Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*: Engagement Strategies and Activities

by Jared Robinson
Interdisciplinary Study Package: Arthur Miller’s the *Crucible*

Engagement Strategies and Activities
Introduction to The Crucible Engagement Strategies

The Crucible by Arthur Miller is a play that weaves the history of the Salem Witch Trials of 1692 together with fictitious dramatic characterizations of real Puritan individuals such as Betty Parris, John Proctor, Tituba, and others. Likewise, the play is also an allegorical commentary on McCarthyism, specifically the persecution of ordinary Americans in the 1950s who were suspected of being communist sympathizers.

History and The Crucible are very much tied to one another, and the following pages give teachers interdisciplinary strategies to weave English and historical discussion together. Included are sample lesson plans for historical/textual discussion, plus supplementary activities not in sequence with any specific study guide. The package is not a complete scene by scene overview of the entire play, but only concerns how to bring the historical context into the discussion of The Crucible. Included are also a list of sources used which can be consulted in relation to studying The Crucible.

Best Regards,

K.J.R
Lesson Example #1

Synopsis of lesson: A pre-reading lesson on the lifestyle of the citizens of Salem. This lesson deals with the religious hysteria which dominated the Puritan mindset. Specifically, the widespread fear that the devil was always influencing people to do evil deeds. In addition, the lesson discusses the social factors such as the widespread desire to be the most prosperous member of the community, which in turn led neighbours to turn on one another.

Why this lesson is important: The Salem witch hunts *did* happen in 1692. Without a historical understanding of the true reasons the citizens of Salem chose to murder nineteen “witches” in the 17th century, the students will not gain a true understanding of the motivations of the characters in the play. The students will potentially gain an unsatisfactory appreciation for Miller's work, and will get lost in perceived meaningless actions of the characters.

For instructors, it is advised to break the historical context of The Crucible into subsections, divided over a number of lessons, specifically, a good sequencing for the historical pre-reading lessons is:

- Life in Salem
- A synopsis of the Witch Trials/McCarthyism

Breaking the material up into subsections, keeps the students focused. Jamming too much historical background into one lesson will overwhelm them, especially those who have very little background in historical discussion.

Lesson Outline

1) The instructor starts by handing out the play to the class and introducing it orally. The main focus should be a brief synopsis of the book. This can be done by simply talking for a few minutes.

I.E: “Okay Class, today we are starting Arthur Miller’s The Crucible. For the next three weeks we will be reading the text and doing a number of activities. The play is about witch-hunting in the Puritan village of Salem, Massachusetts in 1692, and how 19 people were tried and killed for being suspected witches. The play is based on real events.”

Next, Introduce why the book is important: For example, “it will lead to a better understanding of the theme of persecution, or a better understanding of life in the colonial period.”
Teacher Note! Students must feel like reading the book is worthwhile or else they will have no motivation to get through it. Giving the students a simple little speech potentially will make them feel like they have something to gain from it and they will want to find examples of the theme as they are reading.

2) Show pictures from the website or off the overhead projector of real locations around Salem Massachusetts. Explain briefly the historical background behind Salem. The images can be found at the Salem tourist site [http://www.salemweb.com/](http://www.salemweb.com/). (See Figure #1)

Here is an example of a walk through for this activity. Specifically talking points for the instructor:

- I.E Salem is located in Essex county, Massachusetts (show map picture)
- The town was settled by Puritans, an extremist Protestant group (show picture of Salem settler)
- Salem citizens were extremely religious and believed good and evil were constantly at war with one another. (show picture of Puritan church)
- They were afraid of witches (supernatural creatures who worked for the devil) (show picture of Salem Halloween festival). Explain background of Witches and what they were believed to do (It is advisable to write some of the characteristic on the board so students can follow along)

Teacher Note!

A suggestion is to part way through the presentation do a **mind map** on the board with the students. A mind map is a brainstorm of a particular idea or them, e i.e. witches. The instructor draws one circle balloon in the centre with the word WITCHES. Then asks for characteristics of witches by creating connecting balloon branches. Students may shout out words such as “Evil,” “Broomstick,” “Spell.” During this mind map session the instructor fills in the historical details. For example, he or she might say “witches in the 17th century were suspected of being able to destroy farm crops/ warts and other afflictions were usually a sign of witchcraft.” The mind map is a good way to encourage student participation in class and visually emphasizes why witches were so feared in Salem, Mass.
Below is an example of a **mind map** on the subject of Halloween:
3) The students are given the article *Life in Salem*, and told they are going to be reading it along with the instructor. The website can be found here for *Life in Salem* article can be found here: [http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schooladventures/salemwitchtrials/life/](http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schooladventures/salemwitchtrials/life/)  
(See Figure #2)

Questions like the following examples should be placed on the board at the beginning of class. The instructor stops the reading intermittently and asks the students the questions on the board in sequence. Some of it will be repetition from the previous presentation, but the activity will scaffold the material for the students.

