



UNIT #1

GRATITUDE

OVERVIEW

ESSENTIAL QUESTION

Why should I choose an attitude of gratitude?

LEARNING TARGET

I can choose gratitude to help me walk in step with God and improve my overall mental and physical health.

GRATITUDE DEFINITION

Recognizing the goodness around me and the God who gives it to me.

MY GENEROUS LIFE PURPOSE POINT

- Gratitude.

OBJECTIVES

Students will...

- Build a habit of gratitude through proven practices and activities.
- Watch an engaging video and discuss the personal connections.
- Explore scientific facts about gratitude and identify gratitude practices.
- Read Psalm 138:1-3. Draw a comparison between David's life and their personal lives.
- Write a letter to God thanking Him for the things they are grateful for.
- Connect with their classmates to learn specific ways to be grateful.
- Reflect on the impact of social media on gratitude.

LESSON PREP

Access the following UNIT #1 materials:

- Student handouts.
- Gratitude slide deck.
- *Care 4 Your Middle Schooler: 4 Tips to Connect with Your Generous Student* parent newsletter.



UNIT AT A GLANCE

LESSON 1: SPOTLIGHT STORY

Watch an engaging video. Explore scientific facts about gratitude and begin a gratitude practice.

LESSON 2: THEN & NOW

Read Psalm 138:1-3. Draw a comparison between David's life and their personal life. Write a letter to God.

LESSON 3: JOIN UP

Collaborate with their peers to identify specific ways to be grateful.

LESSON 4: REFLECT & RESPOND

Reflect on the impact of social media on gratitude.

UPON COMPLETION

Send *Care 4 Your Middle Schooler* home.





UNIT #1

GRATITUDE



LESSON 1: SPOTLIGHT STORY

INTRODUCTION & START WITH GRATITUDE

INTRODUCTION

Think about this statement for a moment and consider if you agree or disagree:

You've survived 100 percent of your bad days.

We all encounter challenging days. You might be having one right now. (If that's the case, we hope it turns around ASAP!) However, one thing remains true:

Gratitude changes everything.

Whether your day is at its lowest, rising to the top as the best, or somewhere in between, choosing an attitude of gratitude can turn things around and redirect your heart and mind. God designed you to live this way. As 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 (NIV) says, "Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

God made you, God knows all of your thoughts — what makes your best days amazing and your worst days downright difficult — and yet He still commands you to give thanks. Gratitude is more than a good mood; it's not forced happiness. It's a deep-inside awareness and appreciation of who you are and whose you are. When you are grateful, you recognize the goodness around you and that God has given it to you.

MY GENEROUS LIFE is about looking upward and outward for a life of joy and purpose — a life of Generosity! A grateful heart is a great place to start when it comes to Generosity, so we'll begin each session with a moment to pause and get that upward and outward thinking started.



Questions to activate your gratitude:

- › Who or what is on the constant highlight reel of your life?
- › Who's there for you and makes you feel understood, cared for, and valued?
- › What awesome things in your life do you enjoy and love? How aware are you that those are gifts that God gave to you?



Direct students to complete their first gratitude practice.

Whether it is you, me, the classmate behind you, or someone on the other side of the world, each of us has a unique story to tell.

Throughout MY GENEROUS LIFE, you'll hear stories and gain insight from others. Each story shared will provide you with a unique perspective on how to live a generous life.

These stories serve as a reminder that our lives are influenced by the guidance of God and that each person's journey is uniquely created for them. They also remind us that just because we see someone

daily doesn't necessarily mean we know their full life story. It's about taking a moment and having empathy for what someone has been through.



Show the *GRATITUDE & Gracie* video (located on the slide deck).



DISCUSSION QUESTION

› **How can you relate to today's Spotlight Story?**

DID YOU KNOW?

God wants us to live with thankfulness and gratitude. We know that God says that gratitude is what's best for us. But if you need even more convincing, here are seven scientifically proven benefits of gratitude.¹



Show the 7 Benefits of Gratitude slide (located on the slide deck).



