

# Lesson Plan: Virtues vs. Vices

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## Objectives:

- Students will be able to understand the influence of religion on Spanish Golden Age Theater plays (especially Convent Plays).
- Students will be able to understand the central message of the play by better understanding Catholic tradition.
- Students will be able to capture why Sor Marcela chose to approach profound doctrinal topics in a humorous way.

## Materials needed:

- Images
  - <http://users.bigpond.net.au/steventa/03a.jpg> (funny stick picture of an angel and a devil)
  - <http://www.redemptionblues.com/pictures/angel%20and%20devil%20small.jpg> (picture of an angel and a devil)

## Activities:

Procedure
Introduction: Teacher should start the class by explaining that Golden Age Theater plays took place in Spain around the time that the American Continent was being discovered and that the majority of the people in Spain at that time were Catholic Christians. The teacher should point out that understanding their culture and beliefs will not only help us better understand the Golden Age Theater, but will help us understand how millions of people around the world see themselves in relation to God.
Warm up: Teacher should show serious angel with devil picture

and ask questions to help students understand the central theme of the picture of the sculpture is. (What is it teaching? How is it teaching it? Did the artist create this to represent a single event or is he trying to portray an ongoing thing? Why do you think he does that?)

Hook: Teacher now should show funny picture of the angel and the devil and ask the students what is the theme of the second picture? How does it approach the same theme differently? Which one do they think is easier to understand? Why? Which one is funnier? Is it easier to learn something when it is taught in a funny or joking way?

Religious Influence on Golden Age Theater: Teacher should explain that the ongoing battle of good and evil is one of many religious themes that we encounter in Golden Age Theater. In the play that they are going to see today they are going to identify Catholic doctrines such as: The Holy Virtues (played by the personages Mortificación and Desnudez), The Seven Vices or the Seven capital sins (played by the personage Apetito) and fallen, imperfect men (played by the personage Alma)

Catholic Tradition: Teacher should explain that according to Roman Catholic doctrine there are seven holy virtues that oppose each of the seven deadly sins. (Help them to understand what a vice is and what a virtue is.)

Faithful Catholics try to get closer to God by replacing the vices with the virtues that directly oppose them and are taking root in their hearts. In the play "La Muerte del Apetito" the personages Mortificación and Desnudez (who both personify the holy virtues) are in direct opposition to Apetito (who personifies the seven deadly sins or vices). Both sides are trying their best to win Alma's heart (she represents all people in their daily struggle to make choices). Alma, like every human being, feels with equal intensity the appealing voices of both Apetito (vices) and Mortificación (virtues). The following table would help them visualize this doctrine better:

**Vice  
(Apetito)**

Lust  
Gluttony  
Greed  
Sloth  
Wrath  
Envy  
Pride

**Virtue  
(Mortificación)**

Chastity  
Temperance  
Charity  
Diligence  
Forgiveness  
Kindness  
Humility

Activity 1: In order to help students better understand the roles that virtues and vices have in their daily choices ask them to discuss in small groups how they feel compelled by the one and the other. Be sure to ask them to discuss specific virtues and vices that should not bring anything up that is not appropriate for the classroom (i.e. greed vs. charity, wrath vs. forgiveness, etc.)

The teacher could also divide the class into two big groups and ask one group to be the vice and the other to be the virtue. The teacher can have them write the following on the board: ***I should...***(ask one student in the virtue group to say a virtuous thing that they feel they should do) , ***but I ...*** (ask another student in the vice group to think of a vice that would get in their way.) For example: I should **do my homework**, but I **want to watch TV instead**. The class could do this activity as long as time permits and at the end the teacher could ask them which one is usually more appealing to them: vice or virtue and why? They can write a quick response to this question.

Why Humor: Bring up the two pictures from the beginning of the lesson. Sor Marcela, as a nun, felt that adding humor to the play would spice it up a little bit and would help the other nuns to better learn the important doctrine of developing holy virtues. Sor Marcela created Apetito as a really selfish and even silly personage in order to help the nuns understand that the vices are silly things that we can really overcome if we decide to become

better. Vices are usually more appealing to the fallen men in Catholic tradition and that is why the virtues in Sor Marcela' play come in triple dose to combat the vices: Mortificación, Desnudez and Oración.

Homework: As the actors present the play, write down both how Alma is influenced by both virtues and vices and then share your observations with the class after the performance.