Here are some examples of questions that can be placed on the board:

I. What were the religious duties of the people of Salem, Massachusetts? What were their importances to the community?

II. Describe how the Puritans were so heavily indoctrinated that they believed that good was always under threat from evil, and chose to weed out anything they did not understand

III. Describe what the lifestyle was like outside of religious duties?

Teacher Note!

For this activity, making the students read the article aloud allows them to be part of the discussion and engaged with the material. Putting the questions up on the board allows students to feel relaxed and makes it so they are not struggling to decipher what is important about the article and what is not. Likewise, it is important to ask the students to make brief jot notes as they go, summarizing what the instructor is saying so they stay awake and do not start drifting. For example, as a prompt before reading the article say “When we stop and discuss, just briefly in your own words summarize the points I am making, I will also give you time to ask questions in these short break periods” a result this keeps them focused and attentive, and not passive individuals.

4) Provide students with a journal entry activity that is due for homework, which reiterates the material. This will help ensure that the day’s material is carried over from one day to the next. Give students time to work on the activity in the last quarter of class.

For example: *In two paragraphs, write three things you learned today from studying the article Life In Salem. List three interesting facts about the social, political, and economic organization of Salem and how you think it sparked the Salem witch trials?*

Teacher Note!

Doing a journal activity allows students to engage with the material even when they are home, and allows them to bring that knowledge with them to class the next day fresh in their minds.
Twenty-four innocent victims lost their lives in the Salem witchcraft hysteria. How did the community of Salem let this tragedy happen? Was it simply fear and superstition, or were there other factors at work?

The events of 1692 took place during a difficult and confusing period for Salem Village. As part of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, Salem was under British rule. When the hysteria began, the colony was waiting for a new governor and had no charter to enforce laws. By the time the new governor, William Phips, arrived in Massachusetts, the jails were already filled with alleged witches. To make matters worse, New England towns were under attack by Native Americans and French Canadians.

Salem Village faced daily challenges closer to home as well. Most families had to support themselves, making their own clothes, planting vegetables, raising meat. Farming was often a painstaking task in the harsh climate and rough, rocky terrain—and a drought or flood could ruin a year’s harvest. An epidemic of smallpox could kill a family. In a world where people saw the Devil lurking behind every misfortune, it is little wonder they believed evil spirits were at work.

But there may have been stronger factors behind the witch hunts—the Puritan lifestyle, a strong belief in the Devil and witchcraft, the divisions within Salem Village, and the expectations of children. Click each topic below to learn more:

Church was the cornerstone of 17th century life in New England. Most people in Massachusetts were Puritans—colonists who had left England...
seeking religious tolerance. But the strict Puritan code was far from tolerant. It was against the law not to attend church—where men and women sat on opposite sides through long services. The Puritan lifestyle was restrained and rigid: People were expected to work hard and repress their emotions or opinions. Individual differences were frowned upon. Even the dark, somber Puritan dress was dictated by the church.

Since Puritans were expected to live by a rigid moral code, they believed that all sins—from sleeping in church to stealing food—should be punished. They also believed God would punish sinful behaviour. When a neighbour would suffer misfortune, such as a sick child or a failed crop, Puritans saw it as God’s will and did not help.

Puritans also believed the Devil was as real as God. Everyone was faced with the struggle between the powers of good and evil, but Satan would select the weakest individuals—women, children, the insane—to carry out his work. Those who followed Satan were considered witches. Witchcraft was one of the greatest crimes a person could commit, punishable by death.

In keeping with the Puritan code of conformity, the first women to be accused of witchcraft in Salem were seen as different and as social outcasts: Tituba, a slave; Sarah Good, a homeless beggar; and Sarah Osborne, a sickly old woman who married her servant.

In 1692, children were expected to behave under the same strict code as the adults—doing chores, attending church services, and repressing individual differences. Any show of emotion, such as excitement, fear, or anger, was discouraged, and disobedience was severely punished. Children rarely played, as toys and games were scarce. Puritans saw these activities as sinful distractions.

But unlike young girls, boys had a few outlets for their imagination. They often worked as apprentices outside the home, practicing such skills as carpentry or crafts. Boys were also allowed to explore the outdoors, hunting and fishing. On the other hand, girls were expected to tend to the house, helping their mother’s cook, wash, clean, and sew.

Many children learned to read, but most households owned only the Bible and other religious works—including a few that described evil spirits and witchcraft in great detail. There were a few books written for children, but these often warned against bad behavior and described the punishment that children would suffer for sinful acts.

Such was the world of Abigail Williams and Betty Parris during the long, dark winter of 1692. There was little to feed their imagination that did not warn of
sin and eternal punishment. It is no wonder that the young girls were so captivated by Tituba’s magical stories and fortune-telling games. These activities were strictly forbidden, which must have filled them with fear and guilt. This may have been one reason for their hysterical behaviour. And at a time when young girls were forbidden to act out or express themselves, it is easy to see why they were so enraptured by the attention they received when they became “bewitched.”

Of course, there were probably many factors behind the girls’ actions. But what is more surprising than the accusations from these imaginative young girls is the reaction from the community. The girls may have sparked the witch hunt, but it was the adults who set the wheels into motion.

