



Analyzing High Impact Decisions within Historical Fiction:

The case of "Eveline," by James Joyce



Grade Level

9th–12th

Unit Length

5 Lessons | Content Area: English/
Literature

Standards

- SD.1 – Identify and frame
- SD.2 – Clarify values and objectives
- SD.3 – Generate and develop options
- SD.4 – Gather and analyze information
- SD.5 – Make predictions
- SD.6 – Explain and provide the rationale
- SD.7 – Reflect and evaluate
- VAR.1 – Decisions as opportunities

Unit Description

Students will be introduced to a decision-making process and decision-making pitfalls. They will apply this knowledge to analyze the short story "Eveline" from *Dubliners*, by James Joyce, and will have the opportunity to place themselves at the center of Eveline's decision-making process.

Text: Joyce, James, 1882–1941. *Dubliners*. New York, N.Y.: New American Library, 1991.

Unit Objectives

- Students will analyze the decisions Eveline makes and the consequences of those decisions.
- Students will reflect on the potential impact of a decision-making process and how it could have affected outcomes for Eveline.

Key Concepts

- Framing, clarifying values, generating options, gathering information, predicting, and reflecting.

This unit is based on lessons created by 2021–2022 Decision Education Fellow, Topher Bigelow, an English Language Arts teacher at the High School for Community Leadership in Queens, NY.

We thank Topher for their hard work, insight, and expertise in developing this decision-making unit.



Focus Standard

VAR.1 – Embrace decisions as opportunities

Supporting Standard

SD.1 – Identify and frame what a decision is and is not about

Suggested Time

45–60 minutes

Resources

“Eveline” from *Dubliners*, by James Joyce

[Video: A Decision-Making Process](#)

Impact

This lesson introduces students to a decision-making process. Intentionally designing the process and context for making a decision can help youth to process their feelings, while improving their chances of positive outcomes.

Objectives

- Students will learn the steps of a decision-making process.
- Students will reflect on their confidence in their current decision-making process.

Optional Teaching Strategies

- Incorporate the reading of “Eveline” in the best way for your class—reading together, in small groups, independent work, or homework. It can be read before the unit starts, or alongside the first two lessons.

Differentiation

- Create a graphic organizer to support students in identifying individual parts of the decision-making process presented in the video.
- Scaffold small group discussions by giving students one question at a time or providing written questions.

What To Look and Listen For

- Can students identify their own strengths and weaknesses as a decision maker?
- Can students identify specific ways to improve their decision-making?

Engage (10–15 minutes)

Ask your students to identify a big or important decision they have made recently and take a few minutes to reflect on or journal about it using the prompts and questions below.

Suggested Prompts & Questions:

- Describe the decision you made, and the options you had.
- What made that decision feel big or important?
- What were the consequences of the decision?
- What information did you consider before making this decision?
- On a scale of 1–5, how satisfied were you with your decision? Why?

Apply (25–30 minutes)

Split your students into small groups, with a mix of ratings in each group. Ask students to share their rating and their justification.

Suggested Questions:

- What did you rate yourself and why?
- In general, what are your strengths as a decision maker?
- In general, what are your weaknesses as a decision maker?

Bring the group back together to discuss their ratings and justifications. Based on their discussions, ask students to share ideas about what it means to be a strong decision maker. Record and display their answers.

Reflect (15–20 minutes)

Introduce your students to the concept of a decision-making process with [this video: A Decision-Making Process](#). Then, compare the processes outlined in the video with those that students identified in their earlier discussion.

Suggested Questions:

- What similarities and differences did you notice between our list and the process outlined in the video?
- Are there parts of this process you do already? Which parts of the process were new to you?
- How could using this process change your decision-making? How might that affect the rating you gave yourself at the beginning of the lesson?



Clarifying Values

Lesson #2



Focus Standard

SD.2 – Clarify the values and objectives of the decision maker in a given decision

Suggested Time

45–60 minutes for the lesson

Resources

“Eveline” from *Dubliners*, by James Joyce

Impact

Understanding how our values factor into a decision can be challenging, because we often care about more than one thing at the same time, and sometimes our values can even contradict each other. This lesson introduces students to the idea of clarifying values as part of a decision-making process, and teaches them to check that their choices reflect their values.

