

# Decision Education Foundation English Curriculum

## Lord of the Flies

by William Golding

### Unit Snapshot

<b><i>Designed For</i></b>	High School Students
<b><i>Essential Questions</i></b>	To think or to feel: which is more important? How do actions define character?
<b><i>Content and Skill Focus</i></b>	Decision Topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• using head and heart in decision making</li><li>• a variety of perspectives is best in group decision making</li></ul> English Topics <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• textual evidence makes an argument powerful</li><li>• realistic characters are multidimensional</li><li>• expository writing</li></ul>
<b><i>Expected Outcomes</i></b>	Students will be able to <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• analyze characters according to their thought and feeling</li><li>• use decision elements to understand characters and action</li><li>• explain the strengths and weaknesses of decisions made in the novel</li></ul>
<b><i>Kinds of Assessment</i></b>	Essay about an important decision in the novel Four decision skill exercises
<b><i>Time Required</i></b>	Three classes of 40 or 45 minutes each and time to complete an essay
<b><i>Comments</i></b>	Freedom, survival, fear, conflict, order, and chaos are topics that William Golding explores in <i>Lord of the Flies</i> . Through the way four main characters face life on a deserted island, Golding demonstrates the importance of <i>head</i> (thinking, reason) and <i>heart</i> (feeling, emotion, passion) in making good decisions.

(Version 7)

# Overview

**General Description:** With a focus on William Golding’s novel, *Lord of the Flies*, this unit explores the balance of head (thinking) and *heart* (feeling) in the decision making process. Designed for high school students (grades 9-10), the lessons are intended to supplement a larger study of the novel. The unit focuses on eight scenes from the novel, and teachers can use these exercises as either introductory or review material.

**Duration:** This unit plan is designed for three class periods of forty to forty-five minutes each. However, the length will vary according to whether teachers choose to present exercises as the class reads each chapter or to teach the lessons as a separate, self-contained review once students have finished the novel.

**Summary and Decision Perspective:** Freedom, survival, fear, conflict, order, and chaos are topics that William Golding explores in *Lord of the Flies*, published in 1954. Sent away from their war-torn homeland, a group of young boys survive a plane crash and find themselves stranded on a deserted island. As these boys face their freedom and seek to bring order to their brand new world, Golding takes a sobering look into the darkness of the human heart and challenges Rousseau’s theory of the “noble savage”—that mankind is good by nature and only corrupted by society. As they seek to bring order to their world, fear takes hold, two of their company die (one by murder) and the group splits into two warring camps that nearly destroy the island. Saved by a navy ship that sees the fire ravaging the island, the remaining boys return to civilization, or what’s left of it after the adults’ war.

The main characters, Ralph, Piggy, Jack, and Simon are slightly older than the rest of the boys, and they take on different roles in providing leadership for the group. Through the way these four distinct characters face their new world, Golding demonstrates the importance of *head* (thinking, reason) and *heart* (feeling, emotion, passion) in making good decisions. As we watch the boys make choices related to their survival on the island, it becomes clear that they are most successful when they strike a healthy balance between *head* and *heart*; when they ignore either one, trouble ensues. We see the strengths and weaknesses of the different approaches to their predicament and realize that the right balance of head and heart is one of the keys to survival.

# *Lord of the Flies* Unit Contents

## **1. Learning Plan**

- **First Class: Introduction (page 4)**
  - Handout 1—Which Way do the Characters Lean? (page 6)
  - Handout 2—Decision Skill Basics (page 7)
- **Second Class: Decision Skill Basics and Class Exercise (page 10)**
  - Teacher Resource: Sample Responses to Handout 1 (page 11)
  - Class Exercise: Decisions in *Lord of the Flies* (page 12)
  - Handout 3—Guidelines for Analyzing a Decision in the Novel (page 13)

## **2. Assessment Evidence (page 14)**

## **3. Resources on the Web (page 15)**

# 1. Learning Plan

**Two Ways to Proceed:** Because this unit requires students to focus on eight different scenes, teachers can use the exercises in this learning plan (1) as the students read each scene for the first time or (2) as a review once they have finished the novel. Specific guidelines:

1. These lessons provide a way to help students look at a text closely as they read. Introduce the topic with the initial discussion described in **First Class** below, and use the scenes listed in **Class Exercise: Decisions in Lord of the Flies** as a guide for how to proceed: once students finish reading a scene, have them use **Handout :Guidelines for Analyzing Decisions in the Novel** to discuss what they have read. Once students have completed reading all of the scenes, assign the essay (*see Assessment Evidence*).
2. Follow the plan below to teach the lessons as a self-contained review unit.

