The Crucible Lesson plans, ideas, and resources

Always find these and updated links on The English Teacher’s Friend Delicious site.

Essay by Arthur Miller where he describes the paranoia that swept across America during the McCarthy era.

Activities with Resources and Project ideas

Collection of political cartoons about the McCarthy era.

Large collection of internet sites to assist students with further research on the era of McCarthyism and The Salem Witch Trials.

Excellent collection of resources and summary of the Puritans

The Kennedy Center Arts Edge lesson on societal perceptions – great lesson ideas here.

Eyewitness to History with first person accounts of the hysteria of witch trials

The Crucible Essay Topics

from http://www.goodessaytopics.com/the-crucible-essay-topics.html

1. Discuss the roles that grudges and personal rivalries play in the witch trial hysteria.
2. How do the witch trials empower individuals who were previously powerless?
3. How does John Proctor’s great dilemma change during the course of the play?
4. Compare the roles that Elizabeth Proctor and Abigail Williams play in The Crucible.
5. What role does sex, and sexual repression, play in The Crucible?
6. What kind of government does Salem have? What role does it play in the action?
7. Analyze Reverend Parris. What are his motivations in supporting the witch trials?
8. Discuss the changes that Reverend Hale undergoes in the course of the play.
9. Compare and contrast the Salem witch trials and McCarthyism.
10. Examine the dynamics of Puritanism in 1692.
11. Is John Proctor a tragic figure? Compare his fate to that of such tragic literary figures as King Oedipus in Sophocles's Oedipus Rex and the title character in William Shakespeare's Hamlet.
12. Describe the social response to witchcraft in Europe in the 16th and 17th centuries.
13. What can you find out about modern witchcraft or wicca?
14. Compare and contrast the characters of Rebecca Nurse and John Proctor.
15. Discuss Miller’s treatment of women in The Crucible.
16. Explain why the play is a tragic comedy.
17. Explain the symbolic characters and how they develop the themes.
18. Discuss how the themes of The Crucible make it both universal and enduring.
19. Miller originally wrote the crucible as a critique of McCarthyism, but he distanced his narrative by using the Salem witch trials as the setting for the play. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of this approach.
20. At the end of the play, John Proctor recovers his sense of goodness by tearing up the confession that would have saved his life. Given his character and the events which have led up to this moment, do you find this act believable? Explain your response.

21. In *The Crucible*, Miller suggests that sacrifices may be necessary to restore the social order. Discuss the sacrifices made by the play's characters and whether you think they are necessary.

22. How does *The Crucible* portray justice or injustice?

23. Compare the character of Elizabeth Proctor to that of Mary Warren. What value systems does each represent?

24. How are the "little crazy children jangling the keys of the kingdom"?

25. What is Giles Corey's role in the play?

26. Examine Elizabeth Proctor as a symbol of truth. How has her husband "paid for" this truthfulness?

27. What motivates Elizabeth to lie? Is a good name more important than the truth?

28. How is Mary Warren used by both sides? Does she have an individual identity?

Also included below

- Poem *Half Hanged Mary*
- Anticipation guide
- Personal writing assignments

- How to Spot a Witch article and worksheet
- Various Publisher Teacher guides
HALF-HANGED MARY

("Half-hanged Mary" was Mary Webster, who was accused of witchcraft in the 1680's in a Puritan town in Massachusetts and hanged from a tree - where, according to one of the several surviving accounts, she was left all night. It is known that when she was cut down she was still alive, since she lived for another fourteen years.)

7pm

Rumour was loose in the air
hunting for some neck to land on.
I was milking the cow,
the barn door open to the sunset.

I didn't feel the aimed word hit
and go in like a soft bullet.
I didn't feel the smashed flesh
closing over it like water
over a thrown stone.

I was hanged for living alone
for having blue eyes and a sunburned skin,
tattered skirts, few buttons,
a weedy farm in my own name,
and a surefire cure for warts;

Oh yes, and breasts,
and a sweet pear hidden in my body.
Whenever there's talk of demons
these come in handy.

8pm

The rope was an improvisation.
With time they'd have thought of axes.

Up I go like a windfall in reverse,
a blackend apple stuck back onto the tree.

Trussed hands, rag in my mouth,
a flag raised to salute the moon,

old bone-faced goddess, old original,
who once took blood in return for food.

The men of the town stalk homeward,
excited by their show of hate,

their own evil turned inside out like a glove,
and me wearing it.
9pm

The bonnets come to stare,
the dark skirts also,
the upturned faces in between,
mouths closed so tight they're lipless.
I can see down into their eyeholes
and nostrils. I can see their fear.

You were my friend, you too.
I cured your baby, Mrs.,
and flushed yours out of you,
Non-wife, to save your life.

Help me down? You don't dare.
I might rub off on you,
like soot or gossip. Birds
of a feather burn together,
though as a rule ravens are singular.

In a gathering like this one
the safe place is the background,
pretending you can't dance,
the safe stance pointing a finger.

I understand. You can't spare
anything, a hand, a piece of bread, a shawl
against the cold,
a good word. Lord
knows there isn't much
to go around. You need it all.

10pm

Well God, now that I'm up here
with maybe some time to kill
away from the daily
fingerwork, legwork, work
at the hen level,
we can continue our quarrel,
the one about free will.

Is it my choice that I'm dangling
like a turkey's wattles from his
more then indifferent tree?
If Nature is Your alphabet,
what letter is this rope?

Does my twisting body spell out Grace?
I hurt, therefore I am.
Faith, Charity, and Hope
are three dead angels
falling like meteors or
burning owls across
the profound blank sky of Your face.

12 midnight
My throat is taut against the rope
choking off words and air;
I'm reduced to knotted muscle.
Blood bulges in my skull,
my clenched teeth hold it in;
I bite down on despair

Death sits on my shoulder like a crow
waiting for my squeezed beet
of a heart to burst
so he can eat my eyes

or like a judge
muttering about sluts and punishment
and licking his lips

or like a dark angel
insidious in his glossy feathers
whispering to me to be easy
on myself. To breathe out finally.
Trust me, he says, caressing
me. Why suffer?

A temptation, to sink down
into these definitions.
To become a martyr in reverse,
or food, or trash.

To give up my own words for myself,
my own refusals.
To give up knowing.
To give up pain.
To let go.

2am
Out of my mouth is coming, at some
distance from me, a thin gnawing sound
which you could confuse with prayer except that
praying is not constrained.
Or is it, Lord?
Maybe it's more like being strangled
than I once though. Maybe it's
a gasp for air, prayer.
Did those men at Pentecost
want flames to shoot out of their heads?
Did they ask to be tossed
on the ground, gabbling like holy poultry,
eyeballs bulging?

As mine are, as mine are.
There is only one prayer; it is not
the knees in the clean nightgown
on the hooked rug
I want this, I want that.
Oh far beyond.
Call it Please. Call it Mercy.
Call it Not yet, not yet,
as Heaven threatens to explode
inwards in fire and shredded flesh, and the angels caw.

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

3am

wind seethes in the leaves around
me the tree exude night
birds night birds yell inside
my ears like stabbed hearts my heart
stutters in my fluttering cloth
body I dangle with strength
going out of me the wind seethes
in my body tattering
the words I clench
my fists hold No
talisman or silver disc my lungs
flail as if drowning I call
on you as witness I did
no crime I was born I have borne I
bear I will be born this is
a crime I will not
acknowledge leaves and wind
hold onto me
I will not give in

-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

6am

Sun comes up, huge and blaring,
no longer a simile for God.
Wrong address. I've been out there.
Time is relative, let me tell you
I have lived a millennium.

I would like to say my hair turned white
overnight, but it didn't.
Instead it was my heart:
bleached out like meat in water.

Also, I'm about three inches taller.
This is what happens when you drift in space
listening to the gospel
of the red-hot stars.
Pinpoints of infinity riddle my brain,
a revelation of deafness.

At the end of my rope
I testify to silence.
Don't say I'm not grateful.

Most will have only one death.
I will have two.

---------------------------------------------------------------

8am

When they came to harvest my corpse
(open your mouth, close your eyes)
cut my body from the rope,
surprise, surprise:
I was still alive.

Tough luck, folks,
I know the law:
you can't execute me twice
for the same thing. How nice.

I fell to the clover, breathed it in,
and bared my teeth at them
in a filthy grin.
You can imagine how that went over.

Now I only need to look
out at them through my sky-blue eyes.
They see their own ill will
staring then in the forehead
and turn tail

Before, I was not a witch.
But now I am one.

---------------------------------------------------------------
Later

My body of skin waxes and wanes
around my true body,
a tender nimbus.
I skitter over the paths and fields
mumbling to myself like crazy,
mouth full of juicy adjectives
and purple berries.
The townsfolk dive headfirst into the bushes
to get out of my way.

My first death orbits my head,
an ambiguous nimbus,
medallion of my ordeal.
No one crosses that circle.

Having been hanged for something
I never said,
I can now say anything I can say.

Holiness gleams on my dirty fingers,
I eat flowers and dung,
two forms of the same thing, I eat mice
and give thanks, blasphemies
gleam and burst in my wake
like lovely bubbles.
I speak in tongues,
my audience is owls.

My audience is God,
because who the hell else could understand me?
Who else has been dead twice?

The words boil out of me,
coil after coil of sinuous possibility.
The cosmos unravels from my mouth,
all fullness, all vacancy.

~Margaret Atwood~
## The Crucible
### Anticipation/Reaction Guide

**Part I Directions:** Prior to reading *The Crucible*, in the "Before" column, respond to each statement by putting a plus sign (+) if you agree with it, a minus sign (−) if you disagree, and a question mark (?) if you are unsure of your belief.

**Part II Directions:** For one of the statements below, write a Deep Thoughts response of 500 words or more in MLA format as to why you have the belief you do. Then, copy and paste your response on our message board at mrjeffrey.com. If someone responds to it, they may earn up to 10 points extra credit. Extra credit points both depend on the quality and quantity of the response.

