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Ethics after the Apocalypse


– Teaching Right and Wrong through and Analysis of
Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*

Etik efter apokalypsen

*– Att undervisa rätt och fel genom samt analys av Cormac
McCarthy's The Road*

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Title (in English)

Ethics after the Apocalypse: Teaching Right and Wrong through and Analysis of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*

Titel (svensk översättning)

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Sammanfattning Summary (in English)

In our world and our modern society, we have laws, ethics, morality, and religion that guide us, teaching us the basic principles of what is right and what is wrong, and what is good and what is bad. However, what would happen if all of these guides suddenly cease to exist? In Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, this is exactly what happens. The novel's two main characters, a father and his son, try to survive in a world that has turned into ravaged landscapes with people that will hunt others down, kill them and eat them. Through the story, the pair fight to survive, but also fight to maintain their ethical values and moral duties when everyone around them has abandoned those values.

This thesis will thereby demonstrate the possibility of ethics in a post-apocalyptic world and analyse this by reference to consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics. Moreover, it will show the ways that *The Road* can be used to teach right and wrong and good and bad in upper-secondary school.

Commented [BB1]: The author explicitly states which theories form the lens through which ethics are analyzed in this piece.

Nyckelord *Keywords*

Cormac McCarthy • The Road • Ethics • Consequentialism • Deontology • Virtue Ethics • Swedish National Agency of Education • English • Philosophy • Upper-secondary school

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Introduction

What if some good guys came?

Well, I don't think we're likely to meet any good guys on the road.

We're on the road. (McCarthy, 151)

Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* tells the story of a father and a son as they walk through a grey and burned USA after the destruction of the world. Whether the world was destroyed by a meteor strike, a nuclear explosion or climate change is unclear. Despite that, the reason for the world's destruction has little significance to the plot. The novel instead focuses on how humans have turned against one another when laws suddenly become meaningless. When rules, laws and other forms of guidance that prescribe right and wrong are non-existent, and the environment turns harsh, *The Road* implies that one might also need to become cruel to survive. However, this might not be the only way to fully understand how ethics may function in such a state of nature.

As the man and the boy wander through a ruined USA, they are faced with ethical dilemmas and tension-filled circumstances. Through the novel, the pair's ethical values slowly cause them to realise that they have different ethical perspectives. The father will do anything to protect his son and always prioritises his well-being. Even if people they meet need assistance or aid, he will not help them if he has the slightest suspicion that they may cause harm or put his child in danger. The boy, however, believes they should help whoever needs it because they are supposed to be good. For the boy, being good means helping everyone, while to the man it means protecting his son. Through the father and the son, the novel highlights the possibility of ethics in a post-apocalyptic world.

This thesis will discuss how ethical principles that guide behaviour can be found even in a world without laws and where everyone must act primarily to ensure their survival. Furthermore, a comparison between the ethical values depicted in the novel and those of our world will determine whether the novel might be a useful teaching tool for upper-secondary school students, particularly in English and Philosophy classes. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to analyse how ethics and morality are depicted in a post-apocalyptic world in which our contemporary laws no longer apply or exist.

According to the Swedish National Agency of Education, students of English 7 should read a variety of types of texts, including literature. Students are expected to be able to discuss complex subjects about society and analyse literary contexts (Skolverket, 2022a, 8). Moreover, in Philosophy courses, students should learn about ethical theory, including being able to distinguish between what is right and wrong and what defines a good society (Skolverket, 2022b, 1-2). I will thus examine the possibility of using *The Road* to teach ethical issues in both English 7 and Philosophy to satisfy the requirements of the syllabi for both courses. Because the themes and issues raised in *The Road* are

Commented [BB2]: This quote captures the novel's discussion of discerning good and bad people. Others may have good intentions, but it is dangerous to assume that that case is likely. What is hopeful and what is naïve?

Commented [BB3]: This word choice helps to establish the bleakness of *The Road's* setting.

Commented [BB4]: This sentiment mirrors my feelings. This novel is not about how the world came to an end. It focuses on telling the tale of how humans react to the end.

Commented [BB5]: It is interesting to see how this separation does or does not impact the pair's behaviour. Though the boy becomes increasingly vocal about his perspective, their father-son dynamic results in the final say belonging to the man.

Commented [BB6]: The boy's perspective is as altruistic as it is simplistic. It may lack nuance, but it is undeniably noble.

Commented [BB7]: During my initial reading of *The Road*, I personally developed the position that it would be an effective teaching tool for the discussion of ethics and morality.

quite difficult, the students must be mature enough, and have a high enough level of English competence to understand it. Since students usually read more advanced novels and classics in English 7, students at this level should also be able to read *The Road*. Hence, English 7 has been chosen as the most appropriate level for this project.

What follows will begin with Chapter I which addresses the literary aspects of *The Road*, where an analysis of the narration and environment as well as the relationship between the two main characters will be presented. Chapter II will focus on its ethical themes and will include a basic survey of philosophical ethical theories. Chapter III will centre on the pedagogical potential of the novel and demonstrate its possible uses in English and Philosophy classrooms to determine whether teaching *The Road* could help students see ethics from perspectives outside of their own.

I

What would you do if I died?
If you died I would want to die too.
So you could be with me?
Yes. So I could be with you.
Okay. (McCarthy, 11)

The Road tells the story of an unnamed father and his unnamed son, who are referred to as “the man” and “the boy” (e.g., 8). The plot unfolds through a third person limited narration, with occasional insights from the man’s first-person point of view. These flashbacks and insights from the man’s perspective provide a lens to understand how the world around them has transformed since the destruction occurred. Because the man was alive before the disaster happened, but the boy was only born shortly after the destruction, the man’s reflections highlight the transformation of the world, noting that “[e]verything as it once was had been faded and weathered” (8). With the help of his descriptions and memories, one is able to grasp the story’s setting, which is described as a desolated (17) where the snow is grey with “[b]lack water running from under the sodden drifts of ash” (16). The novel’s narration provides the picture of the environment, since the novel contains very little dialogue; as Michael Sauder and Chad McPherson explain, “[q]uiet is more common than conversation” (475). When there is so little dialogue, McCarthy’s writing creates the feeling that the readers themselves are on the grey, desolated road, barely speaking, malnourished and without energy, and hiding from the so-called “bad guys”. Furthermore, there is no typical literary climax, causing the novel to feel more like an experience shared with the father and the son.