DISCUSSION QUESTION

› **Which one (or more) of these seven benefits of gratitude can you relate to the most?**

When we take time to be grateful for the things we have and the people in our lives, it can change how we see our circumstances and the world. As middle schoolers, you may be wondering, *How can I possibly stop to think about what I'm grateful for when I have sports, homework, and other stuff?* Don't worry — we got you! Building a habit of gratitude can be done in many ways and can be as short as one minute. Let's look at some together.



Show the Gratitude Practices slide (located on the slide deck).

YOUR TURN

We've learned a lot about gratitude so far and how to set up a gratitude practice. It's now time for you to use what you've learned. Here are a few ways to get started:

- Write down one specific gratitude practice that you'll try for the next week. Gratitude comes in all forms, so if your idea is not on the list, that's okay. Write it down anyway!
- 3 UP Find a Friend: Who wants to be your 3 UP partner? When one of you says, "3 UP," it's code for asking your friend to tell you three things that turn his/her eyes UP to God with gratitude.
- Surprise the adults in your life tonight by telling them three things you are grateful for without them asking, then pose the question to them. Warning: Big reactions, shock, and awe may come your way!



LESSON 2: THEN & NOW

SCRIPTURE CONNECTION



START WITH GRATITUDE!

What's one thing that made you smile this week? Why are you grateful for that experience?

THAT WAS THEN: INTRODUCTION



Who Am I? is an interactive experience to help students learn unique and relatable characteristics of people in the Bible while discovering just how applicable God's Word, written long ago, is to their middle school lives today. Here are some options for facilitating:

- **Hints:** Display the hints one at a time from the slide deck for students to examine independently, and then submit their answers on paper or through a survey app such as Kahoot! (quietest option)
- **Guessing Game:** Allow some time for students to read the clues and discuss with their peers to identify the person. Make this a competitive game by splitting students into teams or partners. (louder option)

Reveal: Once students have made their guesses, reveal the identity of the biblical figure and give prizes to the winners (optional). Review the clues together, providing additional context if needed. Finish by reading the David recap together as a class.

Hints:

- I was the youngest in my family.
- My family chores were outdoors.
- My kids were not my fans.
- I loved music and poetry.
- My career peaked at the age of thirty.
- My father-in-law tried to kill me. (I had family issues.)
- I tried to cover up my sin. It didn't go well.
- I had a great aim with my slingshot.



Show the Who Am I? hints (located on the slide deck).

THIS IS NOW



You just saw ways that David may have described himself to others. Using the space on your sheet, fill out the I AM template to describe yourself to others.

After students have finished their I AM template, allow them a few moments to share their descriptions with their peers.



Read the David Recap slide with students (located on the slide deck).

David experienced many difficult personal struggles. He often felt uncertain about the ups and downs of his daily life. Sound familiar? Middle school life can take some crazy twists and turns with family life, friendships, and school too! Despite the constant unknowns, David remained grateful. He acknowledged God's presence and goodness through really challenging times. He journaled his most vulnerable feelings, as seen in the Psalms. He expressed his honest emotions, deepest thoughts, and heartfelt gratitude. (Read the psalms of lament for comfort when you're confused, angry, desperate, or scared!)

David saw that God's love is always faithful. David could have chosen to be angry, resentful, or hopeless when his life was out of control. Even in his moments of deepest heartbreak, he let his story be shaped by God's unending goodness. You can let your story be shaped by God's goodness too!

Throughout middle school, you will experience challenges. Friends might come and go. Grades will go up and down. You may struggle to fit in at times and life can feel overwhelming. It sure did for David! But you can follow his lead and lean into God's deep love for you. David's psalms spoke the truth THEN and speak the same truth NOW: God is love, God is faithful, and God will see you through.

Let's read one of David's psalms of gratitude together.

