

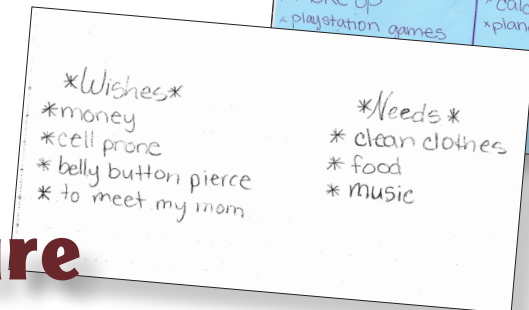
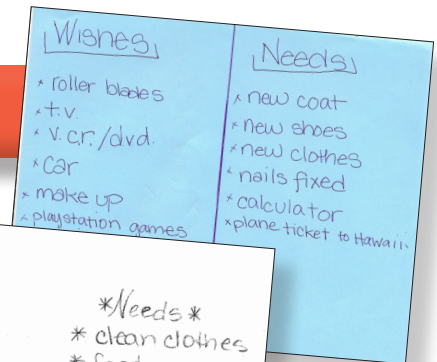
Wants & Needs and Gratitude



by Mary Ann Johnson, M.Ed.

Incorporating:

- “I Want It *Now!*”
- Children’s Literature
- Class Collaborative Poem
- Comparative Cultures: More Needs than Wants?



Just right for Thanksgiving!

Introduction:

This plan both delivers a lesson on economics as well as a thoughtful reflection on our celebration of Thanksgiving. For our students, this holiday signals the run-up to winter religious holidays and thoughts of giving and receiving gifts. The awareness of the dangers of overdosing on “wishes” in contrast to our actual needs, can be a worthwhile pause for insight and gratitude at any time of the year. There are three separate activities for this unit. You can do these quickly, in as little as one hour, or take your time and do them over 2-3 days. Extensions for products you class can create are at the end of the lesson plan.

Focus #1: Wants and Needs

(All you need for this is for students to use a regular sheet of paper, folded in half lengthwise.)

Begin the lesson by asking students to fold a blank sheet of paper lengthwise (“hot dog” or “necktie” fold.) At the top on one side write “Wants” and on the other side write “Needs.” Ask students to spend some time making lists under each category. You can reference the upcoming holidays where presents are exchanged, and ideas needed for the Wish List. Give students enough time and cues to get past their first few listings. (you can add that there are some “givens” that they don’t have to list, like air, water, things they have for their survival.)

When most students are finished, ask volunteers to read some items on their wish lists. Let them know that it is okay to add items if they hear an idea they like, or think of additional ideas during the class discussion.

Have student tell their wishes first. Point out the tendency to add outrageously expensive items on many wish lists. Then ask for items on the “needs” list. Here there are opportunities to check if the needs are really not so much needs as wants. If students say they need a new game, more clothes, etc, ask if they already have a game or clothes, in which case, maybe the “need” is really a “want.”

Remind students that teenagers in many places in the world would have many more “needs,” whereas most of us would tend to have many more “wants.”

Focus #2: “I want it NOW!”

(You can do this part of the lesson with discussion of some examples in literature without reading some short stories relating to this focus, but for best results and to amplify the unit, be ready to read these two famous pieces of children’s literature, regardless of the age level of the students in your class. I recommend “The Fisherman and His Wife” by the Grimm Brothers, a German fairy tale and “The Stone Cutter” by Gerald McDermott, a Japanese folk tale.)

This focus shows students how parents all over the world try to teach their children that it can be dangerous to have too many “wants.” Many stories in literature have this theme, or point. Ask what stories your students have heard or seen in the media that point out this message. Remind them of the brat in “Charlie and the Chocolate Factory whose trademark line was “I want it NOW!” Maybe you can ask them to mimic how she said this famous line, just for the fun of being so outrageous! For older students you may be able to reference “The Monkey’s Paw,” and other stories. Then to prove the universality of this problem, read one or two famous children’s stories, such as the ones suggested above.

Focus #3: Create a Class Collaboration Poem of Thanks-Giving

(You will need a background piece of butcher paper, 30-50 sentence strips, dark markers, and some glue or a long-handled stapler to attach student lines to the long sheet of butcher paper. The butcher paper can be laid out on the floor in an open area for students to do the attaching of their lines of writing.)

Turn now to the action piece for students to show their grateful side. Review how the simplest and most powerful words of poetry are often about the pleasures of the five senses (sight, sounds, touch, taste, smell.) Review some of the wonderful sensory pleasures of the upcoming Thanksgiving holiday. Add a reminder of the importance of people who are important in our lives. Then introduce the idea of writing a class poem, each person adding at least one line,

listing the ways they are grateful, after deciding on a title for the poem. Examples for a title could include "We give thanks for," or "We are grateful for so many things." Ask a student volunteer to write the big title on the top of the butcher paper.

Then pass out the sentence strips (or long pieces of colored paper) so each student can write one or more lines to list under the title of the poem. Each student should write their initials at the end of their line.

Those students done first or volunteer editors may be asked to arrange the lines so they fit well when the lines are read aloud. As students bring up their sentence strips, the student editors group/arrange/glue/staple the student lines to the poster. Allow for some duplication; the editors can decide which to use, or scatter the duplicate lines throughout the list. Let students create more than one line once they get the idea, or see that a new line would be needed for a segue to other lines. Some students may even want to write an entire poem of their own.

When the poster is full, post the long butcher paper on a classroom door or a wall inside or outside the room. If you want to photograph it, it can be added to the school's web page. Done early enough, you can create student Thanksgiving cards or place mats. Or just read it aloud again, and have a Happy Thanksgiving!