

THE BEAST WITHIN

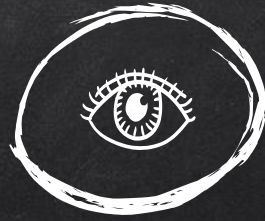
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EDSE 501: Evil Education

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EVIL EDUCATION LESSON PLANS

For the Introduction of the Philosophy of Evil
Connecting Historical & Current Events in Social Studies to
the Literature Study of William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*



CONTEXT

- ↕ These lessons are specific to making connections between *Lord of the Flies*, as studied in ELA, and understanding past and current events as discussed in Social Studies. These lessons were created thinking of students from grades 9–12.
- ↕ These lessons will be a very brief introduction into philosophy discussing the theories of Arendt and Badiou. I believe these theories, of the banality of evil and of evil as a process, complement each other, along with Golding's novel, as a way for students to begin to make sense of the world, and their own worldviews.



BACKGROUND

- ↕ The students will need to have read far enough into the novel to have discussed this quotation in ELA class. Beginning this crossover unit could begin when the quotation is discussed in class, if the ELA teacher wants to collaborate, or it could start after the students have finished the novel, so as not to have any spoilers, and/or if the ELA teachers chooses not to collaborate with this mini-unit.
- ↕ These lessons are not to be full block lessons, but rather smaller portions of some very big concepts.



WARNING

- ↓↑ These activities and discussions could be very upsetting for students (and yourself), so be sure to take your time, discuss respectful discourse, and be aware of any “self-esteem threats” (when a person’s worldview is threatened) that appear in yourself or your students.
- ↓↑ Ask students to be gentle with themselves, as well as with others, and let them know that you are available for private discussion if it is needed.



WARNING

The sad truth is that most evil is done by people who never make up their minds to be good or evil.

QUOTEHD.COM

Hannah Arendt
German Historian

These mini-lessons will be intense. Be prepared for big opinions and big emotions. Also be prepared for deafening silence -- try to avoid filling that silence, as the students likely need time to think about concepts they've never encountered.



CROSS-OVER ACTIVITY ~ LESSON 1

- ↕ Start with the quotation on the board, or with the clip of the quotation (or several clips from the movie of the discussion of the beast and evil within).
- ↕ Ask the students to look within themselves to find an event in their own lives where the beast was within themselves. Have them write (privately), trying to objectively describe just what happened when the beast arose.



... maybe there is a beast ...
maybe it's only us.

— William Golding,
Lord of the Flies



CROSS-OVER ACTIVITY ~ LESSON 2

- ↕ Next class, again start with the quotation on the board, but this time, ask the students to write about an incident they were involved in, from the perspective of the person hurt by someone else's beast. (This could be the same situation as previous, or new)
- ↕ Now show a news report or article about a current (or historical event), where the beast arose (ex: mob mentality at/after sports games, as this is a less triggering event).



CROSS-OVER ACTIVITY ~ LESSON 2 CONT'D

- ↓↑ Ask the students to describe why and how events like this occur. Discuss different ideas, keeping a safe place for thoughts and ideas. (Keep a list of ideas in a Google Slides deck for future discussion.)
- ↓↑ Then, ask the students to think about their own beast moment (as the beast or as the victim), and then write (privately), describing how and why it they think it occurred.
- ↓↑ Be sure to circulate and check in with students (without reading over their shoulders), as this could be intense introspection, depending on the situation they are thinking about.



CROSS-OVER ACTIVITY ~ LESSON 3

- ↕ Now introduce more quotations by Golding, as they will be familiar with his novel and writing.
- ↕ With each one, discuss what he meant, and if they can think of any historical or current events that relate to his quotations. Again keeping notes/ideas/comments in a Slide deck that can be shared with the class for future discussion/reference.

“

WILLIAM
GOLDING,
LORD OF THE
FLIES

MY BOOK WAS TO SAY:
YOU THINK THAT NOW
THE [SECOND WORLD
WAR] IS OVER AND AN
EVIL THING DESTROYED,
YOU ARE SAFE BECAUSE
YOU ARE NATURALLY
KIND AND DECENT.

BUT I KNOW WHY
THE THING ROSE
IN GERMANY. I
KNOW IT COULD
HAPPEN IN ANY
COUNTRY.

“

GOLDING

THE BEAST WAS
HARMLESS AND
HORRIBLE; AND THE
NEWS MUST REACH
THE OTHERS AS
SOON AS POSSIBLE.



