

GRATEFULNESS

Australian Supplement to the Character First Education Curriculum

I Will:

- Show my parents and teachers that I appreciate them
- Write “Thank You” notes
- Take care of my things
- Be content with what I have
- Count my benefits rather than my burdens



Definition

Letting others know by my words and actions how they have benefited my life

Illustration

One of Australia's rarest marsupials, the Numbat, now inhabits only a few protected sanctuaries in Western Australia. These small but quick marsupials are well built for eating its one and only food, termites. Throughout its entire lifetime, the numbat's staple diet is made up of the tiny, ground-dwelling insects. Yet it never complains or begrudges having to eat the same food every day. The numbat story is a truly classic example of gratefulness.

Edward John Eyre's heroic trudge from South to Western Australia was fraught with difficulty, ranging from sand to sickness, from the killing of his best mate to the severe lack of water across the Great Australian Bight. Through all these perils, Edward remained grateful and positive towards his circumstances, despite the temptation to complain. The history story will reveal how this brave explorer demonstrated gratefulness in the midst of hardship.

Gratefulness in Nature

The Numbat



One sunny spring day, a family was enjoying a picnic in the bush. It was wildflower season, and the ground was carpeted with white everlastings and pink orchids.

As the family chatted away and munched on their lunch, the father spotted some movement in the underbrush. Squinting harder, he saw scurrying through the scrub a small animal, not much bigger than a kitten. Putting his finger to his lips, he motioned for his family to stop talking.

As they watched, they saw the small animal had a pointed snout, beady black eyes, pointed ears and a long bushy tail. Its fur was reddish-brown, like the dirt, with banded black and white stripes.

The family looked on in fascination, watching as the small animal scratched around in the dirt. Then it would stop, sniff the air, scurry on to a new place and start scratching. No one knew what it was doing, and before long, the animal has disappeared into the bushes.

The family shrugged and turned back to their picnic. What they didn't realise was

that they had just sighted one of Australia's rarest marsupials, the Numbat. In fact, the numbat is so rare it is on the list of endangered species. Numbats used to be found right across southern Australia but, since the arrival of Europeans 200 years ago, they are now restricted to four sanctuaries and reserves throughout Australia. Farming of the land and the introduction of feral pests, like cats and foxes, has led to a decline in the population of this animal.

Numbats grow to 35-45 centimetres in length, and weigh 300 to 700 grams, roughly the weight of a large guinea pig. These small marsupials have some extra special characteristics and adaptations that help them survive.

Numbats are also known as the banded anteater. Can you guess why? Numbats are insectivores, which means that they eat an exclusive diet of termites. Termites are tiny white ant insects that make their homes in large nests, with an extensive series of

tunnels that radiate out to their food sources.

It's surprising, but a numbat will *only* eat termites its entire life! They are definitely *not* picky eaters! In fact, an adult numbat will consume up to 20,000 termites every *single* day! 20,000! That's a *lot* of termites, even if they are very small!

To put that into perspective, imagine if you were a numbat and the termites you ate were baked beans. If you were to eat 20,000 baked beans every day, you would have to consume 60 x 420g tins of baked beans every single day! That's a lot of baked beans! How would you feel if you had to eat 60 tins of baked beans every day of your life, and nothing else!?

The numbat, though, never complains or begrudges having to eat the same food every single day of its life. It shows gratefulness, and happily slurps up those termites!



These little marsupials are specially equipped to hunt these tiny little insects. Numbats are one of the few marsupials that are diurnal, or active in the daytime. This is because termites are most active during the daytime hunting for food.

Although a numbat has fairly strong claws, they aren't strong enough to break into rock-hard termite mounds. However, a numbat has a very acute sense of smell that helps it locate the labyrinths of termite tunnels hidden just below the ground. When it sniffs out a tunnel, it will use its well-developed forelimbs to penetrate the unfortified, underground galleries. Numbats have five toes on the forefeet, with four on the back feet. These are perfect for scratching around at the earth to find their meal.

Once a numbat has scratched around and has dug up a termite tunnel, its long, thin snout comes into play! Like many ant-eating animals, the numbat has an unusually narrow tongue that is coated

in very sticky saliva, produced by glands at the back of its mouth. The tongue slurps in and out of its mouth, bringing with it lots of juicy termites.

A numbat has numerous soft ridges in its mouth that scrape off any termites that get stuck to its sticky tongue. Amazingly, numbats are able to gain a considerable amount of water from their pure diet of termites, so they rarely need to drink water.

Because a numbat's sole food is termites, their lifestyle is very closely linked to the termite movements. In the summertime, termites are out early in the morning, so numbats rise very early to get out and feast. They aren't lazy, lying in their nests, but they get out early to eat.

During the heat of the day, numbats retreat to a hollow log or burrow to keep cool, then they come out again in the evening to forage. In winter, termites aren't active until late morning, when the ground starts to warm, so numbats feed from mid-morning to dusk.

