

# The Can-Do Thanksgiving

by Marlon Hess Pomeranc  
Pictures by Nancy Cote

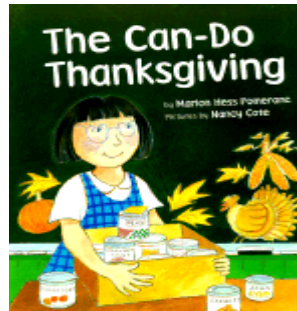


**NOVEMBER 2011**

## **Book of the Month: "The Can-Do Thanksgiving"**

Written By: Marion Hess Pomeranc

Pictures by: Nancy Cote



**Ethical Character Trait:** Generosity (gen er os ity)

**Generosity:** (noun) Willingness to give money, help or time freely

**Other forms of the word:**

- Generous: Adjective
- Generously: Adverb
- Generousness: noun

**Synonyms:**

Kindness

Bigheartedness

Openhandedness

Liberality

Bounty

Bounteousness

Munificence

Charity

**Antonym:** miserliness (To be a miser)

**Author Interview with Marion Hess Pomeranc  
The Can-Do Thanksgiving**

Marion Hess Pomeranc is an award-winning author. *The Can-Do Thanksgiving* was a Bookselling This Week Pick of the List and chosen as an Honor Book by the Society of School Librarians International 1999 Book Awards. *The American Wei* was a Notable Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies, a Bank Street Best Children's Book of the Year list winner, and was an honors award winner from National Parenting Publications. And *The Hand-Me-Down Horse* was a Smithsonian Magazine Notable Children's Book of the Year, a Notable Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies, and a Sugarman Family Award winner for Jewish Children's Literature.

In *The Can-Do Thanksgiving*, Dee is eager to contribute to the class Thanksgiving Food Collection, but she would really like to know what will happen to her can of peas after she donates it. She places a sticker on the can with the name of her school. The church that received "Dee's peas" invites her class to prepare and serve Thanksgiving dinner to those in need.

**1. Where did the idea for *The Can-Do Thanksgiving* come from? Do you and your family participate in food collections or serve at a soup kitchen or shelter?**

The idea for *The Can-Do Thanksgiving* came to me as I was bringing several cans from my kitchen to my synagogue for an annual food drive. "Where do these cans wind up?" I wondered. I assumed that if I wanted to know the answer to this question . . . so would kids. The story itself, though, came from my imagination as I tried to make the issue come alive in a way that would be fun and lively for children to read, and in a way they could understand and relate to. I haven't worked in a food kitchen, but when my son was younger, we used to carry bagels with us to give to homeless individuals we'd run into who were asking for money on our local Manhattan streets.

**2. Dee and her classmates are fortunate to share in the excitement of preparing and helping to serve the food at the church where the meal is served. Would elementary-aged children be welcome to help out at most soup kitchens?**

I'm really not sure if kids can work in soup kitchens. I assume not. That's a bit of poetic license I took in creating *Can-Do*. But I would strongly suggest that there are things kids can do in soup kitchens, like setting tables or giving out napkins and

paper cups, or even helping with clean-up, or perhaps they could deliver the cans they collect directly to the site where they will be used.

**3. If the kids couldn't participate on-site, do you have other ideas how a canned food collection could be a more meaningful activity than just contributing to a collection box?**

I think it would be nice if kids personalized their donations with letters and drawings about why they chose a particular type of can, or how they feel about donating, or even about a time that someone helped them out. Children have a beautiful way of expressing generosity and love that is unique and can touch anyone.

**4. Kids need to eat more vegetables! Dee learns from her father how to prepare a "Vegetable Medley" for dinner. Do you have a family recipe you would like to share for this dish?**

Our favorite way to prepare veggies is to roast them at a high temperature. We mix them up with olive oil and a generous dose of salt and place them on a flat baking sheet. Then roast them at 425 for about 10 minutes, or until they begin to curl up and brown. Yummy. We do this with broccoli, sweet potatoes and Brussels sprouts, too.

**5. If kids and their families are just starting to volunteer, do you think a food collection is a good project for kids of all ages? If so, why?**

I believe that collecting food is a very meaningful way for children to volunteer in their community. Food nourishes and sustains us, and on a very basic level children can understand the sorrow of not having enough to eat.

