

Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message

(GPN #129/PBS #1210)
Author: Chief Jake Swamp
Illustrator: Erwin Printup, Jr.



Proudly sponsored by:



Program Description:

The feature book, an Iroquois Indian prayer celebrating the precious and rare gift of the natural world and the resources of the earth, causes LeVar to express appreciation for the gifts of the earth. He visits a family who grows and harvests cranberries, then goes to a pueblo where native artists use clay from the earth to make pottery. Finally he visits a group of children who are planting trees in their neighborhood.

Social Studies Concepts

- culture
- holidays
- ecology



Classroom Activities:

Culture

The morning message of thanks is a ritual many Native Americans practice. Invite a Native American who is familiar with their traditions to visit the class and discuss their culture and rituals. Expand the discussion to the class and ask students to think about rituals that are part of their lives. Initiate a classroom morning ritual with a shared writing activity called “daily news,” where together students compose a message about school happenings as well as special events in their lives – such as a birthday or upcoming family event.



Holidays

Every culture has a unique way of expressing gratitude or celebrating special events. “Giving Thanks” is a message of thanks from the Iroquois, also known as the Six Nations. Contact a local Native American Center for information about similar traditions among Native peoples in your area. Invite students to describe multicultural events their families celebrate each year -- events springing from European, Asian, Hispanic, African-American, Latino or other ethnic backgrounds.

Holidays

After learning about the ways Native Americans traditionally celebrate the harvest, involve students in researching other harvest celebrations. Sukkot is the Jewish harvest festival that takes place in early October; Jewish families worldwide decorate wooden frames, which represent a sukkot or hut, and fill them with freshly harvested fruits and vegetables. Homowo is a corn harvest celebration in Ghana. In Switzerland wheels of cheese are divided up among the herd owners during harvest time. Set up learning stations for each of the harvest celebrations the class researches.



Ecology

Brainstorm ways in which students can be responsible for caring for the Earth. After the class has a list of ideas, have them choose one that can become a class project. Options may include: keeping trash picked up from the playground; helping in the school cafeteria; classroom or school-wide recycling; conserving water, heat, electricity, or paper products; participating in planting a tree for World Environment Day or Arbor Day; joining an organization that focuses on saving animals or rain forests, etc. The objective is to have students decide how they can become more responsible in caring for Earth.

Do-At-Home Activity:

Family Traditions of Giving Thanks

Encourage family members to share with one another the traditions they have for thanking others and giving thanks, by sending home the “Family Traditions of Giving Thanks” activity.

Suggested Reading:

Review Books:

The Tremendous Tree Book by *Barbara Brenner and May Garelick*

My First Green Book: A Life-Size Guide To Caring For Our Environment by *Angela K. Wilkes*

A River Ran Wild by *Lynne Cherry*

Other Suggestions:

The Way To Start A Day by *Byrd Baylor*

The Circle Of Thanks: Native American Poems And Songs Of Thanksgiving told by *Joseph Bruchac*

The Earth Under Sky Bear’s Feet: Native American Poems Of The Land by *Joseph Bruchac*

Did You Hear Wind Sing Your Name? by *Sandra De Coteau Orie*

Going Green: A Kid’s Handbook To Saving The Planet by *John Elkington*

Earth Always Endures: Native American Poems edited by *Neil Phillip*

The Land Of The Gray Wolf by *Thomas Locker*

Mother Earth by *Nancy Luenn*

Earthdance by *Joanne Ryder*

Giving Thanks

How do you say "Thank you!" to others? Make a list of ways your family shows gratitude to others.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

How does your family celebrate Thanksgiving? Draw a picture of this holiday celebration. Ask your family members to draw themselves somewhere in your scene.