FIGURE #1: Salemweb.com pictures.

A sample of some of the images available at the Salem Massachusetts tourist site used in conjunction with Lesson Example #1: [http://www.salemweb.com/memorial](http://www.salemweb.com/memorial). These pictures are of the individuals who were prosecuted and convicted of witchcraft.

Lest Terror Be Forgotten

June 10, 1692

Bridget Bishop

"I am no witch.
I am innocent.
I know nothing of it."
July 19, 1692

Sarah Wildes

Elizabeth Howe

"If it was the last moment I was to live, God knows I am innocent..."
Crucible Lesson Example #2

Synopsis of Lesson: Students discuss briefly what was learned the day before, and are given learning synopsis of the events of the Salem Witch trial in 1692.

Why this lesson is important!

The lesson scaffolds the material for the students (reinforces it so it becomes long term). Gives students background history of the Salem Witch trials in 1692. Students are more inclined to connect with a dramatic text when they have an understanding of the material as something that is based on truth.

Lesson Outline

1) Homework journal entries are taken up; the instructor asks students discuss what they learned from the previous day. Specifically the journal entry that they were instructed to do was:

“In a paragraph, write three things you learned today from studying the article Life In Salem. List three interesting facts about the social, political and economic organization of Salem and how it sparked the Salem witch trials.”

Teacher Note!

*This activity allows the student to be an active participant right from the beginning, and not passive leaners* the instructor can better motivate the conversation by first adding a bit of causal trivia about the people of Salem. This helps the students get over their nerves of having to speak and can spark discussion.

I.E the instructor might say something like:

- “Did you know, that the drinking water and unsanitary conditions around Salem caused people to have hallucinations, and exhibit ‘supernatural’ behaviour?”
- Children did actually flap their arms like birds, and bark like dogs.

2) Once the journal entries are taken up, the instructor asks the students to hold on to them until the end of class for marking. The video docu-drama, Salem Witch Trials is queued up, starring actress Kirstie
Alley. This is a miniseries created for the History Channel anthology entitled Haunted Stories Collection. Web information for the video can be found here: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0284450/. This information is useful for the instructor only and provides logistical details for who is in the movie, how long it is, and where to purchase it (See Figure #3).

The instructor has the discretion of how much he or she wishes to show. (However, the part with Betty Parris screaming and contorting is specifically entertaining for the thoroughness of the explanations of how diseases and afflictions were perceived as witchcraft (23 m. 15 seconds in the film.) The instructor stops the video, every so often and asks informal questions. This keeps the students engaged so they don’t start to drift or sleep. It is best to pick different students rather than the same ones, to keep the class upbeat.

Here are some examples of informal oral questions that can go with the video:

1) Who was the first person to be accused of witchcraft? For what reasons?

2) Why was Caribbean slave Tituba accused more quickly than the rest?

3) Who was the first witch to be hanged?

As an alternative to informal questions, an analysis chart (Figure #4) can be given to the students to keep them awake during the film with something to do. The students make jot notes and the instructor takes up the answers at the end of watching the movie.

Teacher Note! The video allows students a relaxing, and comfortable environment perfect for learning. The questions/ chart provide the opportunity for the instructor to dissuade sleeping and drifting during the video. In addition, showing a short length of video does not create boredom.

3) The video is followed by more formal questioning on the board. The rest of the period is devoted to the students answering the questions for homework. Here are some examples of questioning that can be used:

1) Give some examples of the economic and political causes underlying the Salem witch trials?

2) In one sentence, analyse the role that Samuel Parris played in the Salem witch trials?

3) In one sentence, name some of the spectral evidence used to convict the people of Salem. What would a modern day court do with this evidence?
4) In two paragraphs, find an example of persecution your own family or friend has faced. Explain what the persecution was and why it occurred? How did this person deal with the victimization they faced?

*****The students are instructed that question #4 is not due the next day, but in the lesson after. This gives the student time to get in touch with relatives or find documents such as pictures, or letters to gain some perspective on their own family history. ***** In addition they are told that it will be the foundation of a large scale class discussion that will take up half a period so it is very important they do the activity.

**Teacher Note!** Formal questions allow students to further engage with the material. The instructor can also take this time to do a homework check to make sure the students did the journal entry from the previous day.
### Salem Witch Trials Analysis Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who were the accused?</th>
<th>What symptoms did the accused display?</th>
<th>Who were the accusers?</th>
<th>What are some other reasons given for accusing people of witchcraft?</th>
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*Figure #4*
Lesson #3 Example:

Synopsis of lesson: The lesson scaffolds the material from the previous day, as well as discusses McCarthyism and how the play The Crucible was a commentary on the communist hunts of the Nineteen Fifties.

Why This Lesson is important!

The historical context of The Crucible is further reinforced and students are introduced to the idea of allegory: using one event to comment on a more recent event. I.E the hysteria and the arbitrary process of hunting witches, compared to the hysteria and arbitrary manner Wisconsin senator, Joe McCarthy hunted communists in the 1950s. This is an important lesson, because without discussing McCarthyism, the students will miss the true significance of the play, and potentially an understanding of allegory.