## First Class: Introduction

### Materials

- Handout 1—Which Way do the Characters Lean?
- Handout 2—Decision Skill Basics

### Procedures

- Introduce the unit by asking your students to write for five minutes on the following questions (avoid giving any clarification, hints, or advice):

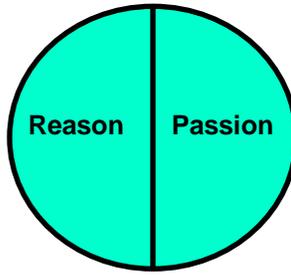
*As you face situations in your life, which do you rely on more— reason (analytical thought) or passion (feeling, emotion)? Example?*

*Which is more (useful, valuable, important)—reason or passion? Explain.*

Once five minutes is up, begin a discussion of the questions by asking students to share their responses. As you explore *reason* and *passion* with the group, list on the board the different ways students define these two words. Note the similarities and differences in responses.

Topics to emphasize towards the end of the conversation:

- a. **We need Both.** The example of Elizabethan psychology. During Shakespeare's time *reason* and *passion* defined the human psyche and provided a way to explain human behavior. In the Elizabethan view, both reason and passion are valuable attributes, all people use both reason and passion, and mental health is the result of keeping the two in proper balance.



Examples:

1. Shakespeare viewed physical love as a good thing (created by God); lust and rape, however, are examples of passion gone wrong—the person’s reason is not exerting proper control in these situations—reason and passion out of balance.

2. If an Elizabethan were to analyze Dickens’s main character in *A Christmas Carol*, Ebenezer Scrooge, before his transformation, she would say that Scrooge is an example of someone who has let his reason overpower his passion: at the beginning of the novel, the miser blocks out all feelings for others (passion) and only looks at situations analytically. (Add other examples or have students think of additional example of imbalance of reason and passion.)

b. **Definition of head and heart.** Explain to the class that instead of the terms reason and passion, this unit uses the HEAD (our thinking and analysis—reason) to refer to the way we apply our minds in decision making. The term HEART (passion) refers the way we use emotions and feelings in given situations.

c. The main goal of this unit is to explore how Ralph, Jack, Piggy, and Simon use their heads and hearts as they face difficult decision situations.

- Have students begin **Handout 1**. Hand out before the end of class.
- Give students copies of **Handout 2—Decision Skill Basics**.

## Next Steps

**Homework:** Students should use **Handout 2** to review decision skill basics and finish **Handout 1**.

# Handout 1. Which Way do the Characters Lean?

*In difficult situations does the main character rely on more on his head or his heart?*

**Directions:** Use the table below to record your view of how Ralph, Piggy, Jack, and Simon approach a challenge. If the character uses mostly his head put a check in the left column; if he leads with his heart, check the right column. If he uses head and heart about the same, check both sides. Then provide evidence for your view.



**HEAD**

**THINKING**  
Reaching conclusions based on objective reasoning and impartial criteria, constant principles, truths, and logic.



