

# The Filius Files, part 5: A Theoretical Approach to Teaching

*by Pyttan*

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## A Theoretical Approach to Teaching

*Chapter 1 of 1*

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### **Part 1**

Filius Disillusioned himself before he turned the corner and entered the corridor leading to the staff room.

He had no intention of getting caught in any conversation that would lead to poorly convoluted attempts to ferret out information about the doings of Albus alternating with vicious attacks on young Potter, the poor lad. The last time the harridan had cornered him, Filius had descended into hitherto unequalled depths of misery. He had been forced to listen to her venom for a full twenty minutes, and besides the obvious content of her rant, she had also repeated the words 'excellence, decisiveness and passion' as she described the Ministry. He didn't really know which of the words bothered him most.

The word 'excellence' was almost comical on account of it being such an utter falsehood.

'Decisiveness' was, on the other hand, the absolute truth, which made the statement frightening on a whole new level.

He decided 'passion' was the worst though, since the word evoked pictures in his head.

Pictures mixing Umbridge, Fudge and Lucius Malfoy with that cane of his. He shivered and, with a determined effort, pushed the thoughts away as he reached the door leading into the staff room. It stood ajar, and he peeked inside the room, careful not to make any sound.

Only Severus was present. He was sitting in the horrible, straight-backed armchair Minerva usually favoured, reading the Daily Prophet. Umbridge wasn't there, and Filius drew a sigh of relief, removed the Disillusionment charm and entered the room.

"Good evening, Severus," he said and smiled. Severus wasn't necessarily pleasant company, but always an intelligent discussion partner. At least when he wasn't annoyed by students.

He didn't look annoyed today, and that boded well.

"Filius," Severus answered and put the paper on the table next to his chair, watching as Filius climbed into his favourite armchair and made himself comfortable.

Filius had poured himself some tea and since Severus had put his paper down prepared for a nice chat, when a movement in the corner of his eye caught his attention. He looked at the wall, intending to greet his little shepherdess, and then had some trouble looking away from the assembled tastelessness that now graced the wall instead.

"This is new," he said and looked at Severus, plastering a smile on his face that he suspected looked demented rather than pleasant.

Severus' face was blank as he, without further prompting from Filius, explained.

"Yes," he said. "Professor Umbridge thought the room needed cheering up." As Severus spoke his face continued to show no expression at all. A very impressive trick, that.

Especially considering that Severus had a better view over the plates on the wall than Filius had.

Filius nodded and looked at the three pink plates with the rollicking kittens again. One of the horrid animals turned on its back and stretched, looking straight at Filius, its expression giving the impression of an ageing and very dour lady. And then it yawned. Deliberately. In his face.

Filius decided that that particular cat needed to become a stray.

Especially since he wanted his shepherdess painting back. *She* always smiled and batted her eyelashes at him. And *she* was pretty.

"How nice of her," Filius said turning back to Severus.

"Indeed. It shows how much she cares," said Severus, bringing new meaning to the term 'bland'.

Filius gave a quiet thank you to the deities that it was only him and Severus in the room this evening. Pomona wasn't always that quick on the uptake, and that could have caused problems. Minerva, on the other hand, was lightning fast, and the probability that she would step up to the offending plates and declare open war was very high. The alternative being that she would discover the plates and blow them to pieces without any hesitation at all, bringing Umbridge's wrath down on her head. Or more likely: on Albus' head.

Not that Minerva would care at this point. She was itching for a fight and had been for quite some time now. Even Severus avoided baiting her. Very wise of him really.

Filius hadn't forgotten *the incident* that had occurred when he and Minerva were still students at Hogwarts. Scrimgeour's bitterness over it had never abated. Not that Filius really blamed him. After all, Scrimgeour's limp had never abated either.

Severus cleared his throat, making Filius flinch and fix his attention on him again.

"The changes I made in my curriculum for the seventh year are working out very well, by the way," Severus said.

Such a nonsensical thing to say. And under the guise that Filius knew what Severus was talking about. How very interesting.

Filius smiled, nodded and set his mind to find the clue. The seventh-years? That was really the only thing he could go by at this point.

Filius made a mental inventory of the more prominent seventh year students while sipping his tea. He came up with the answer at once and snorted tea through his nose, back into his cup, from the pure glee of it.

He put his cup down and dabbed his nose.

"So very sorry, Severus. I think I might be getting a cold. I can't seem to stop coughing. Where were we? Changed curriculum, you said?"

"Yes. You do remember that I was hesitant to use a more theoretical approach in Potions, since it's a practical subject?"

