Attitude of Gratitude

By Jennifer W. Shettel
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November is the month of Thanksgiving, and social media is filled with 30 Days of Gratitude posts. Oprah Winfrey made the concept of the “Gratitude Journal” popular almost 20 years ago, and this idea is still going strong! This month, as we are surrounded by reminders to “count our blessings” and “be thankful,” be sure to check out a few of these new book titles and focus on the attitude of gratitude!

Ages 4–8

*Little Elliot, Big Family.* Mike Curato. 2015. Henry Holt.

When Mouse heads off to his big family reunion, Elliot feels sad that *he* doesn’t have a big family and spends the day doing things by himself. Later that evening, Mouse returns for Elliot and he learns that he *does* have a family—and a wonderful friend—to feel grateful for!


This simple story focuses on gratitude for everything that is around us. DePaola reminds readers that every day is a gift and to be grateful for the things in their lives. This book would make a good family read-aloud for Thanksgiving Day.


Three furry friends have a fun pajama party. Before they go to sleep, they take a moment to remember what they are thankful for. A lovely bedtime story for young listeners.
Ages 9–11


A young child asks his grandmother to tell him the story of the man made of stars and then sets out to find him one starry night. When he finally catches up with man, he discovers that it is his own love and kindness that make the world—and the stars—shine so brightly. This book reads like a modern-day legend or folk tale and reminds readers that it is important to...


Missing her mother while visiting her grandmother, a young girl is grateful to find a small collection of poems in the attic her mother wrote when she was a young girl. The poems recollect the places she lived as her family moved around the country to different Air Force bases. Grimes includes an author’s note about her own gratitude for the hard-working service men and women and their families. Grimes adds details about the type of poetry she used in this book and encourages young writers to try writing their own poems.

Ages 12–14

*Ava and Taco Cat*. Carol Weston. 2015. Sourcebooks Jabberwocky

Ava is so grateful when her mom and dad *finally* agree to let her adopt cat! But what will happen when Ava finds out that Taco Cat’s original owner wants him back? This middle-grade novel is filled with opportunities to talk about gratitude and how “doing the right thing” is never easy.

In this wonderful picture book biography about Jane Addams, readers will be grateful to learn about Addams’s lifelong quest to help the poor and to make a difference in the world. This book tells about the creation of Hull House—a settlement house Addams created to help needy people and families in Chicago. A detailed author’s note gives additional information about Addams, and Stone encourages young researchers to learn more about the work of Jane Addams, the first woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her humanitarian work.


Bond recounts a story passed down from her grandfather about a true event from his youth. In this story, a young Antonio tells about the time when a forest fire drove people and wild animals into a lake, where they all waited safely for the fire to pass them by. Pair this wonderful oral history story with StoryCorps’ [The Great Thanksgiving Listen](#) and encourage young writers to record their own ancestors’ stories!

**Choosing Courage.** Peter Collier. 2015. Artisan.

This is a book of short biographies about everyday heroes, published in collaboration with the Congressional Medal of Honor Foundation. Teen readers will enjoy reading these varied accounts of courageous individuals and may feel inspired to express their own gratitude for someone who is a “real-life” hero in their eyes.
Jennifer W. Shettel is an associate professor at Millersville University of PA, where she teaches undergraduate and graduate courses in literacy for preservice and practicing teachers. Prior to joining the faculty at Millersville, she spent 16 years as an elementary classroom teacher and reading specialist.

These reviews are submitted by members of the International Reading Association’s Children’s Literature and Reading Special Interest Group (CL/R SIG) and are published weekly on Literacy Daily.

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**Dumpl’n.** Julie Murphy. 2015. HarperCollins.

Willowdean Dickson (aka Dumpl’n) reminds us to be grateful for the body we have, not the body we wish for. Typically confident in her own plus-size body, Willowdean finds herself questioning her confidence when a boy she considers “out of her league” shows interest in her. Resolved to regain her “Go big or go home” attitude, Willowdean sets out to show her mother, her friends—and herself—that she deserves every good thing that comes her way just as much as the next person.