

JOURNEY IN... YEAR THREE ON BEING HUMAN ART

This lesson's Big Ideas:

- Being human means having a capacity to speak and do both good and evil things and plenty of things in-between.
- Good and evil aren't forces that can exist in a vacuum. They are consequences of our actions which are influenced by many factors in our lives. We have to live with the consequences of all our actions, both good and evil and everywhere in between.
- Unitarian Universalists commit themselves to discerning good from evil using our own hearts and minds and to standing on the side of goodness and love.

TEACHER REFLECTION AND PREPARATION

🕒 Ahead of time

Even on this small stage we have our two sides, and something might be done by throwing all one's weight on the scale of breadth, tolerance, charity, temperance, peace, and kindness to man and beast. We can't all strike very big blows, and even the little ones count for something.

- Sir Arthur Conan Doyle

"Are there, infinitely varying with each individual, inbred forces of Good and Evil in all of us, deep down below the reach of mortal encouragement and mortal repression - hidden Good and hidden Evil, both alike at the mercy of the liberating opportunity and the sufficient temptation?"

- Wilkie Collins

"The forces that tend for evil are great and terrible, but the forces of truth and love and courage and honesty and generosity and sympathy are also stronger than ever before."

"War with evil; but show no spirit of malignity toward the man who may be responsible for the evil. Put it out of his power to do wrong."

- Theodore Roosevelt

"It is a man's own mind, not his enemy or foe, that lures him to evil ways." —

-Siddhartha Buddha

"Men do not differ much about what things they will call evils; they differ enormously about what evils they will call excusable."

- GK Chesterton

"All that is required for evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing."

- Edmund Burke

Reflect on your own perspective on good and evil. What has your life taught you about human nature? Do any of the above ideas conflict with or reflect your own beliefs? As a Unitarian Universalist, what is your relationship to these forces, to the struggle between them, both within and without?

Lesson Materials

- Construction paper, 18" x 26"
- Glue or glue sticks
- Scissors, including art-edge scissors if available
- Wire clothes hangers or paper towel tubes
- Yarn
- Magazines, especially children's magazines and current event magazines
- Images of artistic renderings of the Cain and Abel story (2 or 3 are enough)

GATHERING AND FOCUSING

🕒 5-8 minutes

In this unit, we're talking about good and evil as capacities that all human beings confront in themselves. We'll start by exploring art images of the Judeo-Christian story of Cain and Abel, an archetypal story of choosing between goodness and evil.

Select two or three from among the following works, showing them to the class and discussing the works

- Cain and Abel, Kelmscott, Oxfordshire, c 1280. Medieval Wall Painting in the English Parish Church.
- Cain and Abel, Titian, c 1576. Religious Studies 15, Stanford University.
- The Body of Abel Found by Adam and Eve, William Blake, c 1826.
- Cain and Abel, Gustave Doré, 1866.
- Adam and Abel, Leon J.F. Bonnat, c 1900. Lutheran Brotherhood's Collection of Religious Art
- Cain and Abel, Marc Chagall, 1931. Genesis Reconsidered, Time. Com.Cain and Abel, Archie Rand, contemporary. Bernice Steinbaum Gallery.
- Cain and Abel, stained glass at Sacred Heart, Jersey City. stainedglassphotography.com.
- Death of Abel, Tracey Clarke, 1994.
- Cain and Abel, Wayne Forte, 2004

(This list comes from http://www.textweek.com/art/cain_and_abel.htm)

YOUR FIELD EXPERIENCES: FEEDBACK AND NOTES

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PRIMARY ACTIVITY ONE HUMAN ART: COLLAGES OF GOODNESS AND EVIL

🕒 40-45 minutes

In our exploration of good and evil, we'll use collage art to visualize humanity capacity for choice. The final product will be different for each child, but we'll offer them some options to get them started. We'll only ask them to meet one requirement: wherever they make a collage of images of goodness, on the flip side of that collage, they should make a collage of images of evil. They may choose to make a Möbius strip (above) of images or a mobile of hanging



TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL LESSON

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Steps to write on the board or a flip chart:

1. Pick one: mobile or möbius .
2. Pick construction paper colors.
3. Cut shapes for mobile or long strip for möbius.
4. Cut and sort pictures.
5. Glue pictures and words on!!
6. Assemble möbius or mobile.
7. Clean up!

images of goodness and evil and things in between. Feel free to use a pre-made model of these projects as an example. The artistic freedom for the children will lie in their ability to select and arrange images according to their own ideas and aesthetic preferences.

Materials

- **For a möbius strip:** Provide each child with one or two strips of construction paper, cut to dimensions of about 6" by 24". To make a longer strip, two shorter strips can be glued or taped together.
- **For a mobile:** Provide each child with a hanger or a paper towel tube to serve as the rigid structure of the mobile. Allow each child to select strips or squares of one or two colors of construction paper onto which they will glue their images.

Process

- Throughout the activity, consider discouraging the use of the colors black and white as symbols to help to prevent negative associations that spill over into race issues.
- Give the children access to scissors (art edge scissors for scrapbooking are extra fun and can be expressive), glue and stacks of magazines. We'll use magazines with images of current events. Teachers and parents may choose to limit the graphic nature of images provided to younger children.
- As the children select their words and images, have them sort them into piles of goodness and evil. On one side of the posterboard, glue the images of goodness and on the other side, the images of evil.
- Encourage the class to think of collage as a true form of artistic expression. Like a photographer, we can choose our composition. We can pick which images get the most space, which are next to each other. We can use color and words to make it look just so. Collage art is more than cutting and gluing.

Assembly

- **For möbius:** When all the images are glued onto the posterboard strips, we'll glue them back to back. By twisting the ends a single turn and stapling them together, we'll create a möbius strip, an endless link that shows the connection between goodness and evil. (Older children may be capable of sorting images along a spectrum, placing pictures and words in the 'gray' areas between good and evil. If they choose, they can put the strongest images in the center of the strips and the more ambiguous images toward the end. When connected in a möbius strip, the ideas will be close to a continuum.)
- **For mobile:** Poke a hole through each mobile shape. Tie yarn through the hole and hang the shape from the hanger or paper towel tube. Making the yarn for each shape a different length adds interest.
- After cleaning up, gather the artists together for sharing and discussion.

Wondering Together

- What does it mean to you if you hear someone say that everyone has a capacity for goodness and for evil?
- Do you think this idea gives us an excuse to be unkind or unfair?
- I wonder if this person in the picture here could go on to do something good? Something unkind, unfair or even evil?
- I wonder what images you selected to show goodness? To show evil?
- I wonder if the *people* in the pictures are good people or evil people? How do we know? How do we decide?
- I wonder how some of these pictures and words made you feel?
- I wonder how Unitarian Universalists should face evil in the world? What can we do about the evil that people can commit (even we ourselves!)?
- I wonder how Unitarian Universalists can create more good in the world?
- I wonder how you work with your own good and bad nature? How do you make choices between the two, good and evil?
- Do you think there are evil things that we could stop from happening in your lifetime? How?
- Do you think that certain people are more good than other people? Why or why not?

CLOSING AND LEAVE-TAKING

🕒 2 minutes

Gather in a circle, take each other's hands and speak these words responsively, teacher beginning and children responding:

Inside us all is a seed of hate and a seed of love

I will water the seed of love.

Inside us all is a seed of anger and a seed of calm

I will water the seed of calm

Inside us all is a seed of violence and a seed of peace

I will water the seed of peace

Inside us all is a seed of evil and a seed of good

I will water the seed of good

- inspired by the teachings of Thich Nhat Hanh