**Part III Directions:** After reading the story, in the "After" column respond again to the statements. Then, reply by writing a 500 words or more Deep Thoughts response in MLA format to a statement where your belief changed since reading the play. If not, write about a different statement than you responded to in Part II. Once again, post your journal on our message board.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ___</td>
<td>Confessing to a crime you didn't commit in order to avoid punishment is wise.</td>
<td>1. ___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ___</td>
<td>The difference between right and wrong is clear.</td>
<td>2. ___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. ___</td>
<td>It is better to die for what you believe in rather than to lie to save your life.</td>
<td>3. ___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ___</td>
<td>There is only one correct way to interpret the Bible.</td>
<td>4. ___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ___</td>
<td>That which doesn’t destroy us only makes us stronger.</td>
<td>5. ___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. ___</td>
<td>It’s more difficult to forgive yourself if the person you have hurt doesn’t forgive you.</td>
<td>6. ___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. ___</td>
<td>Courage means doing something even though it can be difficult and fearsome.</td>
<td>7. ___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. ___</td>
<td>A person is innocent until proven guilty.</td>
<td>8. ___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. ___</td>
<td>Beliefs in opposition to common values should be illegal.</td>
<td>9. ___</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. ___</td>
<td>Justice is best determined in a court of law.</td>
<td>10. ___</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Personal Writing Assignment
Focus: The Crucible
Pick eight out of these thirteen choices to write about. Each entry must be at least 200 words (with the exception of 
#2 & 3). You will be graded on the effort and thought put into these writings, as well as your creativity. Add pictures, drawings, art work, whatever you feel appropriate. The more creative, the better the grade. Have fun with it!

1. A major theme in “The Crucible” deals with guilt. Recall a time when you felt guilty about something you had done or said. It may not be as serious as the characters in the play, but it was probably just as real. It can be some recent experience or one that took place in childhood. How did you deal with those feelings? As you look back now were your fears justified, or were you being too hard on yourself?

2. Read the poem “Conversations with an American Writer” on page 162 in “The Crucible” Rewrite the poem replacing the word (and the theme) “courage” with another word to describe you.

3. Think of an image from the play and use that image to create a spatial poem.

4. Abigail was a strong, domineering influence on Mary Warren. When did the power or control of someone else influence you?

5. Recall a time when you were wrongly accused of something, or of a time when you wrongly accused someone of something. What was it and how did you feel?

6. Abigail took revenge for Proctor’s dismissal of her. Describe a time when you sought revenge or someone sought revenge on you.

7. Describe your concept of heaven.

8. Describe your concept of hell.

9. Write a sermon to a group of fourteen to sixteen year olds. Your objective is to make them feel guilty for all real and imagined things they might have done or thought. What do you say?

10. Stream of consciousness writing:
Pick a theme from “The Crucible” (guilt, faith, honor, etc). Just start writing and do not stop for several minutes or until you have filled up at least one page. Do not worry about punctuation, grammar, etc. Just don’t let your pen stop moving.

11. Describe a time when you have felt isolated.

12. What do you feel remorse for?

13. Read “How to Spot a Witch” pg. 179 in “The Crucible” book. Write a paper similar to this essay on how to spot a __________. You fill in the blank. EX: How to Spot a Liar. How to Spot a Surfer. Etc.
The belief in witches existed for centuries before the trials at Salem. Over time, a considerable body of folklore developed about how to identify witches. A contemporary writer explains the most popular methods.

Perhaps the reason witch-hunting has gotten a bad name is that some practitioners used rather crude methods to separate the guilty from the innocent. The notorious judges of the Holy Roman Empire, for example, simply applied thumbscrews until the unfortunate suspects confessed. And during the English witch craze in the 1640s, the Rev. John Gaule recorded that ‘every old woman with a wrinkled face, a fur’d brow, a hairy lip, a gobber tooth, a squint eye, a squeaking voice, or a scolding tongue ... is not only suspected, but pronounced for a witch.” (Sexism was regrettably widespread among Gaule’s colleagues, even though both men and women could be witches.) But more discriminating European witch hunters used far more refined techniques, as described in early lawbooks, manuals and court records.

1. **Devil’s Marks and Witches’ Teats** According to many witch-hunting guides, it is best to start your examination by shaving the suspect’s body and examining it for devil’s marks. These are the spots where Satan brands his followers to seal their pact with him. An English jurist in 1630 described them as “sometimes like a blew spot, or a red spot, like a Fleabiting.” One problem: In the vermin-ridden 17th century, such blemishes were hardly uncommon. So the witch hunters devised an ingenious solution. The Devil, they reasoned, would not allow anything of his to be harmed. Therefore, they pricked any suspicious marks with a long silver pin. If the spot didn’t bleed or was insensitive to pain, the suspect was a witch.

English experts believed witches often had extra nipples that they used to suckle demons. Matthew Hopkins, a witch hunter under Oliver Cromwell, exposed one woman as a witch when she was "found to have three teats about her, which honest women have not."

2. **The Swimming Test** If the hunt for teats and devil’s marks proves inconclusive, you may have to resort to a popular folk method, the "swimming test." First, sprinkle the suspect with holy water. Tie his right thumb to his left big toe, and his left thumb to his right big toe. Fasten a rope around his waist. Then toss him into a pond or river. If he floats, he’s a witch. If he sinks, haul him back in and set him free. The theoretical basis for this is simple, explained James VI of Scotland in 1597: "The water shall refuse to receive in her bosom those who have shaken off the sacred water of baptism."

Other popular tests include weighing the suspect against a very heavy Bible (if she weighs less than the book, she is guilty) and asking her to recite the Lord’s Prayer without making a mistake. (In 1663, a defendant was convicted after repeatedly failing to do better than "Lead us into temptation" or "Lead us not into no temptation.") When you suspect a witch has murdered someone, ask her to lay her hands on the victim’s body. If she is guilty, the corpse will start to bleed.

3. **Nabbing the Elusive Imp** One of the most devious ways to foil witches is to catch them with their familiars, the imps in animal form who do their nefarious wicked bidding. Many witch hunters believed the imps could not go for more than 24 hours without being suckled by their master or mistress. Therefore, when you have a suspect in prison, drill a peephole in the cell door and keep a close watch. If you see a rat, mouse or beetle in the cell, you’ve nabbed an imp. Beware of even the most improbable animals. In 1645, an Englishman named John Bysack confessed that for the last 20 years, he had regularly suckled imps in the form of snails.

4. **Asking the Right Questions** Even stubborn suspects will often collapse under skillful interrogation. Europe’s most successful witch hunters were expert at framing questions of the when-did-you-stop-beating-your-wife sort. The justices of Colmar in Alsace used to lead off with "How long have you been a witch?" before moving on to more specific inquiries such as "What plagues of vermin and caterpillars have you created?"

**WARNING:**

According to the *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hammer of Witches), a comprehensive witch-hunting guide published in 1486, judges at witchcraft trials should take precautions against being bewitched by the accused. Always wear protection: A wax medallion containing a bit of salt blessed on Palm Sunday, worn round the neck, will defend you from Satan’s wiles [tricks]. Otherwise, you yourself could end up on the wrong end of a witch hunt.
“How to Spot a Witch” by Adam Goodheart

Directions:
The article, “How to Spot a Witch” by Adam Goodheart, gives four methods of how one might determine if a person is a witch or has become bewitched. Think of three additional ways that someone could tell if a person were involved in witchcraft. Use the format of the article to guide you. First, determine how you will spot a witch, what evidence you will use to prove they are guilty, what the suspect will go through once accused, possible ways the suspect witch will react and how you intend to respond, and finally, what people should do in the future to prevent getting caught for witchcraft from this method. Be specific and write in complete sentences!

5. How to spot a witch: ________________________________

  • What evidence will be used to prove they are guilty?

  • What will the suspect go through?

  • Possible ways the suspect will react and how one might respond:

        • What people should do in the future to prevent getting caught from others using this method?

6. How to spot a witch: ________________________________

  • What evidence will be used to prove they are guilty?

  • What will the suspect go through?

  • Possible ways the suspect will react and how one might respond:

        • What people should do in the future to prevent getting caught from others using this method?
7. How to spot a witch:

- What evidence will be used to prove they are guilty?

- What will the suspect go through?

- Possible ways the suspect will react and how one might respond:

- What people should do in the future to prevent getting caught from others using this method?
This study guide for The Crucible contains background information for the play, suggested themes and topics for discussion, and curriculum-based lessons that are designed by educators and theatre professionals.

The lessons and themes for discussion are organized in modules that can be used independently or interdependently according to the class level and time availability.

This guide was written and compiled by Barbara Worthy, Rod Christensen and Dr. Debra McLachlan, PhD. Additional materials were provided by Tadeusz Bradecki, Peter Hartwell and Gyllian Raby.