**6. What do you hope children will take away from reading *The Can-Do Thanksgiving*?**

I want kids to understand that anyone of us can be in a situation of need. I want them to understand that those who need are just like us. And finally, I want kids to know that they can help.

**7. You've written two books about children as American immigrants, *The Hand Me Down Horse* and *The American Wei*. Did your background have an influence on this subject?**

Immigration is a real part of my life. My parents, my in-laws, and my husband are all naturalized American citizens who were born in other countries.

**8. Are you currently working on a children's book or do you have other projects planned?**

I am working on another book about volunteering.

FamilyCares thanks Marion Hess Pomeranc for her time and talent. Check your local library for "The Can-Do Thanksgiving" and "The American Wei" or order them on-line. Your children will enjoy the stories and so will you!

Interview conducted by email November 2006  
Maureen Byrne

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## Why do Americans celebrate Thanksgiving Day?

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**M**any Americans think of Thanksgiving as a wonderful time to celebrate getting out of school for a long weekend, and eating a great dinner. Or, maybe they think it is the start of the Christmas holiday season. What is the real meaning behind Thanksgiving? Catherine Millard writes:



Note-taking  
Activity 

We can trace this historic American Christian tradition to the year 1623. After the harvest crops were gathered in November 1623, Governor William Bradford of the 1620 Pilgrim Colony, "Plymouth Plantation" in Plymouth, Massachusetts proclaimed:

"All ye Pilgrims with your wives and little ones, do gather at the Meeting House, on the hill... there to listen to the pastor, and **render Thanksgiving to the Almighty God for all His blessings.**"

This is the origin of our annual Thanksgiving Day celebration. Congress of the United States has proclaimed National Days of Thanksgiving to Almighty God many times throughout the following years. On November 1, 1777, by order of Congress, the first National Thanksgiving Proclamation was proclaimed, and signed by Henry Laurens, President of Continental Congress. The third Thursday of December, 1777 was thus officially set aside:

Then again, on January 1, 1795, our first United States President, George Washington, wrote his famed National Thanksgiving Proclamation, in which he says that it is...

"...our duty as a people, with devout reverence and affectionate gratitude, to **acknowledge our many and great obligations to Almighty God, and to implore Him to continue is... our duty as a people, with devout reverence and**

**affectionate gratitude, to acknowledge our many and great obligations to Almighty God, and to implore Him to continue and confirm the blessings we experienced..."**

Thursday, the 19th day of February, 1795 was thus set aside by George Washington as a National Day of Thanksgiving.

Many years later, on October 3, 1863, Abraham Lincoln [proclaimed](#), by Act of Congress, an annual National Day of Thanksgiving "on the last Thursday of November, as **a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens.**" In this Thanksgiving proclamation, our 16th President says that it is...



## **Proclamation of Thanksgiving**

by the President of the United States of America

**T**he year that is drawing toward its close has been filled with the blessings of fruitful years and healthful skies. To these bounties, which are so constantly enjoyed that we are prone to forget the Source from which they come, others have been added which are of so extraordinary a nature that they can not fail to penetrate and soften even the heart which is habitually insensible to the ever-watchful providence of Almighty God.

In the midst of a civil war of unequalled magnitude and severity, which has sometimes seemed to foreign states to invite and to provoke their aggression, peace has been preserved with all nations, order has been maintained, the laws have been respected and obeyed, and harmony has prevailed everywhere, except in the theater of military conflict, while that theater has been greatly contracted by the advancing armies and navies of the Union.

Needful diversions of wealth and of strength from the field of peaceful industry to the national defense have not arrested the plow, the shuttle, or the ship; the ax has enlarged the borders of our settlements, and the mines, as well of iron and coal as of the precious metals, have yielded even more abundantly than theretofore. Population has steadily increased notwithstanding the waste that has been made in the camp, the siege, and the battlefield, and the country, rejoicing in the consciousness of augmented strength and vigor, is permitted to expect continuance

of years with large increase of freedom.

No human counsel hath devised nor hath any mortal hand worked out these great things. They are the gracious gifts of the Most High God, who, while dealing with us in anger for our sins, hath nevertheless remembered mercy.

