

Dear Educator,

We all know the thrill of receiving a card or letter in the mail, and the warm feeling that comes when we share a gift of words with someone special.

To help you teach your students how to share this gift of words, the curriculum experts at Young Minds Inspired and the United States Postal Service® have teamed up to provide you with this free language arts teaching kit, *A Gift of Words*. The activities guide students through the process of creating a greeting card and show how words can strengthen our connections with others. Students also learn how to address an envelope correctly and — to complete the lesson — mail it.

Use these activities before summer break so your students can apply what they learn when traveling on vacation, writing each other from camp, etc. And plan to repeat the activities with a new class of students next year.

We hope that you will share this program with other teachers in your school. You can also find PDFs of these materials and more at ymiclassroom.com/usps.

Please use the enclosed postage-paid reply card to share your opinion of this program, or comment online at ymiclassroom.com/feedback-usps.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Dr. Dominic Kinsley
Editor in Chief, Young Minds Inspired



For questions, contact us toll-free at 1-800-859-8005 or by email at feedback@ymiclassroom.com.

Program Components

You are one of five teachers selected to receive this program at your school.

Two teachers are receiving Kit #1, consisting of:

- A wall poster with four reproducible pages printed on the back — a one-page teacher's guide and three student activity sheets. Please photocopy these pages before displaying the poster in your classroom.
- A reply card for your comments, or you may comment at ymiclassroom.com/feedback-usps.
- A set of 25 blank cards and 25 barcoded envelopes.

Three teachers are receiving Kit #2, consisting of:

- The same wall poster, teacher's guide, activity sheets, and reply card as described for Kit #1.
- Kit #2 does not contain blank cards or envelopes. Students should make or bring in their own.
- Visit ymiclassroom.com/usps to download Spanish translations of all three activity sheets, as well as two additional online-only activities in both English and Spanish.

Target Audience

Students in grades 3 and 4.

Program Objectives

- Introduce the unique rewards of communicating with those we care for through the mail.
- Enhance creative expression to strengthen interpersonal connections in a digital world.
- Educate students on how to address an envelope and mail items on their own.
- Demonstrate the achievement and personal connection felt when brightening a loved one's day through a mailed greeting card.

How to Use This Program

Choose the activities that will be most meaningful for your students. All activities afford an opportunity to teach students how to properly address and stamp an envelope, and how to look up addresses for friends, family — even their local heroes!

To ensure that your students' greeting cards make it into the mail, follow these tips:

- Include the cards in your school's outgoing mail.
- Take a field trip to a nearby post office or mailbox and teach students how to put mail in an outgoing box.
- Ask parents or your PTA/PTO to donate stamps.

Activity 1 A Timeless Tradition

This activity introduces students to the history of greeting cards.

Begin by having students talk about greeting cards they and their family have mailed and received — holiday cards, birthday cards, etc. Discuss the process of choosing a card and putting it into the mail, and the special thrill of receiving a card and tearing open the envelope.

Pass out the activity sheet and review the ancient Egyptian origins of greeting cards, then have students brainstorm words for their own good luck greeting cards. Pass out blank cards and have students decorate the front of their cards with "papyrus" art drawn on a piece of brown paper bag that has been crumpled and smoothed out to make it appear more authentic. Students glue their decorations on the front of the card and write a good luck message on the back, using some of the words they brainstormed.

Pass out envelopes and use the space on the activity sheet to teach students the correct way to address an envelope. Have students stamp their envelopes and mail them, then talk about how the recipients will likely react when a fun hieroglyphic greeting card arrives in their mailbox.

Activity 2 Greeting Cards for All Occasions

This activity explores different occasions when we exchange greeting cards.

Use the chart on the activity sheet to prompt discussion about your students' experience sending and receiving cards for each occasion. Have them fill in words they would use for these occasions, and work as a class to develop a vocabulary for each occasion.

Ask students to think of someone to whom they can send a special "gift of words" greeting card — a coach, a dance or music teacher, a carpool parent, etc. Pass out blank cards and help students compose a message and decorate their cards in a way that will be meaningful for the recipient.

Pass out envelopes and use the space on the activity sheet to teach students the correct way to address an envelope, then have students stamp their envelopes and mail them. Ask students to anticipate the surprised reaction of their special person when they open their gift of words.

Activity 3 Thanking Our Heroes

In this activity, students create Thank You cards for community heroes who do not always receive thanks for what they do.