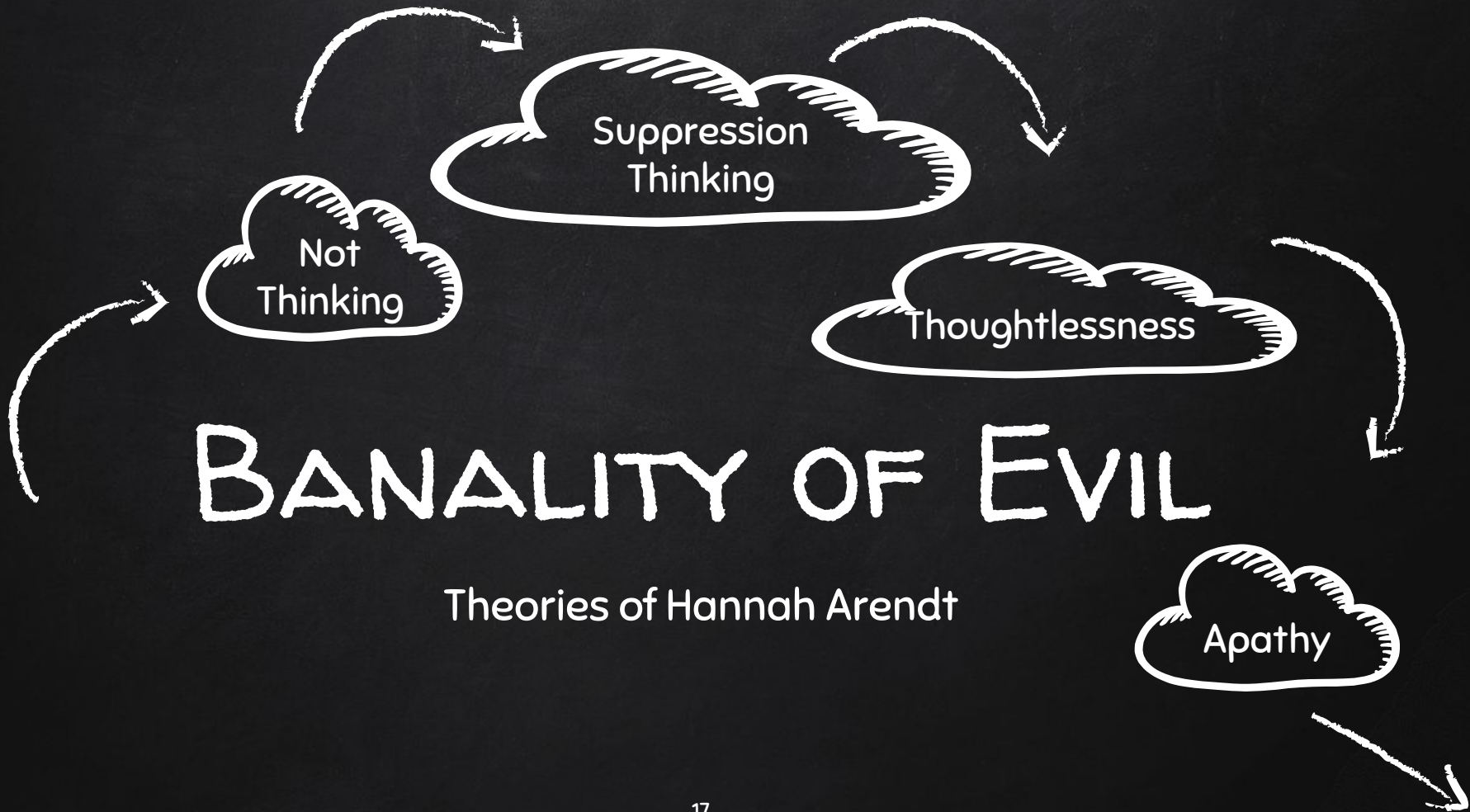
CROSS-OVER ACTIVITY ~ LESSON 3 CONT'D

- ↕ The above Golding quotations will need to be unpacked with the students, because depending on grade level, their knowledge and understanding of the Second World War may be limited.
- ↕ The discussion may naturally move (or you can nudge it) into other historical or current events that could correlate with Golding's thoughts.
- ↕ Resist the temptation to guide the students to a particular worldview, and let them grapple with the ideas.



PHILOSOPHY DISCUSSION ~ LESSON 4

- ↕ Now it's time to introduce some philosophy! You can give a brief explanation of worldview and epistemology, depending on the maturity of your class, but it is not required.
- ↕ For the discussion on Arendt's "banality of evil", you may choose to introduce the quotations first, or begin with a clip from *The Eichmann Show* (keeping in mind the mature language and difficult content from that movie).





