

Audience Grade 9 Art and Drama

I feel this story lends itself to an exploration of each student's personal values as well as allowing for an exploration of discovering what kind of person they want to be. The story has its roots with the Cherokee people and has been told for many generations.

It is as follows:

One evening an old Cherokee told his grandson about a debate that goes on inside people. "My son," he said, "the battle is between two 'wolves' inside us all.

One is Evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, false pride, superiority, and ego.

The other is Good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith."

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: "Which wolf wins?"

The old Cherokee simply replied, "The one you feed."

After the story has been read to the class, students will be asked to individually make a list of 5 examples when they are the 'good wolf' (personal thinking first). They will be given 3 minutes to do so, then they will share their list with a partner with the goal of adding 2 more examples to their list. The process will be repeated to give examples of when they are the "evil wolf". Following this we will regroup as a whole class and list on the board their examples of when they exhibit 'good' and 'evil' behaviours. This brainstorming activity should be accomplished in one period.

The following afternoon, a double period will be provided for students to create two masks – one representing 'good' and the other representing 'evil'. Students will be provided with plain cardboard plates, popsicle sticks, paints, pastels, markers, sequins, bits of fabric, lace, feathers, glue, etc. in order to create their own unique masks.

On the third day of this activity, students will find a partner and role play their 'good' and 'evil' sides using their masks. This should take no more than 15 minutes. After the role play, students will be asked to sit in a circle, with their masks, and make any comments regarding how they felt about the process and why they chose to represent themselves as they did (color, texture, etc.)

As a final part of this lesson, students will be asked to write a 3 paragraph reflection on what they have learned through this process. Paragraph one should talk about the 'good', paragraph two about the 'evil', and paragraph three about what they have learned about themselves and how they feel about that.

Reflection on Activity

When I first read this story, I fell in love with it and knew exactly what I wanted to do with it. I really like the concept of teaching students that, as human beings we are multifaceted, complex beings and that they have a choice as to what kind of person they want to be. The story is very short and students had no difficulty comprehending its essential message and staying focused throughout its telling.

The students found the first activity fairly simple – most were able to fairly easily generate their individual lists of 5 examples of ‘good’ and ‘evil’. As well most were able to add to their list of examples once they had exchanged ideas with a partner. The listing of ideas/examples on the board produced lively cooperation – everyone wanted their example on the board and I wrote them all down.

The construction of the masks was, as expected, very successful. All students enjoyed the activity and some masks were exceptionally creative. I circulated through the class, while constructing my own masks, asking why they had chosen a particular color or medium. I feel it was important for me to be seen constructing my own masks and taking part in the process. When it came time to sit in a circle and reflect on the process or any feelings they had, several students expressed surprise that when they thought about it, there was a specific reason why certain colors and materials were chosen. Several expressed that they were uncomfortable with expressing their ‘evil’ side.

Their final reflections were very similar to what was expressed in our circle time. Many expressed the fact that creating the mask began as very difficult, but during the process it took on a ‘life of its own’. They indicated that upon further reflection and the passage of some time, certain aspects of their masks had more meaning than they were initially aware of.

I had a dual purpose in designing this lesson. In my role as a support services teacher, I used this lesson with a group of grade nine students to establish a rapport with them and get to know them both individually and as a group. My second purpose was to have them realize they are not alone in their feelings, thoughts, questions and actions. I am not entirely certain to what extent I was successful, but I feel I have more of a connection to these students – they freely come and talk to me.

My goal in using this story and accompanying art/drama activity was to help students realize that all people have the potential for both good and evil. The story was the springboard and the masks helped provide a safe environment in which to explore the multiple aspects of personality. As Oscar Wilde so aptly said, “Man is least himself when he talks in his own person. Give him a mask, and he will tell you the truth.”