Objectives

- Students will analyze the story “Eveline” to reflect on her values and how they impacted her decision.
- Students will begin to identify their own values and learn how they impact their decisions.

Differentiation

- Provide a list of values for students to select from if listing and grouping items present a challenge.

What To Look and Listen For

- Can students identify their own values and how they impact their decisions?
- Can students identify Eveline’s values and how they impact her decisions?

Engage (15–20 minutes)

Ask your students to take ~5 minutes to list things they care about—encouraging as long a list as they want, and including anything important to them.

After ~5 minutes, ask your students to begin grouping the items on their lists into categories (For example, they might group names of family members or different sports they play, etc.).

Begin a discussion about how our values impact our decision-making. Use their lists as references.

Suggested Questions:

- How did you group the items on your list?
- What do those groups tell you about your values?

Apply (20–25 minutes)

Break your students into small groups to analyze James Joyce’s “Eveline” and the values that impacted Eveline’s decision in the story.

Suggested Questions:

- What does Eveline care about? What are her values?
- What does Eveline’s decision tell us about her values?
- Did Eveline’s decision align with her values? Were there any conflicts between Eveline’s values and decisions?

After ~20 minutes, ask small groups to share what they have determined regarding Eveline’s values and how they affected her decisions. Discuss any differing values and evidence to support each group’s ideas.

Reflect (10–15 minutes)

Ask your students to journal or share about their values, and how clarifying our values can help guide our decision-making.

Suggested Questions:

Clarifying our values can help us make difficult decisions, but it can be challenging to always make decisions that align with our values.

- Think about some decisions that have aligned with your values, and some decisions that haven’t aligned with your values.
- Why did you make those decisions?
- What other factors did you consider?
- What consequences came from those decisions?



Generating Options

Lesson #3



Focus Standard

SD.3 – Generate and develop significantly different criteria-aligned decision options

SD.4 – Gather and analyze information from multiple sources to evaluate decision options

Suggested Time

45–60 minutes

Resources

[Video: A Decision-Making Process \(starting at 2:44\)](#)

“Eveline” short story from James Joyce’s *Dubliners*

Impact

Generating options is the act of looking beyond the most obvious possibilities to come up with more and potentially better options. While many decisions appear to be an either/or situation, there are often more options than may be apparent at first. In this lesson, students will analyze Eveline’s options, and generate other possible options.

Objectives

- Students will generate and develop options for Eveline.
- Students will identify potential sources of information for Eveline.

Differentiation

- For students who might struggle with generating options, you could consider providing a few options and have them debate the advantages and disadvantages of each option.

What To Look and Listen For

- Are students able to generate a variety of additional options for Eveline?
- Do the options students generate meet the criteria shared in *Apply*?

Engage (10–15 minutes)

Facilitate a discussion with your students about the options Eveline identified in the story. Ask your students to situate themselves in her shoes.

Suggested Questions:

- What options did Eveline have?
 - What was Eveline trying to achieve?
 - How do Eveline's values affect her options?
 - What limits did Eveline face with her options?
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Apply (10–15 minutes)

Review the generating options part of the [video from lesson one: A Decision-Making Process \(starting at 2:44\)](#).

Then, assign students to small groups to collectively generate additional options for Eveline, and create a poster or presentation to share with the class.

Suggested Questions:

Use information from the text, including what you know about Eveline, the other characters, and their values and circumstances, to develop at least two additional options for Eveline. Make sure to consider the following criteria from the video:

- Are the options under Eveline's control?
 - Are they significantly different?
 - Are they attractive?
 - Are they doable?
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Reflect (10–15 minutes)

Invite each group to share the additional options they generated for Eveline and ask other students to provide feedback using the criteria from the video. With a better understanding of Eveline's options, have students consider possible sources that could inform her decision.