It has seemed to me fit and proper that they should be solemnly, reverently, and gratefully acknowledged, as with one heart and one voice, by the whole American people. I do therefore invite my fellow-citizens in every part of the United States, and also those who are at sea and those who are sojourning in foreign lands, to set apart and observe the last Thursday of November next as a day of thanksgiving and praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the heavens. And I recommend to them that while offering up the ascriptions justly due to Him for such singular deliverances and blessings they do also, with humble penitence for our national perverseness and disobedience, commend to His tender care all those who have become widows, orphans, mourners, or sufferers in the lamentable civil strife in which we are unavoidably engaged, and fervently implore the interposition of the Almighty Hand to heal the wounds of the nation and to restore it, as soon as may be consistent with the Divine purposes, to the full enjoyment of peace, harmony, tranquility, and union.

In testimony wherof I have herunto set my hand and caused the seal of the United States to be affixed.

[Signed]

A. Lincoln

**So it is that on Thanksgiving Day each year, Americans give thanks to Almighty God for all His blessings and mercies toward us throughout the year.**

## **SOCIAL STUDIES**

### **Enduring Understandings:**

- People of diverse backgrounds influence our past and present lives.
- Diversity among the various immigrant groups in the U.S. have led to changes in the American culture.

### **Essential Questions:**

- What are the reasons that people emigrate from their country? (What are the push factors involved in the emigration process?)
- What are the reasons that people immigrate to a new country? (What are the pull factors involved in the immigration process?)
- What types of hardships do people face when they immigrate?

## VOYAGE OF THE MAYFLOWER

### WHAT HAPPENED ON THE VOYAGE?



The *Mayflower* left Plymouth, England on September 6, 1620, and anchored off the tip of Cape Cod on November 11. During those two months crossing the Atlantic Ocean to America, many things happened on the *Mayflower*.

The first half of the voyage was actually fairly smooth. The wind and weather were good for sailing, and they made good progress. Aside from sea-sickness, the health of the passengers was generally very good. One of the sailors, however, continually laughed and scoffed at the passengers, "cursing them daily" and saying that he hoped to throw their dead bodies overboard and take their belongings for himself. But it turned out that this sailor would be the first to get sick and die: Passenger William Bradford wrote "it pleased God before they came half seas over, to smite this young man with a grievous disease, of which he died in a desperate manner, and so was himself the first that was thrown overboard. Thus his curses light on his own head, ... for they noted it to be the just hand of God upon him."

Of the 102 passengers onboard the ship, three of them were pregnant women. One of the women, Mrs. Elizabeth Hopkins, gave birth during the voyage. Stephen and Elizabeth Hopkins named their newborn son Oceanus. The other two women would give birth shortly after arrival.

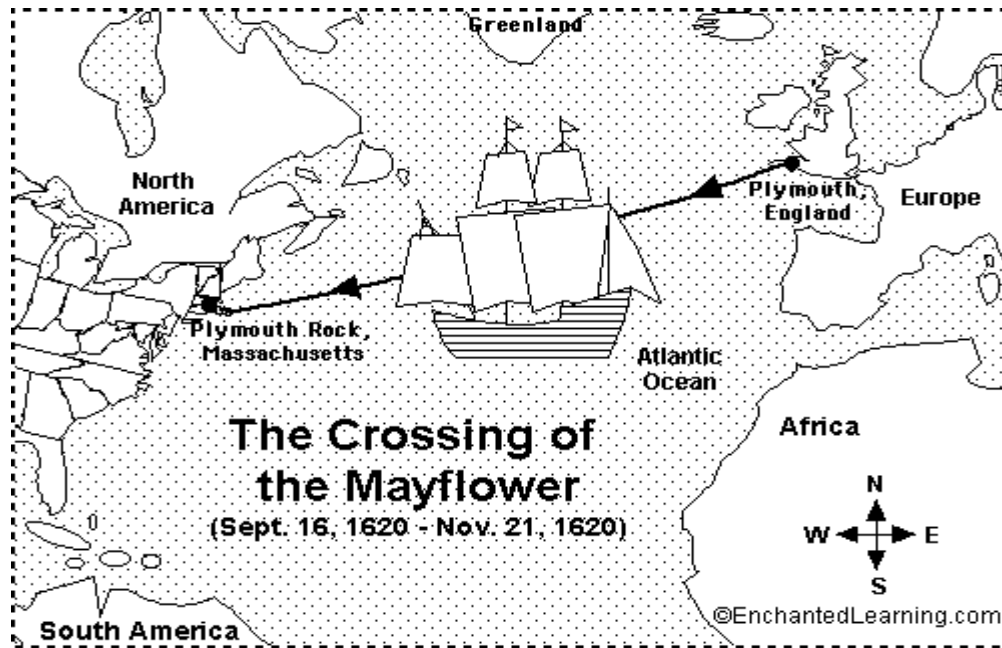
After they had sailed more than half way to America, the *Mayflower* began to encounter a number of bad storms, which began to make the ship very leaky, causing many of the passengers below deck to be continually cold and damp. During one of the storms, a main beam in the middle of the ship cracked, causing some of the passengers and crew to wonder if the ship was strong enough to make all the way to America. But Master Christopher Jones felt his ship was strong, and so they fixed the main beam with a large screw, caulked the leaky decks as best they could, and continued on.