The novel has no surprising turn of events; even the father’s death (McCarthy, 281) is expected because he is sick throughout the book. Nonetheless, the father’s death is upsetting, with the boy begging his father to let him join him in death. The father refuses, saying that he cannot hold his dead son in his arms, even though he believed he could. Their last moment continues with the boy’s denial, claiming that his father had promised to never leave him, and yet it is exactly what he does. In the end, the father tells his son that whenever the boy wants to, he can talk to him, and the father will reply (279). Until the end, even on his death bed, the father cares for his son, trying to comfort him and showing him that he will not be alone since the father will always be with him. However, it is still heart-wrenching to imagine not only that the little boy “slept close to his father...and held him” (281) on the night his father died, then awoke the next morning to find “his father was cold and stiff” (281), but also that he remained with his father for “three days [before] he walked out to the road” (281) again. Moreover, the man reflects on a dream he has about his wife, remembering that “she died alone somewhere in the dark and there is no other dream nor other waking world and there is no other

Commented [BB8]: The use of only a single word to conclude this segment of dialogue highlights how throughout *The Road*, brief language is used to convey broad meaning. Though the boy’s sentence could not have more brevity, it is emotionally impactful.

Commented [BB9]: This is an interesting observation for discussion. To what extent does that minimal dialogue contribute to the immersive nature of the novel?

tale to tell” (32). Therefore, the narration of *The Road* uses the father’s perspective and flashbacks to highlight the way a person’s life could change after a catastrophe such as the one in the novel. The father’s memories are sometimes hard to decipher, as they are often vague, fading and turning grey, a mere reflection of the world around them. When the father passes away, and the novel can no longer be narrated through him, it turns to the son and follows his journey. The novel hence follows the literal road of the father and the son in what turns out to be the last chapter of their life together.

Commented [BB10]: The father’s flashbacks are reflective of typical internal dialogue that arises in response to traumatic events. Memories reappear, discussions are recited, and feelings resurface.

After the boy has stayed with his father’s body for three days, he finally decides to walk to the road and look around. That is when he sees a man called the veteran. The boy asks him if he is one of the good guys, which the veteran confirms. When he suggests that the boy join him, the boy asks if he is “carrying the fire” (283), a phrase he and his father used countless times to confirm that they are still good, that there is still hope. Moreover, the boy asks if they have any kids with them (284), perhaps to determine that the veteran and his group are not cannibals but actually good guys. After finally agreeing to join the veteran and his group, he meets a woman who holds him tight and claims that she is glad to see him, which is described saying that “[s]he would talk to him sometimes about God. He tried to talk to God but the best thing was to talk to his father and he did talk and he didnt forget” (286). Because of this, the bittersweet ending of the book creates an empty sensation, like the road itself.

Commented [BB11]: The novel’s title, *The Road*, is barebones, but it is descriptive. The novel holds a collection of metaphorical and literal roads.

Commented [BB12]: The notion of “carrying the fire” remains my favorite phrase found on the pages of *The Road*.

As mentioned, the man was alive before the apocalypse. This means that he retains memories of what once existed, which allows him to describe to his son how the world was. These memories can be evoked even in simple objects, like a can of Coca Cola the man finds and gives to the boy. In telling the boy to drink it and that it is really good (23), the narrative makes the world of the novel familiar, even if the can seems out of place in an unfamiliar environment like that of *The Road*. It also makes the world of the novel visceral, as the well-known bright red colour of the Coca Cola provides contrast to the grey environment. Later, when the two come upon a house, it is revealed that the man grew up there. The house is, like the rest of their world, destroyed, with “[t]he peeling wooden clapboards...largely gone from the lower walls for firewood leaving the studs and the insulation exposed. The rotted screening from the back porch lay on the concrete terrace” (25). It is not strange for the house to be in this condition, but knowing that it is the man’s childhood home, one could imagine that he could feel conflicted. He remembers his house the way it was when he lived there, while seeing it in its present, barely recognisable state. The father walks through the house, showing his son where they used to celebrate Christmas and where he used to sleep (26-27). When looking at his old bedroom, the narrative turns to the father’s thoughts: “In the nights in their thousands to dream the dreams of a child’s imaginings, worlds rich or fearful such as might offer themselves but never the one to be. He pushed open the closet door half expecting to find his childhood things. Raw cold daylight fell through from the roof. Gray as his heart” (27). The reference to his heart as grey could

Commented [BB13]: This novel was not fit for a good ending. It was necessary to have an ending as empty and bleak as the one McCarthy penned.

represent his lack of sympathy or compassion for other people in this new world. When the father realises that the toys from his childhood are gone, it could represent how not only the memories of his childhood, but also his admiration for life, has now faded away. It is after this realisation that the father immediately agrees to leave the house, which contrasts with his earlier excitement when he first saw it. This incident foreshadows the rest of the novel, as despite having little hope, they try to survive in a hostile and hopeless grey environment that lacks the compassion of earlier times. This part of *The Road* therefore sets the mood, showing that there is barely any hope for the father and the son. Through the references of the father's warm memories of his childhood, the son becomes a symbol of the father's hope and will to continue living.

Commented [BB14]: Reinforces the author's observation that simple material objects connect to the complex psyche of the characters.

The man sees his child as "his warrant" (5), even going so far as to say that "[i]f he [the son] is not the word of God God never spoke" (5). In Christianity, the Son and the Father are crucial to the trinity. With this quote, the father is claiming that his son must be sent from God, or God does not exist. As the son is his symbol of hope but also his reason to keep on enduring this ravaged landscape, he must believe that his son is sent to him from God. If not, the father would lose his faith and the little hope he has left. When the pair later find a shelter, the man thinks once again about the world as it was and reflects that his son must see him as alien, speaking of things that the boy could not possibly imagine. Diogo Barbieri claims that the man is haunted by his memories, tortured by the remnants of the world he once knew and "of a better past that cannot be restored" (62-63).

Commented [BB15]: The boy, even independent of his own dialogue, is a symbol of hope and optimistic will.

Commented [BB16]: Due to my unfamiliarity with the Christian faith, this is a connection that I neglected to make.

Moreover, when the father attempts to recount the old world to the son, the narrator describes the way that the father "could not construct for the child's pleasure the world he'd lost without constructing the loss as well" and "[t]hat he could not enkindle in the heart what was ashes in his own" (McCarthy, 155). Here, the man's heart and memories become a reflection of the world around him, symbolizing what he has become because of the destruction of the world. It could also be seen as foreshadowing of his illness, acquired from the soot in the ruined world. The ash, thus, is both in him, destroying his body, and symbolic of the world that has been destroyed.

Commented [BB17]: There is a symbolic link within the ash of the barren world contributing to the man's deteriorating health.