THE BANALITY OF EVIL

HANNAH ARENDT

Eichmann on Trial

- ↕↑ Arendt verbalised the theory of the banality of evil after reporting on the trial of Adolf Eichmann, a Nazi war criminal who was tried in Israel, 16 years after the end of World War II.
- ↕↑ She was widely criticised as “victim blaming” because she saw Eichmann as banal rather than as purely evil.

Eichmann on Trial

- ↕↑ Ultimately, Arendt was likely incorrect regarding Eichmann’s banality, BUT her theory applies to most of the atrocities committed, not only during WWII, but also in all actions deemed “evil”, where otherwise banal people commit evil, and otherwise innocent bystanders “fail to uphold the good” as stated by Badiou.

“

ARENDT

...IN A WORLD THAT
PRODUCED THE
DEATH CAMPS, THE
IMPOSSIBLE BECAME
TRUE.

“

ARENDT

TOTALITARIAN SOLUTIONS MAY
WELL SURVIVE THE FALL OF
TOTALITARIAN REGIMES IN THE
FORM OF STRONG
TEMPTATIONS THAT WILL COME
UP WHENEVER IT SEEMS
IMPOSSIBLE TO ELIMINATE
POLITICAL, SOCIAL OR
ECONOMIC MISERY IN A
MANNER WORTHY OF MAN.



THE EICHMANN SHOW



- ↕ Preview and show clips from the 2015 movie: *The Eichmann Show*, which is about the filming of his trial.
- ↕ It is graphic and does include coarse language, so teachers will want to preview, pre-discuss, and edit as needed.



THE EICHMANN SHOW



The main character, Leo Hurwitz, often seems to have the same sentiment that Arendt did – that Eichmann **MUST** have had humanity inside, and that his actions were those of a banal follower, not that of an evil mastermind.



THE EICHMANN SHOW

Banal

While it appears from his testimony and presence in the War that Eichmann was a banal follower, later history would shine a light on perhaps more evil intentions than what Arendt had witnessed and hypothesised.

Apathetic

And this new information actually flows well into Badiou's theory that apathy is violent. Badiou believed that evil is not its own thing; evil is a failure to find/uphold the good.

Process

So perhaps Eichmann had been banal, and then apathy led to failure to uphold the good. "Evil in this case is to want, at all costs and under condition of a truth, to force the naming of the unnameable."

Badiou



PHILOSOPHY DISCUSSION ~ LESSON 4 CONT'D

- ↓↑ Again, these discussions could be very upsetting for students, so be sure to take your time, but also be aware of any “self-esteem threats” that appear in yourself or your students.
- ↓↑ This is heavy discussion about the nature of evil and the evil within, so it may be a good idea to end the lesson with a discussion of the following quotation(s).