During another storm, a twenty-five year old man named John Howland came up on deck, but the ship suddenly rolled and he lost his balance and fell into the cold Atlantic ocean. Luckily, he managed to grab a hold of a rope that was hanging down from one of the topsails, and held on as he sunk many feet below the surface of the water. The *Mayflower's* crew hauled him back up to the surface with the rope, and then grabbed him with a boathook.

Wet and cold and cramped in their small quarters, some of the passengers began to develop coughs and colds. As the *Mayflower* finally began to approach America, one of the passengers, a young boy named William Butten, a servant to the passengers' doctor Samuel Fuller, died. William Butten died on November 6, just three days before land was sighted.

## MAP SKILLS ACTIVITY

### THE CROSSING OF THE MAYFLOW



1. From which city and country did the Pilgrims leave for the New World?  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. From which continent did they leave? \_\_\_\_\_
3. When did the Pilgrims set sail? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Which is the name of the ship in which they sailed? \_\_\_\_\_
5. In which direction did the Pilgrims sail: northeast, northwest, southwest, or southeast?  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Which ocean did the Pilgrims cross? \_\_\_\_\_
7. To which continent did they sail? \_\_\_\_\_
8. When did the Pilgrims land on this continent? \_\_\_\_\_
9. How long did their voyage take: 5 days, 30 days, 66 days, or 94 days? \_\_\_\_\_
10. The Pilgrims first landed on Cape Cod (in what is now [Massachusetts](#)) and then sailed to a nearby area. What is the name of the stony landmark where they eventually landed?  
\_\_\_\_\_

## PERSUASIVE WRITING ACTIVITY

**Persuasive Letters:** Take a poll to find out which, if any, of the Pilgrims in class would have chosen to turn back to England when the voyage became perilous. Invite students to discuss the reasons for their choices. After hearing others' opinions, ask students to take a firm stand on the issue: to continue the voyage, or to return to England. Then have them research the settlers' motivations and preparations for going to the New World. Using the information they gather from the read aloud, have students compose a letter to try to persuade others to agree with their position on the issue.

### THE PLYMOUTH COLONY



Plymouth Colony, America's first permanent Puritan settlement, was established by English Separatist Puritans in December 1620. The Pilgrims left England to seek religious freedom, or simply to find a better life. After a period in Holland, they set sail from Plymouth, England, on Sept. 16, 1620, aboard the *Mayflower*, its 102 passengers spending 65 days at sea. Passengers, now known as the Pilgrim Fathers, included leader William Brewster; John Carver, Edward Winslow, and William Bradford, early governors of Plymouth Colony; John Alden, assistant governor; and Myles Standish, a professional soldier and military advisor. The *Mayflower* dropped anchor near present-day Provincetown on Nov. 21, 1620, and 41 male passengers signed the Mayflower Compact, an agreement to enact "just and equal laws for the general good of the colony." The Pilgrims finally landed at the site of present-day Plymouth, Mass., on Dec. 26, 1620.