Lesson Outline

1) The instructor explains that the students are going to watch a short video from Discovery Education.com entitled Salem Witch Trials: The Story. The web link can be found here: http://school.discoveryeducation.com/schooladventures/salemwitchtrials/story/story.html (Figure #5)

After the video, the questions from the previous class are taken up. This is a straight question and answer period. This is important because it allows students to relate to the material and solidifies it in the mind for future reference. The students will than take out their formal questions from the previous day, to elaborate on the discussion:

1) Give some examples of the economic and political causes underlying the Salem witch trials?

2) In one sentence, analyse the role that Reverend Parris played in the Salem Witch Trials?

3) In one sentence, name some of the Spectral evidence used to convict the people of Salem. What would a modern day court do with this evidence?

4) After the questions from the previous day, the article The Crucible a Context is handed out. The article is located here: http://www.sparknotes.com/lit/crucible/context.html (Figure #6). The instructor asks the students to read the article along with him/ her, stopping to discuss important points. When the point in the article is reached about communism, the instruction writes the definition for allegory up on the board.

Allegory: A story, picture, or play that acts as a symbolic representation.
The instructor explains the significance of allegory, that writers and artists often use the circumstances of one historical event to comment on another. This is often done because criticizing an authority figure can be dangerous to one's safety and reputation. The instructor emphasizes that Miller used the play as a commentary on the communist persecutions of his time as well as creating a loose narrative on the Salem Witch Trials. The play has a dual meaning, and Miller often took liberties with his characters to make their personalities like the communist witch hunters of his day.

The following are some examples of questions that can be asked in the lesson:

- Who was Arthur Miller?
- What was the House of Un-American Activities?
- Who was Joe McCarthy? What was his role?
- What did it mean to blacklist someone?
- Why do you think blacklisting occurred?
- Why did Miller write *The Crucible*?
- Can you give me an example of another instance of prejudice you have seen in your life?
- Is there anybody who'd like to tell me a time when they've have seen another example of allegory?
- Can anybody name a time when they have seen somebody comment on something in an abstract way?

Teacher Advice!

Getting the students to read the article with the instructor keeps the students awake and alert, as do the questions which spark discussion and commentary. The questions above have been designed to follow Blooms Taxonomy of Questioning. The instructor starts with basic, one-answer response questions and gradually asks more complex questions, which solicit free thinking responses. Included with this lesson are a list of prompts for Blooms Taxonomy. As the instructor moves down the list, the type of answers from students change from basic answer responses to creative and broad.

A list of Blooms Taxonomy prompts can be found with this lesson (*Figure #7*)
The instructor uses the last ten to fifteen minutes of class to emphasize the students will be sharing their own family stories of prejudice and hate from the previous day’s lesson. It is reminded they have to write two paragraphs for this assignment which is to be handed on the same day.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Knowledge</th>
<th>Useful Verbs</th>
<th>Sample Question Stems</th>
<th>Potential activities and products</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>tell, list, describe, relate, locate, write, find, state, name</td>
<td>What happened after...? How many...? Who was it that...? Can you name the...? Describe what happened at...? Who spoke to...? Can you tell why...? Find the meaning of...? What is...? Which is true or false...?</td>
<td>Make a list of the main events.. Make a timeline of events. Make a facts chart. Write a list of any pieces of information you can remember. List all the .... in the story. Make a chart showing... Make an acrostic. Recite a poem.</td>
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<th>Comprehension</th>
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<td></td>
<td>explain, interpret, outline, discuss, distinguish, predict, restate, translate, compare, describe</td>
<td>Can you write in your own words...? Can you write a brief outline...? What do you think could of happened next...? Who do you think...? What was the main idea...? Who was the key character...? Can you distinguish between...? What differences exist between...? Can you provide an example of what you mean...? Can you provide a definition for...?</td>
<td>Cut out or draw pictures to show a particular event. Illustrate what you think the main idea was. Make a cartoon strip showing the sequence of events. Write and perform a play based on the story. Retell the story in your words. Paint a picture of some aspect you like. Write a summary report of an event. Prepare a summary report of an event. Make a colouring book.</td>
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### Application

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<th>Useful Verbs</th>
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<tr>
<td>solve, show, use, illustrate, construct, complete, examine, classify</td>
<td>Do you know another instance where...? Could this have happened in...? Can you group by characteristics such as...? What factors would you change if...? Can you apply the method used to some experience of your own...? What questions would you ask of...? From the information given, can you develop a set of instructions about...? Would this information be useful if you had a ...?</td>
<td>Construct a model to demonstrate how it will work. Make a diorama to illustrate an important event. Make a scrapbook about the areas of study. Make a paper-mache map to include relevant information about an event. Take a collection of photographs to demonstrate a particular point. Make up a puzzle game suing the ideas from the study area. Make a clay model of an item in the material. Design a market strategy for your product using a known strategy as a model. Dress a doll in national costume. Paint a mural using the same materials. Write a textbook about... for others.</td>
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### Analysis