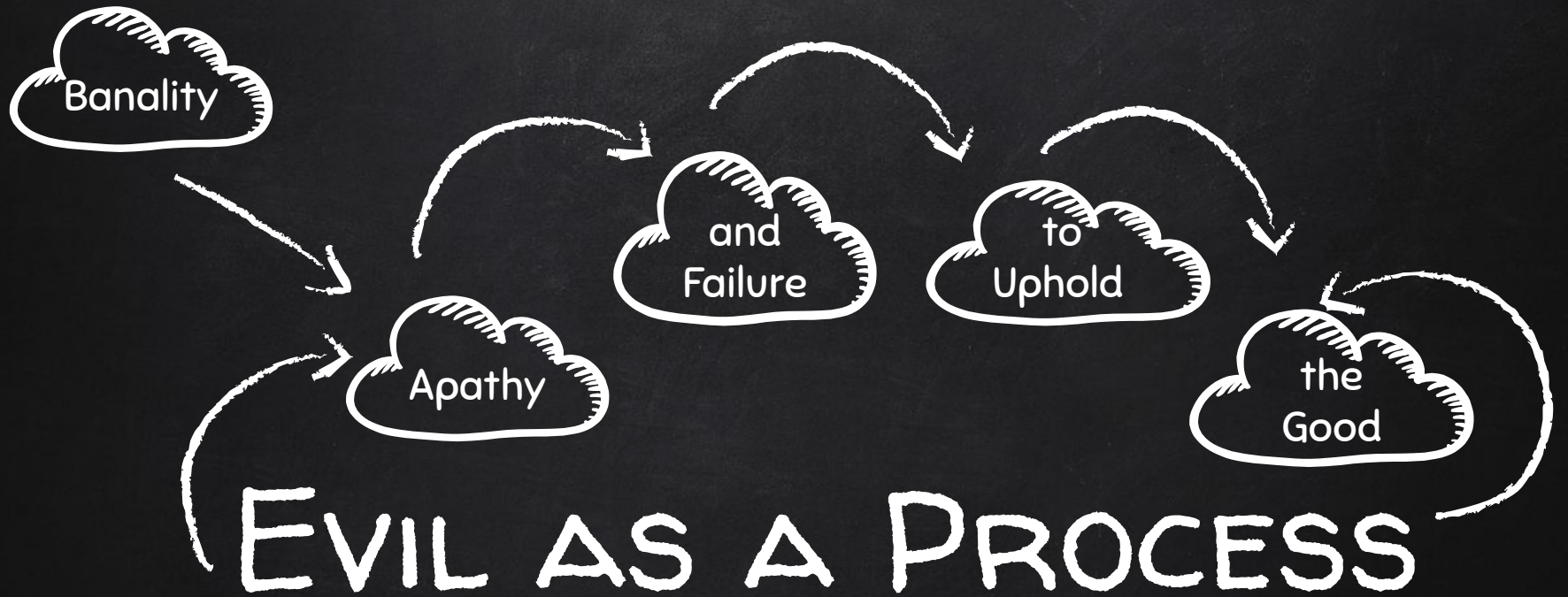
PHILOSOPHY DISCUSSION ~ LESSON 4 CONT'D

- ↕ Flip back and forth between the Golding and Arendt quotations (slides 13 & 14 and 19 & 20) and see where the discussion leads. The students will likely have many questions, and even some opinions, on what happened.
- ↕ It will likely be beneficial to end this lesson with a discussion of people who chose NOT to be apathetic and CHOSE to uphold the good (ie: Dutch resistance, Schindler, modern examples).



PHILOSOPHY DISCUSSION ~ LESSON 5

- ↕ At the end of lesson 4, hopefully the class was able to brainstorm some examples of people who chose not to apathetically turn a blind eye or to not thoughtlessly follow along.
- ↕ The quotation on slide 28 is likely to raise some heated class discussions, which could range from what kids should do when they see fighting on the playground, to what individuals, and in fact other countries did (or did not do) in the face of Hitler's atrocities. Be prepared to navigate these discussions in a respectful manner.



Theories of Alain Badiou

“

DEN HEYER
&
VAN KESSEL

“BEING PASSIVE, OR
THE DESIRE TO REMAIN
UNAWARE OF THE
REPERCUSSIONS OF
OUR ACTIONS OR
INACTIONS IS JUST AS
DESTRUCTIVE AS
ACTIVE
PARTICIPATION.”



PHILOSOPHY DISCUSSION ~ LESSON 5 CONT'D

- ↕ Next will be an introduction into Badiou's thoughts of evil as a process, which tie in nicely with the previous Golding/Arendt discussion.
- ↕ Badiou's theories will likely be too in depth for most students, so focus on the progression of the abject apathy and the thoughtless following that create the circumstances which allow the evil-doers the space for their atrocities.



EVIL AS A PROCESS

ALAIN BADIOU

“Evil is not its own thing... ..evil is a failure to find and uphold good.”

↓↑ When we view a person or deed as evil, we again distance ourselves from the possibility of evil in our own actions.

↓↑ We view these people inherently evil, with evil intent, as a way to separate ourselves from their actions AND the circumstances that led to the possibility of these actions in our own lives.

↓↑ When we think of evil as a process, we acknowledge the circumstances that allowed for the evil to grow, and we acknowledge that ordinary people are involved in both the circumstances AND the actions, despite having no evil intent.



ACTIVITY LESSONS ~ LESSON 6

- ↕ The next slides will discuss various quotations from Arendt, Golding, and Badiou that are related to Golding's novel, historical events, and the theories from both Arendt and Badiou.
- ↕ Students will need time to digest the quotations. It will likely be best to start with Golding quotations, as some of his ideas will be familiar to them from ELA classes.



ACTIVITY LESSONS ~ LESSON 6, 7, & 8 CONT'D

- ↕↑ These can be quicker “starter” discussions, not entire-class lessons. Thoughts for the students to ponder as they learn about historical and current events.
- ↕↑ Perhaps one quotation per day, where the students write “exit slips” about their thoughts regarding the quotations and the ensuing discussions.



