

# ***Facts and Faith: Biblically Responsible Lessons For Diverse Classrooms***



Crafted by a dedicated team of expert educators and ministers from diverse Christian denominations, these lesson plans by Defense of Democracy are designed to meet Oklahoma Academic Standards and Superintendent Walters' OSDE Instructional Support Guidelines for Teachers directive. Our mission is to promote inclusivity and ensure emotional and physical safety for all students. These rigorous, Bible-based lessons reflect our commitment to historically and scientifically accurate education, fostering shared experiences across all backgrounds.



## ***How to Support Defense of Democracy?***

If you want to support our organization please scan this QR code or visit our site at

[www.defenseofdemocracy.org](http://www.defenseofdemocracy.org)



# ***Lesson: Donkey Vs. Angel: Who Will Win?***



## ***Table of Contents***

1. [Summary](#)
2. [Implementation](#)
3. [Differentiated Instructions](#)
4. [Materials and Resources](#)
5. [Provided Text](#)

**Do you like this  
Lesson Plan?**

**We have more!**

Check them out for FREE at  
<http://defenseofdemocracy.org/dofd-wiki/lesson-plans/> or you can scan the QR Code.




# Lesson Plan

## Donkey Vs. Angel: Who Will Win?



### Summary


1. **Subject(s):** Textual Analysis including language, structure, and themes. 7.3.R.5, 7.3.R.7, 7.3.R.8, 7.3.R.2, 7.3.R.3, & 7.3.R.4.
2. **Topic or Unit of Study:** English, Language Arts
3. **Grade/Level:** 7th grade
4. **Objective:** Analyze the story found in Numbers 22:1-35 NRSVue
5. **Time Allotment:** 2 Class Periods

 **Pro Educator Tip:** As with everything you read for your class, but, likely more so with this passage you need to make sure you are proficient with reading this passage. It is confusing and has several proper nouns that are difficult to pronounce. That said, something to keep in mind when you read this story is that some of the events don't make any sense. We will be looking at these in the themes section later. Also, of note, the provided text is from the most current version of the [Updated New Revised Standard Version of the Christian Bible](#). Many scholars consider this version to be the most accurate translation. If your learners ask that is why this text was included. It is abbreviated "NRSVue." Some of your learners may be more familiar with other versions and you can tell them that is great, but for this class, the NRSVue will be the version that you intend to use.

### Implementation

#### Learning Context:


This story is confusing, but it highlights several themes and allows your learners some interesting ways to engage with this text. Specifically, the heroic donkey is an element that may engage a lot of your learners.

 **Pro Educator Tip:** The talking donkey may put off some of your learners, but the killer angel is likely enough to engage them. The talking donkey is a good opportunity to remind your students of personification.

Faith Leaders

## Procedure:


a. **Anticipatory Set:** The setup for this lesson is quite easy, but, you will be doing a lot of reading to your learners during the first period. You know your learners, so plan accordingly when they will be attentive to hear a long passage. Also, you will need a (fairly) clean and empty trash can.

 **Pro Educator Tip:** 'Balaam ([pronunciation](#)) and the Donkey' has been a very common story for artists to paint throughout the years. Included in the Suggested Resources are several paintings of Balaam and his donkey with the Angel to include in class as you see fit.

## Class Period 1:

b. **Direct Instruction:** Before you begin encourage your learners to take notes. Let them know that you intend for them to hold their questions until after you are through with the entire passage. Read the passage. After you finish the passage wait 45-60 seconds to allow your learners to write down any thoughts they may have. Ask your learners if they noticed anything strange or odd about the passage. Many will mention the talking donkey. Ask them if they noticed anything else. You may have to guide them by asking "What, exactly kindled God's anger?" (Note, they are still holding their questions.)

c. **Guided Practice:** Distribute a half sheet of paper to each of your students. Have your students write their name, date, class period, etc. at the top of this sheet. Now, ask your students to select their best question and write it on this sheet. Tell them that this portion of class is for a grade. Now, pick up the trash can and direct your students to crumple up their sheets and throw them into the trash can. You can recruit a student to aid you in collecting any of the stray shots. Now, you can open up several of these sheets and read the questions (don't use the students' names) one at a time.

 **Pro Educator Tip:** As you do this lesson more and more you will anticipate questions, and, you will even miss when specific questions are not asked and answered. If you expect a question but don't see it, you can ask it anyway (they will never know.)

## Class Period 2:

d. **Direct Instruction:** As students come in for this class let them know that you will be returning to the talking donkey story. For today you will be looking at things like the themes, literary devices, the story structure, and some of the language used. Ask your learners if any elements stood out to them from the previous day. (You have already primed them by saying "The talking donkey story" so one of them should mention the talking donkey, or, if you have a student who is very high performing they may even say "personification.")

