

Gracias • Thanks

written by Pat Mora
illustrated by John Parra

About the Book

Genre: Fiction

Format: Hardcover, \$18.95
32 pages, 8-1/2 x 10-3/4

ISBN: 9781600602580

Reading Level: Grade 1

Interest Level: Grades K-4

Guided Reading Level: I

Spanish Guided Reading Level: I

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:
2.8/0.5

Lexile™ Measure: AD620L

*Reading level based on the ATOS Readability Formula

Themes: Families, Gratitude, Sharing and Giving, Identity, Self Esteem and Confidence, Poetry, Imagination, Friendship, Childhood Experiences and Memories, Multiracial Interest, Empathy and Compassion, Optimism and Enthusiasm, Latino/Hispanic/Mexican Interest

Resources on the web:

leeandlow.com/books/gracias-thanks

SYNOPSIS

There are so many things to be thankful for.

For one young boy, it's

flying ladybugs,

splashing ocean waves,

a best friend,

Dad's thick chocolate syrup,

and much more.

Straight from the heart of a child flows this lighthearted bilingual celebration of family, friendship, and fun. Come share the joy, and think about all the things for which you can say, "¡Gracias! Thanks!"

All guided reading level placements may vary and are subject to revision. Teachers may adjust the assigned levels in accordance with their own evaluations.

BACKGROUND

Gratitude

Research has shown habits of gratitude to have positive impacts; gratitude is a topic of interest for health and wellness researchers and practitioners. According to the Greater Good Science Center at the University of Berkeley

(https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/is_gratitude_good_for_your_health), gratitude writing and other gratitude exercises, especially when they are long-term habits, may be related to fewer health complaints, better sleep, improvement for mental health challenges, reduced stress, and increased happiness.

According to *Business Insider* (<https://www.businessinsider.com/science-says-children-will-grow-up-happier-if-you-teach-them-gratitude-2017-11>), studies suggest that modeling gratitude, having conversations about gratitude, and engaging in activities to help children recognize reasons they have to be grateful are effective strategies for cultivating gratitude in children.

Author Pat Mora & Poetry

Pat Mora is a poet and author as well as a children's literacy advocate. In this exclusive video interview with Reading Rockets, Pat Mora discusses her bilingual childhood and her literacy cause (<https://www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews/mora>). You can view the interview transcript here (<https://www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews/mora/transcript>) or see a selected list of her children's books. Colorín Colorado also has video conversations with Pat Mora for additional information (<https://www.colorincolorado.org/videos/meet-authors/pat-mora>).

Lee & Low Poetry Resource Guide

Check out our tips and strategies from renowned poet, educator, and literacy advocate and author of *Gracias • Thanks*, Pat Mora, about how to use poetry with students in various educational settings. Dive into creative ways to make poetry fun and engaging for young people, not just during Poetry Month but year-round! Read excerpts from the guide below, as well as some of our new and bestselling poetry titles based on universal themes (https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded_document/787/PoetryGuide_2020.pdf).

BEFORE READING

Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

- Brainstorm the times you usually say, “Thank you.” Encourage students to notice patterns and connections between ideas.
- Come up with times you feel thankful, even if you may not say “thank you” to a particular person. Again, notice patterns and connections between ideas.
- How does being thankful feel?
- What do you like to do for fun?
- How do you appreciate and show gratitude for nature?

Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1; Craft & Structure, Strand 5; and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

- **Book Title Exploration:** Talk about the title of the book, *Gracias • Thanks*. Then ask students what they think this book will most likely be about and whom the book might be about. What do they think might happen? What information do they think they might learn? What makes them think that?
- Read Pat Mora and John Parra’s biographies to find out about their works and books for children.
- Encourage students to stop and jot in their reading notebooks during the read-aloud when they: learn new information, see a powerful image, have an emotional reaction or an idea, have a question, or hear new words.
- Have students quickly write a feeling in their notebooks during reading. After reading, ask students why they wrote that feeling down and have them write a journal entry about it.

Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- who and what make the boy feel thankful.
- how the boy’s ideas can remind readers of why they feel thankful
- how the boy has fun with his family and friends
- why it’s important to be appreciative and thankful for what you have

Encourage students to consider why the author, Pat Mora, would want to share this story with young people.

VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 2)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below.

Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word. (Many of the Spanish words can be found in the book glossary, but there are also some that are not included. Students could be encouraged to create a log of these words—they will not be listed here.)

Content Specific

beard, ladybug, bees, sting, pincushion, Abuelita, (fishing) line, guitar, syrup, cricket, serenade

Academic

foamy, dash, winks, misbehave, tug, howling, tripped, melts, thick

AFTER READING

Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses. **To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite textual evidence with their answers.**

Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. Why does the boy say thank you to the sun?
2. What landed on the boy's finger? What did he call it?
3. What does the boy like to do at the beach?
4. What is the boy thankful for about bees?
5. Why is the boy thankful for his grandmother?
6. Why is the boy thankful for his friend Billy?
7. Why is the boy thankful for his little brother?
8. Why is the boy thankful for his uncle? What happens with his dogs?
9. What did the boy's family do during his school play?
10. What does the boy's dad do that makes him feel thankful?
11. What is the boy thankful for at night?

Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 2 and 3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

1. What can you learn about the boy as a character, based on the reasons he's thankful?
2. What do all the people to whom the boy said "thanks" have in common? What do their actions show? Why do you think the boy included so many people in his thank you list?
3. Do you think the reasons the boy lists for why he's thankful for his family and friends are the only reasons he's thankful for them? Why or why not? Why might he have chosen those specific reasons to mention?
4. What are some ways this boy appreciates nature? Why do you think the author decided to include many ideas about nature in the book?
5. Would you like to be friends with this boy? Why or why not?
6. How do you think the boy feels as he goes to bed? How can saying thank you change the way

you feel?

7. Who are you thankful for you in your life? How do you appreciate your family, friends, and the world around you?

Reader's Response

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. **Suggest that students respond in reader's response journals, essays, or oral discussion.** You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. The boy in the book was thankful for things in nature, people, and things. Draw and write a list of reasons you are thankful in each of these categories.
2. Re-read the parts when the boy wakes up and goes to bed. Think about these times in your day. Make a list of things you could feel thankful about at each time of day.
3. Re-read the part that tells why the boy said, "Thanks" to his friend. Draw a picture of one of your friends. Write a list of all the reasons you feel grateful for that friend.
4. Think about a person you want to say, "Thanks" to. Who is that person? Why do you want to write a letter to them? After reflecting, write a thank you letter to that person.
5. Read the Author's Note at the end of the book. Write a letter back to author Pat Mora answering her question, "What are you thankful for?" Also include at least one way you will do as she says and, "Keep the circle of giving thanks, growing."

ELL Teaching Activities

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.
2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
 - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
 - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about their families, something they are thankful for in nature, or something else for which they feel grateful.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to

students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

6. Practice using the sentence structure ("For _____, thanks.") from the book to help students brainstorm "thanks" statements. Use picture cards to support vocabulary use, if helpful.

Social and Emotional Learning

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1-3 and Craft & Structure, Strands 4-6)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 4)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1-2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4-6)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 6)

Social and emotional learning involves being aware of and regulating emotions for healthy development. In addition to understanding one's own feelings, strong socio-emotional development allows individuals to develop empathy for others and to establish and maintain relationships.

Use the following prompts to help students study the socio-emotional aspects of this book.