The Players

Ezekiel Cheever.................................................Guy Bannerman
Giles Corey......................................................Bernard Behrens
Hopkins......................................................Anthony Bekenn
Tituba...............................................................Lisa Berry
Thomas Putnam.............................................Norman Browning
John Proctor..................................................Benedict Campbell
Betty Parris.....................................................Katie Cambone-Mannell
Elizabeth Proctor...........................................Kelli Fox
Abigail Williams..............................................Charlotte Gowdy
Ann Putnam..................................................Mary Haney
Townsperson...................................................Evert Houston
Francis Nurse...............................................Al Kozlik
Reverend John Hale........................................Peter Krantz
Mary Warren..................................................Trish Lindstrom
Marshall Herrick............................................Jeff Meadows
Deputy-Governor Danforth..............................Jim Mezon
Rebecca Nurse................................................Jennifer Phipps
Guard...............................................................Micheal Querin
Reverend Samuel Parris.................................Ric Reid
Judge Hathorne..............................................David Schurmann
Susanna Wallcott...........................................Nelly Scott
Sarah Good....................................................Wendy Thatcher
Mercy Lewis....................................................Taylor Trowbridge

Directed by Tadeusz Bradecki
Set Designed by Peter Hartwell
Costumes Designed by Teresa Przybylski
Lighting Designed by Kevin Lamotte
Original Music by Paul Sportelli
Stage Manager: Meredith Macdonald
Assistant Stage Manager: Amy Jewell
Technical Director: Jeff Scollon

Synopsis

A powerful, fictional re-telling of a historical moment in 17th century America: the “witch trials” of Salem, Massachusetts in 1692. A play famous for rousing the conscience of America, and one of the landmark dramas of the century, it depicts how difficult it is to defend principles and human dignity under conditions of paranoia, fear, and hysteria. The Crucible is an allegory of the insidious spread and reach of McCarthyism in the early ‘50s.
The Crucible is based upon the 17th century witch-hunts that took place in the community of Salem - a small religious colony of Puritans near Boston, Massachusetts. Miller wrote this play as an allegory to 1950s McCarthyism; it parallels the activities of the House Of Un-American Activities Committee in the USA during the mid 20th century when paranoia about communism pervaded the USA and spread to Canada. The Crucible is a story of a village overtaken by religious fervor and mounting panic, where people are arrested for being witches without evidence. In Salem, matters of good and evil are clearly defined; dissent is not merely unlawful, it is associated with satanic activity.

Early in the year of 1692, a collection of girls from the colony fall victim to supposed hallucinations and seizures after dancing in the forest with a black female slave named Tituba. Suspicion surrounds Tituba and soon accusations and fears of witchcraft fill the town. Abigail Williams, 17 years old and beautiful, appears to be the girls’ ringleader, and when Tituba and Abigail begin accusing various townsfolk of conspiring with the devil, the other girls join in. Soon the colony is beset with jealousies, bitter quarrellings, and deeply held hatreds rise to the surface. Local farmer John Proctor is a deeply honest man and he suspects Abigail of being a fraud. But Proctor has a guilty secret to protect – an affair with Abigail when she was a servant in his house. This proves to be his downfall. Jealous and vindictive, Abigail accuses Proctor’s wife of dealings with the devil, and as the hysteria grows, Proctor hesitates to expose Abigail in fear of having his secret exposed and losing his good name. Old grudges and religious fervour result in tragedy, as good people are hanged for witchcraft, others are jailed, and a community is left with its conscience in tatters.

Costume design for John Proctor by Teresa Przybylski.
Who’s Who in The Crucible

At the center of the Salem tragedy were real people - the “bewitched” young girls, the townspeople who fell prey to the hysteria and the innocent individuals accused of witchcraft. Whether they helped create the witch-hunt or were at the mercy of the events, these people made up a community consumed by jealousy, fear, hysteria, superstition and hypocrisy.

Abigail Williams is a tormented character who represents absolute evil and The Devil. She is the ‘mass murderer’ whose actions bring about the death of so many innocent people. She was deeply in love with John Proctor and now that love has been taken away from her, her vengeance is powerful. She wants revenge. But her life is not an easy one. She is an orphan whose parents were murdered by the Wabanaki, (see pg. 9). She has raised herself, feeling somewhat on the edge of society, and observing all the manipulation and hypocrisy around her. Her power comes from her intelligence, empathy and courage. She’s like an animal, instinctual and strong. She knows what she has to do to get what she wants.

John Proctor is a deeply honest man, who is troubled by his act of lechery with Abigail. Driven by guilt, Proctor becomes the hero of this play, but he is painfully human. His fall from grace is part of his humanity. He is weak and undecided, full of contradictions, and yet he makes heroic choices. He is a man who can be easily understood because he is imperfect. Part of this imperfection is the knowledge that his bond with Abigail is not completely ended. His choices are difficult but in the end, heroic.

Deputy-Governor Danforth is the Deputy Governor of Massachusetts and the presiding judge at the witch trials. Honest and scrupulous, Danforth is a tough Boston lawyer who is basically fair, honest and scrupulous but overconfident in his ability to judge the truth. He is always right, at least in his own mind, and is convinced that he is doing right in rooting out witchcraft. Danforth feels that it is his duty and destiny to purge society of evil and establish the Kingdom of Christ on earth. He is, therefore, temperamentally inclined to interpret all evidence as proof that Satan's forces are operating in Salem and seems to feel particularly strongly that the girls are honest. He is sensitive to the presence of the devil and reacts explosively to whatever evidence is presented.

Reverend Hale is “a tight-skinned, eager-eyed intellectual. This is a beloved errand for him; on being called here to ascertain witchcraft he has felt the pride of the specialist whose unique knowledge has at last been publicly called for” (Miller). As the play progresses, however, Hale experiences a transformation. His belief in witchcraft falters, as does his faith in the law.

Mary Warren is a servant in the Proctor household and used by Abigail to accuse Proctor’s wife, Elizabeth. John takes Mary to the court, hoping she will confess to the girls’ pretense. But Mary fears Abigail, and when Abigail leads the other girls against her, Mary turns on Proctor and accuses him.

Elizabeth Proctor is a good woman who has been treated badly and she pays the ultimate price. Her love and understanding of her husband John is powerful, but if she accepted his adultery, she did not intend to let it continue. She is no fool and understands Abigail’s intentions well, better than Proctor himself. She is a loving mother, and is sent to prison even though she carries a child. She is described as being cold, but is perhaps merely accepting of her life.

Reverend Parris is Pastor of the church in Salem. He is the father of Betty, uncle of Abigail Williams, and master of Tituba. He believes that he is being persecuted and that the townspeople do not respect his position as a man of God. The people have ousted the last few pastors and Parris fears the same fate. He chooses to believe the girls, because to do otherwise would mean that the trouble would be connected to his own household. If this happened, he may not be trusted by the village.

Miller himself said, ”The play is not reportage of any kind .... nobody can start to write a tragedy and hope to make it reportage .... what I was doing was writing a fictional story about an important theme.”
Arthur Miller’s classic parable of mass hysteria draws a chilling parallel between the Salem witch-hunts of 1692 – “one of the strangest and most awful chapters in human history” – and the McCarthyism that gripped America in the 1950s. And yet, when read from the perspective of over half a century after the play was written, its core message seems today to be far more universal: analyzed in The Crucible are not only those two particular moments of American history, but also some general, fatal pattern of human behaviour, repeatedly re-occurring – like a disease – through the centuries. Salem-like witch-hunts happened – and still do happen – in many places in the world. Innumerable communities and whole nations have been stirred into madness by superstition, malice, and ideological paranoia. The evils of mindless persecution and the terrifying power of false accusations have repeatedly scythed their bloody crops. Miller’s comment on his work, written in 1953, is striking: “When one rises above the individual villainy displayed, one can only pity them all, just as we shall be pitied some day. It is still impossible for man to organize his social life without repressions, and the balance has yet to be struck between order and freedom”. I remain particularly touched by the deep, understanding humanism of this play. “What is man?” asks Miller. Look with no illusions, he seems to say: these two-legged monsters seem capable of every possible evil, every imaginable cruelty. And yet we humans – wretched creatures in many ways – are able to reach almost angelic levels of goodness and beauty, thanks to the unique human treasure we all possess: our free will.

Tadeusz Bradecki, Director

Strongly rooted in its historical time frame of 1692, director Tadeusz Bradecki and designer Peter Hartwell saw the set design for The Crucible as reflecting a metaphysical space in keeping with the sense of the play as ‘a parable’. A large black grid dominates the stage, rotating on its axis to form a horizontal floor or vertical walls to create four different places of action. Each rotation is accompanied by the sound of metal chains and grinding machinery. Says Hart-well: “It represents the eternal machinery of human madness, like some kind of gigantic guillotine, pushing us from one place to the other.” And the backdrop is a cyclorama of a vast forest, reminding us that the wilderness, the ever-stretching American continent, was never far away. The large black strip running along the backdrop echoes the long, rectangular windows used by the media to view the McCarthy hearings in the 50s.
Arthur Miller transformed American theatre. Following the end of World War II, he tapped into a sense of dissatisfaction and unrest within the greater American psyche. His dramas were provocative, insightful and probing. He became the ‘public conscience’. Regarded as a brilliant writer, a staunch humanitarian, and a man of great dignity, it is said that not a day goes by when one of Miller’s plays is not being performed somewhere in the world.

**Family**
Parents: Jewish immigrants, Isidore and Augusta Miller.
Father: a ladies wear manufacturer.
Mother: a school teacher and housewife.
Sister: actress Joan Copeland.
Brother: Kermit.

**School**
Graduated from high school and paid his way through college. Attended University of Michigan, 1934-38.
Bachelor of English with honorary degrees worldwide.

**Major Influences**
The Great Depression years - watching his father’s desperation due to business failures - anti-Semitism - McCarthyism - politics - love.

**Major Works**

**Major Themes**
Moral plight of the working class - moral responsibility - struggles of conscience - sociopolitical commentaries - betrayal - death - injustice.

**Marriage**
m. Mary Slattery, 1940-1956 (college sweetheart, two children: Jane and Robert);
m. Marilyn Monroe, 1956-1961 (movie icon - met through Elia Kazan);
m. Inge Morath, 1962 (photographer - met on the set of *The Misfits*), married 40 years until her death in 2002, two children: Daniel and Rebecca);
in 2004 Miller announced his engagement to Agnes Barley, 34, with whom he had been living since 2002.

"I’d say out of the five we had two good years, but her addiction to pills and drugs defeated me," said Miller. Yet the marriage compounded Miller’s fame.

Arthur Miller with Marilyn Monroe in 1961, on the set of *The Misfits* which is the screenplay he wrote for her. They were only married for five years and this was Monroe’s longest marriage.

Arthur Miller with Marilyn Monroe, 1961, on the set of *The Misfits* which is the screenplay he wrote for her. They were only married for five years and this was Monroe’s longest marriage. "I’d say out of the five we had two good years, but her addiction to pills and drugs defeated me," said Miller. Yet the marriage compounded Miller’s fame.