Thank you! Everything in me says "Thank you!" Angels listen as I sing my thanks. I kneel in worship facing your holy temple and say it again: "Thank you!" Thank you for your love, thank you for your faithfulness; Most holy is your name, most holy is your Word. The moment I called out, you stepped in; you made my life large with strength.

— Psalm 138:1-3 (MSG)

David expressed thanksgiving and saw that God's love is always faithful. Even on the worst of days, this psalm reminds us that there is always something to be grateful for. David could have chosen to be angry, resentful, or hopeless. After hearing his story, it would make sense if he remained heartbroken, frustrated, and devastated. But that's not David's story, and no matter what you've been through, are currently experiencing, or what is to come, that doesn't have to be your story either.

Using the format of David's psalm, write a letter to God and thank Him for all of the things you are grateful for. Challenge yourself to press into the discomfort of today to recognize God's love and faithfulness.



Direct students to complete the activity titled Thanks Be to God.

YOUR TURN

Encourage your students to ask a family member this:

- › **What situation in your life was hard yet gave you an opportunity for gratitude?**



LESSON 3: JOIN UP DEEPER LEARNING IN COMMUNITY



START WITH GRATITUDE!

Think of a person who has had made a positive difference in your life recently. What makes you grateful for them?

GRATITUDE SCAVENGER HUNT

Here's a guarantee for today: You will learn something new about a classmate that you didn't know before! How, you ask? Listen carefully to the following directions!

Today you are going to get a chance to witness just how many different things we can be grateful for in our lives. When the music starts, walk around the room and fill every box on your Gratitude Scavenger Hunt card.



Pass out the Gratitude Scavenger Hunt handout to students. Play music in the background and provide time for students to get to know their classmates.

WRAP UP

It's pretty amazing how much we can learn when we take time to listen to and share with others. As we wrap up our lesson, turn to a partner and share one thing that you learned about someone in the room. It could be something surprising, exciting, or just interesting. Remember, by engaging with one another, you not only learn new things, but you also have a chance to make new friends!

And let's not forget the importance of gratitude! Being grateful is extremely important. Take a few moments each day to appreciate the people and things around you.

YOUR TURN

Before you leave school today, ask someone what they are grateful for.



LESSON 4: REFLECT & RESPOND STEPPING INTO CHANGE & GENEROSITY



START WITH GRATITUDE!

Think about something that you might take for granted (clean water, food, shelter). Why are you grateful for those items?



Display photo on the slide deck for students to look at.

ASK STUDENTS:

› How can social media affect a person's attitude of gratitude?

Think about this question for a moment, then turn and talk to your neighbor, explaining whether you think social media makes it easier or harder to feel grateful, and why you think so.

As we have discussed throughout this lesson, gratitude is a powerful emotion that can enhance our well-being. However, in today's digital world, social media plays a significant role in shaping how we perceive and express gratitude.

I'm going to read a statement on the slide, and you decide whether this statement is a positive or a negative influence toward feeling grateful while using social media. If it's positive, you'll move to this side of the room. If it's negative, you'll move to this side of the room. Be prepared to have a discussion with your peers and defend your reasoning.



Split the room into two sides: positive and negative. Show the statement on the slide deck and ask students to choose if this statement is a positive or a negative aspect of social media by choosing the appropriate side.

WRAP UP

As you can see, social media does play a role both negatively and positively in our experience of gratitude. Social media is not necessarily a bad thing, but it will take intentional consideration regarding its helpfulness or harmfulness for you as you go through different seasons of your life. Try to balance your time on social media and remember that what you see isn't always the true story. By fostering mindfulness and following God's lead for us, we can experience gratitude both online and offline.



Show the My Generous Life Rewind and So ... What Now? slides (located on the slide deck).



Send home the *Care 4 Your Middle Schooler* parent newsletter for UNIT #1: GRATITUDE. This can be accessed in the Teacher Portal.

**CARE 4 YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOLER
UNIT #1: GRATITUDE**

Use these ways to connect and care for your middle schooler based on the Generous Student® program.