By legend the Pilgrims stepped ashore at Plymouth Rock; their records do not mention this landmark. Settlers began erecting buildings and rough shelters for the winter. But harsh climate and illness took their toll. By the end of winter half the colonists had died. The colonists encountered the Indian Samoset, who surprised them by speaking English, learned from English traders on the coast of Maine. Samoset introduced the colonists to Massasoit, chief of the Wampanoag Indians, who signed a peace treaty with the Pilgrims. Squanto, another English-speaking Indian, acted as guide and interpreter, and with his help the colonists

learned to plant corn, catch fish, and gather fruit. The Pilgrims invited the Indians to celebrate their first harvest in 1621, an event now celebrated as Thanksgiving Day. After Massasoit's death, the Wampanoag joined a tribal coalition to eliminate English settlers, but in the ensuing King Philip's War the Wampanoag were nearly exterminated. The colony gradually grew in size, and the original settlement known as the Plymouth Plantation expanded as settlers built houses in the area. Plymouth Colony retained its independence for over 70 years, and by 1691 its population exceeded 7,000. It was integrated with the Massachusetts Bay Company's much larger colony to establish the royal colony of Massachusetts — now the state of the same name.

## **ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES:**

**Personal Perspectives:** Ask students to quietly reflect on what they've learned about the origins of Thanksgiving and its evolution into a national holiday (see "Thanksgiving Timeline"). Have them compare how Thanksgiving Day is observed today versus the 1621 feast. Encourage them to also consider what kind of observation Sarah Hale, Abraham Lincoln, and others had in mind as they worked to set aside a special day of thanksgiving. Taking all these things into account, have students write personal perspectives about how they (or our nation in general) observe the Thanksgiving Day celebration. Ask them to address things such as: similarities of today's holiday to early thanksgiving observations, ways it reflects a time of thanksgiving, what they like or dislike about it, what they would change and why, etc. Invite volunteers to share their perspectives with the class.

### **Compare and Contrast:**

- Tell students that many of the foods served at the First Thanksgiving were different from those found on today's holiday table. Discuss some of the foods served at the 1621 feast. Have children fold a large sheet of paper in half and then unfold it. Ask them to write "First Foods" on the left side of the paper. Have them draw and label foods served at the First Thanksgiving on this side. On the right, ask them to write "Future Foods" and then draw and label foods served during a present-day Thanksgiving celebration. Finally, on the back, have students write a description of each celebration.
- Explore and describe similarities and differences in the ways groups, societies, and cultures address similar human needs and concerns

**Read and construct simple timelines**, identify examples of change, and recognize examples of cause and effect relationships

## THANKSGIVING MATH PROJECT

Imagine that you are going to plan a Thanksgiving dinner! You have \$100.00 to spend in the grocery store. You are in charge of planning the menu, guest list, and shopping list.

You must **brainstorm** by referencing store flyers to find out actual costs.

### Requirements:

1. Make up a guest list. Decide who is coming. Be sure to purchase enough food for everyone!
2. Prepare a shopping list. Use the flyers, internet grocery store sites, and your parents as reference.
3. Menu - Include what you are serving. It may be set up like a restaurant menu. (No prices!)

The project may be presented in a brochure, poster, or booklet. If you have any other ideas, please see me for approval.

Be very creative. You should enhance with pictures. Be sure to use nice handwriting (a ruler!) or computer.

*Remember* - this is a math project so I will be looking for all the ways you used math. All calculations must be correct! You **may not** exceed \$100.00. You may not use the "coupons" for free turkeys!

The project will include these **3 components**: the guest list, shopping list, and menu.

You will be graded via the enclosed rubric.

Have fun and happy "shopping"!



DATE DUE: \_\_\_\_\_

## **FamilyCares INCREDIBLE FAMILY FEAST**

- **Introduction**

Thanksgiving is a time of year for families to sit together and discuss the things that they are grateful for while enjoying a traditional Thanksgiving meal. It is perhaps the most opportune time for parents to talk to children about what they are thankful for and the importance of giving.



There are many families who will not have the opportunity to celebrate this holiday, as they might like to, and some live in your own town. Your family can make a difference by assembling a FamilyCares Incredible Family Feast.

All family members can help. Ask your children what they most enjoy about Thanksgiving - from eating grandma's pumpkin pie to watching football with their older brothers or sisters. Ask how they think they can help another family enjoy Thanksgiving and try to incorporate their ideas or suggestions in your project. To help young children understand why you are assembling a "feast," read *The Can-Do Thanksgiving* by Marion Hess Pomeranc, or one of the books suggested below.

