

By Ruth Gilbert, Youth Librarian at the Kirkland Town Library

Thanksgiving is just a few weeks away. I always think of the holiday as autumn's grand finale. We start the season with cider donuts and apples, pause to enjoy the flashes of fall foliage, and approach the end with carved pumpkins and Halloween costumes. This year Thanksgiving may look different for families who won't be traveling to see relatives, and it can be difficult whether you're a child or a grownup.

Scientific research has shown that gratitude can help make you feel better. If you can take the time each day to think of something that you appreciate, you may start feeling more optimistic or happy. Sometimes the food overtakes gratitude at Thanksgiving, but focusing on things we're grateful for may help the holiday feel more meaningful. If your families need a little inspiration to start thinking about what you're thankful for, these books can help.

"Ten Thank You Letters," by Daniel Kirk. Pig is writing a thank you letter to his grandma and inspires his friend Rabbit to write thank you notes to everyone he can think of, from his bus driver to the president. The letters are heart-warming and may inspire your family to write thank you notes to people you love.

"We Are Grateful: Otsaliheliga," by Traci Sorell and illustrated by Frane Lessac. "Otsaliheliga" is a word the Cherokee use to express gratitude. This book introduces readers to this and other Cherokee words as the pictures show things to be grateful for, like changing seasons and the sacrifices of our ancestors.

"Thank You, Mr. Falker," by Patricia Polacco. This autobiographical picture book can help get your family thinking about the special people in your lives. As a child, author Patricia Polacco had trouble learning to read but a special teacher, Mr. Falker, recognized that she had dyslexia and helped her, and she never forgot him for it.

"The Last Stop on Market Street," by Matt de la Peña and illustrated by Christian Robinson. This award-winning picture book takes readers on a bus ride with a little boy named CJ and his grandmother. CJ has lots of questions for his grandmother, like why they don't have a car or an iPod. They get off the bus in a rough part of town where they help serve food at a soup kitchen. CJ's grandmother helps him to appreciate all the little things they experience and people they interact with on a seemingly mundane bus ride.

"Penguin Problems," by Jory John and illustrated Lane Smith. We all have days like the penguin in this book. Everything seems like a problem: the penguin thinks he looks silly when he waddles, he wishes he could fly, and no one seems to care. Finally, a wise walrus snaps him out of it by reminding him of the beauty and love all around him. The penguin realizes that maybe everything is okay after all, but not without a few final mumbles about having a cold beak.

"Bear Says Thanks," by Karma Wilson and Jane Chapman. This rhyming picture book introduces us to a bear who wants to make a big meal for his friends but finds that his cupboard is empty. One by one his animal friends come to his cave, each with something to contribute to the meal. This bear has a lot to be grateful for!

I hope your families can find things to be grateful for, too.