"I’d say out of the five we had two good years, but her addiction to pills and drugs defeated me," said Miller. Yet the marriage compounded Miller’s fame.
Historical Background

Seeking reprieve from the strict and narrow ways of Puritan life, several girls from Salem secretly met in the woods to hear the exotic tales told by Tituba, a slave from Barbados. In February, 1692, the Reverend Parris discovered the girls participating in one of these forbidden sessions. Afterwards, Betty Parris and others began having ‘fits’ that defied all explanation. Doctors and ministers watched in horror as the girls displayed catatonic symptoms and signs of the devil.

Unable to find a natural explanation, the Puritans turned to the supernatural - the girls were bewitched. Prodded by Parris and others, the girls named their tormentors: a beggar named Sarah Good, the elderly Sarah Osburn, and Tituba herself. Each woman was in some way, a village outcast.

Tituba claimed, “The devil came to me and bid me serve him.” Villagers sat spellbound as Tituba spoke of the devil’s mischief and how she was coerced into signing the devil’s book. She said there were several undiscovered witches who seek to destroy the Puritans. Discovering and eliminating witches became a crusade – not only for Salem but all Massachusetts.

In June of 1692, the special Court of Oyer (to hear) and Terminer (to decide) sat in Salem to hear the cases of witchcraft. Presided over by Chief Justice William Stoughton, the court was made up of magistrates and jurors. The first to be tried was Bridget Bishop of Salem who was found guilty and was hanged on June 10. By October of that year, thirteen women and five men from all stations of life were hanged before the court was disbanded by Governor William Phipps. A new court, (the Superior Court of Judicature), was formed which did not allow spectral evidence. This belief in the power of the accused to use their invisible shapes or spectres to torture their victims, sealed the fates of those tried by the Court of Oyer and Terminer. The new court released those awaiting trial and pardoned those awaiting execution. In effect, the Salem witch trials were over.

**“King William’s War” or “The Second Indian War”**

In 1689 the English parliament drove the papist James II from the throne and replaced him with his daughter and her husband, the Dutch Protestant William of Orange. Ongoing tensions between the French and the English contributed to colonial conflicts. Both competed for control of the Maine frontier. The people of Salem feared attacks by the French/Catholic backed Wabanaki Indians with whom there had been an uneasy truce since Chief Metacomet’s War (1675-1678). The colony lacked a constitutional government, and wealthy men had soaked up the power and put the judiciary in disarray. “The times were out of joint,” wrote Arthur Miller.

**Feuding Landholders**

Salem village was rife with resentment and rivalry fueled by disagreements over land and taxes. A race for land-wealth pit neighbour against neighbour. Accusations were made against known merchants who traded arms and food for profit to the French-allied Wabanaki Indians. Many of the accusers resented this, due to loss of family members and landholdings. Those merchants were seen as traitors, having ‘devilish collaboration’ with the enemy.

**The Wabanaki Confederacy** was a coalition of five Algonquian tribes of the eastern seaboard, banded together in response to Iroquois aggression. Like other Wabanaki tribes, the Penobscot Indians of Maine were longstanding enemies of the Iroquois, particularly the Mohawk. This led them to side with the French and Algonquins in the costly war against the English and Iroquoians. The English paid out bounties for dead Penobscots, but it was European diseases (especially smallpox) that really decimated their nation, killing at least 75% of the population. Still angry with the British, the much-reduced Penobscot tribe supported the Americans in the Revolutionary War, and having picked the winning side they were not expelled from New England, and to this day, remain on reservations in their native Maine. Recently the Penobscot tribe was able to buy back some of their ancestral lands, and today they are a sovereign nation working to maintain their traditions, language, and self-sufficiency.
Did You Know?

Definition: Crucible (n)
1. A severe test, as of patience or belief; a trial.
2. A place, time, or situation characterized by the confluence of powerful intellectual, social, economic, or political forces.
3. A metal container used to heat material to a very high temperature.
4. A hollow area at the bottom of a furnace where metal collects.

Miller also wrote the screenplay of the film version of *The Crucible*, which featured Winona Ryder, and his son-in-law Daniel Day-Lewis, who was married to Miller’s daughter Rebecca.

The Language of 1692

Miller used the ‘colour’ of language in *The Crucible* to help create the tone of 17th century Salem with dialect choices imbedded in the script. He chose a rustic, colloquial sound, partly based on Salem records, with echoes of the King James bible; not unlike a dialect still heard today in rural southern England. Miller achieved his effect by changing verb tenses, linking words unusually and by the use of archaic words and double negatives, (e.g. ‘not’ with ‘no’, or ‘never’).

“You should surely know that Cain were an upright man, and yet he did kill Abel.” (Parris, Act 3);

“He cannot discover no medicine for it in his books.” (Susanna, Act 1);

Old-fashioned words set the tone from the beginning: *bid* for ‘told’, *unnatural* for ‘supernatural’, *witched* for ‘bewitched’, *sport* for ‘fun’, *aye* and *nay* for ‘yes and no’. And as Puritans, the characters often quote or allude to the Bible, which Miller uses to remind us of the strict religious code they lived by:

‘Abigail brings the other girls into the court, and where she walks the crowd will part like the sea for Israel.’ (Elizabeth, Act 2)

‘You should surely know that Cain were an upright man, and yet he did kill Abel.’ (Parris, Act 3).

Spectral Evidence

Arthur Miller: At a certain point, the high court of the province made the fatal decision to admit, for the first time, the use of “spectral evidence” as proof of guilt. Spectral evidence meant that if I swore that you had sent out your ‘familiar spirit’ to choke, tickle, poison me or my cattle, or to control thoughts and actions, I could get you banged unless you confessed to having had contact with the Devil. After all, only the Devil could lend such powers of visible transport to confederates, in his everlasting plot to bring down Christianity.

Arthur Miller in 1956

Miller was one of the original founders of International PEN’s Writers in Prison committee, and in 1965 was elected its president, which was a position he held for four years.

Arthur Miller on writing The Crucible.

‘The Crucible’ was an act of desperation. Much of my desperation branched out, I suppose, from a typical Depression-era trauma - the blow struck on the mind by the rise of European Fascism and the brutal anti-Semitism it had brought to power. But by 1950, when I began to think of writing about the hunt for Reds in America, I was motivated in some great part by the paralysis that had set in among many liberals who, despite their discomfort with the inquisitors’ violations of civil rights, were fearful, and with good reason, of being identified as covert Communists if they should protest too strongly.
Puritanism is a Christian faith which originated in England during the early seventeenth century. The ideals, which separate Puritans from other Christians include their strict belief in predestination. This term refers to the idea that God has previously chosen those who will be saved, and an individual can do nothing to change this status. The Puritan Covenant of Grace calls for all Puritans to be actively faithful. The Covenant of Works is the belief that those who follow God's moral codes will be blessed with eternal life.

The Puritans split from the Church of England in 1633. When William Laud became the new Archbishop of Canterbury, the new beliefs he brought were unacceptable to those members who sought to "purify" the Church.

The Puritans: Five Basic Beliefs

**Total Depravity:** By virtue of the original sin of Adam, when one is born, he has no right to salvation.

**Unconditional Election:** Some are chosen for salvation, some are not. There is nothing one can do to change his status.

**Limited Atonement:** The extent to which one can please God with acts is limited.

**Irresistible Grace:** God showers one with a quality of grace, and one cannot resist it.

**Perseverance:** Once one has been saved, nothing he does will change that fact.

These central beliefs, along with an extreme emphasis on preaching and the laws contained within the Bible itself formed the strict ideals of American Puritanism.

These new beliefs included emphasis on individual acceptance or rejection of God's grace, tolerance for a variety of religious beliefs, and the incorporation of "high church" symbols. The Puritans wished to rid their religion of all Catholic influence.

Early in the seventeenth century, groups of Puritans began leaving Europe to travel to the American colonies. The New England region became the center for Puritans, but the group was spread throughout the area north of Virginia. The main goal of these immigrants was to form a religious community in which their "pure" ideals could be central. The radical beliefs of the Puritans flourished in the New World. By keeping a strong connection between Church and State, the Puritans were able to control most of the colonies' activity until the end of the seventeenth century.
Scholars have been writing about the Salem Witch Trials for three hundred years, with various theories as to why the girls 'cried out'. Sexual repression, a male dominated society, fear, intolerance, an austere religious doctrine have all been suggested. Here are some findings through the centuries:

**17th Century:** scholars believed the accusers were actually possessed by the devil and operating as witches against the Christian community of Salem.

**18th Century:** religious fervour and the popularity of ‘extreme conversion’ seemed a more likely explanation for the fits and delusions of the accusers.

**19th Century:** Theories of “womb-centred” female psychology suggested that the girls were ‘hysterical, carried away in a collective consciousness’. (This theory continued with adherents of Freud and Jung).

**20th Century:** Science experts propose that the girls were under the influence of natural poisons such as ergot or suffering from an encephalitis epidemic. Bernard Rosenthal proposes that they were malicious adolescents drunk on power.

**21st Century:** Contemporary scholarship refocuses the spotlight away from the accusers to the judges and the larger cultural context of war, making a case that the accusers were traumatized refugees.

The real Abigail Williams was only 11, and the real John Proctor was 60, and Elizabeth Proctor, 41, was his third wife. Proctor was not a farmer but a tavern keeper. Living with them was their daughter aged 15, their son who was 17, and John's 33-year-old son from his first marriage. Everyone in the family was eventually accused of witchcraft. Elizabeth Proctor was indeed pregnant during the trial, and did have a temporary stay of execution after convicted, which ultimately spared her life because it extended past the end of the period that the executions were taking place.