"I hesitate for the very same reason. But it is working?" Filius asked.

"Surprisingly well."

Filius vanished his tea and refilled his cup.

"What area did you chose?" he asked and glanced at the plates. One of the kittens looked as if it was falling asleep, and two of them were grooming themselves.

"Elemental brewing. Interesting subject, but far too dangerous to experiment with in class." Severus' smile was all teeth.

"That's novel," Filius said, adopting a thoughtful mien while trying to hide his horrified amusement. "And you are focusing on what element?"

"Fire, focusing on the different states of it. From sparks and fire to explosions. A couple of them show great enthusiasm. And since they are somewhat less dunderheaded than most, I expect results ... eventually." Severus smiled that very worrying smile again.

Severus was teaching the twins pyrotechnics with a twist! It made Filius want to dance a little jig of sheer excitement and then go hide in a safe place.

But Severus needed something from him or they wouldn't be having this conversation. There was a weakness.

Filius sipped his tea, pretending to savour it, and looked into the fireplace while thinking. And the answer was there, right in front of him, in the fading embers: Pyrotechnics were easy enough to get rid of. Easy to quell. And that was what Severus was after: As always, he wanted to add a little extra to the brew. This time he wanted to add duration. Longevity.

"Maybe I should try it too," Filius said. "I have been hesitant, but since it has turned out well for you ... " Filius let his voice trail off, buying himself some time. He buttered a scone, bit into it and let his mind wander.

"Did you have a particular area in mind?" Severus asked.

Yes, he had indeed.

And it would work, too. If the boys made the connections, and knowing them they would, they could create chaos never before seen at Hogwarts. Something that would put the Marauders and their forebears to shame.

Filius was sure Albus would approve. It was a pity if he didn't since Filius didn't really care.

"I was thinking that a theoretical approach to Animation might work," said Filius.

Severus looked hesitant.

"Animation?" he asked, his intonation making it obvious that he wasn't clear on what Filius was getting at.

"Yes, Animation. How to infuse lifelike qualities in inanimate objects, substances and ... such."

Severus was scowling, and Filius could almost see how he sifted through his mind searching for the right reference. He had the pleasure of seeing the exact moment Severus caught on to it.

Severus did look much better when that empty, deadish look vanished from his eyes. Much healthier.

"I remember reading something in that vein a couple of years ago," he said. "Animation is used to maintain the effects of a charm, spell or hex for a longer period of time?"

Filius smiled and nodded.

"Yes, quite right. But that's only part of it. It also infuses the object, substance and ... such, with lifelike qualities. They sometimes grow; they may even reproduce or, as some prefer to call it, multiply. Some even argue that evolution can take place and that the objects, substances and ... such can develop certain awareness. I read an old Chinese script arguing the point," Filius said, with an enthusiastic nod. "Very interesting."

Severus nodded, his gaze becoming distant while a muscle at the corner of his mouth was twitching. Filius hoped he wouldn't burst out laughing.

It would be a sight if he did, though.

Filius caught Severus's eye, and Severus covered his mouth with his hand and coughed.

"I really do hope I haven't infected you?" Filius asked. Severus glared at him in response.

"No, not at all. Longbottom burnt out another cauldron in class, and the fumes were toxic. I had to let the class leave early."

Filius nodded and then continued his deliberate ramble.

"Animation is far too advanced for a practical approach, of course, but if I were to cut back on my practice sessions, I'm quite sure I would be able to cover far more advanced magic on a theoretical basis," he said.

Severus nodded.

"Is it worth a try, do you think?" asked Severus.

Filius gave a couple of eager nods.

"Well worth it, even."

In the corner of his eye, Filius saw the sour little kitten wander out of the picture, the tip of his bushy tail flicking. The two others were snoring.

"Well, it's been pleasant, but I think I'll retire. I have lessons to prepare," said Severus and rose.

Filius looked at the empty room and the horrid pink plates and slid off the seat of his armchair.

"Yes. You're right," he said. "This new approach demands some work, of course."

Severus smirked and they left the staff room together.

## **Part 2**

Filius was eating his lunch, which tasted of nothing at all.

The fact that Albus was gone, and the terrible posters all around the castle proclaiming Umbridge the new Headmistress of Hogwarts explained the misery, he supposed.

The whole sorry affair made him want to Floo to the Ministry and call Fudge out.

Especially after the conversation Umbridge had had with him and Severus over breakfast. She had made it clear that she considered them her own personal minions, since they had "the ability to adapt to Ministry decrees and obviously had a profound understanding of the importance of a theoretical approach to teaching magic."

