

Name: _____

Class: _____

Giving Thanks

By Joseph Bruchac
2019

Joseph Bruchac is the author of dozens of books for children and young people that celebrate and teach about Native American people. He is a member of the Abenaki nation. A didactic poem is a poem with a clear lesson for the reader. In this didactic poem, Bruchac shares a lesson he learned from Chief Jake Swamp, a leader of the Mohawk, a Native American nation based in New York and Canada. As you read, take notes on things the speaker is thankful for.

*In memory*¹

of Chief Jake Swamp

- [1] Thanksgiving is more
than just one day,
so a Mohawk elder²
said to me.
- [5] Though it is good
that we remember
this time with feasting
each November.
- [10] We need to give thanks
every dawn
for the gifts of life,
for each breath drawn.
- [15] For everything
that keeps us living,
we speak our words
of true thanksgiving.



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1. a way to honor someone who has passed away
2. **Elder** (*noun*) an older person

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. What is the central message of the poem?
 - A. Sharing with others is important.
 - B. It is good to celebrate holidays each year.
 - C. You should always think before you speak.
 - D. We must remember to see each day as a gift.

2. How does the speaker suggest people give thanks?
 - A. by taking deep breaths
 - B. by eating a big meal
 - C. by giving presents
 - D. by saying words

3. The poet begins this poem "*In memory of Chief Jake Swamp*" to show —
 - A. that this is a poem the chief wrote.
 - B. that they wish the chief had been more thankful.
 - C. that this is an important lesson they learned from the chief.
 - D. that they never celebrated Thanksgiving until they met the chief.

4. What does the Mohawk elder mean when they say "Thanksgiving is more / than just one day"?

Discussion Questions

Directions: Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.

1. Do you celebrate Thanksgiving? If you do, how do you celebrate it? Do you agree or disagree with the poem's message that we should say thanks every day and not just one day?
2. What are some things you are thankful for today? As a creative extension, ask students to write a poem about something they are thankful for, using the same didactic style poem with a clear lesson.
3. What are some things that keep us alive that we do not always think about? Do you think about saying thanks to the sun, air, or water? Why or why not? How would it feel to remember to say thanks to these things each day?