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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>analyse, distinguish examine, compare, contrast, investigate, categorise, identify, explain, separate, advertise</td>
<td>Which events could have happened...? I ... happened, what might the ending have been? How was this similar to...? What was the underlying theme of...? What do you see as other possible outcomes? Why did ... changes occur? Can you compare your ... with that presented in...? Can you explain what must have happened when...? How is ... similar to ...? What are some of the problems of...?</td>
<td>Design a questionnaire to gather information. Write a commercial to sell a new product. Conduct an investigation to produce information to support a view. Make a flow chart to show the critical stages. Construct a graph to illustrate selected information. Make a jigsaw puzzle. Make a family tree showing</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Sample Question Stems</td>
<td>Potential activities and products</td>
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<td>create invent compose predict plan construct design imagine propose devise formulate</td>
<td>Can you design a ... to ...? Why not compose a song about...? Can you see a possible solution to...? If you had access to all resources how would you deal with...? Why don't you devise your own way to deal with...? What would happen if...? How many ways can you...? Can you create new and unusual uses for...? Can you write a new recipe for a tasty dish? can you develop a proposal which would...</td>
<td>Invent a machine to do a specific task. Design a building to house your study. Create a new product. Give it a name and plan a marketing campaign. Write about your feelings in relation to... Write a TV show, play, puppet show, role play, song or pantomime about...? Design a record, book, or magazine cover for...? Make up a new language code and write material suing it. Sell an idea. Devise a way to... Compose a rhythm or put new words to a known melody.</td>
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**Synthesis**

**Evaluation**

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<tr>
<td>judge select choose decide justify</td>
<td>Is there a better solution to... Judge the value of... Can you defend your position about...? Do you think ... is a good or a bad thing?</td>
<td>Prepare a list of criteria to judge a ... show. Indicate priority and ratings. Conduct a debate about an issue of special interest. Make a booklet about 5 rules you</td>
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</table>
Early in the year 1692, in the small Massachusetts village of Salem, a collection of girls fell ill, falling victim to hallucinations and seizures. In extremely religious Puritan New England, frightening or surprising occurrences were often attributed to the devil or his cohorts. The unfathomable sickness spurred fears of witchcraft, and it was not long before the girls, and then many other residents of Salem, began to accuse other villagers of consorting with devils and casting spells. Old grudges and jealousies spilled out into the open, fueling the atmosphere of hysteria. The Massachusetts government and judicial system, heavily influenced by religion, rolled into action. Within a few weeks, dozens of people were in jail on charges of witchcraft. By the time the fever had run its course, in late August 1692, nineteen people (and two dogs) had been convicted and hanged for witchcraft.

More than two centuries later, Arthur Miller was born in New York City on October 17, 1915. His career as a playwright began while he was a student at the University of Michigan. Several of his early works won prizes, and during his senior year, the Federal Theatre Project in Detroit performed one of his works. He produced his first great success, *All My Sons*, in 1947. Two years later, in 1949, Miller wrote *Death of a Salesman*, which won the Pulitzer Prize and transformed Miller into a national sensation. Many critics described *Death of a Salesman* as the first great American tragedy, and Miller gained an associated eminence as a man who understood the deep essence of the United States.

Drawing on research on the witch trials he had conducted while an undergraduate, Miller composed *The Crucible* in the early 1950s. Miller wrote the play during the brief ascendency of Senator Joseph McCarthy, a demagogue whose vitriolic anti-Communism proved the spark needed to propel the United States into a dramatic and fractious anti-Communist fervor during these first tense years of the Cold War with the Soviet Union. Led by McCarthy, special congressional committees conducted highly controversial investigations intended to root out Communist sympathizers in the United States. As with the alleged witches of Salem, suspected Communists were encouraged to confess and to identify other Red sympathizers as means of
escaping punishment. The policy resulted in a whirlwind of accusations. As people began to realize that they might be condemned as Communists regardless of their innocence, many “cooperated,” attempting to save themselves through false confessions, creating the image that the United States was overrun with Communists and perpetuating the hysteria. The liberal entertainment industry, in which Miller worked, was one of the chief targets of these “witch hunts,” as their opponents termed them. Some cooperated; others, like Miller, refused to give in to questioning. Those who were revealed, falsely or legitimately, as Communists, and those who refused to incriminate their friends, saw their careers suffer, as they were blacklisted from potential jobs for many years afterward.

At the time of its first performance, in January of 1953, critics and cast alike perceived The Crucible as a direct attack on McCarthyism (the policy of sniffing out Communists). Its comparatively short run, compared with those of Miller’s other works, was blamed on anti-Communist fervor. When Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were accused of spying for the Soviets and executed, the cast and audience of Miller’s play observed a moment of silence. Still, there are difficulties with interpreting The Crucible as a strict allegorical treatment of 1950s McCarthyism. For one thing, there were, as far as one can tell, no actual witches or devil-worshipers in Salem. However, there were certainly Communists in 1950s America, and many of those who were lionized as victims of McCarthyism at the time, such as the Rosenbergs and Alger Hiss (a former State Department official), were later found to have been in the pay of the Soviet Union. Miller’s Communist friends, then, were often less innocent than the victims of the Salem witch trials, like the stalwart Rebecca Nurse or the tragic John Proctor.