**HEART**

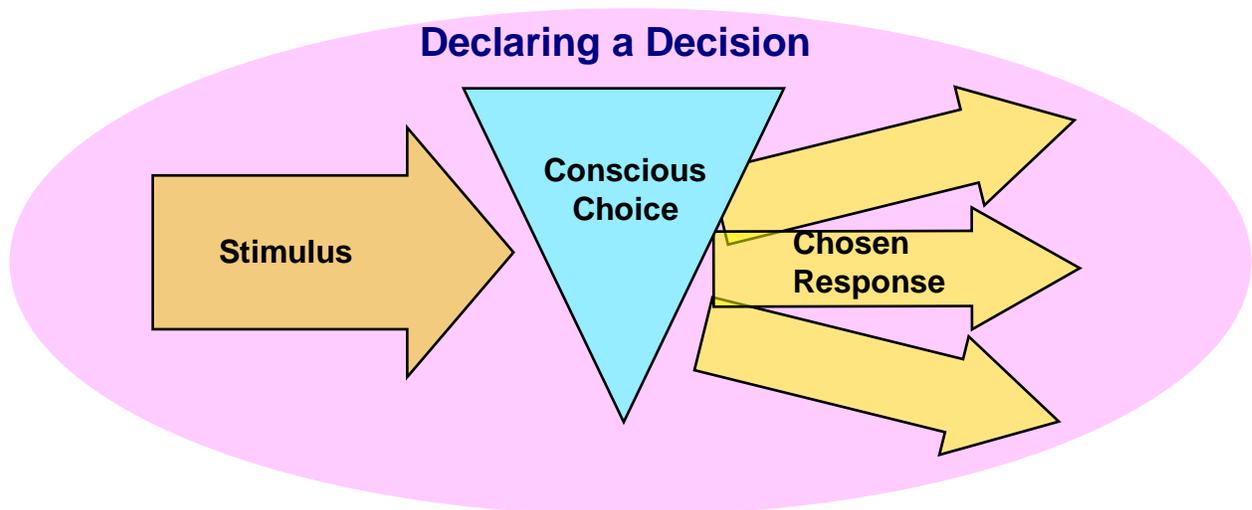
**FEELING**  
Reaching conclusions on value based, person-centered criteria. Seeking harmony.

	<b>Ralph</b>	
	<b>Piggy</b>	
	<b>Jack</b>	
	<b>Simon</b>	

## Handout 2. Decision Skill Basics

### Declare it First

An essential decision-making skill is recognizing when we have a decision to make. We call it ...



Often we find ourselves in the middle of a situation before we even recognize we are making a decision. And sometimes we make a decision without realizing we have done so.

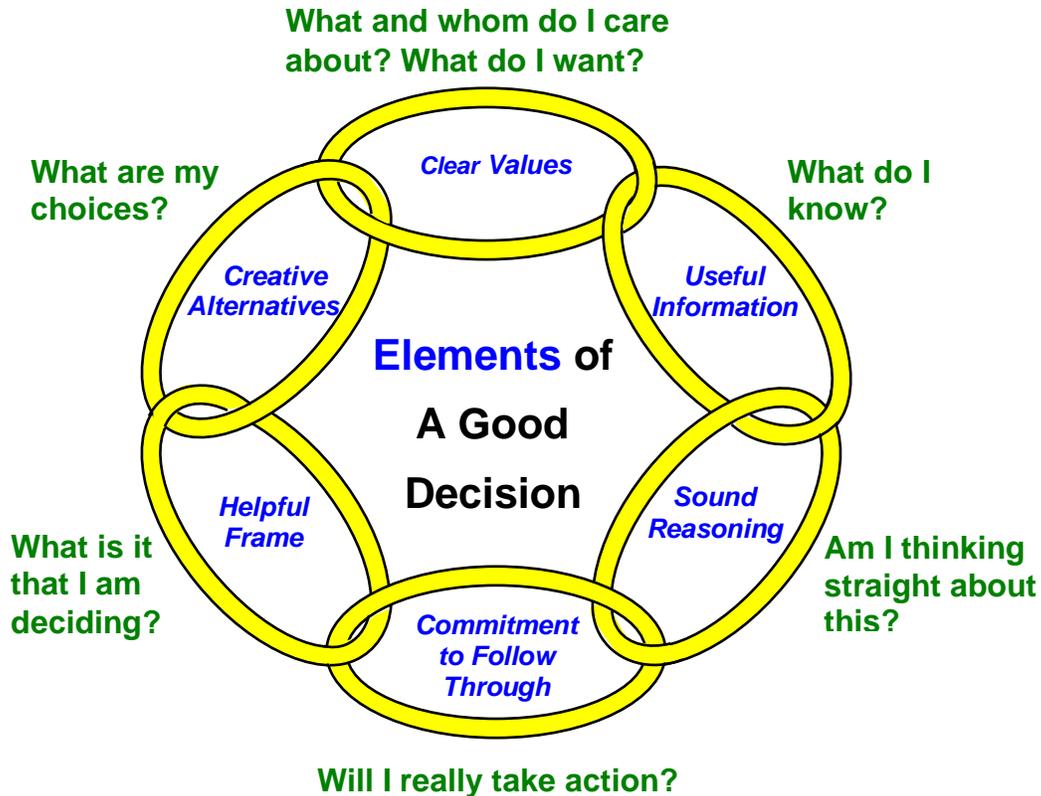
*For example: When the thunderstorm hits the island, Ralph and Piggy join in the ecstatic dancing and chanting of Jack's group because they are afraid and they like the comfort and security of other bodies around them. Without realizing it until later, they end up taking part in Simon's murder. We see them struggle with the realization of what they have done (without declaring a decision) in the beginning of Chapter 10.*