Talk with students about why it is important to mail a Thank You card when you receive a gift. Then tell students that some people who give us the gift of service every day seldom receive a Thank You card. Pass out the activity sheet and have students unscramble the names of these community heroes — mail carriers, police officers, firefighters, 9-1-1 operators, and emergency medical workers. Then have students choose one community hero to whom they will all send Thank You cards.

Pass out blank cards for students to create their Thank You cards. Use the space on the activity sheet to teach students the correct way to address an envelope. Have students stamp their envelopes and mail them, then talk about how surprised your heroes will be when they find dozens of Thank You cards in their mailbox.

Follow up with a phone call to encourage your community heroes to display their Thank You cards at the police station, firehouse, etc. They might also reply to the students with their own cards, or make a classroom visit to thank the students in person.

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Teacher's Guide for Activities 4 and 5

Activity 4 Our Special Day

In this activity, students use their creativity and language arts skills to invent a greeting card occasion to share with their family.

Tell students that America is known for its unique and sometimes funny special days, from Drinking Straw Day in January to Monkey Day in December. Then ask students to guess how many greeting cards are mailed each year in the U.S. (Answer: over six billion cards!)

Pass out the activity sheet. Tell students that they will be inventing a special day for their family by creating their own unique greeting card and mailing it to their parents. Have students use the questions on the sheet to come up with their day, then pass out blank cards and have students design their greeting cards. Pass out envelopes and use the space on the activity sheet to teach students the correct way to address an envelope, then have students stamp their envelopes and mail them home to their parents, being sure they don't tell their parents in advance so that when their parents see their name and address on a handwritten envelope from their child, it will provide a surprise that rewards both parent and child.

As an extension, have the class create a special day for your school that will promote school spirit, and design a line of greeting cards to support that promotion.



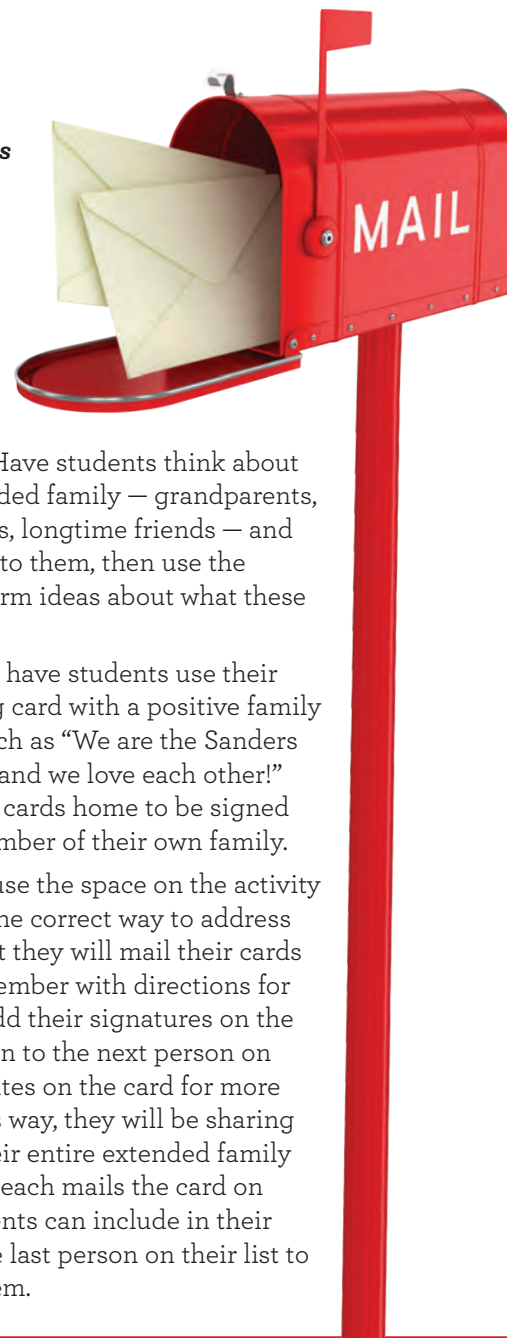
Activity 5 Say It Forward

In this activity, students learn how greeting cards connect two or more people, and how a gift of words builds relationship bonds.

Tell students that today they are going to create a card that connects an entire extended family! Have students think about the people in their extended family — grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, longtime friends — and what these people mean to them, then use the activity sheet to brainstorm ideas about what these family members share.

Pass out blank cards and have students use their ideas to create a greeting card with a positive family message on the front, such as “We are the Sanders family. We are awesome and we love each other!” Have students take their cards home to be signed on the back by every member of their own family.