If Miller took unknowing liberties with the facts of his own era, he also played fast and loose with the historical record. The general outline of events in The Crucible corresponds to what happened in Salem of 1692, but Miller’s characters are often composites. Furthermore, his central plot device—the affair between Abigail Williams and John Proctor—has no grounding in fact (Proctor was over sixty at the time of the trials, while Abigail was only eleven). Thus, Miller’s decision to set sexual jealousy at the root of the hysteria constitutes a dramatic contrivance.

In an odd way, then, The Crucible is best read outside its historical context—not as a perfect allegory for anti-Communism, or as a faithful account of the Salem trials, but as a powerful and timeless depiction of how intolerance and hysteria can intersect and tear a community apart. In John Proctor, Miller gives the reader a marvelous tragic hero for any time—a flawed figure who finds his moral center just as everything is falling to pieces around him.
Lesson Example #4

The class discusses McCarthyism and how it relates to Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*. Much of class time is related to informal Think, Pair, and Share period.

Why This Lesson is Important!

The lesson is a follow up to the previous day’s discussion about McCarthyism. The notion of allegory can be difficult for some students to understand, so it is good to do a recap of the previous day’s discussion so any stragglers can get caught up with the material and its importance.

1) **Step 1:** The instructor hands out two sets of music lyrics to the students, one for “Get That Communist Joe” by the Kavaliers (Figure #7) and “Burn the Witch” (Figure #8) by Queens of the Stone Age. The instructor explains that the students will be learning the similarities and differences between McCarthyism and the Salem Witch Trials. The students listen to the first song “Get that Communist Joe,” and the instructor asks questions. Here are some examples

- What does the song say about the time period of the 1950s
- **Instructor Note:** Hysteria/ people making false accusations
- Who is ‘Joe’ mentioned in the song?
- **Instructor Note:** Joe McCarthy, Wisconsin senator and head of the anti-communist crusade in the United States.
- What reasons does the song give for making false accusations
- **Instructor Note:** jealousy of wealth, poor relationships between neighbours.

**Step 2:** The instructor puts in the second song, “Burn The Witch” by Queens of the Stone Age. A comparison is made between the two songs.

- What is the atmosphere like in both the 1950s and the 17th century?
- Who is the authority figure making the accusations in both time periods?
- Compare the reasons for people accusing one another in the 1950s and the 17th century.
Teacher Advice!

This particular activity, for the most part, allows the students to break away from simple one answer question responses and makes possible a very free thinking atmosphere. The Rock n’ Roll allows for a comfortable, relaxed setting conducive to learning.

1) Once the lyrics analysis activity is finished, the instructor tells the students that they are doing a think, pair, share activity. A think, pair share activity is where the student is asked to think over a task, question, or problem individually, share their ideas with their seat partner, and than along with their seat partner, share their similarities and differences with the entire class.

**Step 1:** The instructor asks the students to take out their journal reflections assigned two days prior. They are told they will be using them for the purposes of a discussion with their seat partners and the entire class. Specifically, the journal entry assignment was to find an issue of prejudice from their friends or relatives. Two instructions are written on the board:

(1) Individually in two lines, reflect on some of the core reasons persecution happened in your specific case?

(2) In pairs share with your partner the similarities and differences for why persecution occurs and compare the ways the persecution was dealt, or not dealt with.

**Step 2:** The students are asked to take out a blank piece of paper and told to only answer the first instruction individually.

**Step 3:** The students are asked to get into pairs and discuss instruction #2.

**Step 4:** The pairs share their thoughts with the class and the instructor.

**Step 6:** The instructor then collects the journal entries the students completed for homework, and used for discussion with their classmates.
Figure #7: Get those Communist Joe
Lyrics. http://www.atomicplatters.com/more.php?id=32_0_1_0_M

Get That Communist, Joe: The Kavaliers [1954]

Joe, come here a minute
I get a red hot tip for you, Joe

See that guy with the red suspenders
Driving that car with the bright red fenders
I know he's one of those heavy spenders
Get that Communist Joe

He's fillin' my gal with propaganda
And I'm scared she will meander
Don't want to take a chance that he'll land her
Get that Communist Joe

He's a most revolting character
And the fellas hate him so
But with the girls this character
Is a Comrade Romeo

Since my love he's sabotaging
And the law he has been dodging
Give him what he deserves, jailhouse lodging
Get that Communist Joe (Get that Shmo, Joe)
Figure #8: Burn The Witch

Burn The Witch Lyrics
Artist(Band): Queens Of the Stone Age

Holding hands
Skipping like a stone
On our way
To see what we have done
The first to speak
Is the first to lie
The children cross
Their hearts & hope to die

Bite your tongue
Swear to keep your mouth shut

Ask yourself
Will I burn in Hell?
Then write it down
& cast it in the well
There they are
The mob it cries for blood
To twist the tale
Into fire wood
Fan the flames
With a little lie
Then turn your cheek
Until the fire dies
The skin it peels
Like the truth, away
What it was
I will never say...