It is important to analyse the relationship between the father and the son, since throughout the story, the father never wants to leave the son's side, only doing so with hesitation when necessary. When they are attacked by a so-called "roadrat" (66), the father shoots the man to protect his son (66) saying: "[t]his is my child ... I wash a dead man's brains out of his hair. That is my job" (74), showing that he will go to extraordinary lengths to protect the boy. Furthermore, if the son were to die, the father would want to die, too (11), as the father explains: "the boy was all that stood between him and death" (29). What this demonstrates is that the only reason the man endures this miserable world and walks this road is his son. They are described as "each other's world entire" (6). In the end, when the boy asks his father to take him with him to death, the father makes him promise not to give up after his death (279). The pair take care of one other, as is clear both when the father tells the son to drink

the Coke and the son insists that the father has a sip (23) and when the father makes the son shoes and the boy says “[n]ow, you Papa” (100). According to D. Marcel DeCoste, this signals how the son mirrors his father’s “loving concern” (75). So, even though the boy is thought to be around 10 years old, he seems to be mature beyond his years in the way he cares about his father because he models his father’s care of him. Later, when the son forgets their gun at the beach, their only weapon to protection against the “bad guys,” the father blames himself rather than becoming angry with the boy, saying it is he who should be responsible for the gun (232). The father does not want his son to bear the burden should they lose the gun. DeCoste explains this as a parental act where “the father keeps himself conformed to love and offers his child an education in this virtue” (74).

Commented [BB18]: The boy is forced to grow up far too fast due to the conditions. Luckily, the man serves as a strong positive role model for the boy to learn from.

Commented [BB19]: Even in tense circumstances, the man maintains a level head for the sake of the boy’s mental wellbeing. He takes responsibility for the mistakes of the pair as he is living to protect the boy.

Throughout the novel, the man and boy refer to themselves as the “good guys” (McCarthy, 77) and the other people of the land as the “bad guys” (79). These bad guys commit horrendous acts such as rape, murder, and cannibalism. In comparison, the father and son refuse to succumb to these behaviours although, at times, acting unethically could provide them with more food and security. As DeCoste says, the father teaches his son about virtues, ethics, morality and, overall, about what good and bad and right and wrong is. However, it is possible that some acts that would not be ethical or justifiable in a world that is not destroyed would be considered ethical in a postapocalyptic world like that depicted in *The Road*. But how could ethics, right and wrong, be determined in a lawless world where everyone must do what they need to do to survive?

Commented [BB20]: Though the actions of the main characters appear entirely innocent relative to the heinous acts executed by “bad guys”, outside of this postapocalyptic world they may not be ethical in the same way. For example, looting the contents of homes for sustenance is not the honourable behaviour that it becomes viewed as.

II

Are we still the good guys? he said.

Yes. We’re still the good guys.

And we always will be.

Yes. We always will be. (McCarthy, 77)

In all of McCarthy’s works, according to Steven Frye, he “engages the ultimate questions – the nature of the real, the possibility of the divine, the source of ethics and identity – but always in a richly philosophical context” (3). This, indeed, describes the themes raised in *The Road*, as the novel addresses complex ethical questions. But what is meant when an act is deemed right or wrong or good or bad?

According to Russ Shafer-Landau, to know how we must live, what actions are right, and how people should treat one another, one must turn to philosophy (1). Following Shafer-Landau, this chapter turns to ethics, specifically normative ethics. Normative ethics provides answers to questions about fundamental moral duties, including what acts are considered ethical, what traits are virtues and vices, whether “the ends always justify the means, or [if there are] certain types of action that should never be done under any circumstances?” (2).

Three of the major approaches in normative ethics are *consequentialism*, *deontological ethics*, and *virtue ethics*. Consequentialism, as the name implies, focuses on the consequences of our actions. According to consequentialism, actions are deemed morally correct simply because they “maximize the amount of goodness in the world” (112-113). Furthermore, if the ends are good enough, they can justify the means; this means that if the result has brought as much goodness as possible, the actions are justified (113). This means that if one has to choose between two possible ways of acting, and one choice brings more good than the other, then it is the ethical choice. Deontological ethics is usually seen as the opposite of consequentialism. Its name derives from the Greek word for ‘duty’. Deontology, thus, focuses not only on what is permitted or forbidden but also what is morally required. Deontological ethics dictates what we ought to do instead of what type of person we should be. The difference between consequentialism and deontology, thus, is that deontologists believe that some actions cannot be justified no matter how good the results are. Deontologists argue that some acts “are morally forbidden” and that “the Right is said to have priority over the Good” (Stanford Encyclopedia, 2021). Finally, virtue ethics is concerned with the sort of person one should be, rather than moral duty or consequences. Virtue ethics claims that there are specific characteristics thought to be ideal and, therefore, virtuous. According to virtue ethics, right and wrong do not arise out of moral duty or the consequences of acts but, instead, first imagines what a good person and a good life is and, from that basis, defines ethical duty and action in reference to this ideal (Shafer-Landau, 240241). As such, virtue ethics claims that “[a]n act is morally right just because it is one that a virtuous person, acting in character, would do in that situation” (241). Virtue ethics would call this person a *moral exemplar*, an ideal virtuous person that everyone should strive to be. Moreover, for each virtue that exists, there is also a contrary vice that one should avoid (241). Depending on the culture, society, or religion, these might differ slightly. Some of the most common virtues, derived from Christianity, are named the *seven heavenly virtues*: “chastity, diligence, patience, kindness, humility” (Siker, 46). These virtues stand in opposition to seven vices, or the so-called *seven deadly sins*: lust, gluttony, greed, sloth, wrath, envy and pride” (46).

It is clear in the novel that ethical values in the new world have become blurred. For, when there are no laws or accountability, it seems that there is absolute freedom to make one’s own choices and decisions about how to act. But in the society of *The Road*, this freedom becomes gruesome, as there are numerous examples where this freedom to decide how to act results in cruelty and horrific practices. For example, as there is little food left, people have turned to cannibalism as a resource and infants are seen charred, gutted, and headless, ready to be eaten by the bad guys (McCarthy, 198). Furthermore, it is implied that these men rape and impregnate women, only so that they can eat the infants (195). Additionally, when the father and the son encounter one of the bad guys in the novel, he is said to have traits that are nearly animalistic. The father describes him as having “[t]he reptilian

Commented [BB21]: This paragraph outlines the three theoretical approaches to ethics that are taken into account within this analysis. The foundational definitions of consequentialism, deontological ethics, and virtue ethics are included.

It should be noted that in listing the virtues that make up Christianity’s Seven Heavenly Virtues, the author’s list of only five concepts diverges from the traditional list containing humility, charity, chastity, gratitude, temperance, patience, and diligence (Colón 1).

