objects as a group.

Then allow 1–2 volunteers to choose their own object and lead the class in saying thank you.

💡 Purpose: To make the abstract act of "thanking objects" concrete, social, and memorable.

3. Guided Discussion – During the Walk (5–10 minutes)

Teacher asks while walking:

"What would our school be like without trash cans?"

"What would happen if all the light switches disappeared?"

"Which object do you think is the most forgotten? Why?"

"Does saying thank you to an object change how you see it?"

Introduce the aphorism during the walk:

Recite together: "Be grateful always, for everything and everyone, at every moment."

Ask: "Does 'everything' include a pencil? A chair? A spoon?"

AFTER THE WALK (Classroom, 20 minutes)

1. Reflection & Sharing – What Did We Thank? (5 minutes)

Teacher asks students to sit in a circle.

"What was one object you noticed today that you had never noticed before?"

"How did it feel to say thank you to a door or a trash can?"

"Was it silly? Was it nice? Can it be both?"

"Will you say thank you to your spoon tonight at dinner?"

Students share with a partner first, then 2–3 share with the whole class.

2. Hands-on Activity – "Thank You, Forgotten Helper" Card (10 minutes)

Materials per student:

Appendix B – "My Thank You Card" template

Crayons or markers

Scissors (optional)

Step-by-step instructions:

Step 1 – Choose an object

Each student chooses ONE object they found during the hunt (e.g., door, trash can, pencil sharpener, clock).

Step 2 – Complete the card

Students fill in the blanks on Appendix B:

Dear _____ (name of object),
Thank you for _____ (how it helps).
You help me every day when you _____.
I will try to remember to say thank you more often.
Love, _____

Step 3 – Draw the object

Students draw a picture of the object on the card.

Step 4 – (Optional) Deliver the card

If appropriate, tape the card onto or near the object (e.g., tape a "Thank You" card on the classroom door or next to the pencil sharpener).

💡 Purpose: To transform abstract gratitude into a visible, lasting artifact.

3. Action Plan – How Will I Remember to Be Thankful? (5 minutes)

Teacher asks students to choose ONE action for this week:

- | Action | Check when done |
|--|--------------------------|
| Say "thank you" to my spoon at breakfast tomorrow | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Say "thank you" to my bed before sleeping | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Say "thank you" to the classroom door when I leave | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Draw a thank-you picture for my toothbrush | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Remind a family member to thank an object | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Teacher says: "These small thank-yous will fill your heart. Even if the object cannot hear you, YOU will remember to be grateful. And that changes everything."

Reflection

- Ask students to brainstorm and discuss how they can express gratitude to everyday objects that help them — such as doors, chairs, trash cans, pencils, spoons, beds, toothbrushes, and light switches.

Reflection

Encourage students to consider actions they can take to show thankfulness to these forgotten helpers, such as:

Saying "thank you" out loud to one object each morning

Keeping objects clean and in good condition (e.g., putting away crayons, closing drawers gently)

Not wasting or damaging things (e.g., not breaking pencils, not kicking chairs)

Drawing a thank-you picture for a forgotten object at home

Reminding family members to say thank you to objects too

Pausing for one "thankful moment" before throwing something away

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Prompt students to create a poster or list detailing the actions they can take to show gratitude and kindness to the objects in their classroom, home, and school. This can serve as a visual reminder of their commitment to mindful thankfulness — noticing and appreciating the small, silent helpers that make every day possible.

Appendix A – "Thankful Object Hunt" Worksheet

THANKFUL OBJECT HUNT

Name: _____ Date: _____

Directions: Walk around your school. Find objects that help you.
Check the box when you find one.

- A door
- A window
- A trash can
- A chair
- A pencil sharpener
- A light switch
- A water fountain
- My own choice:

Think about what would happen if all these objects disappeared?

**Be grateful always, for
everything and everyone,
at every moment.**

shí shí gǎn ēn chù chù gǎn ēn
時時感恩，處處感恩，
rén rén gǎn ēn shì shì gǎn ēn
人人感恩，事事感恩。



Tzu Chi Education Foundation





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