Haaahh (oohhhh-oohhhhh)Haaahh (oohhhh-ohhhh)

Bite your tongue, swear to keep
Keep your mouth shut
Make up something
Make up something good...

(guitar solo)

Holding hands
Skipping like a stone
Burn the witch
Burn to ash & bone
Burn the witch
Burn to ash & bone
Burn the witch
Burn to ash & bone

(hooooooo, ooohhhhh, hooooooo, and oooohhhhhhhhh)
Supplementary Engagement Activities to do with the Crucible.

These activities are designed to act as alternatives to the ones provided in the sample lesson plan examples. The activities are mean to bring a further meant to be a historical aspect to discussions of the play and can be used as a pre-reading activity or while reading the text. The following three activities will be doctored, specifically it will be explained how to use the activity and what benefit can come from using them in a classroom setting.

Activity #1: Anticipation Guide for the Crucible (Figure #9)

This activity basically asks students agree or disagree questions that go along with the themes of the text. I.E if you commit a sin you are a bad person. The students take time in class to write ‘A’ for ‘Agree’ or ‘D’ for ‘Disagree’. The activity can be used as a hook rather than a video, or a picture slideshow as suggested.

Step 1: The instructor explains the nature of the text, gives a brief synopsis about the book

I.E “We are going to be reading the play The Crucible, by Arthur Miller. The play is about the Puritan witch hunts of 1692 in Salem Massachusetts. The play deals with a lot of themes, persecution, mistrust, superstition. Please fill out the anticipation guide, and we will talk more about the themes and the historical background once everybody has completed the guide.”

Step 2: Hand out the Anticipation guide and wait for students to fill it out. This is a great time to add some Salem/Witchcraft trivia about the town and the people.

- I.E Did you know all the police cars in Salem have witches painted on them.
- The high school in Salem is named Witchcraft heights.

Step 3: Take up the chart with the students. Use the Life in Salem article to discuss important and relevant points about the themes and the historical background of Salem Massachusetts.

Step 4: On the board, assign questions from the Life in Salem article for students to do for homework.

Teacher Advice! The Crucible Anticipation Guide is a quick substitute for educating the students on the historical nature of The Crucible. It is designed to quickly familiarize the students with the themes and historical background of Salem/ The Puritans and is most effective when the teacher is pressed for time, and has to get through pre-reading speedily. The anticipation guide can certainly also be used in conjunction with videos, lyric analysis and other multimedia as well for historical analysis of 17th century Puritan society.

The Anticipation Guide is engaging because it allows students to offer their own opinions or stories, a habit many like to do. It also allows the instructor to add his own beliefs, stories, and convictions to the analysis and students generally like to find out about the personal qualities of teachers.
Activity #2: Arthur Miller, “Are You Now Or Were You Ever?” (Figure #10)

This is a very long essay by Arthur Miller on why he wrote The Crucible. It discusses his life, the background history of Salem, and the McCarthy communist hunts of the 1950s.

Step #1: As a pre-reading activity the instructor makes three columns on the board. One is for information on Salem Mass., the second on biographical life about Arthur Miller, and the third about McCarthy and communism. He/ She tells students they will be reading an article that deals with all three topics and there will be questions to go along with the chart.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salem Mass.</th>
<th>Arthur Miller</th>
<th>Communism/McCarthyism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19 witches were murdered in 1692.</td>
<td>Miller, called in as witness to testify against other suspected communist writers.</td>
<td>Joe McCarthy, fanatical anti-communist.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step #2: The instructor introduces the play very briefly telling the students that it was written by playwright Arthur Miller. The plot concerns the real-life Salem Witch hunts, which took place in 1692. The instructor briefly talks about communism/ McCarthy, and what was going on in Miller’s life when he wrote the play.

Step #3: The instructor gives out the article and begins reading. At the discretion of the teacher, he/ she asks the students to take over and read the article. The instructor stops and asks questions to the class about the article as they are reading. As the instructor go along he/ she jots important points in the three columns.

Here are some examples of questions

- What happened in Salem Mass in 1692?
- Who was the first witch to be accused?
- What are some of the reasons for the Salem hysteria in 1692?
- Name another instance of hysterical persecution.

Instructor Note: The article can be made interesting if the questions move away from simple one word answers and become more free-thinking, i.e., “name an instance where you have seen persecution in your own life?”

Step #4: If time, article is followed by board questions for the students to do for homework.
I.E What was the house of Un-American Activities. What was their purpose?

Teacher Advice!

This activity is meant as a quick overview of Miller's *The Crucible*, The Salem Witch Trials, and Communism and McCarthyism. It is designed for the teacher who has to move through the historical context background quickly because time does not permit otherwise.