Seven Heavenly Virtues | Definition, Deadly Sins, List, & Facts | Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/seven-heavenly-virtues>. Accessed 22 May 2024.

calculations in those cold and shifting eyes. The grey and rotting teeth. Claggy with human flesh” (75). This description shows that the bad guys’ cruel actions get interpreted ethically by the father as animalistic and lacking in the virtues of humanity.

Commented [BB22]: In a desolate world lacking the framework of society, humanity resorts to animalistically cruel behaviour.

When describing their environment and what occurred to it, the father describes that the world he formerly knew was "soon to be largely populated by men who would eat your children in front of you" (181). This demonstrates how people have abandoned ethics, which leads to people having no guide to what is right and what is wrong. Thus, people only act in the ways that benefit them. Since there are no longer laws and there is not much food left, it is not unexpected that a majority of the population would turn to what was once deemed unethical behaviour, cannibalism, in order to survive. However, characters like the father and the son, as well as the previously mentioned veteran and his group, seem to be able to survive without engaging in immoral or unethical behaviour. According to Sauder and McPherson, what separates the bad guys from the good guys in the novel is that the good guys “do not harm others without provocation and, of even more significance, do not engage in cannibalism” (477).

Commented [BB23]: I feel as though Sauder and McPherson’s distinction is lacking. Though it is true that abstaining from cannibalism is a core tenant of our main characters and the veteran, it is not the only significant behaviour they detest. For example, it can be safely assumed that these characters would not partake in the nefarious act of rape (contrary to the actions of the bad guys).

The father says that “[o]n this road there are no godspoke men. They are gone and I am left and they have taken with them the world” (McCarthy, 32). When the world was destroyed, everything that humans built was abolished too, not only its buildings, but also its laws, societies, ethical values, morality, and religion. Moreover, when laws, ethics, morality, and religion are eradicated, people seem to forget about the moral basic principles that would usually guide them to be good and return to a state of nature. In *The Road*, since these guides became non-existent, there was no one left on Earth to hold people accountable for their actions. Thus, everyone is now free to do whatever they want. By categorising the good men as “godspoke men”, one could conclude that there is no longer an absolute or law concerning what is right and wrong. By claiming that the father is the only one left who has a moral compass, it becomes clear that there is no longer anyone that is good. Since the father grew up in a time where laws and ethical values existed, he is aware of the extreme contrast living in a world with or without morality. At times, the novel uses religion, specifically Christianity, to represent morality, which one can see when the boy reaches out for a snowflake that is falling. The man observes this, saying that “[h]e caught it in his hand and watched it expire there like the last host of Christendom” (16), showing that religion had been one of the moral guides in the world before its destruction.

There are many times in the novel that the man reflects that there are no good men left. However, perhaps he overlooked one possibility: the boy. In the story, the son becomes the driving force for ethics, as it is he who questions the behaviour of others, even his father’s. This perhaps implies that hope rests with children; since their perspectives are purer and not cynical, they might be able to see right and wrong better than adults. Because even though the boy grew up seeing the miserable world

Commented [BB24]: Though the father maintains a firm moral compass, it is true that the boy serves to maximize his morality via questioning his actions.

they live in, he still wants to do and be good. There are several instances where the boy considers whether he and his father actually are good guys. The father's goodness can often be called into doubt because he repeatedly engages in questionable behaviour, such as refusing to assist a man who was hit by lightning. The man is limping and described "as burntlooking as the country" (49) with one of his eyes burnt shut. The father deems the man helpless and determines that it would be better not to waste their resources, since it is apparent that he was going to die and if they give him their food then they will die too (52). However, the son does not agree and wants to help the man (50). This is one of the first cases of ethical conflict the pair have.

Throughout the novel, the boy desires to help others. He is even willing to sacrifice his own safety when he believes to have spotted another boy; in order to locate and help the boy, he leaves the safehouse where he and his father are hiding and stands on the open road, entirely exposed to harm (84). Later, the pair have everything they own stolen by a thief. When they finally catch up with him, the father insists not only that the thief returns their things, but also that he should strip naked. Finding his father's actions unfair, the boy begins to cry. However, the father continues, telling the thief that he took everything from them and that they will leave him in the same way. Despite the thief begging and the boy crying, the father does not stray from his decision. One might think that the father should not have taken the thief's belongings in addition to taking back his own, however, deontology could be used to understand the father's decision. Since the thief was acting on the principle that stealing is alright, since there are no laws, the father was simply reflecting the thief's understanding of moral duty and, in some way, respecting them by stealing. Because there are no laws, the new world has turned into a state of nature where an eye for an eye works as a moral reasoning. Because of this, it is hard to decipher if the actions are right or wrong, for there is no absolute right and wrong in this post-apocalyptic world, only one's own survival. When they have left the thief alone, naked, and cold, the father attempts to justify his actions by saying that he "wasn't going to kill him" to which the boy responds "[b]ut we did kill him" (256-260). The boy continuously demonstrates his vast empathy for the people around him and his desire to help everyone no matter the circumstances. The father, in comparison, focuses only on himself and his son.

The boy could be seen as having almost messianic qualities. Kevin Kearney describes how the boy sees the good in everyone and, because he wants to see good, he remains good and pure (173). The boy is someone a virtue ethicist might describe as a *moral exemplar*, since he shows an incredible amount of virtue. More than showing kindness and being helpful, the boy is also honest. He does not try to hide his disappointment in his father or himself after they left the thief to die or any other time when he believes that they acted wrongly. He shows an incredible amount of regret or frustration every time he cannot help someone. The son can be seen as the novel's moral exemplar and the epitome of kindness, always staying faithful to his desire to be good to everyone around him. The

Commented [BB25]: The boy applies his understanding of ethicality to frequently consider the morality of his own position in the world. Not only is he capable of assessing the rights and wrongs of his environment, but he is also able to look inwards upon his own character.

Commented [BB26]: This is an interesting application of ethical theory that I would not have been able to conceive personally prior to learning of this methodology as it is presented in this analysis.