We do therefore hereby signify to all in general, and to the surviving sufferers in special, our deep sense of, and sorrow for, our errors in acting on such evidence to the condemning of any person; and do hereby declare, that we justly fear that we were sadly deluded and mistaken - for which we are much disquieted and distressed in our minds, and do therefore humbly beg forgiveness, first of God, for Christ's sake, for this our error, and pray that God would impute the guilt of it to ourselves nor others, and we also pray that we may be considered candidly and aight by the living sufferers, as being then under a strong and general delusion, utterly unacquainted with, and not experienced in, matters of that nature.

We do hereby ask forgiveness of you all, whom we have justly offended, and do declare, according to our present minds, we would none of us do such things again, on such grounds, for the whole world - praying you to accept of this in way of satisfaction for our offense, and that you would bless the inheritance of the Lord, that he may be entertained for the land.

Thomas Fisk, Foreman
William Fisk
John Bacheler
Thomas Fisk
John Dane
Joseph Evelith

Thomas Peabody
John Peabody
Thomas Perkins
Samuel Sayer
Andrew Eliot
Henry Herrick, Sr.
McCarthyism grew out of the Second Red Scare that began in the late 1940s and is named after U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy, a Republican of Wisconsin with a particular zeal in uncovering the 'reds'. Many parallels exist between McCarthyism and Miller's depiction of the Salem witch trials. When *The Crucible* opened on Broadway on January 22, 1953, audiences were well aware of the symbolism it represented. McCarthyism took place during a period of intense suspicion in the United States primarily from 1950 to 1954, when the U.S. government was actively countering alleged American Communist Party subversion, its leadership, and others suspected of being Communists or sympathizers. During this period people from all walks of life, but especially the arts, became the subject of aggressive "witch-hunts," often based on questionable evidence. Paranoia reached a peak of hysteria.

In 1956 Miller appeared before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. On May 31, 1957, Miller was found guilty of Contempt of Congress for refusing to reveal the names of members of a literary circle suspected of Communist affiliation. His conviction was reversed on August 7, 1958, by the U.S. Court of Appeals.

Arthur Miller: Certain processes are universal. When Gentiles in Hitler's Germany, for example, saw their Jewish neighbors being trucked off, or soldiers in Soviet Ukraine saw the Kulaks sing before their eyes, the common reaction, even among those unsympathetic to Nazism or Communism, was quite naturally to turn away in fear of being identified with the condemned. As I learned from non-Jewish refugees, however, there was often a despairing pity mixed with 'Well, they must have done something.'

In the film industry alone, over 300 actors, writers and directors were denied work in the U.S. through the informal Hollywood blacklist. The studios, after first resisting, agreed to submit artists' names to the House Committee for "clearing" before employing them. "This unleashed a veritable holy terror," wrote Arthur Miller. Even Miller’s close friend, film director Elia Kazan, ‘named names’ to the HUAC, effectively ending a friendship, careers, and in some cases, lives. Miller and writer Lillian Hellman publicly denounced him.
**ADDITIONAL SOURCES**

http://www.etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/
This site provides a wealth of primary source documents, from trail transcripts to rare books and historical maps of Salem Village. Also features a helpful Q&A with the town archivist for Danvers (formerly Salem Village).

http://www.rjgeib.com/thoughts/puritan/puritan.html
This site contains Mary Easty's petition to the court asking them to please not shed any more innocent blood. The site also contains background historical information on the trials.

http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/trials/salem/salem/.html
Find a chronology of events, images, select trail transcripts and petitions, biographies, excerpts from Cotton Mather’s Memorable Providences and more…

http://www.salemweb.com/witches.html
This site contains a brief historical introduction to the events of 1692-93 in Salem. This site also contains various links to more specific aspects of Salem and the trials.

http://www.salemwitchmuseum.com/learn.html
This site answers some commonly asked questions about the trials and witchcraft in the seventeenth century.

http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/97/salem
An interactive trip through the hysteria that caused the witch hunt in Salem, offered from the perspective of one of the accused.

An interactive map showing the locations of the accused and the accusers, as well as major roads, rivers, townships and households.

http://earlyamerica.com/review/summer97/carey.html
Although over 500 of the original legal documents from the trials still exist, one particular death warrant, known as the Carey Document, has been exposed as a fake. This site includes information on the discovery of the document with pictures.

http://www.native-languages.org/wabanaki.htm
Peoples of the Wabanaki Indian Confederacy, with links to information about each Wabanaki nation and its language.

http://religiousmovements.lib.virginia.edu/nrms/salem.html
A chronology of important events surrounding the Salem witch trials.
Classroom Applications

The following pages suggest questions and activities students might explore BEFORE attending The Crucible

Activities relate to Ministry of Education expectations for Drama and Dance at the junior, intermediate and senior levels. To obtain Ontario Curriculum documents, visit www.edu.gov.on.ca.

RESEARCH

The Crucible enacts historical events that occurred in and around the town of Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692. Investigate these events on the internet. In role as investigative reporters, select one aspect of these events to focus attention on. Write a two to three paragraph newspaper article to read to the class.

Theme One
COMMUNITY

The idea of community is important to The Crucible because the play enacts factual circumstances that arose in a specific community of time and place. A community might be identified by the values, attitudes and actions of its people. Rules of behaviour, either stated or implied, specify what beliefs and behaviours are permitted and not permitted in any community.

Your school as a community

What are the duties and responsibilities of various members of your school community (e.g. students, teachers, administration, custodians, secretaries)?

What formal rules of behaviour exist for different members of your school community?

What unspoken rules exist among students in your school?

What values, actions and affiliations are prized in your school community?

Does your school community include cliques or easily distinguished groups of students? If so, what labels and behaviours are attributed to these groups?
**Tableau Work**

Imagine that you live in a farming community with these unspoken rules:

- Everyone must belong to the same religion and attend church every Sunday.
- Hard work is good; recreation is evil.
- No one is allowed to dance or read novels.
- Hymns and lullabies may be sung; no other singing is permitted.
- Families should be prepared for a possible attack by natives living just beyond the community border.
- Slavery is an accepted practice and most landowners own slaves.
- Parents and slave owners have the right to beat their children or slaves.
- Owning as much land as possible is an admired goal.
- Disputes among neighbours are normally settled by a court of law.
- People are expected to spy on their neighbours to make sure they follow the rules.

In groups of four to five, create a tableau depicting an image of everyday life in this community. Then create another tableau depicting an image that breaks one or more rules of this community.

Display the tableaux to the class. Identify common images or themes from both versions. What moods are depicted in the tableaux? Describe the lifestyle of people displayed in the first tableaux.

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**ACTIVITY**

_The Crucible_ depicts relationships and conflicts among three generations of community members. Although specific details of character and experience relate to a community very different from ours, certain aspects of inter-generational conflict are similar to today’s circumstances. The task in this activity is to improvise a scene based on the following information.
• Four teenagers have been caught engaging in activity that is forbidden or illegal in their community. The worst aspects of the activity remain unknown to the adult who caught them.

• Teenager A is the leader. Physically attractive, bossy, and very accustomed to lying, Teenager A organized the forbidden event. Once caught, Teenager A decides to admit to a minor aspect of the activity, and plans to accuse others of the more serious elements.

• Teenager B is a true follower. Nervous and eager to please, Teenager B often acts without thinking things through. Teenager B went along with Teenager A’s plans out of intimidation and curiosity. Teenager B will admit to whatever the majority decides. Teenager B is afraid of the punishment that is likely to follow.

• Teenager C is a lonely and naïve person who went along with the group in an attempt to be accepted by the in-crowd. Teenager C was present at the scene of the forbidden activity, but did not participate. However, Teenager C is willing to admit to participating in minor aspects of the activity for fear of group retaliation.

• Teenager D is deceptive and frequently unkind. Teenager D is a bully and uses threats of violence and exclusion to get what she or he wants. Teenager D accuses Teenager C of planning to tell on others in order to escape punishment.

Before creating the scene, the group should first decide on the type of activity that the teenagers were engaged in. Next, decide what aspects of the activity they were caught doing, and what more serious aspects occurred undetected. Now decide on the setting. Finally, decide who it was that caught them in the act.

The scene itself should depict a conversation among the four teenagers that occurs after they have been caught, but before they have been questioned individually about their role in the activity. The improvisation should demonstrate the wants and goals of each character and lead to an announcement of what each one plans to do.
The Crucible recreates events of 1692 in and around the town of Salem, Massachusetts, where a number of citizens, primarily women, were accused of witchcraft and subsequently condemned to death.

Brainstorm common ideas about witches in terms of: (a) their appearance (b) their objects (c) their animals (d) their habits and (e) their supernatural abilities.

In the Salem trials, many people accused of witchcraft were those considered of little use to society; elderly widows, for example. Compare your ideas about witches to images of elderly widows in an agricultural society 300 years ago.

The Wizard of Oz recounts how an elderly woman can become transformed by a young girl’s dream into a powerful force of evil witchcraft. Discuss childhood dreams or fears of witches that classmates recall.

Pantomime

In this exercise, students will depict actions that might be transformed through rumor and exaggeration into evidence of witchcraft.

- One partner will represent an elderly woman or man performing a menial task involving such objects as a cooking pot, a broom, and a candle. Household pets and/or other animals may be involved as well.
- The second partner will represent the same task, this time transformed by rumor and exaggeration into an example of witchcraft.
Chants and Spells

The witches in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* exemplify common notions of witches in the century before the Salem trials, including spells and chants over a boiling cauldron, fetishes, and familiars. Fetishes were objects believed to embody magic power; familiars were animals belonging to individual witches.

- In the box below are words and phrases taken from Act One of *The Crucible*.
- In groups of four to six, create a chanted spell by:
  - (a) selecting words and phrases of your choice from the box,
  - (b) putting the words and phrases into an appropriate order,
  - (c) choosing words or phrases to repeat throughout the chant or charm.
- Add actions and possibly music to your chant or charm.
- After presenting to the class, discuss the atmosphere evoked by the exercise.

