

American Gratitude

Quotations from Well-Known Americans
to Spark a Conversation this Thanksgiving

Collected by Rabbi Debra Orenstein

It seems appropriate to turn to Americans for inspiration on this quintessentially American holiday.

Consider attaching a quotation on thankfulness to each person's place card around your Thanksgiving holiday table. You can invite people to share their quotes and/or to experience the holiday through the prism of their randomly selected quotation.

The moment one gives close attention to anything, even a blade of grass, it becomes a mysterious, awesome, indescribably magnificent world in itself.
– Henry Miller

We are all of us from birth to death guests at a table which we did not spread. The sun, the earth, love, friends, our very breath are parts of the banquet.... This day [originally said of Thanksgiving] is a chance to come nearer to our Host, ...who has fed us so long. – Rebecca Harding Davis

Most people return small favors, acknowledge medium one, and repay greater ones – with ingratitude. – Benjamin Franklin

Gratitude is riches. Complaint is poverty. – Doris Day

We can only be said to be alive in those moments when our hearts are conscious of our treasures. – Thornton Wilder

As we express our gratitude, we must never forget that the highest appreciation is not to utter words, but to live by them. – John Fitzgerald Kennedy

For each new morning with its light,
For rest and shelter of the night,
For health and food, for love and friends,
For everything Thy goodness sends.
– Ralph Waldo Emerson

Gratitude is a quality similar to electricity: it must be produced and discharged and used up in order to exist at all. – William Faulkner

We are told that people stay in love because of chemistry, or because they remain intrigued with each other, because of many kindnesses, because of luck. But part of it has got to be forgiveness and gratefulness. – Ellen Goodman

What you focus on expands, and when you focus on the goodness in your life, you create more of it. Opportunities, relationships, even money flowed my way when I learned to be grateful no matter what happened in my life. – Oprah Winfrey

On Thanksgiving Day, we acknowledge our dependence. – William Jennings Bryan

Be grateful...It's the only totally reliable get-rich-quick scheme. – Ben Stein