Commented [BB27]: This sentiment, interpreting the boy as fulfilling the role of a messiah, is an interesting point for discussion.

purity and innocence Kearney describes, are seen several times in *The Road*. At the book's conclusion, when the son encounters the veteran who he chooses to join after his father passing, one of the first questions he asks is: "Do you have any kids?" (284). This shows that the boy is in fact just a boy, filled with purity and innocence, who not only wants to see the good in everyone, but also wants to be just a boy. Furthermore, the father and son continuously talk about a metaphorical flame that they must carry and, when the father is dying at the end of the novel, he tells the son that the boy has to carry it alone from now on (278). The flame could be understood as a symbol of hope or light that will bring a better tomorrow. Even in the man's final moments, he thinks about who will find and take care of his son. He concludes that "[g]oodness will find the little boy. It always has. It will again" (281). This shows that the boy is intrinsically good and that, because he is, he will be protected. Kearney also raises the question of how someone as virtuous and good-natured as the boy manages to survive in a world filled with more bad guys than good ones (173); this is perhaps answered when the father mentions that because goodness always follows his son, he will always be safe.

In comparison to the boy, how does the father display his ethical values? The clearest contrast between the two is that the boy persists on helping others while the father solely focuses on his son. The father feels an immense duty to protect his son, which is perhaps what most parents feel; but by claiming that he is appointed by God to protect him and will kill anyone who touches him, this shows that he will do whatever it takes to protect the boy (McCarthy, 77). One might therefore wonder what role the son plays in relation to his father and whether he might be the man's anchor to sanity and humanity. DeCoste concludes that the man rarely shows his love through words but rather does so mainly through actions. He describes that "the man's love is best expressed not in whispered words but in acts of tenderness which all but scream in McCarthy's savage setting" (73). DeCoste divides the father virtuous acts into three different categories: "acts of mercy, acts of giving, and more profound acts of sacrifice" (73). The father never puts his own well-being first, since everything he does is for his son's benefit or safety.

However, one can wonder whether the father's means justify the ends. The answer to this depends on whether the father is acting out of duty to the boy, which is a form of deontology, or if he focuses on the result or consequences of his son's survival, as consequentialists would. It is hard to say what matters to him the most, the duty or the result, but what can be seen in the novel is that the father's only focus is the boy, and he is prepared to kill or leave people to die simply so that the boy could live.

A consequentialist strives for the greatest amount of happiness for the greatest number. As the narration primarily follows the father, one only sees how the actions affect him and his son. Therefore, it is difficult to say if the ends are good enough to justify the father's actions. So, would consequentialists consider the man ethical or the actions good? For example, even though the father

Commented [BB28]: I believe that the metaphorical flame is also significant in how it relates to the ashen state of the world. Though a charred, barren, and soot-covered landscape would be a crushing sight to see, it has become a daily reality. As such, though the flame is reminiscent of their miserable surroundings, they are able to associate it with hope and positive will.

Commented [BB29]: I am inclined to believe that the duty of caring for the boy is the man's primary matter of concern. While there is abundant overlap between these two values, as the man's duty to the boy prepares him for survival, I believe that one key plot point should be taken into consideration. The point I am referring to is the father's initial impression that he may end up shooting the boy if it meant that the pair could die without suffering. This also extends to the father giving the boy instructions as to how he could end his own life in the instance that it would save him from an unenviable death at the hands of cannibals.

is prepared to kill people, he only killed the aforementioned road rat *after* he grabbed his son and put a knife to his throat (McCarthy, 66). While the father murdered the road rat, it was in defence of his son's life and, more importantly, it resulted in his survival. However, aside from murder, the father chooses not to help people in need in favour of ensuring their own survival. For instance, he did not help the man struck by lightning and he took the thief's clothes and left him to die. The only person the father helped was an old man called Ely. The pair spot Ely and follow him for a while before they catch up to him. He is described as "small and bent" and "even by their new world standards he smelled terrible" (161). Ely believes the father and the son to be robbers at first while the father on the other hand believes it might be an ambush (162). This is an example how the people of the new world no longer trust each other, both sides believe the other to be the 'bad guy'. This is proven by the father's reluctance to help Ely, who is only given food after the boy insists. However, the father's distrust is still clear, as he does not give Ely a spoon to eat the canned peaches (163). This shows that the father does not trust anyone unlike the boy who wants to see the good in everyone.

Commented [BB30]: In such circumstances, any human has reason to believe that any outsider is a threat.

Another incident that causes one to question if the man's ends truly justify the means is when he uses flare gun to shoot an attacker after being shot by an arrow (263). Even though it could be seen as self-defence, it is after this incident that the boy wonders whether they are actually good guys. Estes concludes that "[t]he boy is starting to suspect that the father's ordering of the world is not based on universal moral principles but entirely on his own limited perspective and self-interest" (5). DeCoste further claims that by McCarthy not naming the father or son "calls our attention to their identity as moral characters, in ways which profoundly humanize rather than, as we might expect, dehumanize the man and boy" (72-73). Moreover, DeCoste concludes that "[i]f we can take the novel as a tale of moral formation, then, it is so as we see the son learn from and grow beyond the exemplary performance of the father" (73). This could show that the boy first learns what it means to be good from his father but, since he starts to disagree with his father's choices and actions, he also develops ethical values independently from his own experiences and understandings of the world.

Commented [BB31]: As my previous annotation states, everybody has reason to see others as bad guys. This remains true for the boy as he has firsthand experience with the dangerous capabilities of strangers, yet it does not stop him from seeking out the good in people.

During the course of the novel, the man tells stories to the boy who seemingly enjoys them. However, later on in the book when the father asks if he wants to hear a story, the boy rejects the offer, saying "[t]hose stories are not true...in the stories we're always helping people and we don't help people" (McCarthy, 268). Kearney's concern about how the boy manages to stay alive is important to raise again. Because despite the boy being good and having messianic qualities, the sole reason for his survival is the father's cunning survival skills (173-174). Since the boy is the epitome of ethical good, and for the goodness to be maximized, the son must stay alive. The good for a consequentialist would therefore be that the boy lives and, since the father is the reason for his survival, his means are therefore justified.

Commented [BB32]: Though the man's decisions are at times questionable, it is true that they contributed to his success in ensuring the boy's survival.

According to deontological ethics, the right thing to do would be to help the people they meet. Even if they would, for example, have put themselves at risk by helping the man struck by lightning, helping others is a duty and, therefore, the right thing to do. Deontology claims that people have a duty that is universalizable to all people regardless of the circumstances or consequences; acting according to duty is what is morally required (Stanford Encyclopedia, 2021). Even though the father believes he should only act upon choices that would benefit his son, it is wrong to refuse to help others. Moreover, there are other acts in the novel that cannot be justified, particularly those performed by the ‘bad guys’. Even if many of these people have survived because of them, actions like cannibalism, rape, forcefully impregnating women, and eating infants, cannot be justified. Here is where deontologists would claim that these actions are morally forbidden regardless of whether they ensure survival. In the end, the right has the priority over the good. Moreover, DeCoste argues that neither the man nor the boy act according to deontology. Even though the pair are considered “good guys”, it is not a title they earn for their devotion to “immutable moral laws” or any “abstract principles”. The laws do exist for them, especially through the law to never resort to cannibalism (71).