1 God designed us to live with gratitude, no matter the circumstances.
 Tip: Your student's thoughts toward gratitude is a reliable way and see the difference it makes. Specific questions like "What's going well at school? What are you excited about? What friend is there for you right now?" may lead better than "What are you thankful for?"
 Tip: Gratitude is 100 percent guaranteed to change parents' attitudes. Parenting in the middle school years will be more enjoyable with a regular and consistent habit of practicing gratitude.

2 Thoughts about David's family?
 Students reappreciated David's life of ups and downs, then read Psalm 138:1-3. Check out the reliable issues in David's life below, and use this as a springboard to talk about the challenges your student is facing.

- I was the youngest in my family.
- My family chores were ridiculous.
- My kids were not my fans.
- I loved music and poetry.
- My career peaked at the age of thirty.
- My father-in-law tried to kill me. I had family issues.
- I had a great arm with my slingshot.

Tip: Your student will appreciate when you talk about what's going on in your personal life and family life. Honesty and clarity, even when they're hard, are what a middle schooler wants from fatherly parents. Don't assume they aren't aware and don't pretend it isn't going through in the open and out a through together.

3 Which you sleep better? Check out what science says about gratitude!
 Do a quick Google search on the benefits of gratitude and you'll find that an attitude of gratitude is worth choosing. If you don't already have a habit of writing down three things you're grateful for daily, TRY IT!

4 Scrolling or Sinking? How does social media affect our gratitude?
 We challenged students with this question: How can social media affect a person's attitude of gratitude? Parents, how would you answer this question?
 Tip: If your student is on social media, they are seriously affected by what they scroll through, and research shows it's probably for the worse. If you haven't talked to your middle schooler recently about what they like to explore on social media and how it makes them feel, make it a priority to do this regularly.

Get more about Generous Classroom™ at www.generousclassroom.com

Get inspiration, free accountability, and encouragement ideas by following us on social media: [@generousclassroom](https://www.instagram.com/generousclassroom)

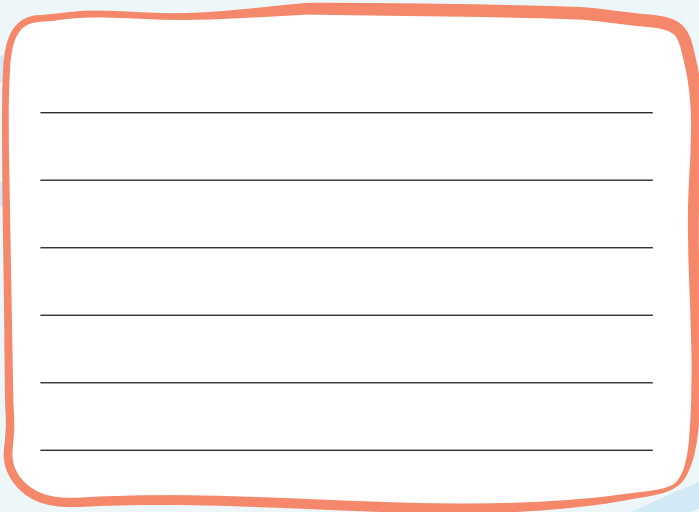
Gratitude Scavenger Hunt

Who's grateful? Ask your classmates, "Are you grateful for..." and ask for specific answers to each topic in the boxes below. After you hear their response, have your classmate put their initials on the line. The first person to fill out their Gratitude Scavenger Hunt card and submit it to the teacher wins!

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|---|
| Grateful for my pet _____ | Grateful for someone who makes me feel loved _____ | Grateful for a skill I have _____ | Grateful for something that I own _____ | Grateful for a teacher _____ |
| Grateful for the ability to exercise and move _____ | Grateful to learn about... _____ | Grateful to have traveled to... _____ | Grateful for a family member _____ | Grateful for a coach or leader _____ |
| Grateful for nature _____ | Though it was hard, I'm grateful for... _____ | FREE SPACE | Grateful for God's... _____ | Grateful for technology _____ |
| Grateful for this place _____ | Grateful for this snack _____ | Grateful for this friend _____ | Grateful to have accomplished... _____ | Grateful to serve... _____ |
| Grateful to laugh with... _____ | Grateful to wear... _____ | Grateful to watch... _____ | Grateful for this memory _____ | Grateful to look forward to... _____ |

I AM...