Even though a numbat's diet will only ever be termites, it never complains about it. Instead, it chooses to be grateful for its food, and the

special adaptations in its small body to locate its food source.

We learn from the numbat to be grateful too, no matter what situation we find ourselves in. It can be easy to be thankful and happy during the good times, but during a bad day when you get down, it's easy to throw in the towel and be grumpy. Instead, we need to be grateful for whatever circumstances we find ourselves in. A good way to be grateful is to think of things that you can be thankful for whenever you first wake up in the morning. Learn from the numbat, and choose to be grateful!

Gratefulness in Australian History

Dauntless Courage

Edward John Eyre opened his eyes and rolled over in his canvas swag. His put his hand out and discovered that the grass was covered in a thick coating of dew.

Edward jumped up and shook his mates. "Quick, we must collect as much of this dew as we can," he said. In a daring attempt to reach King George Sound in Western Australia, the men had been trudging across waterless land, and only last night had Edward realised that they had drunk their last drop of water.

Now, filled with joy, Edward used a sponge to gather as much of the dew as possible. In an hour, the quat pot was full. Although it wasn't a plentiful creek or heavy rain, Edward was content with what he had.

Did you spot the "I will"? Edward was content with the water he had.

One dark, windy night, Edward was keeping watch over the horses when, suddenly, CRACK! a shot rang out in the dark. Edward ran back to the camp to find the

provisions scattered everywhere and his white companion, Baxter, dead.

The other two Aboriginal boys had run off with most of the stores, leaving Edward and his Aboriginal tracker, Wylie, a little flour, tea, sugar and 15 litres of water. Edward's warmest clothes had also been stolen. He now had to take great care to manage what little he had left.

Did you spot the "I will"? Edward took great care of his things.

"Everything is going wrong!" Edward thought angrily. "My best mate is dead, we have hardly any provisions left and I don't know if I can trust Wylie!"

Taking a deep breath, he chose to look at the good things that happened. He was still alive, he had Wylie for company and he still had his precious diary.

Did you spot the "I will"? Edward chose to count his benefits, rather than his burdens.

Edward and Wylie plodded bravely onwards, wondering if they would ever make it to King George Sound. It took every ounce of willpower to put one foot in front of the other. The

horses stumbled along. They staggered into Thistle Cove on the 2nd June 1841 and, miraculously, sighted a vessel. It was a French whaler, captained by an Englishman named

Rossiter. He took the weary



travellers onboard and gave them all he could offer, including, to Edward, any selection of outfit from his private wardrobe!

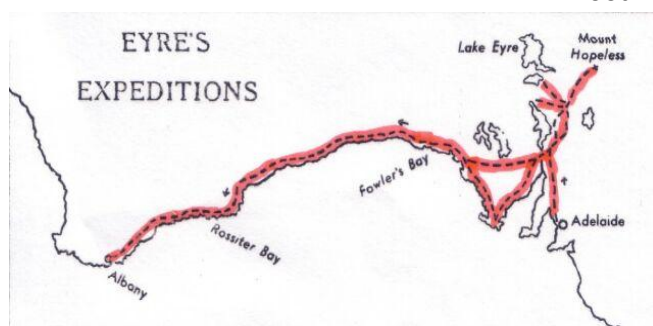
With hearts overflowing with thankfulness, Edward and Wylie left Thistle Cove two weeks later. Edward wrote a letter to Captain Rossiter expressing his gratitude. "Had it not been for you, we would have surely perished in this waterless land."

Did you spot the "I will"? Edward wrote a 'thank you' note to Captain Rossiter.

Edward and Wylie arrived at King George Sound on 7th July 1841, five months after leaving Fowlers Bay in South Australia. Only through their dauntless courage had they succeeded.

Edward was immensely grateful to his faithful companion Wylie and he arranged with the Governor of Western Australia to have him taken care of. He had him given land, a cottage and provisions for the rest of his life.

Did you spot the "I will"? Edward showed Wylie that he appreciated him.



A Practical Purpose

Mary McConnel (1824-1910) and her husband emigrated from Scotland in 1848. Upon arrival they settled in the Moreton Bay area, and took up land on a sheep and cattle station. The following story is a striking illustration of Mary's gratefulness in the midst of the hardships she faced as a pioneer.

The sturdy wooden wagon bounced down the road and stopped in the clearing. The driver, a strong young man named David McConnel, put his arm around his wife, Mary. "There it is," he said, looking at the stone cottage with the wooden shingled roof. "This is Cressbrook station."

The dwelling comprised of a sitting, sleeping and dressing room. It was bare but accommodating. Mary quickly set to work trying to make the house as warm and inviting as possible. She made curtains, cushions and covers out of an unbleached roll of calico and she cut up twelve red silk handkerchiefs as binding for the covers.

"Now I have a pretty room to sit in," thought Mary as she sat down to admire her work. Although it wasn't an elaborate manor, she took care of what she had.

About this time, Mary gave birth to her first child, a boy, whom they named Harry. He was adventurous and loved to explore everything within reach.