We wouldn't ever eat anybody, would we?

No. Of course not.

Even if we were starving?

We're starving now.

But we wouldn't.

...

Because we're the good guys.

Yes.

And we're carrying the fire.

(McCarthy 128-129)

In conclusion, the boy is represented as virtuous, the epitome of the good, as he constantly wants to help everyone around them. The father, on the other hand, has a more complex relation to ethics, he both refuses to help and murders people they meet on the road, only helping Ely, for example, after his son insisted. Although this is true, the father never goes to the same extent as the bad guys. In a world where it is every person for themselves, and no laws are there to help guide people, one cannot blame him for being cautious of strangers, as they could easily kill or hurt them. **It is true that the father's actions could seem to be based on a type of egoism, since they only consider him and his son.** However, in contrast to the bad guys, the father still maintains some basic moral principles and ethical values, as everything he does is to protect his son. As mentioned, the boy seems to be some sort of anchor for the man's sanity and hope, so perhaps his actions might have been different had he not had the boy to protect. But without his father, the son would likely not have become as good as he is, as

Commented [BB33]: In the context of *The Road's* setting, the ability to contribute to a common good has been diminished. The extent of the pair's abilities to consider the needs of others has been steeply limited by external factors. They have limited contact with strangers, of whom they must approach cautiously, and they hardly have the means to sustain themselves.

it was his father that taught him right and wrong and good and bad. Most of the father's questionable actions come from a place of fear or self-defence, though perhaps he is not as virtuous, pure, and innocent as the boy. But one could argue that the man is in fact generally good, since he still holds onto moral laws and ethical values.

What the novel seems to claim is that, even though people become cruel when the world turns to ashes, ethical values are still relevant; there will remain people who want to do better or be better, even in a hopeless world. This is why the boy is so important to the story, as he is the symbol of hope for a better world; goodness will find him, and he can carry the flame forward. The boy as a symbol of hope is incredibly important for the novel, as it shows that good will still exist in a ruined world. Because of this, it is clear that this novel can be important for students at upper-secondary school, especially as they, like the boy, are the future of society. *The Road* could show students that, despite the world falling apart, there will always be hope and there will always be people who want to do good.

III

The frailty of everything revealed at last. Old and troubling issues resolved into nothingness and night. The last instance of a thing takes the class with it. Turns out the light and is gone. Look around you. Ever is a long time. But the boy knew what he knew. That ever is no time at all. (McCarthy, 28)

As a future teacher in English and Philosophy, one of my main interests has been to create a project that could blend the two subjects. This is something I have observed many times during my internships but also when I went to school. Moreover, it is highly encouraged at the Teachers' Programme. However, commonly, the subjects that tend to be blended fall into the disciplines of History or Social Studies. English combined with Philosophy is rarely seen in these projects. I argue, however, that Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* could be a great tool for combining English and Philosophy in upper-secondary school.

One of the aims in Philosophy is for students to gain "[k]nowledge of ethics, different ethical viewpoints, and normative ethical theories" in addition to "their application" (Skolverket 2022b, 1). In English, The National Agency of Education has long indicated that literature and reading comprehension has great value; when the syllabus for English was revised in 2021, several of the modifications emphasize the importance of using fiction in the classroom. The *Content of Communication* in English 7 remarks that teaching should incorporate complex and theoretical subjects in connection to the education of students and their society (Skolverket 2022a, 8). Moreover, the syllabus for English 7 states clearly that the teaching should integrate "societal questions, social, cultural, political and historical conditions, as well as relevant ethical and existential questions in

Commented [BB34]: Ethical values persist beyond the framework of society. They are a resilient feature of humanity. The characteristics of *The Road*'s good guys can arise in the bleakest of circumstances. This is the nature of the flame that they carry through the dark.

different contexts” (8; my trans.). What can be understood is that both Philosophy and English 7 students are expected to discuss ethical questions, and students of English 7 are expected to read a variety of types of texts, including fiction. Based on the syllabus of the two subjects, reading a novel that raises ethical questions as one of its themes makes the project almost obvious. An example of the proposed project can be seen in Appendix 1.

First, it is important to note that the project plan is designed with an ideal schedule in mind where the students have two days of the week each in Philosophy and English. The plan would of course have to be adjusted based on the schedule the teacher or teachers have. However, if the schedule allows, the lessons can be interchanged with each other. For example, ethical theories could be presented during English and literary discussions could occur in Philosophy classes. The purpose of the project is to have students reflect on the ways that ethics and ethical decision-making are presented in *The Road* and to reflect on their own ethical values to consider how they would behave if the world around them looked like it does in the novel. To first establish their own ethical values, it would be necessary for students to discuss other ethical dilemmas and theories before they analyse the ethics in *The Road*. Ethical dilemmas are commonly used in the Philosophy classroom, so the teacher can select whichever dilemmas they see fit. Examples could be the Trolley problem¹ or the crash of the Uruguayan Air Force Flight 571².

The first week of the project is more introductory, where students learn about the project, the novel and ethical theories. Here, it is important for the teacher to mention some of the novel’s graphic themes such as cannibalism and rape. These can be extremely triggering for some student; hence it is important that the teacher provides trigger warnings. Moreover, the teacher presents a question the students should keep in mind as they read the novel, which is: “How are ethical values depicted in the novel?”. This question helps the students understand where the project is going and what its purpose is. The first week, literary discussions are more focused on what the students themselves find interesting and the character analyses. One of the questions the teacher could ask is, simply: “Is there anything you find interesting in the pages you have read?”. However, this needs to be followed up with the teacher asking the students to give examples of something they found interesting in the text. Otherwise, there is a risk for the students to give a simple yes or no answer and not have anything concrete to present. This can help students develop their opinion of the setting, the characters, and the novel overall. In Philosophy, the focus will be on ethical dilemmas and introducing ethical theories from philosophy like consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics.