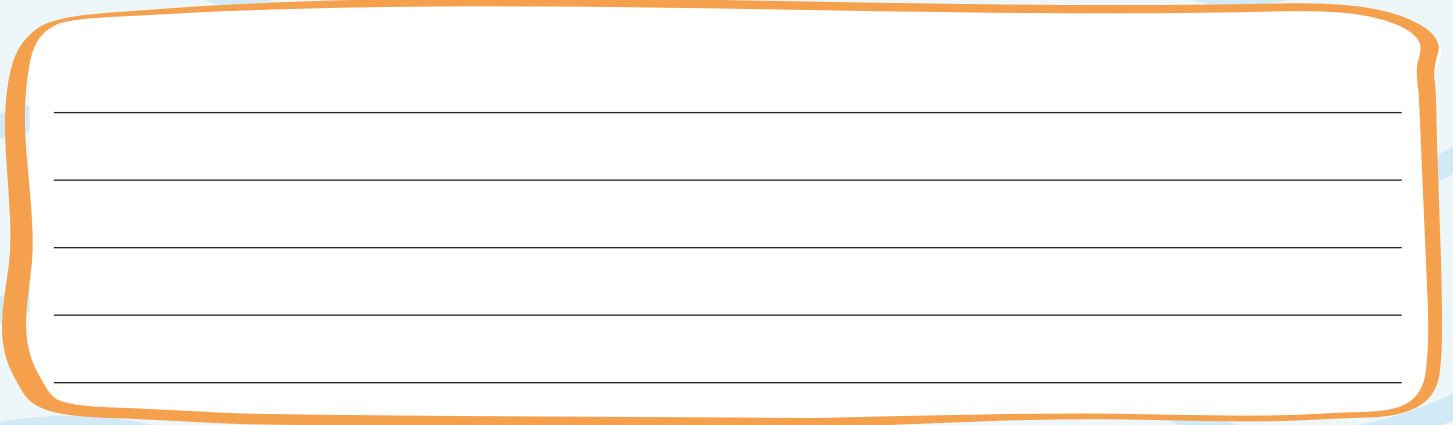
You just saw the ways that David may have described himself to others.
Fill out the boxes below to describe yourself to others.



A writing box with an orange border and six horizontal lines for text.



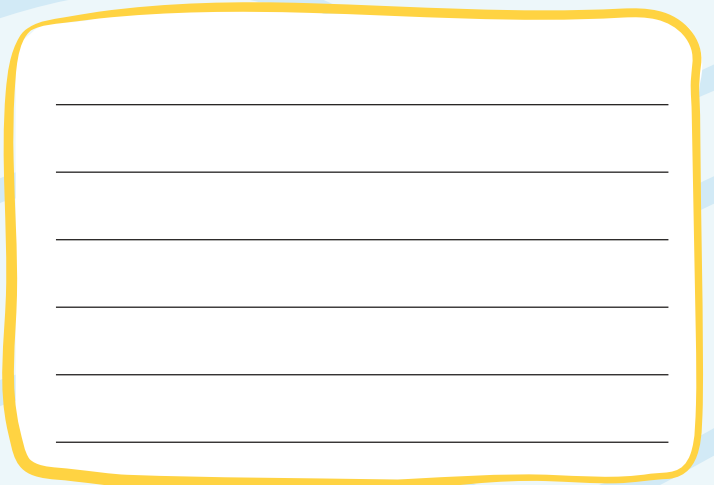
A writing box with a blue border and six horizontal lines for text.



A large writing box with an orange border and six horizontal lines for text.



A writing box with a green border and six horizontal lines for text.



A writing box with a yellow border and six horizontal lines for text.