## Class Period 2 cont:


Regardless, this is a good point to review the personification of the donkey before moving on. Moving on to other aspects of the language. Ask your learners if they know in what language The Bible was written. If any of them say “Hebrew” then you can move on, but if they don’t tell them that this book, Numbers, was written in Hebrew. So, every time we read a Bible verse we are reading a translated (and necessarily interpreted) passage. In this passage, in verse 22:22 the angel of The Lord comes “as a satan.” It is hard for us to think of an angel who is also a satan, but that is exactly what is happening in this verse. Then, move on to the narrative structure. This is a story that happens in Stages or Acts. (These are Balaam’s obedience, the appearance of the angel, the donkey’s actions, and the eventual confrontation.) The story builds narrative tension through rising action with the seemingly obedient Balaam heading straight into the waiting sword of an Angel without being able to see the danger he is in. This will allow you to highlight the parallel structure of the passages. Balaam wishes for a sword to slay his donkey, but there has been a looming angelic assassin with a drawn sword hounding them all day.

Finally, the last thing to discuss is the theme. There are several possible themes here to examine. Perhaps the most obvious is disobedience. Balaam did exactly what he was told and nearly died because of it. His donkey, on the other hand, refused to obey his master’s commands even after the point where his master beat him, and yet, perhaps, the donkey is the real hero of this story because the donkey saved them both from this capricious God. Another possible theme is instability. Despite Balaam’s strict adherence to God’s commands, he is still targeted by divine wrath, suggesting that obedience does not always guarantee safety or favor. This begs the question what does it mean to follow orders if the consequences are so arbitrary? Finally, the theme of perception is crucial here. While Balaam, (remind your learners that Balaam has special insight into blessings and curses), is blind to the danger ahead, his donkey—a lowly animal—sees the divine threat and takes action. This reversal of roles challenges the traditional hierarchy of power and suggests that true insight can come from the most unexpected sources.


d. **Check for Understanding:** Have your class divide themselves (or divide them) into 5 or 6 groups. Have each group select one of the “Discussion Questions.” Give your learners enough time in their groups to come up with answers to their chosen questions and then, come back and discuss what they come up with.

## Class Period 2 cont:

f. **Closing:** Again, “Personification” is an excellent vocabulary word that will VERY likely appear on standardized tests. Try to work it in again at the end.


 **Pro Educator Tip:** If any of your learners try to derail the conversation to talk about other parts of The Bible, put them back on track. Remind them this is a lesson about THIS story.

## ***Differentiated Instruction***

 **Pro Educator Tip:** Recognize that learners exhibit diverse learning modalities. You can employ a range of pedagogical strategies to effectively engage and instruct a heterogeneous student body by deliberately considering this variability.

- a. Visual Learners
- b. Auditory Learners
- c. Kinesthetic Learners - This is an excellent lesson to engage Kinesthetic learners.
- d. ESL Students - It should be easy to obtain the text in whatever language you may need.
- e. At-risk Students
- f. Advanced Learners

## ***Materials & Resources***

 **Pro Educator Tip:** Choose supplementary materials that will enhance your lesson (books, videos, etc.), YOU KNOW YOUR LEARNERS! Find resources that ENHANCE this lesson and make your instruction an engaging learning experience for all of your learners!

- a. **Instructional Materials:** see the included text.
- b. **Suggested Resources:**
  - [Painting by Rembrandt](#)
  - [Painting by Gustav Jaeger](#)
  - [Painting by John Linnell](#)
  - [Painting by Pieter Lastman](#)

## Text

22 The Israelites set out and camped in the plains of Moab ([pronunciation](#)) across the Jordan from Jericho. 2 Now Balak ([pronunciation](#)) son of Zippor ([pronunciation](#)) saw all that Israel had done to the Amorites. ([pronunciation](#)) 3 Moab was in great dread of the people, because they were so numerous; Moab was overcome with fear of the Israelites. 4 And Moab said to the elders of Midian, ([pronunciation](#)) "This horde will now lick up all that is around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field." Now Balak son of Zippor was king of Moab at that time. 5 He sent messengers to Balaam son of Beor ([pronunciation](#)) at Pethor, which is on the Euphrates, ([pronunciation](#)) in the land of Amaw, ([pronunciation](#)) to summon him, saying, "A people has come out of Egypt; they have spread over the face of the earth, and they have settled next to me. 6 Come now, curse this people for me, since they are stronger than I; perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land, for I know that whomever you bless is blessed, and whomever you curse is cursed."