The second and third week, students should discuss the ethical cases derived from the novel. Questions such as “would you ever resort to cannibalism?” or “what defines a good person or a ‘good guy’ according to the novel?” could challenge the students to think outside the box. These questions might seem more philosophical rather than literary-focused, but the questions asked in relation to the

novel will sometimes lean towards the philosophical questions. This is because the students are using ethical values to analyse the novel. However, according to the English 7 syllabus, students should be able to express both opinions and ideas. They should also be able to explain orally from different perspectives, argue [and] evaluate” (2022a, 9; my trans.). In addition to the English 7 syllabus, the Philosophy syllabus states that class should give students the opportunity to maintain a dialogue about different theories and the chance “to develop the ability to analyse and consider existential, ethical and current socio-philosophical issues and theories” and “the ability to adopt personal standpoints based on well thought-out arguments” (2022b, 1). In addition, Deborah Appleman claims that “the

¹ A trolley is rapidly going down the railway tracks. Five people are standing on the tracks, and one cannot get their attention. One can choose to pull the lever, steering the trolley away from the five people, but that will result in one person on the other track getting killed (Stanford Encyclopedia, 2021).

² A Uruguayan airplane that crashed in the Andes Mountains in Argentina. It took two months for the plane to be found and it was later revealed that the survivors had resorted to cannibalism (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023).

notion of perspectives is very important as one reads literature” and that “real life also means looking beyond one’s own point of view to understand the point of view of someone else” (23). Moreover, the teacher will use a more reader-centred approach by asking the students what they would do in scenarios found in the novel to find the more “personal hooks” that can engage students (30-31). In the final week of the project, students should finish reading the novel. By then, they should have developed a better understanding of how to discuss right and wrong and good and bad. At this point, students will have gained knowledge about ethical values in general and, specifically, how it can be applied to the same scenario with different results. They should also have developed their ability to reflect on how they might act and be able to see ethical decision-making from perspectives outside their own. In this week, the teacher will also present the examination, which could either be an essay or an oral discussion about the novel’s relationship with ethical values. Both assessments can be used for both English and Philosophy as the two subjects will consider different aspects of the text. English will address the student’s ability to analyse the novel and their language skills as well as fluency and formulation. For the student to receive the grade of ‘E’ in English, the teacher should, therefore, consider whether the students’ language is “varied, clear and structured” and has “some adaptation to purpose, recipient and situation” (2022a, 9; my trans.). In Philosophy, the teacher will evaluate the students’ use of ethical theories to discuss the dilemmas of the novel and the characters’ actions. The requirements for a grade of ‘E’ in Philosophy 1 dictates that students should discuss ethics and make simple comparisons between various theories using basic terms with simple arguments. Moreover, with some certainty, students should be able to identify different philosophical issues and “make simple analyses of several issues concerning...ethics” (2022b, 3). If the teacher decides for a written assessment, it is important to explain to the students during the course of the project how they are meant to write a literary analysis and perhaps even provide the students with a mock essay. The

students will most likely have written literary essays before, but since they would now be incorporating ethical theories, the teacher needs to guide them. An oral assessment is also possible and might be a bit easier for the students since oral discussion is what they have been doing throughout the project. The teacher could also do a combination of the two and have a formative assessment of the discussions throughout the project and the literary essay could be used as a summative assessment.

Although, as shown, *The Road* could be great tool for a project that blends English 7 and Philosophy, there are some problems that need to be addressed. First of all, English 7 is an optional course for all students reading at higher education preparatory programmes, while Philosophy 1 is mandatory for all students in the Social Science Programme and Humanities Programme, as well as students specialising in Law in the Economics Programme. Philosophy 2 is only mandatory for the Culture specialization in the Humanities Programme. Despite this potential difficulty, I would still select English 7 for the project, since the themes and subjects raised in *The Road* and its language can be quite difficult for younger students. Their English competence must be advanced enough to be able to not only read the novel but also understand and discuss it. It could, thus, be possible to implement the project with an English 6 second-term class, but then the problem is that Philosophy courses are usually taken in the third year of upper-secondary school. However, although it is not mandatory, English 7 is a popular course that most students take, as it is extremely beneficial for higher education. Thus, this project might not run every year but, instead, only in those years when there is the same group of students in both Philosophy and English 7. What could be done instead, if it is not possible to have the same group, is for the teacher to hand out extracts of the novel during Philosophy. In that way, the students would read the extracts but also use them as dilemmas to discuss ethics. Similar projects with other novels such as for example *Lord of the Flies* by William Golding could also be possible to use as it also highlights how people would react in a state of nature. Other novels could be used as well, as long as they highlight how ethics are portrayed in a society with no laws. Moreover, if it is not possible to do the project in Philosophy, one could also do the project between English and Religion, or possibly English and Social Studies. These subjects also bring up ethical values, especially the Religion courses, and it would make the project more flexible and possible to run more often. However, if the teachers choose to have a project using both English and Philosophy, they run the project during the fall term, since in the spring term fewer students choose Philosophy 2, and in English 7 they are busy studying for the national tests.

Finally, I believe that using Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* in the upper-secondary classroom for English and Philosophy will be both enjoyable and educational for the students, especially since the subjects' unique blending would be different to what students are used to. As the project is four weeks long, they will have sufficient time to dive deeply into both the novel's literary and ethical themes. Moreover, I imagine that it would also be enjoyable for the teachers to observe how the students

slowly start analysing the novel more and more in-depth using literary tools and ethical theories. I believe that this project, or one like it, could be an alternative for teachers that want to do something that is both educational but also varied and enjoyable for the students.

Conclusion

You need to go on...I cant go with you. You need to keep going. You dont know what might be down the road. We were always lucky. You'll be lucky again. You'll see. Just go. It's alright. (McCarthy, 276)

In this thesis, I have striven to highlight ethics, and the lack of it, in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and the ways that the novel can be used in the English and Philosophy classrooms. With the help of consequentialism, deontology, and virtue ethics, an analysis of the characters in the novel has been made. Given how complex the characters are, it is clear that it can be difficult to label a person as good or bad, especially when they do not follow the same set of rules that we do. The characters in *The Road* have no universal guides for right and wrong, so analysing them from today's ethical principles, laws, and moral laws is complicated.

Consequentialism, which aims to maximizing the good, has been shown to be a challenge for the ethical interpretation of actions. In the world of *The Road*, where it is every person to themselves, maximizing good seems almost impossible. However, the man attempts to keep the boy alive so that goodness can live on, and goodness always follows his son. But, in instances when the man chooses to not help people, he not only causes their suffering, but also upsets the boy. One must, therefore, wonder whether choosing to prioritise his son's well-being is enough to justify his actions. Deontological ethics might see the father's acts, out of duty to ensure his son's survival, as ethical since what drives his actions is this moral imperative. His actions towards the thief could, moreover, be seen as an eye for an eye in that the father is merely respecting the moral laws the thief himself employs. However, deontological ethics would also claim that refusing to help others is wrong, since helping others is a more important duty than the good of prioritising the son's survival. The son has been shown to be a clear case of a moral exemplar according to virtue ethics. Had the boy been older and more independent, he could have made his own decisions to help everyone he wanted to help. But since he is dependent on his father who makes the choices, he is not able to help everyone they meet.