**ACTIVITY**

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<th>obscene</th>
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<td>witchcraft</td>
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Theme Three
REVENGE

The Crucible suggests that the Salem witch-hunt was largely sparked by differences between two landowning families, the Putnams and the Proctors. A teen-aged girl capitalized on the growing frenzy to gain personal revenge of her own.

Revenge is a common theme in the Bible, literature and movies. Identify examples of revenge stories known by the class.

Why is the theme of revenge so important in our culture’s religion and entertainment?

What is the difference between revenge and justice?

Story-Telling

In small groups, create and tell modern-day stories, derived from your imaginations, based on the following information:

- Two families own large areas of land in a farming community (imagine members of each family, the type of farming they do, and the kind of people they are).
- The families feud over various issues (imagine a specific example or two).
- The families sue each other (imagine details of the lawsuits).
- One family seeks revenge on the other (imagine how the revenge is sought).
- A teenager who once worked for one of the families holds a grudge against them (imagine the cause of the grudge).
- The teenager seeks his or her own revenge (imagine what form the revenge takes).

A Tribunal

A tribunal is a court or seat of justice. In groups of three, imagine yourselves as panels of judges called upon to respond to the following letters of appeal for justice. What decisions would you make? Why?
Letter #1

I appeal to your wisdom to settle a matter of dispute between myself and my neighbors. As the oldest son of the richest man in our town, and one who has risked my life in battle for my neighbors’ safety, I demand justice from those whose jealousy has besmirched my family. As you may recall, I sought justice on another occasion from this court and was turned down. In that instance, I asked you to overturn my father’s will, a clearly illegal document that favored my stepbrother over me. You refused my appeal for help at that time. I trust you will not disappoint me again. Today I appeal for my wife’s relative, who was refused an important position in this town because of his connection to me. My wife’s relative was the most qualified person for the position, and was voted by 2/3 of those in power to be given the post. He was told, however, that the job had gone to someone else for reasons never disclosed. I demand justice for my family member.

Letter #2

As this town’s pastor, I seek what is owed to me. I came to this town a widower raising a daughter on my own. I realized from the start that I was entering an unstable situation - this town has had three pastors in the last seven years. I’m a man who has never refused a challenge, but I did want some signs of trust from the congregation. When I asked for the deed to the house I was given to live in, my pleas for a secure roof over my head were met with heated denial. When I sought to have proper candlesticks installed by the church altar, I had to fight like a thief for what was right. I agreed to a salary that is low by any standards for a man of my experience. My simple expectations are that important living expenses, such as the heating requirements for my house, should be paid in addition to my meager wage. I now face opposition for this small request. I trust you will come to my assistance.

Letter #3

Although I am young in years, I am old in sorrow. In childhood, I witnessed the murder of my parents as they slept in bed. Following their deaths, I was sent to work as a servant for a family that treated me cruelly. The wife was sick most of the time and very miserable and demanding. At first, the husband would beat me when I failed to please her. One night, shortly after I turned 16, he seduced me in the shed behind the house. From then on, the husband was kind to me and found ways for us to meet. I fell in love with him and I know he loved me too. Then his wife discovered our secret and forced him to turn me out into the street, penniless and with no source of employment. I seek justice for the wrongs this woman has done me.

Letter #4

I am a foreigner to your country, working for a very strict man whose teenaged niece is living in the household. The young woman and her friends are very interested in learning about the culture of my people, whose customs include singing, dancing, and fortune-telling. The niece fears her uncle’s stern attitude toward laziness and what he views as improper female conduct. Not wanting her uncle to know, the young woman and a group of her friends begged me to meet them in secret and teach them about my culture. However, the uncle came upon us and now blames me for leading them astray. I face severe punishment—possibly death. Please help me.
The Title of the Play

The word *crucible* refers to (a) a metal container used to heat material to a very high temperature, (b) a hollow area at the bottom of a furnace where metal collects, and (c) a severe test or trial.

Why do you think Arthur Miller chose to title his play *The Crucible*?

McCarthyism

*The Crucible* was written in 1953, a time in American history that has been labeled the “witch-hunt” of McCarthyism. Many literary analysts claim that Arthur Miller wrote the play as a deliberate comparison between the mass hysteria of 1692 and the frenzy against Communism in mid-20th century USA.

- Who was Senator Joseph McCarthy and why is his name linked to the term “witch-hunt”?
- How did the Communist witch-hunt affect Hollywood celebrities in the 1950s?
- What was the House of Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC)?
- How was the FBI related to the Communist witch-hunt?

What similarities and differences exist between events in Salem in 1692 and events in Washington DC during the 1950s?
The Crucible chronicles a factual instance of mass hysteria that affected most members of a rural community in one way or another.

- Divide the class into teams representing physicians, lawyers, social workers, and experts in studies of occult phenomena.

- The task for each group is to explain the mass hysteria that overtook the Salem community from the perspective of the occupation assigned. Research will be required to complete this task.

- The physicians will describe mass hysteria from a medical perspective and demonstrate that the residents of Salem were physically afflicted.

- The lawyers will describe the effects of mass hysteria on the population of Salem in terms of charges laid, convictions handed down, and punishments assigned.

- The social workers will describe mass hysteria as a result of community conditions in and around Salem at the time.

- The experts in studies of occult phenomena will describe the symptoms of the mass hysteria as it related to beliefs about supernatural influences.

**Movement**

The Crucible reveals that the community of Salem relied on acts of cruelty to maintain order and discipline among its members.

- In pairs, recall instances of physical cruelty from the play.

- Through movement only, practice four or five of these cruel acts in slow motion.

- Concentrate on demonstrating the emotions of the two characters involved through gestures and facial expression.

- Link the acts of cruelty together to create a stylized depiction of cruelty in the Salem community.

- Decide on appropriate music to accompany your movement performance.
Discussion: Theocracy

The Crucible is set in a community governed by theocracy, meaning that laws of religion legally ruled people. In this case, the religion was a strict and harsh form of Protestantism known as Puritanism. The attitude of the religious rulers was “all or nothing”; in other words, they believed that people belonged to either God or the Devil, with no room for doubt in between. The witch trials demonstrated this “all or nothing” attitude by branding anyone who broke rules of the community with the label of devil-worshiper. As Deputy Governor Danforth proclaimed in Act III of the play: “A person is either with this court or he must be counted against it, there be no road between”.

- Are any countries today ruled by theocracy? If so, with what consequences?
- Do you know of any historical instances, other than the Salem witch trials, in which a theocracy caused the imprisonment and death of its citizens?
- What is the effect of theocracy in general on the people who live under its rule?

Did a witch exist in Salem?

- On what evidence were various women in the play accused of witchcraft?
- What different kinds of women were accused of witchcraft? Did these women display any common characteristics?
- What voodoo practices and fetishes were introduced in the play? How were they explained? (a) the accusers of witchcraft and (b) those accused of witchcraft?
- What unexplained strange occurrences remain unanswered at the end of the play?
- Common notions of witches evoke images of ugly old women. But the word “witch” can also refer to a beautiful or fascinating woman who enchants others by means of her bewitching appeal. Based on the second notion of witchcraft, might Abigail be labeled a witch? Why or why not?
Staging a Scene

Below is a scene from The Crucible in which evidence of witchcraft is displayed.

Divide the class in half. In one half, groups will rehearse the scene as if the characters are truly possessed by witchcraft. In the other half, groups will rehearse the scene as if the characters are merely pretending to be possessed by witchcraft. NOTE: In the case of males playing female roles, have them act as males would act and not females.

Watch the various versions of the scene. Is it possible to detect the difference between the two depictions? What differences exist between male and female approaches to the scene?

The circumstance of the scene is that one of the teenaged witnesses, Mary Warren, has admitted that she lied about witchcraft. Abigail has just been accused of lying as well. Characters in the scene are: Mary, Abigail, Mercy, Susanna, Deputy General Danforth, and John Proctor.

JOHN PROCTOR: This girl (meaning Abigail) speaks false.

ABIGAIL: (staring at the ceiling) You will not! Be gone! Be gone I say.

DANFORTH: What is it, child? (Abigail and the other witnesses are now all staring at the ceiling) What's there? Answer me child. Why do you---?

MERCY: (pointing) Look. It's on the beam. Behind the rafters.

DANFORTH: (looking up) Where?

ABIGAIL: Why do you come here, yellow bird?

JOHN PROCTOR: What bird? I see no bird.

DANFORTH: Be quiet.

ABIGAIL: My face? But God made my face. You cannot want to tear my face. Envy is a deadly sin, Mary.

MARY: (jumps to her feet, pleading) Abby, no.

ABIGAIL: (still looking at the ceiling) Oh, Mary, this is black art to change your shape.
JOHN PROCTOR: They’re pretending, Mr. Danforth.

SUSANNA: (looking at the ceiling) Her claws, she’s stretching her claws.

JOHN PROCTOR: Lies, lies.

ABIGAIL: Please, Mary, don’t hurt me.

MARY: (to Danforth) I’m not hurting her.

DANFORTH: (to Mary) Then why does she see this vision?

MARY: She sees nothing.

ABIGAIL: (copying Mary’s voice) She sees nothing. She sees nothing.

MARY: (pleading) Abby, you mustn’t.

ABIGAIL, MERCY, SUSANNA: Abby, you mustn’t. Abby, you mustn’t.

MARY: I’m right here.

ABIGAIL, MERCY, SUSANNA: I’m right here. I’m right here.

DANFORTH: Mary Warren. Draw your spirit out of them. Have you compacted with the Devil?

MARY: Never, never.

ABIGAIL, MERCY, SUSANNA: Never, never.

MARY: Abby, stop it.

ABIGAIL, MERCY, SUSANNA: Abby, stop it.

MARY: Stop it!

ABIGAIL, MERCY, SUSANNA: Stop it!

MARY: Stop it!

ABIGAIL, MERCY, SUSANNA: Stop it!