1. Flip through the pages of the book to notice the characters' faces on each page. Describe how their faces look and name the emotions they convey, including both variations on grateful and others. You might also notice their body language. Use sticky notes to label various emotions.
2. Use the situations in the book to explore empathy. Ask students to predict how the other characters besides the boy in each scenario might feel. Imagine how they might feel if they heard the boy's expressions of thanks. Discuss the positive impact of expressing gratitude to others.
3. Practice listening to others. Have students talk in pairs about reasons they are thankful. Have partners practice active listening so they are able to reflect on their partners' ideas. Debrief about how sharing feelings of gratitude helps people learn more about and appreciate one another.
4. Use the book as a springboard for incorporating a daily classroom gratitude habit, such as ending each school day by thanking a person, or each person sharing something he or she was grateful for during that day.

INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection.

English/Language Arts

(Reading Standards, Craft and Structure, Strands 4 and 5, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 8 and 9, Writing Standards, Texts Types and Purposes, Strands 1 and 2, Production and Distribution of Writing, Strands 4 and 5)

- **Write a group thank you poem using the sentence structure from the book: “For _____, thanks.”** Use large chart paper so that students can contribute multiple entries, or have students each create their own and display them in the class for everyone to see. Have students explain their rationale behind why they chose that particular person or thing to give thanks to. Why is expressing gratitude important?
- **Read other books related to gratitude, such as *Giving Thanks: A Native American Good Morning Message*** (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/giving-thanks>). How are these books similar? What are their messages? How do they show what gratitude means? How are they different? Have students write an essay and discuss their findings in small groups or the whole class.
- **Notice the small details on which the author chose to focus.** The boy liked fishing and said thanks to the worms. He liked his uncle’s music and noticed how it made his dogs sound. Use the details in this book to help children write their own thank you poems that includes specific details. Read more about the author’s advice on inspiring children with poetry in this Poetry Resource Guide (https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded_document/122/Poetry_Teacher_s_Guide_LM_FINAL.pdf).
- **Brainstorm people in your school community who deserve thanks.** Write thank you letters individually or as a class. Or, establish a class bulletin board outside your classroom and use interactive writing to thank someone or something different each week.
- **Have children keep a simple gratitude journal for several weeks.** Share journal entries periodically and reflect on how a regular gratitude habit impacts mood and outlook.
- **Encourage students to learn more about Pat Mora’s work and conduct an author study with her other poetry titles from Lee & Low, *Bookjoy*, *Wordjoy*** ([leeandlow.com/books/bookjoy-wordjoy](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/bookjoy-wordjoy)), *Confetti* ([leeandlow.com/books/confetti](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/confetti)), and *Yum, ¡Mmmm! ¡Qué Rico! Americas Sproutings* ([leeandlow.com/books/yum-mmmm-que-rico-americas-sproutings](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/yum-mmmm-que-rico-americas-sproutings)), *Water Rolls, Water Rises/El agua rueda, el agua sube* ([leeandlow.com/books/water-rolls-water-rises-el-agua-rueda-el-agua-sube](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/water-rolls-water-rises-el-agua-rueda-el-agua-sube)), and *Love to Mamá* ([leeandlow.com/books/love-to-mama](https://www.leeandlow.com/books/love-to-mama)). Have students look at all of the titles to closely examine Pat Mora’s poetry. What do they notice is similar about her poetic style in the different books? What is different? Then have each student write a poem with Pat Mora’s poetic style as an influence.

Social Studies

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 7 and 9, Writing Standards, Research to Build and Present Information, Strands 7-9, Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strand 1)

- **Use this book to help students learn more about each other and build community at the start of the school year.** For a full lesson plan on establishing community using *Gracias • Thanks* as a model, consult the full lesson plan here (https://www.leeandlow.com/uploads/loaded_document/313/Building_Classroom_Community_in_Kindergarten_Lesson_Plan_1.pdf).
- **Use this book to approach discussing the Thanksgiving holiday with a broader lens.** Read *Gracias • Thanks* alongside a traditional Thanksgiving book. Talk about what makes *Gracias • Thanks* a more inclusive exploration of "Thanksgiving." For more on a culturally responsive approach to Thanksgiving, see the following blog post about discussing Thanksgiving in the classroom (<https://blog.leeandlow.com/2017/11/13/a-culturally-responsive-approach-to-discussing-thanksgiving-in-the-classroom/>).
- **Pat Mora has a list of ideas to say thank you from her website** (<http://www.patmora.com/ideas/#gracias>). Ask the students if they know how to say "thank you" in other languages. Teach them to say "thank you" in some of the languages spoken locally or connected to the children's cultures.

