



Written by [Selwyn Duke](#) on February 23, 2010

Students Told to Write Essay on How They Would Make Deal with Devil

God may not have a place in the modern American classroom, but the Devil is a different story. That is, at least in one North Carolina high school.

After reading the short story “The Devil and Tom Walker” — which involves a character who makes a deal with Satan but then balks — students at Gray’s Creek High School in Fayetteville, North Carolina, were told “to write an essay on how they would sell their souls — or what trade they would make with the Devil,” [writes](#) ABC News.



Worse still, school principal John Gibbs claims that the assignment is textbook curriculum, which means that it’s likely other schools have given their students the same work. It’s almost as if Hell is doing market research.

This deal-with-the-Devil story came to light when a Christian honor-roll student, Tieanna Trough, refused to do the assignment, citing her religious beliefs. Despite her valid complaint, the school initially refused to offer an alternative assignment — and had already threatened students with a zero grade if they didn’t comply. On Monday, however, the school finally relented and did offer Trough an alternative assignment, “how and why money is important.” Well, transitioning from the Devil to mammon is at least a vertical move.

Nevertheless, there is no reason to think that the devilish assignment will be stricken from the curriculum, especially since Principal Gibbs himself has said, “I don’t think it’s [the assignment is] anything wrong.” But it is very wrong, Mr. Gibbs. Let’s examine why.

First there is an obvious point: If students had been asked to write an essay on what deal they would make with God, what would be the reaction? The ACLU would make Fayetteville Hell on Earth. But this is actually secondary, especially since the “separation of church and state” isn’t even in the Constitution.

You don’t have to be a Christian or believe in the Devil to understand why the assignment in question here is dangerous. After all, what if we asked students to write on how they would be complicit with the Nazis in 1941 Germany or the KKK in 1960 Mississippi? It would just be an exercise, you know. Or how about asking the boys how they would beat their wives, or the girls how they would sell their bodies or what deal they would make with their pimp? Or how about asking students to explain how they would enslave a tribe of primitive people or orchestrate a genocidal campaign?

What is the point? Whether or not you believe Satan is real, he has come to represent the most



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profound expression of evil in our civilization.

And, newsflash: You don't inure youth to the practice of being complicit in or having dealings with evil. End of story.

I might also add that "making a deal with the Devil" or "selling your soul" has become a metaphor for all manner and form of pathologically unprincipled behavior. The phrases are applied to the politician who sells out his country for votes, the businessman who peddles dangerous products for money, the slave trader, and the drug dealer.

It could also be applied to the educator who peddles political correctness in the name of acceptance and career advancement.

So, again, even if souls and devils and supernatural deals are merely metaphors to you, note that they are metaphors whose purpose is to *stigmatize unprincipled behavior*. And if we inure the young to the metaphors, what do you think will happen to the stigmas?

If the deal-with-the-Devil assignment really is in a textbook — and I wouldn't be surprised — I'd like the individual responsible for it identified. I'd like him to explain what kind of educational value such an assignment holds. I'd like to see what kind of person he is. But I think I know.

Someone to whom, as Robert Bork might say, slouching toward Gomorrah just isn't enough.

Now we need to slouch toward Satan in public schools.



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