DANFORTH: (to Mary) Where did you find this power? You have seen the Devil, have you not?
Theme Three
REVENGE

_The Crucible_ reveals reasons for various characters to seek revenge for their perceived wrongs by making accusations of witchcraft against a number of citizens of Salem. Teenaged girls who appeared physically and psychologically affected by supernatural causes supplied evidence supporting these accusations. One theory to explain the girls’ behaviour relies on the notion of “suggestibility”, meaning that the girls might have unconsciously caused their own strange delusions and behaviour because they were easily influenced by others.

**Activity on “Suggestibility”**

Investigate recent criminal trials, based on the evidence of children and/or teenagers, in which “suggestibility” was used to refute the testimony of witnesses.

**Questions on “Suggestibility”**

People who are suggestible are frequently the best candidates for hypnotism.

- Discuss any class experiences with hypnosis, either as participants or observers.
- What types of behaviour do entertainment hypnotists induce in volunteers?
- What types of behaviour do clinical hypnotists treat in their patients?
- Do you believe that suggestibility was a cause of unexplained behaviour in Salem? Why or why not?
- Were the girls who testified at the witch trials involved in a form of mass hysteria? Why or why not?
- Can mass hysteria be considered a form of mass hypnosis? Why or why not?
- Why is the testimony of suggestible witnesses suspect?
- Was the revenge attained by the Salem witch trials justifiable?
A Flawed Justice System

Identify aspects of the Salem trials, as depicted in *The Crucible* that show evidence of faulty court procedures.

List reasons for declaring a mistrial of justice against the Salem judicial system.

Staging a Scene

Below is a scene from *The Crucible* that displays courtroom injustice and intolerance. The following characters are needed: Martha Corey, Giles Corey, Judge Hathorne, Reverend Hale, and Deputy Governor Danforth.

Before rehearsing the scene, analyze the motives for each character’s words and actions.

The setting is the Salem meeting house, now serving as the General Court.

JUDGE HATHORNE: Now, Martha Corey, there is abundant evidence in our hands to show that you have given yourself to the reading of fortunes. Do you deny it?

MARTHA COREY: I am innocent to a witch. I know not what a witch is.

HATHORNE: How do you know, then, that you are not a witch?

MARTHA COREY: If I were, I would know it.

HATHORNE: Why do you hurt these children?

MARTHA COREY: I do not hurt them.

GILES COREY: I have evidence for the court!

DANFORTH: Keep your seat.

GILES COREY: Thomas Putnam wants our land!

DANFORTH: Remove this man from the court!
GILES COREY: You are hearing lies, all lies.

HATHORNE: Arrest this man!

GILES COREY: But I have evidence. Why will no one hear my evidence?

REVEREND HALE: Pray be calm a minute.

GILES COREY: Mr. Hale, please demand that I speak.


GILES COREY: They’re going to hang my wife.

HATHORNE: How dare you come roaring into this court! Have you gone crazy?

GILES COREY: You aren’t a Boston judge yet, Hathorne. Don’t call me crazy.

DANFORTH: Who is this man?

GILES COREY: My name is Corey, sir. Giles Corey. I have 600 acres and timber in addition. It is my wife you are condemning now.

DANFORTH: And do you expect to aid her cause with such contemptuous riot? Be gone.

GILES COREY: They’re telling lies about my wife, sir.

DANFORTH: Do you take it upon yourself to determine what this court shall believe and what it shall set aside?

GILES COREY: Your Excellency. We mean no disrespect for —

DANFORTH: Disrespect indeed. You have disrupted this court, Mister. This is the highest court of the supreme government of this province. Do you know that?

GILES COREY: Your Excellency, I only said she was reading books, and they came and took her out of my house for witchcraft. I only wanted to know why she reads books. I never accused her of witchcraft.

HATHORNE: Arrest this man in contempt, sir.
### Glossary of Theatre Terms

**Blocking:** The actor’s movement on stage is known as “blocking.” The Stage Manager writes the blocking notation into the Prompt Script.

**Costume:** Anything that an actor wears on stage is referred to as a costume. The Wardrobe department (the department responsible for creating costumes) provides clothes, shoes, hats, and any personal accessories such as umbrellas, purses and eyeglasses.

**Drop:** A drop is a large piece of painted canvas that is “flown in” by the flyman (see Flyman).

**Green Room:** The green room, usually near the entrance to the stage, is where the actors and crew sit while waiting for their turn to go on stage. One possible explanation of how the green room got its name is that actors used to wait for their entrances at the back of the theatre in an area where the scenery was stored. Perhaps the scenery was green, or the name “scene room” evolved into “green room.”

**Orchestra Pit:** The orchestra pit is the place where the musicians perform during a musical. Usually the orchestra pit is between the front row of the audience and the stage.

**Props:** A property or “prop” is anything that the audience sees that is not worn by an actor and is not a structural part of the set. Some examples are: tables, chairs, couches, carpets, pictures, lamps, weapons, food eaten during a play, dishes, cutlery, briefcases, books, newspapers, pens, telephones, curtains and anything else you can imagine.

**Proscenium:** A term describing the physical characteristics of a theatre. A proscenium theatre is one in which the audience and the actors are separated by a picture-frame opening that the audience looks through to see the actors, (e.g. Shaw Festival’s mainstage and Royal George Theatres). Surrounding this opening is the PROSCENIUM ARCH. If there is an acting area on the audience side of the proscenium arch, it is referred to as the APRON.

**Scrim:** A scrim is a piece of gauze that is painted and used as part of the scenery. When a scrim is lit from in front it is opaque, you cannot see through it. When a scrim is lit from behind it is transparent, you can see through it. This allows for many different visual effects to be created by the lighting and set designers.

**Thrust Stage:** A thrust stage is a stage that is surrounded on three sides by the audience, (e.g. Shaw Festival’s Court House Theatre).

### Who Works in a Theatre

**Director:** The person who guides the actors during the rehearsal period as they stage the play. The director is responsible for presenting a unified vision of the play to the audience.

**Designers:** The people who work with the director to decide what the production will look like. Designers must choose the colour, shape and texture of everything you see on the stage. There are several areas that need to have designers: costumes, set, lighting and sometimes sound. The designers work very closely with the director to create the environment in which the play will take place.

**Dyer:** The person who dyes fabrics for the Wardrobe department.

**Flyman:** The person responsible for the manipulation of the scenery which is in the fly gallery (the space above the stage). The scenery is manipulated by ropes attached to a counterweight system.

**Milliner:** The person who makes the hats which the actors wear on stage.

**Props Buyer:** The person who buys items that will be used or adapted to become props. Props buyers also purchase the raw material used to build props.

**Scenic Artists:** The people who are responsible for painting and decorating the surfaces of the set. Some of the techniques they use include: wood graining, stenciling, marbling and brickwork. They also paint the drops and scrims that are flown in.

**Stage Carpenter:** The person who ensures that everything runs smoothly on stage during a performance. The stage carpenter and stage crew are responsible for changing the sets between scenes and acts.

**Stage Manager:** The person who makes sure that all rehearsals and performances run smoothly. During a performance the stage manager also makes sure that all of the technical elements (e.g. lights, sound, curtains flying in and out) happen at exactly the right time.

**Technical Director:** The person who is responsible for coordinating all of the technical elements of a production. Technical directors work with the people who build the sets, props, costumes, wigs and special effects to make sure that everything runs smoothly.
The Crucible
STUDY GUIDE RESPONSE SHEET

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Did you make use of the following elements of this Study Guide? If so, please make any comments you feel might be useful:

Running Time: YES _____  NO _____
The Players / Synopsis: YES _____  NO _____
The Story: YES _____  NO _____
Who's Who in the Play: YES _____  NO _____
Character Breakdown: YES _____  NO _____
Director’s / Designer Notes YES _____  NO _____
The Playwright: YES _____  NO _____
Historical Background: YES _____  NO _____
Did You Know? YES _____  NO _____
Backgrounder: Puritanism YES_____  NO_____  
Backgrounder: The Mystery of Salem YES_____  NO_____  
Backgrounder: The Political Stage YES_____  NO_____  
Additional Sources YES_____  NO_____  
Classroom Applications: YES_____  NO_____  
Glossary of Theatre Terms: YES_____  NO_____  

Please feel free to make any other comments or suggestions:
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A TEACHER’S GUIDE TO THE PENGUIN EDITION OF

ARTHUR MILLER’S

THE CRUCIBLE

By RANDEANE TETU
NOTE TO THE TEACHER:

The questions, exercises, and assignments on these pages are designed to guide students’ reading of the literary work and to provide suggestions for exploring the implications of the story through discussions, research, and writing. Most of the items can be handled individually, but small group and whole class discussions will enhance comprehension. The Response Journal should provide students with a means, first, for recording their ideas, feelings, and concerns, and then for reflecting those responses in their writing assignments and class discussions. These sheets may be duplicated, but teachers should select and modify items according to the needs and abilities of their students.

INTRODUCTION

The witchcraft trials in Salem, Massachusetts, during the 1690s have been a blot on the history of America, a country which has come to pride itself on the concepts of free speech and justice as well as on its religious principles. Guilt by association, unexamined testimony, judges blinded by their biases, and individuals determined to use the system of justice when no evidence of a crime existed—these kinds of social or political problems did not go away with the completion of those trials.

U.S. Senator Joseph R. McCarthy’s relentless determination to find “unAmerican” citizens and communists in all areas of American life in the early 1950s prompted Arthur Miller to write The Crucible, a play about the Salem witch trials which has similarities to “McCarthyism.” The play no doubt prompted the House Committee on Un-American Activities in 1956 to call Miller for questioning, but Miller refused to cooperate when asked to identify writers who had once been communists. Richard H. Rovere calls Miller “the leading symbol of the militant, risk-taking conscience” of that time. Although the play does not parallel the McCarthy investigations exactly, Miller, as a socially conscious writer, is clearly making a statement about conscience and political morality relevant to the McCarthy period—or any period.