***DECLARING helps us to create space for a good decision.  
We STOP and THINK before we ACT.***

***Making a conscious effort to recognize decision situations is the first step in making the best choices.***

## Focus on the Elements

After recognizing we are making an important decision, we can use the following *six elements* to help us choose the best alternative...

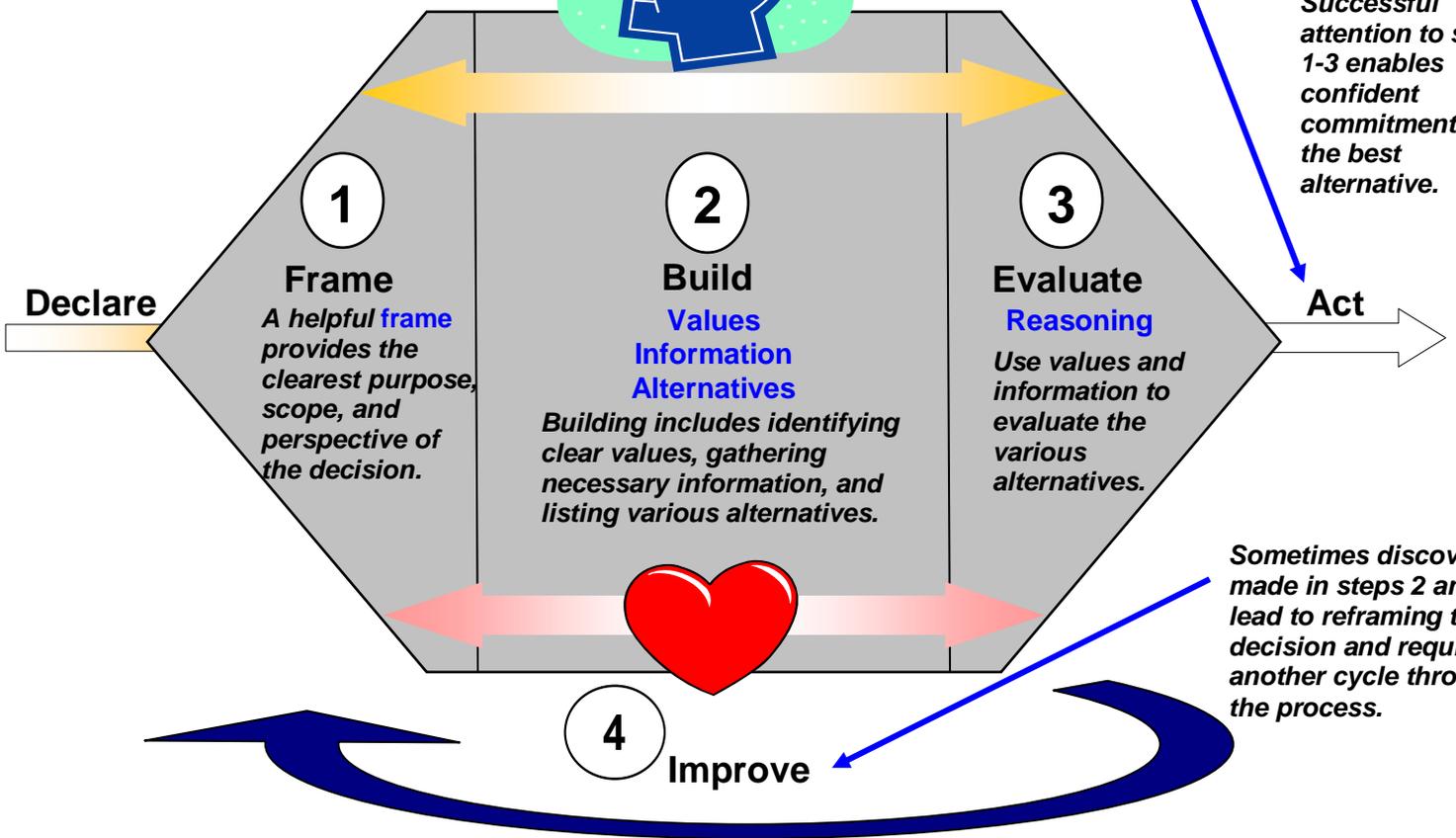
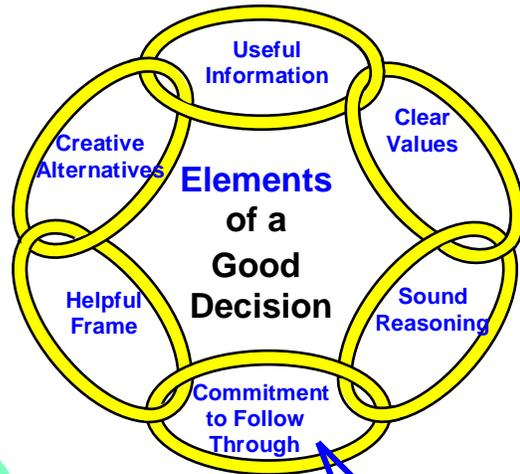


