

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY / Grades 9-12

Legacy Leaves: What Will Grow Because of Me?

Inspired by *Good Things* by Maryah Greene

Explanation of Activity

High school students are increasingly aware of their identities, values, and the lasting impact of relationships—both past and present. In *Good Things*, Malcolm learns that Pops' love and lessons live on through the plants he cared for.

This activity asks students to consider the legacy someone has left in them—and the legacy they, too, want to grow. It's a reflection on remembrance, responsibility, and growth through grief.



Amazon Link



YouTube
Read Along



Objective

Students will reflect on how they've been shaped by someone they've lost—or someone who has had a meaningful influence on them—and how they might carry that person's legacy forward. They'll create a "Legacy Leaf" to symbolize the continuation of those lessons, values, or actions. This fosters introspection, emotional expression, and a sense of purpose and connection.

Materials

- *Good Things* By Maryah Greene (book)
- Blank leaf templates or blank paper
- Pens, markers, or colored pencils
- Optional: branches, twine, or poster board for a "Legacy Tree" wall
- Optional: journaling notebooks

 **Duration**
45-60 minutes

 **Theme**
Grief, Identity, and Legacy

Ways to Use This Lesson

1. Foster Identity Exploration Through Legacy

This lesson is ideal for classrooms exploring identity, personal narrative, values, or community impact. It can complement units in English Language Arts (memoir writing), Social Studies (intergenerational stories or cultural traditions), or Health (emotional development).

2. Encourage Creative Expression

Invite students to express their reflections in different ways: words, drawings, quotes, or symbols. Emphasize that there's no "right way" to honor someone's legacy. The flexibility of the Legacy Leaf makes it adaptable to a wide range of creative styles and comfort levels.

3. Build Classroom Connection

If appropriate, invite students to share their leaves with one another or contribute to a communal "Legacy Tree." This visual installation can help reduce isolation, spark meaningful conversations, and create a shared space of remembrance and inspiration.

4. Extend the Activity Beyond the Day

This lesson can launch a longer project around legacy-building, personal mission statements, or acts of service. Students can write companion letters to the person who inspired their leaf or journal regularly on how they are living out those values.

5. Support Grief-Informed Teaching Practices

This activity is an opportunity to model grief-informed classroom practices; normalizing discussion of loss, offering creative outlets for complex emotions, and helping students see their stories as worthy of reflection and growth.

Activity Introduction

Introduction (5–10 minutes)

Begin by introducing Children's Grief Awareness Day and the themes of *Good Things*.

You can say:

"In *Good Things*, Malcolm learns that caring for something—a plant, a memory—can help keep a connection alive. Today, we're going to reflect on the impact others leave on us... and what we hope to leave behind in the lives of others."

Ask:

- "Who has helped shape the person you are today?"
- "What lessons or values did they give you?"
- "How do you want to grow from that?"

Writing & Creative Expression

(25–30 minutes)

1. Reflect:

Invite students to choose one of the following prompts:

- Someone I've lost left behind...
- A lesson or value I carry because of them is...
- I want to grow...
- One day, I hope someone says I taught them...

2. Create a "Legacy Leaf":

- Have each student write or illustrate their chosen message on a leaf.
- Encourage them to be honest—this could be a word, phrase, quote, drawing, or symbol.

3. Optional Extension:

- Students can write a short letter to the person who inspired their leaf, or journal about how they've changed because of them.

Sharing & Closing

(10–15 minutes)

Legacy Tree Installation (Optional):

- Create a "Legacy Tree" by taping leaves to a bulletin board or poster board, or hanging them on twine with clothespins. This visual installation can remain up for a week as a shared reflection space.

Discussion Questions

- "What does it mean to grow from grief?"
- "What do we want others to remember or carry forward from us?"
- "How do our actions plant something in someone else?"

Closing Thought

Share this quote from *Good Things*:

"Good things take time."

Ask students to take a breath and think about what they want to grow next—in themselves, and in honor of those they carry.



If you are interested in more lesson plans and activities like this one, please reach out to us and ask about:

- **Routes to Resilience**, a social and emotional learning program that is for all students to build emotional intelligence, resilience, and empathy.
- **Good Grief Groups**, a peer support program for grieving students in school, or
- **Grief for Health Educators**, a training and curriculum to support schools implementing the recent New Jersey Grief Bill.

Learn more: goodgriefschools.org