“

— WILLIAM
GOLDING

BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD
WAR I BELIEVED IN THE
PERFECTIBILITY OF SOCIAL
MAN; THAT A CORRECT
STRUCTURE OF SOCIETY WOULD
PRODUCE GOODWILL; AND THAT
THEREFORE YOU COULD
REMOVE ALL SOCIAL ILLS BY A
REORGANISATION OF SOCIETY...

BUT AFTER THE WAR I DID
NOT BECAUSE I WAS UNABLE
TO. I HAD DISCOVERED WHAT
ONE MAN COULD DO TO
ANOTHER... I MUST SAY THAT
ANYONE WHO MOVED
THROUGH THOSE YEARS
WITHOUT UNDERSTANDING
THAT MAN PRODUCES EVIL
AS A BEE PRODUCES HONEY,
MUST HAVE BEEN BLIND OR
WRONG IN THE HEAD...

“

— HANNAH
ARENDT,
EICHMANN IN
JERUSALEM:
A REPORT ON
THE BANALITY
OF EVIL

GOOD CAN BE RADICAL;
EVIL CAN NEVER BE
RADICAL, IT CAN ONLY BE
EXTREME, FOR IT
POSSESSES NEITHER DEPTH
NOR ANY DEMONIC
DIMENSION YET--AND THIS
IS ITS HORROR--

IT CAN SPREAD LIKE A
FUNGUS OVER THE
SURFACE OF THE
EARTH AND LAY
WASTE THE ENTIRE
WORLD. EVIL COMES
FROM A FAILURE TO
THINK

“

— ALAIN
BADIOU

EVIL IS THE
INTERRUPTION OF A
TRUTH BY THE
PRESSURE OF
PARTICULAR OR
INDIVIDUAL
INTERESTS.

EVIL IS THE MOMENT
WHEN I LACK THE
STRENGTH TO BE
TRUE TO THE GOOD
THAT COMPELS ME.



PROJECT LESSONS ~ LESSON 9

- ↕ Now it is time for the students to synthesise what they have been discussing, and apply it to other situations.
- ↕ Students will research a historical or current event and view it through the Golding/Arendt/Badiou tri-focal lens, focusing *not* on a retelling of the event, but rather, focusing on both what went wrong and what went right (or what could have been done differently).



PROJECT LESSONS ~ LESSON 10

- ↕ The historical or current event could be their choice, or perhaps both could be presented over the course of the next few weeks; typically 2-3 short presentations per day.
- ↕ Students can do some research on topics, and then sign up with the teacher so that topics are not repeated, although some repetition may be needed, and perhaps even beneficial to see the events from different perspectives.



PROJECT LESSONS ~ LESSON 10 CONT'D

- ↓↑ Students will likely need to be discouraged from choosing to focus on the Holocaust as a whole, and perhaps Eichmann, as these topics were the main focus of the mini-lessons preceding.
- ↓↑ However, students, in consultation with their teacher, could pick certain specific instances from WWII for their presentation.
- ↓↑ You will need to create a rubric that matches your school/district's assessment plan, but there is one in the next slide as an example.

PRESENTATION RUBRIC

	Excellent	Proficient	Acceptable
Content	Event chosen is very well suited to the assignment, and described with all relevant details and information.	Event chosen is well suited to the assignment, and described with some relevant details and information.	Event chosen is not well suited to the assignment, and described with almost no relevant details and information.
Analysis	Provides an insightful analysis of the event with regards to the banality of evil and evil as a process.	Provides a meaningful analysis of the event with regards to the banality of evil and evil as a process.	Provides a simplistic analysis of the event with regards to the banality of evil and evil as a process.
Presentation	The student consistently speaks clearly, distinctly, and with appropriate and varied pitch and tone modulation. Recites loudly enough for all to hear throughout the presentation.	The student speaks clearly but is, at times, indistinct, too quiet, and/or pitch was rarely used OR the emotion it conveyed often did not fit the content.	The student does not speak clearly, mispronounces words and is inaudible to the audience. Spoken in monotone.



FINAL THOUGHTS

- ↕ It will be important to debrief at the end of each project presentation, as well as at the end of this mini-unit. These can be intense discussions that will likely bring up major thoughts and feelings for some students.
- ↕ At the end, it will be important to re-focus on “upholding the good”, as can be read in the next slide, from the great children’s philosopher: Mr. Rogers.



When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.' To this day, especially in times of 'disaster,' I remember my mother's words, and I am always comforted by realizing that there are still so many helpers - so many caring people in this world.

- Fred Rogers