***Answering all of the questions above carefully and completely, gives us confidence that we have decided well.***

# Pay Attention to Head and Heart

**HEAD**-- Reaching conclusions based on objective reasoning and impartial criteria, constant principles, truths, and logic; analysis of facts: **OUR THINKING**

**HEART**-- Reaching conclusions on value based, person-centered criteria; seeking harmony and connection with others: **OUR FEELING**



**All six elements need attention from both HEAD and HEART: good decisions make sense and feel right.**

## Second Class: Decision Skill Basics and Class Exercise

### Materials

Teacher Resource: Sample Responses to Handout 1  
Class Exercise: Decisions in *Lord of the Flies*  
Handout 3—Guidelines for Analyzing a Decision in the Novel  
Essay: A Decision in *Lord of the Flies*

### Procedures

- Review decision skill basics (**Handout 2**). Discuss any questions that arise. Ask students for examples of how they have used the elements.
- Discuss examples students found for **Handout 1—Which Way do the Characters Lean?** For help with this discussion, see **Teacher Resource: Sample Responses to Handout 1**.
- Give students copies of **Handout 3** and begin **Class Exercise: Decisions in *Lord of the Flies***.
- Give students the essay directions (see **Assessment**, page 14), and discuss any questions that arise before the end of class.

### Next Steps

- **Homework:** Students work on essay assignment.
- **Following Class:** Finish class discussion of **Decisions in *Lord of the Flies***. Students can continue working on the essay in class so that they have a chance to ask questions and receive guidance.
- Students complete essay assignment.

# Teacher Resource: Sample Responses to Handout 1

(Page numbers refer to the Perigee Book edition published by the Putnam Publishing Group, ISBN 0-399-50148-7)

*In difficult situations does the main character rely on more on his head or his heart?*



## HEAD

### THINKING

Reaching conclusions based on objective reasoning and impartial criteria, constant principles, truths, and logic.



## HEART

### FEELING

Reaching conclusions on value based, person-centered criteria. Seeking harmony.

	<b>Ralph</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Considers the feelings of others: recognizes he hurt Piggy and attempts reconciliation—“genuine leadership” (p. 25); recognizes Simon’s value when others see weakness (p.24); sees and understands Jack’s antagonistic feelings (p. 118) as they head up the mountain to hunt for pig.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Concerned with logic and facts: tries to check Ralph’s initial dream of freedom and paradise with facts of their situation—stranded on island (p. 14-15); sees absurdity and danger of childish exuberance with fire (Chapter 2). Symbol of Piggy holding the conch—which has stood for order, rules— as he dies: both are destroyed at the same time (p. 181).</li> </ul>	<b>Piggy</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Logic more important than harmony: “We’ll have rules!...Lots of rules! Then when anyone breaks ‘em—“ (p. 33); Lack of feeling for others allows him to control with punishment.</li> </ul>	<b>Jack</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Devoted to seeking the truth and letting others know: wants to climb the mountain to find evidence and truth (p. 128). Impartial assessment of all situations—for example, see his support of Piggy in spite of others opinions (p. 42)</li> </ul>	<b>Simon</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Simon’s desire for harmony also indicates that he uses his heart (see p. 42, 68, &amp;104) “Passions beat about Simon...with awful wings” (p. 71). Simon feels shame and feeds Piggy (74). Simon sees Ralph’s distress over their declining condition, and comforts him by telling Ralph he thinks he will get off the island (p. 111).</li> </ul>