CARE 4 YOUR MIDDLE SCHOOLER

UNIT #1: GRATITUDE

Use these ways to connect and care for your middle schooler based on the Generous Students® program.

1 God designed us to live with gratitude, no matter the circumstances.

Turn your student's thoughts toward gratitude in a relatable way and see the difference it makes. Specific questions like "What's going well at school? What are you excited about? What friend is there for you right now?" may land better than "What are you thankful for?"

Tip: Gratitude is 100 percent guaranteed to change parents' attitudes. Parenting in the middle school years will be more enjoyable with a regular and consistent habit of practicing gratitude!

2 Thought about David lately?

Students recapped David's life of ups and downs, then read Psalm 138:1-3. Check out the relatable issues in David's life below, and use this as a springboard to talk about the challenges your student is facing.

- I was the youngest in my family.
- My family chores were outdoors.
- My kids were not my fans.
- I loved music and poetry.
- My career peaked at the age of thirty.
- My father-in-law tried to kill me. (I had family issues.)
- I tried to cover up my sin. It didn't go well.
- I had a great aim with my slingshot.

Tip: Your student will appreciate it when you talk about what's going on in your personal life and family life. Honesty and clarity, even when they're hard, are what a middle schooler wants from his/her parents. Don't assume they aren't aware and don't sweep it under the rug — bring things out in the open and talk it through together.

3 Wish you slept better? Check out what science says about gratitude!

Do a quick Google search on the benefits of gratitude and you'll find that an attitude of gratitude is worth choosing. If you don't already have a habit of writing down three things you're grateful for daily, TRY IT!

Tip: Middle school students can easily get stuck in what's not going great. How can you point your student's thoughts toward gratitude in a way that allows them to feel known, supported, and valued?

4 Scrolling or Sinking? How does social media affect our gratitude?

We challenged students with this question: How can social media affect a person's attitude of gratitude? Parents, how would you answer this question?

Tip: If your student is on social media, they are certainly affected by what they scroll through, and research shows it's probably for the worse. If you haven't talked to your middle schooler recently about what they like to explore on social media and how it makes them feel, make it a priority to do this regularly.



Learn more about Generous Classroom™ at
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Get inspiration, free downloads, and supplemental ideas by following us on social media: @GenerousClassroom.



UNIT #1

GRATITUDE

Lesson Extension

MY GENEROUS LIFE PURPOSE POINT

Gratitude

6TH GRADE COMMON CORE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.6.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.6.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.1.C

Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.6.2

Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

7TH GRADE COMMON CORE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1

Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.C

Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.2

Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.

8TH GRADE COMMON CORE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1

Cite textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.10

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1.C

Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.2

Interpret information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and explain how it contributes to a topic, text, or issue under study.



UNIT #1

GRATITUDE

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL RESOURCES

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

- Self-Awareness
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills
- Responsible Decision-Making

DAILY EMOTIONS CHECK-IN

Incorporate an emotional check-in with your students before each lesson or when needed. Emotional check-ins assist children with understanding their feelings and the feelings of others. Download and print our Zones of Regulation/Emotions Check-In located in the Teacher Portal or make a copy of the digital form.

MINDFUL MINUTE

1 Timothy 1:7 (NKJV) says, “For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” It is easy for a student to get caught up in worry, stress, or distraction in class. But God has given us the ability to slow down, release our anxious thoughts to Him, and focus our distracted minds. You can take a moment to give your students room to calm their thoughts and bodies. Mindfulness aims to train the brain to slow down and focus. Choosing to end each lesson with a mindfulness activity can help students feel calmer, happier, and less stressed. It may seem silly initially, but the more they practice, the more they will improve at it.

Today you can lead your students through a breathing exercise. Instruct students to slowly breathe in through their noses and out through their mouths. Complete this exercise three more times.

ENHANCEMENT ACTIVITIES

Please find extension lessons and enhancement activities for this unit located in the Teacher Portal. Check back regularly, as our team is constantly creating new lessons.