The engagement part of this activity lies in the easy to read style of the essay, as well as the ability for the instructor to ask many questions without using many different articles concerning *The Crucible*. 
Activity #3: Victimization Activity.

This is an activity meant to be done during class, and can be categorized as formative group work. The activity requires that the students use their knowledge from the book and combine it with research from the computer labs. The research portion is followed by a roundtable discussion where the instructor asks a person from each group to contribute their thoughts. The activity should come after the students have made it through Act I or Act II, after they have a decent knowledge of how to dissect themes. What follows is the activity itself.

Witch-Hunting and Persecution Activity.

In class, we have been discussing the theme of persecution/victimization. You, the student will now have a chance to apply your skills concerning this theme by doing a group activity.

Part I

In groups of three, discuss six examples in which Arthur Miller expresses his theme of persecution in Act I. Examine imagery, and phrases, and specific word choice to highlight this theme. Use the rough analysis provided and chart paper to record your ideas as a group, and be prepared to share your thoughts with the rest of the class. Do not just list the examples, but highlight their SIGNIFICANCE.

Part II

Use the websites provided, (or one approved by the instructor) to find your one instance of victimization/persecution in contemporary society and discuss the reasons why they occur. Compare the similarities and differences to the factors which lead the town of Salem to persecute the main character of Parris and the other citizens of the community.

You will be required to provide a brief synopsis of the persecution on piece of chart paper, and list some similarities and differences along with synopsis. PLEASE PRINT OFF YOUR SOURCE ARTICLE AND STAPLE TO YOUR CHART PAPER!

Part III

As a class, the students and the instructor will hold a roundtable discussion. One by one, a student from each group will be asked to discuss a way in which Arthur Miller expresses the theme of persecution and victimization using examples from the play. The student is not only to say the example but explain how it conveys the theme.

Your presentation will include:
-A discussion of ways in which Arthur Miller expresses victimization (which will be transferred to chart paper)
-An analysis of victimization in contemporary society using the Internet
-Your group will be given approximately three class periods for the research portion of the activity. The first day will be devoted to finding examples from Miller’s play The Crucible. The second will be devoted to the web quest.

Websites:
Women's Rights: http://pbskids.org/wayback/civilrights/
Holocaust: http://www.ushmm.org/
Muslim Rights: http://www.cbc.ca/arts/media/story/2007/12/05/muslim-macleans.html
African Americans: http://pbskids.org/aaworld/
CRUCIBLE GROUP ACTIVITY: PERSECUTION AND VICTIMIZATION ANALYSIS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>LEVEL 1</th>
<th>LEVEL 2</th>
<th>LEVEL 3</th>
<th>LEVEL 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/15</td>
<td>-makes no connection w/new original contexts</td>
<td>-makes some connections w/new original contexts</td>
<td>-makes good/solid connections w/new original contexts</td>
<td>-makes excellent connections w/new original contexts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Ideas are poorly developed, if at all</td>
<td>-Some development of ideas</td>
<td>-Support main point</td>
<td>-Excellent development of ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-no analysis-no explanation of importance, relevancy of ideas</td>
<td>-limited analysis</td>
<td>-good development of ideas</td>
<td>-fully developed analysis-enhanced explanation of the importance and relevancy to main point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-lacking textual support</td>
<td>-Does not fully explore the importance to central idea/thesis</td>
<td>-weak paragraph structure</td>
<td>-excellent use of support which reinforce ideas and strengthen argument(s)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CHART PAPER ANALYSIS (application-group)
### The Crucible Activity Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Victimization Examples</th>
<th>Online Research Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Works Cited


Keats, Margaret (OCT). “Crucible Anticipation Guide”


Keats, Margaret (OCT). “Are you now or have you ever been essay.”


VERY GENERAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES FOR TEACHING THE CRUCIBLE

• Be enthusiastic, the students will be more responsive if the instructor is passionate about what he/she is talking about.

• Allow pauses for questions, this brings the students into the discussion.

• If students are willing to act out the play, encourage this, and bring in props to help the students expand their imaginations.

• Tell stories. Don’t be afraid to deviate from the lesson plan and tell stories that relate to the themes of the text. This provides a relaxed and informal atmosphere.

• Don’t always pick the same students to answer the questions. Mix it up and pick students who don’t usually volunteer.

• Pepper your discussions with trivia, students love trivia about cultures and societies they don’t understand.

• Trivia points you can mention ☺

  • Witches were not burned, they were hung. The Real Giles Corey was crushed to death under a stone.

  • The youngest person to be convicted in Salem was four years old.

  • Settlers had very little concept of medicine, so genetic disorders, and afflictions caused by nature would often be misconstrued as Witchcraft.

  • Salem today embraces its witch culture because of Arthur Miller’s The Crucible; Police Cars have pictures of Witches on them, the Elementary school is named Witchcraft Heights, and the High School Football team is named the Witches. There is a witch Museum in Salem, Massachusetts.

  • Kingston has a lot of supernatural related background, i.e The Haunted Walk of Kingston. These make for interesting discussion.