**Note: This table includes only a few supporting examples, and there are many more for students to contribute.**

# Class Exercise: Decisions in *Lord of the Flies*

The boys' circumstances on the island force them to make a number of decisions about their organization and survival. The following, in order of appearance, are eight examples of significant decisions the boys make:

1. Chapter 1 (pages 16-31): The boys choose a leader
2. Chapter 2 (pages 37-47): They decide to build a fire
3. Chapter 6 (pages 98-108): Decision to visit the unexplored end of the island to find the beast Sam and Eric have discovered
4. Chapter 7 (pages 117-123): Decision to follow the pig run up the mountain as evening approaches
5. Chapter 8 (pages 124-127 & 133-137): Jack's decisions to break away from Ralph and to offer a sacrifice to the beast
6. Chapter 8 & 9 (pages 143-147): Simon's decision to climb the mountain and face the beast
7. Chapter 10: Jack's decision to take Piggy's glasses
8. Chapter 11 (pages 168-182): Decision to go to Castle Rock to retrieve Piggy's glasses

## ***Teacher Directions:***

1) Divide your class into four groups. Assign each group two of the decisions in the list above. Ask them to read the pages aloud and analyze the decisions together using [Handout 3](#) as their guideline. One person should be prepared to report back to the class.

2) Next class: ask groups to report to the whole class. Discuss the eight decisions. Some discussion questions to consider:

a. Do these decisions increase in significance or are they all equally important? (The decisions seem to be progressively serious because the later ones appear to be more life-threatening. For example, the outcome of #8 is Piggy's death. However, make sure students remember that #2 also resulted in the death of the young boy with the "mulberry birthmark.")

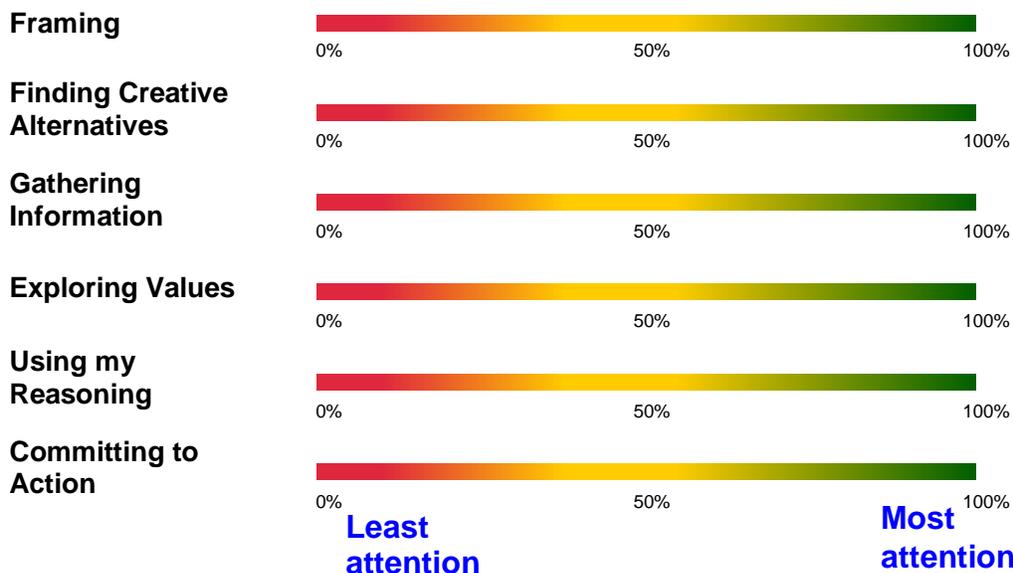
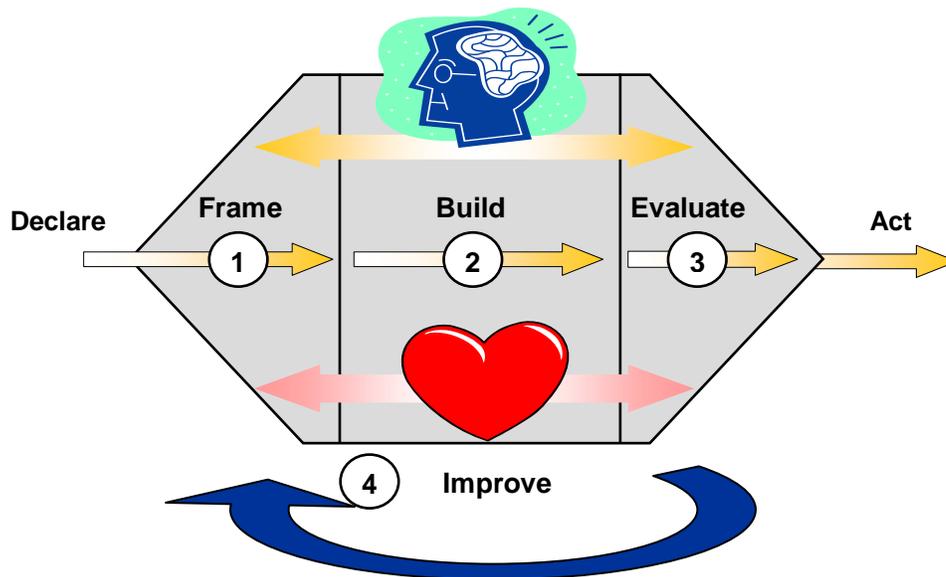
b. How many of the decisions are motivated by fear? Explain.

