

Power of Myth

Lesson 5: Mythic Dualities: Good and Evil

3.4.2018

Objectives: Exploring mythic dualities of good and evil.

Materials: Swat-off words, paper/pencil, laptop/DVD, lesson attachment, clipboards.

Time allotments suggested and meant to be adapted for **75 minute class**.

1. Nametags and Graffiti Wall (5 minutes before class begins)

- Make nametags using blank paper, markers, and holders. Youth can create their own unique but LEGIBLE nametag. Make it a regular practice to wear nametags.
- “Graffiti Wall” questions: Write the following on whiteboard. Invite youth as they arrive to grab a marker and weigh in with their responses:
 - ▶ Which of your friends is closest to being your opposite?
 - ▶ Name a famous couple that seems like an example of “opposites attract.”
- Teachers complete attendance sheets.

2. Silly Fun: Swat-Off Opposites (5 minutes max)

Youth gather in circle on the floor. Spread words (attached) around the floor in the center of the circle. Give two youth sitting opposite each other flyswatters. Say the OPPOSITE of one of the words below (in parentheses). The first youth to swat the opposite word gets to keep his or her flyswatter for another turn. The slower of the youth passes their flyswatter to the person on the left. Keep reading and swatting, passing the flyswatter around and dueling different youth.

Swat-off words: (teacher reads the word in parentheses; repeating is fine)

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|--------------------|-----------------|--------------------|
| • Clean (Dirty) | • Light (Dark) | • Narrow (Wide) |
| • Cold (Hot) | • Loud (Quiet) | • Kind (Mean) |
| • Easy (Difficult) | • Old (Young) | • Male (Female) |
| • Wealthy (Poor) | • Slow (Fast) | • Start (Finish) |
| • Death (Life) | • Small (Large) | • Sick (Healthy) |
| • High (Low) | • True (False) | • Safe (Dangerous) |
| • Weak (Strong) | • Tall (Short) | • Wise (Foolish) |

3. **Chalice Lighting:** Light the chalice, saying these words together: “*We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith; the light of truth and the warmth of love.*”

Teacher reads: (from Elie Wiesel, Romanian Holocaust survivor, author, and Nobel Peace Laureate)

“The opposite of love is not hate, it’s indifference. The opposite of art is not ugliness, it’s indifference. The opposite of faith is not heresy, it’s indifference. And the opposite of life is not death, it’s indifference.”

4. **Joys and Sorrows** (10 minutes): Listening is a precious gift that we offer one another at church. Using the balance scale and the blue (sorrows) and yellow (joys) stones, invite youth to share a joy and/or a sorrow from the past week, as a way of *meeting* one another with our lives and *sharing* in community. You will want to set limits (e.g. two stones max per person) so that no one monopolizes sharing time.

Each Sunday, a copy of the congregation’s *Embracing Meditation* will be made available to your class. Share this information, putting in stones for those whose names are being spoken in the Sanctuary.

5. **Mythic Dualities in Films** (10 minutes)

Teacher summarizes: Dualities are pairs of opposites, and they often appear in myths as symbols. The stark contrast makes it easier to notice differences: between good and evil *characters*, between making a good or bad *decision*, between the extremes of the human experience that myths are so good at revealing. Sometimes, such duality is expressed in the changes in setting: the myth moves from a lush jungle forest into a barren desert. Sometimes, such duality appears in character portrayals: the tall, strong hero standing over the shorter, weaker sidekick (e.g. Batman and Robin). Sometimes, the duality is expressed in a challenging task that demands the hero become the opposite of what s/he is (e.g. man concealed as woman, king disguised as pauper, living hero who ventures into the land of the dead.)

Such dualities signal that we are likely listening to a myth, with **archetypal** categories (or fundamental human categories that seem to transcend geographical, historical, or cultural differences); categories that help us better see the human experience.

6. **Screening: Return of the Jedi** (35 minutes)

Give each youth some paper, pencil, and a writing surface. You will watch several chapters of *Return of the Jedi* together, taking notes and making a list of elements **that play as dualities in the film** —e.g. dualities in characters, settings, plot elements, etc.

- Watch chapters 18 (*The Emperor’s Instructions*) through 28 (Luke Surrenders)
- Invite youth to briefly share some mythic dualities they identified.

7. **Five-Minute Scramble** (15 Minutes)

Get youth into groups of three. Their task will be to choose a film, or any in series of films (*Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, *Lion King*, or *Lord of the Rings*) and complete an inventory of dualities in 5 minutes that will be timed (see attached). Youth should think of the setting, characters, plot, and more when looking for pairs of opposites. Remind them to be specific: not just that characters are opposite, but that one is short and another tall, one an old man and the other a young boy. Every duality they can find counts!

- But note: mythic dualities are *not just any* random opposites we see, but function as an **important** element in the myth.)
- Invite groups to share however many mythic dualities they found in their film.

Discussion questions:

- How does the pairing of opposites make these movies more interesting?
- Would it affect the story if C-3PO and R2-D2 were the same? Both on wheels? Both able to talk?
- Would it affect the story if Hermione's character was male? If Ron Weasley's family was wealthy?
- What if Frodo was a tall, heroic man? What if Gandalf were short like Yoda?

8. **Say goodbye until next time:** Extinguish the chalice, saying together:

"May the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts."

9. **Help clean up classroom** before leaving: Please keep regular practice of readying classroom for the next class.

- leave lesson plan and all materials organized
- return blue/yellow stones to containers
- wipe the whiteboard clean
- tables and chairs neatly returned
- nametags collected in Ziploc bag
- leave any comments for RE staff on attendance sheets