

Soul Pancake Experiment - Gratitude

EXPLANATION:

Did you know that studies have confirmed expressing gratitude makes us happier? This activity begins with a video experiment demonstrating the power of gratitude and then asks for students to replicate the experiment.

YEAR LEVELS: Years 10–12

STUDENT GROUPING: Whole group discussion and individual letter writing

ACTIVITY LENGTH: 60 mins approx.

LINK TO CURRICULUM:

Senior Secondary Curriculum: English:

In Unit 2, students analyse the representation of ideas, attitudes and voices in texts to consider how texts represent the world and human experience. Analysis of how language and structural choices shape perspectives in and for a range of contexts is central to this unit. By responding to and creating texts in different modes and mediums, students consider the interplay of imaginative, interpretive and persuasive elements in a range of texts and present their own analyses. Students examine the effect of stylistic choices and the ways in which these choices position audiences for particular purposes, revealing attitudes, values and perspectives. Through the creation of their own texts, students are encouraged to reflect on their language choices and consider why they have represented ideas in particular ways.

Link to General Capabilities: Personal and social capability:

Students develop personal and social capability in *English* by enhancing their communication skills, teamwork and capacity to empathise with and appreciate the perspectives of others. Close study of texts assists students to understand different personal and social experiences, perspectives and challenges. Students identify and express their own opinions, beliefs and responses by interacting with a range of texts. *English* actively assists students in the development of communication skills needed for analysis, research and the expression of viewpoints and arguments. Students work collaboratively in teams and also independently as part of their learning and research endeavours.

SCOPE OF TASK:

Gratitude is a reciprocation of kind feelings; it is an attitude of gratefulness. Expressing gratitude is more than an inner benevolent feeling, which brings a calming effect to all of us. It's the exchange of good and positive thoughts that develop relationships. Expressing gratitude involves thanking someone for their help, care and interest in one's wellbeing. Research indicates that gratitude is even more valuable when you express it.

1. Activate students' prior knowledge by asking questions and write key points that they make on the whiteboard:
 - What is gratitude?
 - What are the benefits of gratitude – for the giver and the receiver?
 - Can you describe times you have felt gratitude?
2. SoulPancake is an American digital platform that creates content about life's big questions exploring humanity, integrity, heart and humour. One of their experiments investigated happiness and gratitude. Volunteers firstly took a test to gain an idea of their current level of happiness. Then they were asked to close their eyes and to think of someone who had influenced their lives and write down why this person was important. Then they were asked to call that person and read them what they wrote!
3. Watch the video with students (approx. 7mins)



4. Spend time reflecting with students about what happened in the experiment:

- Can someone recount the events in the experiment?
- What are the outcomes of the experiment?
- Who would you write a letter to?

The outcomes of the original experiment: Those who wrote something down but couldn't make the phone call, happiness increased from 2 to 4%. For those who made the phone call and verbally expressed their gratitude, happiness increased from 4 to 19%. Interesting, the person who experienced the biggest jump in happiness was the least happy person at the beginning of the experiment. Therefore, if you are not feeling great, practicing gratitude might have an impact on you!

5. As the video demonstrated, taking the time to express gratitude can be profound and impact of the giver and the receiver. Ask the students why that might occur?

6. Inform students of their task:

- Think of somebody who is influential in your life?
- How have they impacted on you?
- Can you think of specific things this person has done for you?
- Why do they matter to you?
- Why is this person so important?
- Do they make you happy?
- Are you grateful?
- Write a letter to the person that you are thinking of and tell them of your gratitude and the influence they make.
- Provide some guidelines for letter content:
 - Describe specifics – share with the person why you are grateful (what have they done)
 - How do you feel about the person – and how they make you feel
 - Be intentional and authentic

7. Ask the students to choose whether they want to give the letter to the recipient or call the recipient? Research shows that expressing gratitude is most powerful when one is taken out of their comfort zone so if possible, the student should be there when the recipient reads the letter or has it read to them. If possible, allow students make phone calls in class!

8. Finish with students reflecting on writing the letter or making a phone call. In the group discussion probing questions could include:

- How did they feel writing the letter?
- How did they feel sharing the letter?
- How do they think the recipient felt?
- Why is expressing gratitude important?
- How can we express gratitude in our daily lives?

RESOURCES:

Online video: An Experiment in Gratitude, The Science of Happiness, Soul Pancake sourced from:
<https://youtu.be/oHv6vTKD6lg>