PREPARING TO READ

1. Review what you know about Massachusetts in the colonial period of early American history. What religious period and political values held Massachusetts together? What is a theocracy?
2. What were the beliefs and attitudes about witches and witchcraft held by many people in the New England colonies in the late seventeenth century? What characteristics did witches supposedly manifest? How were they identified? How were they punished?
3. Salem, Massachusetts did not have a speedy system of communication with other towns, and the wilderness was not far from its borders in 1692. How did this isolation affect activities and attitudes in the town?
4. Describe the political climate of the 1950s. Why did Senator McCarthy become a powerful figure? How did he influence politics in the ‘fifties?
5. Why is it easier to relinquish responsibility for your actions when you are part of a group?
6. As you read through the play, stop occasionally to record your thoughts, reactions, and concerns in a Response Journal. Your journal may be a separate notebook or individual sheets which you clip together and keep in a folder. Include statements about the characters—what you learn about them, how they affect you—and about the key issues and events which the play explores. Also, jot down questions you have about events and statements in the play which you do not understand. Your Response Journal will come in handy when you discuss the play in class, write a paper, or explore a related topic that interests you. Because this play contains several unusual words (e.g., diabolism) and expressions (e.g., strike hard upon me), you may want to keep a list of some of those words and their meanings in your journal.

UNDERSTANDING THE SURFACE STORY

ACT ONE

1. Why did the Salem settlement need a theocracy? Why had the settlers begun to turn toward individualism?
2. How does Miller characterize Parris? How does Parris feel about his parishioners?
3. Why is Thomas Putnam willing to speak of witchcraft? How does Mrs. Putnam know what Ruth was doing in the woods?
4. Why does Abigail “admit” that Tituba and Ruth were conjuring spirits? Why is Abigail afraid the others will confess what they were doing in the woods? How does Abigail treat the other girls? How does she treat her uncle?

5. What are Abigail’s feelings towards John Proctor? Why is she antagonistic toward Elizabeth Proctor? Why has she been asked to leave her home? Why does she tell John what happened to Betty?

6. Why do Proctor and Rebecca speak out against Hale’s coming? Why has Proctor set himself against Parris? How does Rebecca’s departure affect those waiting at the bedside?


**ACT TWO**

1. Why doesn’t Proctor go to Salem to report what Abigail has told him? Why does Elizabeth want him to go? Why does Elizabeth mistrust him?

2. How does Proctor feel about the court and Mary Warren’s part in the proceedings? How has Mary Warren changed?

3. How has Hale changed since his arrival in Salem? Why is he testing Proctor and Elizabeth? Why hasn’t Proctor been in church?

4. Why is Cheever looking for a poppet? What is the significance of the one they find?

5. Hale says: “Mary—you charge a cold and cruel murder on Abigail.” What does he mean?

6. Why does Proctor insist that Mary Warren testify in Elizabeth’s defense? Why does Mary Warren refuse?

**ACT THREE**

1. Why is Giles Cory expelled from court? Why won’t Danforth hear his evidence? Why is Cory arrested?

2. Why is Mary Warren in court? What does she tell Danforth? Why is Danforth suspicious of her and of Proctor? Why does Proctor remind her of the angel Raphael?

3. How does Parris nullify Proctor’s testament? How is Giles’s deposition turned against him?

4. What is the professed purpose of the court? Why doesn’t the court need witnesses? What does this suggest about the proceedings?

5. Why does Proctor confess lechery? Why does he think Danforth and Hathorne will believe his confession? Why don’t they believe him?

6. How is Elizabeth’s testimony used against Proctor? Why is this an unfair test of Elizabeth’s word against John’s?

7. How does Abigail turn the court against Mary Warren?

**ACT FOUR**

1. What is the effect of Sarah Good’s and Tituba’s talk about flying south? Why does Miller include it?

2. How has Parris changed? Why doesn’t the news that Abigail and Mercy have left town affect the decision of the court? How is Danforth a victim of his own logic?

3. Why has Hale returned? How has he changed? Why has he changed?

4. Why does Danforth allow Elizabeth to speak to John Proctor? How has she changed toward her husband? Why doesn’t she take Hale’s advice?

5. How and why does Giles die? Why wasn’t he hanged?

6. Why does Proctor confess? Why will he not name names? Why will he not let Danforth have his signed paper?

7. Why does John Proctor choose to hang? What does he thereby accomplish?
DIGGING DEEPER

1. What is a crucible? How is it used? Justify Miller’s use of The Crucible as a title for his play.

2. What is an overture? Why does Miller use on in The Crucible? Why is “Echoes Down the Corridor” an appropriate afterword?

3. “…Salem folk believed that the virgin forest was the Devil’s last preserve…” How is the forest used to personify the Devil? How else is the Devil personified?

4. How is Abigail responsible for starting the whole scare about witches in Salem? Is she lying? insane? possessed? If Abigail had not been caught dancing, would the witch trials still have been held? What makes you think so?

5. How do Hale’s preconceptions influence his interpretation of events? How does his interpretation change? What are the implications of his conversion?

6. As a representative of the state government, is Danforth neutral and fair? How would his statement, “Do you know, Mr. Proctor, that the entire contention of the state in these trials is that the voice of Heaven is speaking through the children?” be received in a court today? Why was it received as valid in Salem in 1692?

7. “Them that will not confess will hang.” Explain the major irony of that kind of confession.

8. How have Elizabeth and John Proctor come to terms? Explain the irony in their reconcilement. Why won’t Elizabeth be hanged?

9. Why does Danforth rejoice when Proctor confesses? What does this imply about the purpose of the trials? What does it imply about Danforth? Why must Danforth hang Proctor?

10. What is the purpose of Miller’s comments and explanations throughout the play? How would your understanding be affected if those had not been included?

11. How does Act Two, Scene 2 clarify or change the meaning of the play? Miller says that scene was eliminated from the stage version because it seemed to “deflect the tempo of the play.” If you were directing the play, would you include that scene? Why or why not?

12. In staging the play, Laurence Olivier said a drumbeat starts during the play and continues to the end. How does Miller create this feeling of tension? How does he create the oppressive atmosphere?

13. Arthur Miller has been quoted as saying “The tragedy of The Crucible is the everlasting conflict between people so fanatically wedded to this orthodoxy that they could not cope with the evidence of their senses.” What does he mean by “this orthodoxy”? What is “the evidence of their senses”? Do you agree that this is the basic conflict?

14. In a morality play, characters are intended to dramatize Good and Evil. In what ways is The Crucible a morality play?

15. As a socially conscious writer, Miller intended this play as a comment on McCarthyism. What are the parallels between the incidents Miller dramatizes and the acts of Senator McCarthy in the 1950s?

16. You might have utilized notes from your Response Journal as you reacted to some of the questions above. Now select one specific unanswered question from your journal, and see if your classmates can shed some light on that issue.

WRITING RESPONSES

1. Explain why Proctor’s knowledge that “the children’s sickness had naught to do with witchcraft” did not stop the witch hunt and court proceedings.

2. Proctor’s summation of the trials is that “Vengeance is walking Salem.” Is he right? Support your position with evidence from the play.

3. Proctor calls Hale “Pontius Pilate.” Explain the allusion and argue whether it is or not an appropriate allusion.

4. Give specific examples of how Abigail influences the proceedings, and then give your reason(s) for why she continually succeeds.

5. Miller said, “The form, the shape, the meaning of The Crucible were all compounded out of the faith of those who hanged.” Explain what he means and how his meaning is evident in the play.
6. Herbert Blau (“Counterforce I: The Social Drama”) says the adultery of John Proctor and Abigail Williams dissipates the force of the “public terror” which it was Miller’s intent to convey. Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not?

7. Describe how Miller used the symbol of fire throughout the play and explain what it represents.

8. Choose one of the ironies in the play (for instance, Elizabeth Proctor lies to protect John Proctor and thereby convinces Danforth that John has lied to save Elizabeth) and explain how the irony enhances the drama of the play.

9. If audience sympathy were not with John Proctor in the matter of his adultery, we might be able to see Abigail’s side of the story. Write an account of Abigail’s feelings before she was caught dancing in the forest.

10. Write a one-act play in which a student is caught breaking the school code of ethics and must face a court of his or her peers. Make clear in your scene which rights the student has and which he or she does not.

**EXPLORING FURTHER**

1. Research “habeas corpus.” Explain how this right, guaranteed by the Constitution, might have influenced the proceedings at the Salem witch trials.

2. Research the Puritan idea of predestination and “the elect.” How does an understanding of those concepts influence an interpretation of this play?

3. Read Joseph R. McCarthy’s *McCarthyism: The Fight for America* or articles by Senator McCarthy. What were his tenets? What was their influence on the thinking of certain Americans in the 1950s? What appeal do they have today?

4. Read Bernard Shaw’s *Saint Joan* (also available from Penguin), a play with themes similar to Miller’s. Note the similarities and differences.

5. Read Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*. The play has been performed successfully in China partly because of the common experience available to both cultures. What would be some of the difficulties in presenting *The Crucible* to an audience in China?

6. Read Miller’s 1950 adaptation of Ibsen’s *An Enemy of the People* (also available from Penguin). How are the moral values of that play related to those in *The Crucible*?

7. Create an advertising campaign for a new presentation of the play. Include posters, news releases, radio and TV spots.

8. Stage an interview with Miller in which the class asks questions and Miller responds.

9. Set up a “Today Show” in which Abigail, Proctor, and other characters appear to recount the events which made them famous.

10. Using the list you made of unusual expressions used in the play, rewrite some of Miller’s lines as they would be said by teenagers today.

11. “Three Sovereigns for Sarah,” a television drama starring Vanessa Redgrave, examines the same Salem witch trials by focusing on one family’s harrowing involvement. After viewing the three-part program, compare this more historical approach with Miller’s more dramatic and symbolic approach.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THIS GUIDE**

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