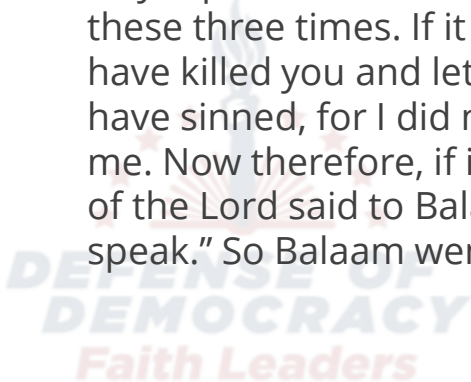
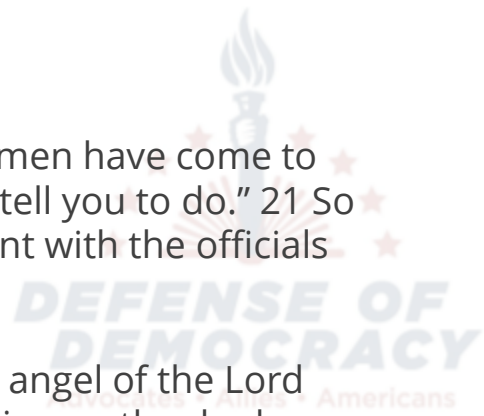
7 So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the fees for divination in their hand, and they came to Balaam and gave him Balak's message. 8 He said to them, "Stay here tonight, and I will bring back word to you, just as the Lord speaks to me"; so the officials of Moab stayed with Balaam. 9 God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?" 10 Balaam said to God, "King Balak son of Zippor of Moab has sent me this message: 11 'Look, a people has come[c] out of Egypt and has spread over the face of the earth; now come, curse them for me; perhaps I shall be able to fight against them and drive them out.' " 12 God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed." 13 So Balaam rose in the morning and said to the officials of Balak, "Go to your own land, for the Lord has refused to let me go with you." 14 So the officials of Moab rose and went to Balak and said, "Balaam refuses to come with us." 15 Once again Balak sent officials, more numerous and more distinguished than these. 16 They came to Balaam and said to him, "Thus says Balak son of Zippor: Do not let anything hinder you from coming to me, 17 for I will surely do you great honor, and whatever you say to me I will do; come, curse this people for me." 18 But Balaam replied to the servants of Balak, "Although Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the command of the Lord my God, to do less or more. 19 You also stay here overnight, so that I may learn what more the Lord may say to me."

## ***Text cont.***

20 That night God came to Balaam and said to him, "If the men have come to summon you, get up and go with them, but do only what I tell you to do." 21 So Balaam got up in the morning, saddled his donkey, and went with the officials of Moab.

22 God's anger was kindled because he was going, and the angel of the Lord took his stand in the road as his adversary. Now he was riding on the donkey, and his two servants were with him. 23 The donkey saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road, with a drawn sword in his hand, so the donkey turned off the road and went into the field, and Balaam struck the donkey, to turn it back onto the road. 24 Then the angel of the Lord stood in a narrow path between the vineyards, with a wall on either side. 25 When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, it scraped against the wall and scraped Balaam's foot against the wall, so he struck it again. 26 Then the angel of the Lord went ahead and stood in a narrow place, where there was no way to turn either to the right or to the left. 27 When the donkey saw the angel of the Lord, it lay down under Balaam, and Balaam's anger was kindled, and he struck the donkey with his staff. 28 Then the Lord opened the mouth of the donkey, and it said to Balaam, "What have I done to you, that you have struck me these three times?" 29 Balaam said to the donkey, "Because you have made a fool of me! I wish I had a sword in my hand! I would kill you right now!" 30 But the donkey said to Balaam, "Am I not your donkey, which you have ridden all your life to this day? Have I been in the habit of treating you this way?" And he said, "No."

31 Then the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam, and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the road, with his drawn sword in his hand, and he bowed down, falling on his face. 32 The angel of the Lord said to him, "Why have you struck your donkey these three times? I have come out as an adversary because your way is perverse before me. 33 The donkey saw me and turned away from me these three times. If it had not turned away from me, surely just now I would have killed you and let it live." 34 Then Balaam said to the angel of the Lord, "I have sinned, for I did not know that you were standing in the road to oppose me. Now therefore, if it is displeasing to you, I will return home." 35 The angel of the Lord said to Balaam, "Go with the men, but speak only what I tell you to speak." So Balaam went on with the officials of Balak.





## ***Discussion Questions***

1. Do you think Balaam could have possibly done anything differently to avoid divine wrath? Is it possible that he was simply doomed from the start, no matter what he did?
2. Why do you think Balaam, this, apparently, 'faithful' servant of God, needed a donkey to save him? What do you think the author is trying to say about the nature of wisdom and power?
3. Why do you think the authors set up the story in a way as to make Balaam appear so clueless? What's the point of making the obedient guy the target of divine wrath?
4. What does this story say about power and authority? Who really holds power in this narrative?



# ***Facts and Faith: Biblically Responsible Lessons For Diverse Classrooms***



Crafted by a dedicated team of expert educators and ministers from diverse Christian denominations, these lesson plans by Defense of Democracy are designed to meet Oklahoma Academic Standards and Superintendent Walters' OSDE Instructional Support Guidelines for Teachers directive. Our mission is to promote inclusivity and ensure emotional and physical safety for all students. These rigorous, Bible-based lessons reflect our commitment to historically and scientifically accurate education, fostering shared experiences across all backgrounds.



## ***How to Support Defense of Democracy?***

If you want to support our organization please scan this QR code or visit our site at [www.defenseofdemocracy.org](http://www.defenseofdemocracy.org)