c. Does any one of the boys have better decision skills than the rest? Explain.

3) Assign students one of the eight decisions (or let them choose from the list) to explore in an essay: see *Assessment Evidence*.

## Handout 3. Guidelines for Analyzing Decisions in the Novel

**Directions:** 1. Place a check on the parts of the decision making process below that you think the boys do well in your assigned decision situation. Place an X on the parts that you think they neglect. 2. Give each decision link in the list at the bottom a “success percentage” by labeling each bar according to how much attention the boys give each element.



**Do those involved in your assigned decision rely mostly on their heads or hearts and how does the way they “lean” affect their choice?**

## 2. Assessment

### Essay: A Decision in *Lord of the Flies*

**Directions:** Write a 2-3 page paper in which you explore and discuss a significant decision in *Lord of the Flies*. The steps...

- 1) Your teacher will assign you (or you will choose) one of the decisions discussed in class.
  
- 2) Reread the appropriate pages in the novel that describe the situation. Consider other parts of the novel that also apply to the topic. For example, if Ralph is the one who makes the decision, you are welcome to refer to other passages in the novel that reveal important details about the way he faces a challenge.
  
- 3) Use your research, class discussion, and the handouts entitled *Decision Skill Basics* and *Guidelines for Analyzing Decisions in the Novel* as resources for your essay.
  
- 4) Use the questions for the decision elements to guide your writing:

FRAME: *What is the character (or characters) deciding?*

VALUES: *What does the character want?*

INFORMATION: *What does the character know? Is there enough information?*

ALTERNATIVES: *What are the alternatives considered?*

REASONING: *Is he or are they thinking straight about the situation?*

FOLLOW THROUGH: *Does he or do they finally take action?*

**Important Note:** While you need to consider all of the elements, focus on the ones that apply most significantly to your decision situation.

- 5) Conclude your essay with a discussion of how the character or characters apply their *heads* and *hearts* in the decision you analyzed.

### 3. Resources on the Web

#### *Lord of the Flies*: Background, Analysis, Summaries

<http://www.rit.edu/~sjg2490/lotf/index.html>

Scott Gersner's site on *Lord of the Flies* provides helpful summary and supporting material (including an artist's rendition of the island). While some of the analysis is a bit simplistic, there are interesting links.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord\\_of\\_the\\_Flies](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lord_of_the_Flies)

Wikipedia's site is useful and easy to read, and it includes helpful background links.

[http://nobelprize.org/educational\\_games/literature/golding/](http://nobelprize.org/educational_games/literature/golding/)

This Nobel site has a simple but entertaining on-line game to help readers review some basic details and concepts in the novel.