One day, Mary was crushing up a keg of pineapple into jam to send back to her family in Scotland. However, she was unaware that her young toddler was helping himself to the pulp. That night, she was awakened at 2am, immediately sensing that something was wrong. Hurrying to the nursery, she found Harry in a fit. His face was purple and he foaming at the mouth. Mary threw him into a hot bath and he became less rigid, vomiting up a large lump of pineapple pulp. Mary was thankful that nothing worse had happened to her son.

After the birth of their second son, Mary became very ill. David took her to the nearest doctor in Ipswich, 50 kilometres away. The doctor diagnosed her as having a gangrenous leg. Although Mary recovered, her seven-month-old baby son died in her arms. Several years later, Mary lost her fourth baby at just two months old.

Mary tried her best not to fret in these painful circumstances. Although infant fatalities were common in those days, the loss of two children left an indelible mark on Mary. She now faced a decision: she could either become bitter, or she could choose to be thankful and accept these trials.

It was these circumstances that caused Mary to see the desperation of other pioneering families around her, who were without a

doctor or hospital in emergency. Even if they could make the rough trek to Brisbane Hospital, children under age five wouldn't be admitted.

Mary was saddened at this injustice. She couldn't stand back and watch families suffer the way she had because there was no adequate medical facility for young children. Mary instigated a fundraising campaign to build a children's hospital in Brisbane and it opened on the 11th March 1878. It still operates today, helping, healing and serving the children of Queensland.

The trials that Mary McConnel faced as a pioneer, equipped her to see the needs of others around her. She never became resentful towards her circumstances, but kept a grateful attitude, choosing instead to use her own experiences to make a difference



in the lives of others.

Project Ideas

Language

Take a look at ways to say "Thank you" in different languages.

Assign a 'secret friend' to each student in the class. Have them write notes of encouragement and thanks to their secret friend, then after a week or two, reveal who's who.

Write an acrostic poem for GRATEFULNESS, listing things you are thankful for.

Maths

How many breaths do you take every minute? Calculate how many, then multiply that by a day, a week and so on. Write a chart how much money you'd have to pay if you paid 5c per breath.

Science and Technology

Study the numbat, its breeding, habits, and particularly its diet of termites.

Society and Environment

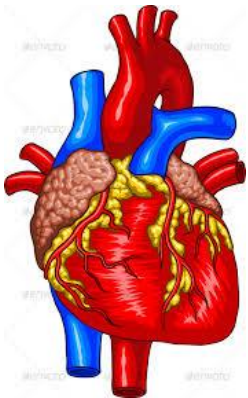
Do a timeline on Edward John Eyre's east to west expedition and write a report.

Study a third world country and the things we have that they don't have - e.g. clean water, education, electricity, food, shopping centres, etc. Draw a chart comparing your answers.



Health

Study different parts of the body that work involuntarily, yet we couldn't live without - e.g. heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, etc. Write a list of the things we can be grateful for about our body.



The Arts

Make a pair of "Gratefulness Glasses" out of the pipe cleaners. Remind your students that glasses changes our *perspective*, not what we *see*. Likewise, gratefulness changes our perspective on the circumstances we face.

Edward John Eyre

From east to west

To which place was Edward Eyre trekking?

What happened to Edward Eyre's friend Baxter?

What was the name of Edward Eyre's Aboriginal companion?

List two ways Edward Eyre showed GRATEFULNESS:

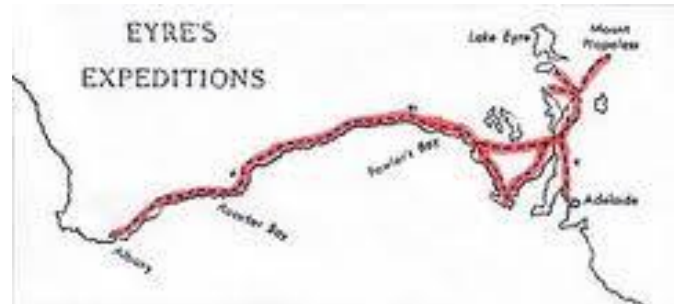
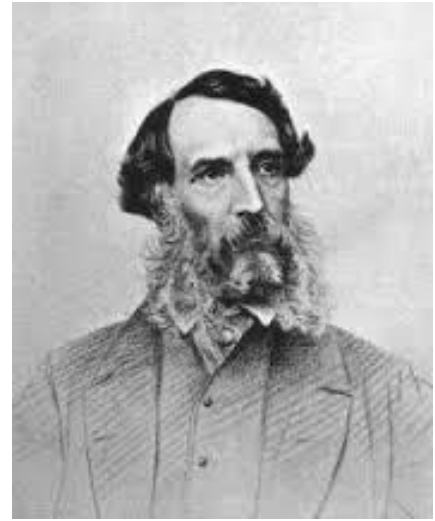
1. _____

2. _____

How can YOU show gratefulness...

Today?

This week?



GRATEFULNESS

Letting others know by my words and actions how they have benefitted my life.