She had also made it clear that they would be rewarded by the Minister of Magic if they kept up the good work.

Fudge really couldn't duel worth a knut.

It would be so easy.

The theoretical approach had, on top of everything else, resulted in nothing. He was so very disappointed and, judging from his mood of late, so was Severus.

Severus was sitting two chairs away from him, face drawn into a stony scowl that had been welded to his face for the last few weeks. Severus's facial expression didn't do much to improve Filius's appetite.

Filius sighed and looked at the plate in front him, giving the shepherd's pie a listless poke with his fork.

Then the explosion came. Filius fell off his chair, and for once, the fall was a real one.

He drew his wand and took cover behind the seat of his overturned chair, preparing to fight.

A quick glance around the hall confirmed that the explosion had taken place outside the room, rather than in it, but several of the students were on the floor.

Severus, at his right, was on his feet though and moving towards the door, wand ready. Pomona was getting to her feet, tottering towards the Hufflepuff table, no doubt worrying that yet another member of her house had gotten hurt, while Minerva was barking orders at the rest of the students.

Not that it helped. Several of them, the first ones being Gryffindors of course, ran towards the door, taking no heed of any warnings or potential dangers outside.

Another loud bang was heard, and somewhere the sinister screaming of something spinning at very high speed sounded outside the door.

And then the laughter started.

Filius looked at Severus, who was now close enough to the entrance to see what was happening outside.

Severus threw a glance outside the Great Hall, stiffened and then looked back at Filius.

And smirked.

Filius got to his feet and went after Severus, who disappeared through the door.

Weaving between the legs of students and fellow staff members, he reached the front of the gathered crowd outside the Great Hall almost at the same time Severus did.

The sight was formidable.

Pyrotechnical wonders everywhere.

Loads of them: rockets, glittering dragons flying around in the corridors, spinning Catherine wheels and what looked like thousands of sparklers. Every single one of the items gaining momentum rather than fading away after the initial blast.

It would take days to clean this mess up. Maybe even weeks, and Filius wanted to howl in pure triumph. The boys had done it. And 'flair' was the word for what they had done. Perhaps somehow in combination with 'genius'.

And there were Umbridge and Filch in the middle of it all, trying to control the situation, everything they were doing worsening things even more.

When Umbridge tried to Stupefy one of the rockets, the result was violent enough to make everyone in the hall duck and take cover.

"I hope she tries Vanishing them next," said Severus, who was now lying on his belly next to Filius, protecting his head with his hands.

"You think that will help her get rid of them?" Filius asked, looking over at him. The thought was so disappointing that he felt his lower lip start wobbling.

"No," Severus answered. "I'm interested in what would happen." Severus sardonic drawl made Filius's lip stop quivering, and he let out a very undignified giggle instead.

He so hoped none of the students had overheard them.

Severus rose, and so did Filius.

Four sparklers immediately set a course for them, zooming around their heads, very much like annoying snitches.

"The headmistress will need help removing the fireworks, I suppose," said Minerva, and Filius jumped in surprise, not having realised that she was right behind him.

Minerva was waving her hand in the air, trying to get rid of the annoying red sparkler that seemed stubbornly set on becoming an ornament on her hat.

"Well," said Pomona. "I have never been particularly apt at charms ... or hexes for that matter, so I'm bound to make things worse. Better leave it to her."

"Yes ... wand waving. Not really my area of expertise," said Severus, and Minerva let out something that might have been a huff. Or a chuckle.

The four sparklers surrounding them whizzed through the air once again, aiming at Filch and Umbridge this time, forcing them to take cover behind an unwilling statue that unceremoniously shooed the pair out of hiding again.

"Besides," said Filius. "We might not have permission to act on our own."

"Yes," said Severus. "And we wouldn't want to challenge the new headmistress's authority."

This time Minerva did, without a doubt, chuckle.

And that was when the sparklers took the opportunity to draw a picture in the air, in front of Dolores Umbridge.

It resembled a hand, giving the two-fingered salute.

Filius couldn't help finding the gesture eminently fitting for the occasion.

A/N: Once upon a time, Great Britain had the finest archers in the world. With their long bows, they defeated many enemies, among them the French army.

The French soldiers developed the nasty habit of cutting the right index- and forefingers of the British archers they managed to capture so that they wouldn't be able to pull the string taut and send their arrows flying again.

The two fingered salute comes from those days: When the enemy approached the archers held their right hands up to them, showing only the index- and forefinger. This was meant as a sign of disrespect, essentially telling the enemy they were screwed, because they were meeting an army that hadn't lost their fingers yet.