Art

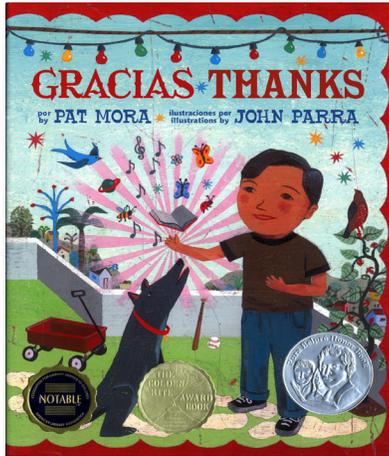
(Reading Standards, Craft and Structure, Strand 5, Integration of Knowledge and Ideas, Strand 7)

- **Study the illustrations to notice the details they include about the setting, people, and situation.** Have students create a drawing or painting of something they are thankful for in the same style.
- **Have students come up with questions to interview the illustrator John Parra.** What is the process behind creating the illustrations with a children's book? What medium did he choose to create the illustrations? Why? Consider looking at John Parra's other children's books and comparing and contrasting the illustrations as well (<https://johnparraart.com/>).

School-Home Connection

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge, Strand 7, Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4 and 6)

- **Pat Mora suggests to do this activity with families from her website** (<http://www.patmora.com/ideas/#gracias>). "Have children make and decorate "gratitude baskets" to take home for sharing with their families. Students can invite family members to write down what they are thankful for on a slip of paper and leave it in the basket. These can be read aloud at a family gathering or special meal."
- **Have children brainstorm ideas for daily gratitude habits, perhaps your family or one you know does.** Send the list of ideas home and challenge families to choose one to try together.



Ordering Information

General Order Information:

leeandlow.com/contact/ordering

Secure Online Ordering:

leeandlow.com/books/gracias-thanks

By Phone: 212-779-4400 ext. 25

By Fax: 212-683-1894

By Mail:

Lee & Low Books, 95 Madison Avenue,
New York, NY 10016

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pat Mora is the author of numerous award-winning children's books. She is also an advocate for diverse children's books and the founder of the family literacy initiative Children's Day, Book Day~El día de los niños, El día de los libros (Día), April 30th and every day of the year. You can learn more about Día here (<http://www.patmora.com/whats-childrens-day-book-day/>). Mora and her husband live in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Visit her online at www.patmora.com. You can read her full bio here (<http://www.patmora.com/biography-childrens-books/>).

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

John Parra is a graphic artist, an illustrator, and a fine artist. His paintings have been exhibited in many gallery shows around the United States, and much of his work is inspired by his knowledge and appreciation of his Hispanic heritage. Parra has illustrated two recent picture books: *P is for Piñata: A Mexico Alphabet* and *My Name is Gabriela/Me llamo Gabriela*. He and his wife live in South Richmond Hill, New York. Parra's Web site is johnparraart.com.

REVIEWS

"For this graceful celebration, ¡gracias!" –*Kirkus Reviews*, **starred review**

"Books of thanks can run toward clichés, but the originality and liveliness of language and art in this one will inspire children to consider their own blessings." –*Booklist*, **starred review**

"A must buy for all libraries looking to add to their children's Spanish collections." –*School Library Journal*

- Notable Children's Book, American Library Association (ALA)
- Pura Belpré Illustrator Award Honor, ALSC/REFORMA
- Choices, Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC)

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