### **Materials Needed**

- A large basket or decorated brown box
- Food (see suggested items below)
- A homemade Thanksgiving card from your family
- Optional: A food gift card for a turkey at a local supermarket
- Suggested Extras
- A home-baked pie
- Holiday napkins
- Oranges, tangerines, apples, onions, and potatoes or fresh foods that will not perish quickly
- Football cards or a football
- Print-outs or coloring pages related to Thanksgiving and a box of crayons

## Steps Involved

1. Contact your local social services, a local soup kitchen or a shelter and tell them you want to assemble a **FamilyCares** Incredible Family Feast for one or more families. The agency might give you a family profile (i.e. mom, dad and children ages 13, and 7) to shop for. Make sure your family is comfortable with the size of the family the agency gives you.
2. Ask if the agency has a list of items they would like included in the "basket." Ask if there are any restrictions - such as peanut products.
3. Ask if you can include a homemade pie, or fresh vegetables or fruit.
4. Ask if another agency is supplying gift cards for turkeys or if they are accepting food gift cards.
5. Ask what day your basket has to be delivered to them.
6. Fill the basket with the makings of an Incredible Family Feast.
7. Decide if you will add any of the "extras"
8. Decorate a card as a family.
9. Deliver your Incredible Family Feast to your agency

## Suggested Food Items

- Potatoes or mashed potato mix
- Cans of corn, green beans, peas, yams and cranberry sauce
- A box of stuffing
- Gravy
- Corn muffin mix
- Large bottle of 100% juice such as apple
- Canned fruit
- Hot chocolate
- Coffee or Tea
- Parmalat

## Resources

- Coloring pages can be found at <http://www.coloring-page.net/thanksgiving.html>
- For facts about hunger in America visit [www.secondharvest.org](http://www.secondharvest.org)

## Books

- *The Can-Do Thanksgiving* by Marion Hess Pomeranc
- *Uncle Willie and the Soup Kitchen*, DyAnne Di-Salvo Ryan
- *Chicken Soup for Little Souls: The Braids Girl*, Lisa McCourt

## Discussion Questions:

1. Why is Dee so excited about buying a can of peas?
2. How did Dee get the money to buy the can of peas? What does this tell you about Dee's character?
3. What did Dee want to know concerning her peas?
4. What plan has Dee come up with and Why?
5. Why do you suppose Dee can't get the can of peas out of her mind?
6. Why is this can of peas so important to her?
7. What's your prediction - what do you think will happen to the can of peas?
8. A week later Mrs. Ortiz has a surprise for the class, what is the surprise?
9. Why did Hector gasped and say maybe Dee wasn't a pea-brain after all?
10. How did Tyler feel when he walked into the soup kitchen? If you were Tyler would you feel the same way? Why or why not? Have you ever felt like Tyler?
11. How did Tyler's mother try to comfort her son?
12. What did Tyler and Dee have in common? Why do you think Tyler said "she might make a fun friend"? Do you think Dee will feel the same way?
13. What events led to Dee finding her can of peas?
14. What happened that caused Dee and Tyler to finally meet?
15. How did Dee help Pricilla solve her problem in the kitchen?
16. What do you think Dee whispered into Pricilla's ear?
17. Why do you think everyone burst into applause when Dee and Tyler emerged from the kitchen to the dining room?
18. Why did the room get so quiet and still when the elderly man said "Please wait, my friends?" How did the people respond?
19. At the end of the story, Dee smiled at Tyler; do you think they will remain friends? What do you think might happen next?
20. What was the author's purpose for writing this book? What is the author's message?
21. What do you think the author might be encouraging us to do during the Thanksgiving holiday?
22. Explain how the characters in this book demonstrate the Ethical Character Trait of Generosity.

# Writing Activity

"The Can-Do Thanksgiving"  
Written By: Marion Hess Pomeranc

## THE AUTHOR'S MESSAGE

<p>What was the author's purpose and message?</p>	<p>What part of the story helped you see the author's message? Give details from the story.</p>	
<p>How did the characters demonstrate the Ethical Trait of generosity?</p>	<p>What is generosity? How do the actions of others affect our daily living?</p>	<p>How can we apply the author's message to our lives?</p>