Suggested Questions:

- Putting yourself in Eveline's shoes, are there people or other sources that could help you weigh these options?
- How could seeking guidance from other sources have informed Eveline's decision?



Predicting Outcomes

Lesson #4



Focus Standard

SD.5 – Make predictions about the consequences and outcomes of each decision option

Supporting Standard

SD.6 – Explain and provide the rationale behind a decision such that a listener can follow the line of reasoning

Suggested Time

45–60 minutes

Resources

“Eveline” short story from James Joyce’s *Dubliners*

Impact

This lesson teaches students to predict the impact of potential outcomes that may result from different options, and consider their likelihoods, to help them make the best decision.

Objectives

- Students will predict the consequences and outcomes.
- Students will write their rationale from Eveline’s perspective.

Differentiation

- Create an if-then graphic organizer to help students organize possible consequences.
- Provide a letter template.

What To Look and Listen For

- Do students’ predictions seem reasonable?
- Are students able to clearly explain their rationale?

Engage (10–15 minutes)

Review the options generated in the previous lesson and lead a discussion about the possible outcomes and consequences associated with them.

Suggested Questions:

- What are the possible outcomes and consequences of each option?
- How likely are they to happen?
- How would they impact Eveline's life?

Apply (25–30 minutes)

Ask your students to position themselves as Eveline, writing a letter to explain their decision. Their letters should explain how this decision aligns with their values and the predictions on which they're basing it.

Suggested Prompt:

In the story, Eveline writes letters to Frank and her father to explain her decision. Today, you'll do the same. Consider ALL of Eveline's options—the options in the story and the additional options we generated, and select the best option for her. Stepping into Eveline's shoes, write a letter to Frank to explain your choice and give your rationale. Include information about how this option aligns with your values, any specific factors you are considering, and your predictions for the outcome.

Reflect (10–15 minutes)

Select students to share their letters with the class. Try to represent different choices in the letters you select to be read, providing opportunities for students to react and discuss.



Reflecting

Lesson #5



Focus Standard

SD.7 – Reflect on and evaluate a decision-making process, and compare the quality of the process with the quality of the outcome

Suggested Time

45–60 minutes

Resources

“Eveline” short story from James Joyce’s *Dubliners*

Impact

Reflecting on our experiences gives us time to process how to improve future decisions. This lesson guides students through reflecting on their decisions, and shows them where changes and improvements can be made to feel confident as decision makers.

Objectives

- Students will reflect on the character Eveline and the decisions she made.

Optional Teaching Strategies

- Provide additional choices, including a live presentation, for students to share what they’ve learned.

Differentiation

- Limit the choices in *Reflect* for groups that may struggle with identifying and selecting the best option.
- This could be a time to allow more creative options for students who enjoy performing. For example, they could write a play about Eveline’s different options, and what might have happened if she used a decision-making process.

What To Look and Listen For

- Are students able to distinguish between and explain the parts of a decision-making process?
- Are students able to convey the importance and applications of a decision-making process?

Engage (5–10 minutes)

Partner or group your students to discuss what Eveline’s life might be like a year after the story takes place.

Suggested Prompts & Questions:

Imagine a year has passed since Eveline decided to leave Frank. What might her day-to-day life be like now? How do you think she feels about her decision? Do you think she spends time wondering about what-ifs, or is she content with her decision? Why?

Apply (10–15 minutes)

Lead a discussion on how implementing a decision-making process could have helped Eveline.

Suggested Questions:

- What parts of a decision-making process did Eveline use in the story? Which parts didn’t she use?
- Compare the decision-making process we used for Eveline to the process she actually used in the story. What were the advantages of using a decision-making process? Were there any disadvantages?
- How could a decision-making process have helped her?

Reflect (30–35 minutes)

Group your students and have them create a video, poster, or presentation teaching others about the importance of a decision-making process.

Suggested Prompt:

It’s your turn! Take what you learned about a decision-making process and share it with others. Make a poster, video, or presentation that teaches viewers about the parts of a decision-making process, how it’s helpful, and why it’s important for their lives.