What makes *The Road* such a fascinating novel is not merely the contrast between the good guys and the bad guys. Since the latter commit horrendous acts that, it would mean that no matter how one twists it, the result will always be that they are bad. The more interesting contrast in the novel is instead between the father and the son. They stand in contrast to each other in ways that make clear

Commented [BB35]: McCarthy's characters are written with enough complexity that their decisions can be assessed through the lens of their own fictional eyes. The lines of morality become blurred when I find myself in their shoes, looking out upon *The Road*'s dire scenario.

Commented [BB36]: Throughout the discussion of moral ambiguity, it is rare to see statements as forthright as this. As such, I was inclined to question its matter-of-fact nature. Upon careful consideration, however, it is undeniable that by the standards of virtue ethics, the boy is a beacon of moral righteousness.

Commented [BB37]: If, hypothetically, the boy and the man were instead two unrelated men of the same age, how would the boy's actions differ? This scenario would see the boy's moral compass on display outside of a family dynamic in which the boy is dependent upon the man (who is ultimately in control of the pair's actions). Would the boy even associate with an independent boy of the same age if the other were to conduct himself in the same manner as the man. Would their differing perspectives and actions separate them beyond alignment?

a variety of ethical principles, both through the characterization and how they see and describe the world.

When reading the novel, some might agree with the father's actions, while others might agree with the son, some might see the son as naïve and reckless in his behaviour and others might see the father's actions and choices as immoral. Some might conclude that caring about everyone, especially in a post-apocalyptic setting as the one in the novel is difficult because one has to ensure one's own survival. The father on the other hand has experience of the world and of the time before it. He understands there are few good people left and, hence, his actions could be justifiable. Using references to Christianity and attributing messianic qualities to the boy, the novel further contrasts the two protagonists. The boy never commits any vices or sins, a clear connection to Christianity, while the father commits several, even if they are to some extent justifiable.

The purpose of this thesis was to analyse how ethics and morality are depicted in *The Road*, where no guides or contemporary laws exist or apply. With the help of this analysis, I determined that the novel could be a useful tool in English and Philosophy at upper-secondary school. While at the outset, I believed the more interesting discussion would occur around ideas of good versus bad in the novel and determining whether the good guys are actually good and the bad guys are truly bad, I realised that the more interesting ethical issues lie in the comparison between the father and son, and their differing perspectives on right and wrong. This led me to conclude that whether the father was right or wrong in his actions was not as important as how one can see the ethical value of his actions differently depending on the theory one applies.

I have, therefore, determined that using *The Road* in upper-secondary would be a great way to teach English and Philosophy, since students will have to do a literary analysis using philosophical ethical theories instead of only using the more common literary theories. Though I have not discussed this above, the novel has an even more expansive potential for use in these two classrooms beyond the ethical uses I have described; it could be analysed through other lenses, too, like, for example, ecocriticism or feminist theory. In any case, using the novel to blend education in these two classrooms would be a productive project that would allow students an experience they might not ordinarily have. While, as mentioned, it may not be possible to run the project every year, it would be interesting to implement when the situation allows. For future research, I would therefore use the project plan in Appendix 1 and see how it works in practice in the combined English and Philosophy classrooms.

In conclusion, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* shows how ethics can be seen in a post-apocalyptic world where people live in a state of nature with no laws and no moral compass to guide them. With the help of the ethical theories discussed above, one can understand not only the ethical dilemmas the characters face in order to survive but also how they maintain their humanity and goodness. Through

Commented [BB38]: This connects back to the opening line of this analysis' introduction. *The Road*, above all else, is "the story of a father and a son as they walk through a grey and burned USA after the destruction of the world" (Winssi 1).

Commented [BB39]: There is no single "correct" answer as to what decisions in *The Road* were right or wrong. It is unlikely that a given person who has read the novel will walk away with the same conclusion that I have made.

The Road, students can learn how to think through different ethical perspectives on the same scenario and expand their understanding of right, wrong, and the blurry in-between. McCarthy's novel can help students understand how they would act in such a world, which can provide them new dimensions for ethical thinking and decision-making. I therefore believe that *The Road* is a useful tool for an upper-secondary school project between English and Philosophy.

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Appendix 1

Week 1	
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Philosophy 1	- Ethical dilemmas
English 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce the project plan. - Introduce the novel. - Introducing question: How are ethical values depicted in the novel? - Read until p. 48 - Is there anything you find interesting? Prepare between lessons
Philosophy 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ethical theories: Consequentialism, deontology, virtue ethics - Discuss ethical dilemmas using theories
English 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read out loud: p. 16-17, Coca Cola scene (23-24), - Is there anything you find interesting? Give examples. - How are the characters introduced? Does it say anything specific about them? What role does characterization have? Describe the setting and the personalities of the characters. - Read until p. 80
Week 2	
Philosophy 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Is there anything you find interesting in the pages you've read? - Do we get to know any new characters? What do you think of them? What do they have to say? - Read out loud - Man struck by lightning (49-50) - How is he affected? How is he described? How do the boy and the man react to him? - Read out loud (56) What do you make of the woman's comments? About the descriptions of the bad guys?
English 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss the road-rat and the father's protection of the son, and quote on p. 74 - What type of responsibility does the father seem to have? Does it seem like any ordinary responsibility of a parent? p. 77 - Read until p. 90
Philosophy 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss the boy seeing the other boy. What do you think of him running out in the open? Why would he risk his own safety? - Read until p. 102
English 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss what's happened in the book so far. <u>How would you be in a world like this?</u> - Read until p. 130

Week 3	
Philosophy 5	- Would you ever resort to cannibalism?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss dilemmas where people has had to eat other humans to survive. - Are the circumstances the same in the book? Is it right or wrong? - Read until p. 144
English 5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The man and the boy talk a lot about good guys in these pages. What do you think defines a good guy? - Read until p. 189
Philosophy 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Repetition of ethical theories. - How could the theories be applied to the novel? - Discussion about ethical theories in relation to the book.
English 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading time. - Read until p. 234

Week 4	
Philosophy 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How does the father show his love for the son? - Why does he not blame his son for forgetting the gun? - Read until p. 263 until next philosophy class.
English 7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Reading time.
Philosophy 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The man and the thief – did the father act right? What would you have done in this situation? - Finish the novel.
English 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduce assessment - Essay or oral discussion about the novel’s relationship with ethical values.