



Zalmy's Gratitude Jar

Ages 6-9
A story and 9 activities



Zalmy's Gratitude Jar

On the first day of the week, Zalmy's Bubby hands him an empty pickle jar.

"What's this for?" he asks.

"Every night before bed, you write one good thing that happened today on a slip of paper," says Bubby. "Then you drop it in. By the end of the month, you'll have a jar full."

Zalmy looks at the jar. It still smells a little like pickles. "What if nothing good happens?"

Bubby smiles. "Something always happens. Sometimes you have to look a bit harder."

That night, Zalmy sits on his bed with a pencil and a torn piece of notebook paper. He thinks about his day. The bus has been late. He's gotten a B-minus on his spelling quiz. Nobody has picked him for the kickball team until the very end.

He chews the pencil. Then he remembers the roll at lunch. It was warm, with butter melting in the middle. He writes: Warm roll. He folds the paper and drops it in the jar. It lands with a tiny whisper.

On Tuesday, he writes: Totty whistles while he makes breakfast. On Wednesday: Moishy shares his markers. On Thursday: Found a quarter under the couch.

By Friday, a funny thing is happening. He starts noticing good things during the day, before he even sits down to write. A butterfly on the school fence.

His teacher saying "good job" about his handwriting. The smell of challah coming from the kitchen.

"I'm collecting," he tells his little sister Chaya, who is watching him scribble on the bus. "I have to remember it so I can put it in the jar."

"What's good right now?" asks Chaya.

Zalmy looks around. The sun is shining through the window and making a bright square on the seat. "That," he says. "The sun square."

Chaya giggles. "I like it too."

The jar fills up slowly, one slip at a time. By the second week there are fourteen papers, and Zalmy shakes it to hear the rustle. When he is having a hard day, he starts reading a few. They make him smile even on the bad days. Roll. Whistling. Markers. Quarter.

One evening, his friend Binyomin comes over. He looks glum. His soccer team has lost, and he's missed an easy goal.

"Want to see something?" says Zalmy. He pulls out the jar. "My Bubby gave me this. You write one good thing a day."

"What do I write? Today was terrible," says Binyomin.

"Everything was terrible? Even lunch?"

Binyomin thinks. "Lunch was okay. My mom packed pizza."

"There you go," says Zalmy, and he hands him a paper and pencil.

Binyomin writes Pizza, and then, after a pause, he adds: Friend who comes over. He folds it and drops it in the jar. It whispers as it lands.

"Cool," says Binyomin. He looks less glum already.

At the end of the month, Zalmy and Bubby sit at her kitchen table and dump out all the slips. There are twenty-nine, and a little pile of crumbs from the bottom of the jar.

They read them out loud one by one. Zalmy laughs at the silly ones and feels warm at the sweet ones. There is a slip he doesn't even remember writing: Bubby's kugel.

"Look at all that," says Bubby, wiping a happy tear from her eye. "That is one good month."

"And I almost wrote nothing on the first day," says Zalmy.

"I know," says Bubby. "But you looked a little harder."

On the way home, Zalmy washes the jar and starts it over. First slip: Bubby, kugel, and the whole month.



Activity 1 of 9

Remember the story

1. What does Bubby give Zalmy?

2. What does Zalmy write on the first slip?

3. Who does Zalmy show the jar to?

4. How many slips are in the jar after the month?



Activity 2 of 9

Fact or guess? (circle one)

1. Zalmy has a little sister named Chaya. Fact / Guess
2. Binyomin's soccer team wins. Fact / Guess
3. Bubby gives Zalmy the jar. Fact / Guess
4. The jar still smells like pickles at first. Fact / Guess



Activity 3 of 9

Think and write

1. What is one good thing that happened to you today?

2. Why does Zalmy start noticing good things during the day?

3. Who could you share a good-things jar with?



Activity 4 of 9

Word search (find all 6)

Words: JAR, GRATEFUL, BUBBY, ROLL, SMILE, PAPER

G	R	A	T	E	F	U	L	E	F	W
B	O	P	H	C	G	G	W	W	T	C
D	L	S	P	S	M	G	K	E	S	N
J	L	B	L	O	R	M	K	P	E	M
I	A	U	C	F	Y	Y	P	A	L	P
C	S	B	U	R	H	T	U	K	I	S
U	R	B	D	F	W	F	V	L	M	K
L	E	Y	U	J	H	J	D	F	S	C
F	P	N	L	F	W	B	A	W	R	W
H	A	N	F	T	A	L	P	R	R	M
W	P	H	H	F	S	C	O	N	P	B



Activity 5 of 9

Scrambled words (from the story)

1. RJA = _____

2. LSPIS = _____

3. UYBBB = _____

4. ERTLBYUFT = _____

5. KEUGL = _____



Activity 6 of 9

Say it out loud

Practice each line in a calm, steady voice:

"Thank you. That was so kind."

"Something good happened today."

"What was good in your day?"



Activity 7 of 9

My chart

My Good Things Chart

Day / moment	Good thing	Who was part of it	How it felt
Monday			
Tuesday			
Wednesday			



Activity 8 of 9

Draw it

Draw Zalmy's jar overflowing with little paper slips and a big smile.





Activity 9 of 9

Answers

Remember the story:

1. An empty pickle jar
2. Warm roll
3. His friend Binyomin
4. Twenty-nine

Fact or guess: 1 Fact; 2 Guess; 3 Fact; 4 Fact

Scrambled words: JAR, SLIPS, BUBBY, BUTTERFLY, KUGEL

Think and write: answers will vary; talk them over together.