Pass out envelopes and use the space on the activity sheet to teach students the correct way to address an envelope. Explain that they will mail their cards to an extended family member with directions for that person's family to add their signatures on the back and send the card on to the next person on a list that the student writes on the card for more family signatures. In this way, they will be sharing the gift of words with their entire extended family by “saying it forward” as each mails the card on to the next person. Students can include in their instructions a note to the last person on their list to send the card back to them.



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How life unfolds.

A Timeless Tradition

When you send a greeting card through the mail, you are part of a tradition that stretches back to the ancient Egyptians. They sent each other good luck messages on papyrus scrolls to celebrate the New Year. The Egyptians were also the first people to send messages through the mail, but that was a luxury reserved for rulers. Today, anyone can send a greeting card anywhere in the world.

Do you know someone who could use a good luck message? Send that person a special greeting card that you make yourself. Start by brainstorming some words and phrases you can use to encourage the person and tell them how you feel.



Now, use a blank card to create your greeting card. Follow your teacher's instructions to create a papyrus to glue to the front of your card, and write an encouraging message on the back of your card.



PLACE
STAMP
HERE











Use this space to practice addressing your envelope before you put your card in the mail.

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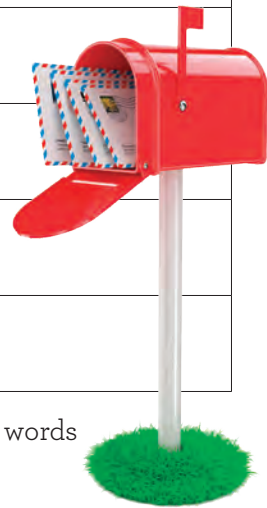
Activity 2 • Reproducible Master

Greeting Cards for All Occasions

Whether you pick out the perfect card at a store or make a card with your own special message, a greeting card is a gift of words. Think about all the different times during the year when we send this gift to someone we care about. Some of these occasions are listed on the chart below. Mark the occasions when you have sent or received a greeting card. Then use your vocabulary skills to brainstorm some words you could use to send a gift of words for each occasion. You can use the back of this sheet to list more occasions when a greeting card is the best way to connect with someone special.



	Sent?	Received?	Words to Use for This Occasion
Birthday			
Thank You			
Get Well			
Valentine's Day			
Mother's Day			
Christmas			



Now follow your teacher's directions to create a special occasion greeting card that will be a true gift of words for someone who is important to you.

Use this space to practice addressing your envelope before you put your card in the mail.

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Thanking Our Heroes

There are heroes in every community. Unscramble these words to identify some of the heroes in your community.

1. lami racreris _____

2. ocepli fcesofir _____

3. getrhifferis _____

4. 191 sorerapot _____

5. yemecgnre cedamil rowreks _____

Can you think of other heroes in your community? Write their names here.

Now choose one of the community heroes named above and follow your teacher's directions to create a Thank You card for that person. How do you think your hero will react after receiving and opening his or her card?



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Our Special Day

America is known for its sometimes silly special days, such as Drinking Straw Day in January or Monkey Day in December. If you could create a special day for your family, what would that day celebrate?



Answer these questions about your special day:

1. What is the name of your special day? _____
2. When is your day celebrated? _____
3. We have fireworks for July 4th, pumpkins for Halloween — what unique images would be associated with your special day?

Now create a greeting card to celebrate your special day with your family. Draw a picture on the front of your card that illustrates the theme of your special day. On the back, write a message about what makes your special day extra-special for your family. Mail your card to your parents as a surprise!

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Say It forward

Think about what makes your extended family special.
Use the questions below to help you brainstorm ideas.

What holidays does your extended family celebrate?
Which holiday is your favorite, and why?

What does your extended family like to do for fun together?

What special traditions does your extended family have? Describe them.

Who are all of the people in your extended family that you want to sign this card?

Follow your teacher's directions to create a "family greeting card" that can be mailed around to your entire family or group of friends.



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to practice
addressing your
envelope before you
put your card in
the mail.

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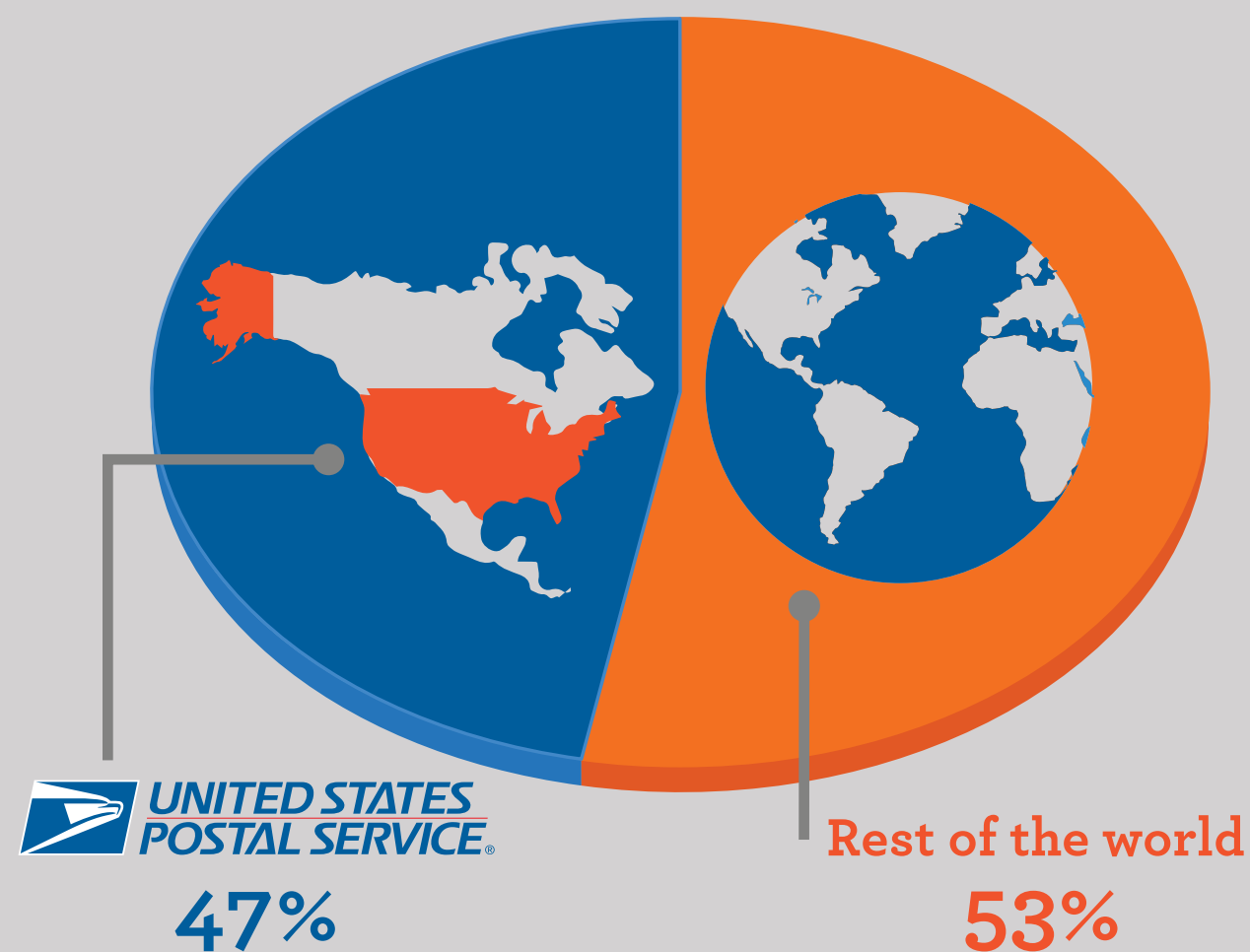
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Did You Know?

The U.S. Postal Service® dates back to 1775, when Benjamin Franklin was named the first Postmaster General.



President Abraham Lincoln was a postmaster in Illinois.



THE U.S. POSTAL SERVICE® DELIVERS NEARLY HALF OF THE WORLD'S MAIL — MORE THAN 500 MILLION PIECES OF MAIL EVERY DAY!



FAMOUS POSTAL WORKERS INCLUDE CHARLES LINDBERGH, WALT DISNEY, AND BILL NYE THE SCIENCE GUY!



Americans mail more than **6 billion greeting cards** each year. That includes:

- **1.6 billion** Christmas cards
- **145 million** Valentine's Day cards
- **133 million** Mother's Day cards
- **90 million** Father's Day cards
- **67 million** Graduation cards
- **57 million** Easter cards
- **21 million** Halloween cards
- **15 million** Thanksgiving cards

Most people receive about 20 greeting cards each year. The world record holder is Craig Shergold, who received **35 million get well cards** from around the globe one year when he was sick.

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