TPAC Education’s Humanities Outreach in Tennessee presents

THE CRUCIBLE

Teacher Guidebook
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Dear Teachers,

This guidebook provides a small fraction of the wealth of material available about *The Crucible*, Arthur Miller, and the Salem Witch Trials. Many of the best web-sites for research and information are listed on the back two pages. Included on the student web quest page is a link to the National Geographic web-site which has an innovative, interactive, accurate, and entertaining web activity that gives any visitor the chance to think from the perspective of the accused. We highly recommend it.

We encourage you to give any students who might need it preparation for three central elements of the play: the hysterics of the girls in court, the Puritan religion and its understanding of God and the Devil, and the adultery of John Proctor, which is not shown on stage but is referred to.

We are thrilled to be offering Tennessee Repertory Theatre’s production of *The Crucible*. It is a great work of theatre and literature by one of the most exceptional playwrights of the 20th century. The play will be presented as Arthur Miller wrote it. The dialogue is masterful and its language evocative; the story is powerful and the production promises to be an unforgettable experience for you and your students.

**TPAC Education**
The Crucible shows true genius in the ability both to tell a fascinating, disturbing story based on a specific historical moment in time AND to reverberate with universal themes that continue to transcend time. In fact, the play is so rich with themes, that when I approached it as a director, I found myself facing a veritable smorgasbord of potential points of focus.

The story, of course, is from that riveting episode in Salem Village, Massachusetts in 1692, when people were accused of being witches and paid with their lives. Most people are aware that Arthur Miller was inspired to write the play in response to the McCarthy era, when the House Un-American Activities Committee went on a “witch hunt” for Communists and people’s lives were destroyed. The bad news is, this play continues to be politically relevant worldwide as time marches on. Some critics believe the play is even more relevant now than when it appeared in 1953 - that the passage of time has only continued to make Miller’s points for him. Miller himself wrote in The Guardian in 2000 that “you could tell when a dictator was about to take power, or had been overthrown, in a Latin American country, if The Crucible was suddenly being produced in that country.”

So, after sorting through implications of The Crucible regarding such things as:

- the dangers inherent in mixing theology with government,
- the extreme suppression of society as demonstrated by the Puritans,
- the ramifications of intolerance in politics and religion,
- the importance of speaking up against authority abusing its power,
- the importance of being true to yourself,
- the nature of mass hysteria,
- and (even more compelling,) the irresistible force of peer pressure,
- the evil streak in human nature that leads us to fend off danger to ourselves by pointing it at someone else—

after recognizing that all of that, and more, is explored in this play, I began to feel that one thing was the through-line tying it all together, one common denominator in all those facets of the story: fear. The fact is, we behave badly when consumed by fear, and those who would control us are usually successful for a time when they exploit our fear to its fullest. And then eventually, ironically, it is the fear that destroys us.

For our production of The Crucible, I am particularly interested in illuminating this tight, highly-dogmatic society’s falling apart when irrational fear replaces thoughtful reasoning—a destruction that is told brilliantly through the individual characters and their relationships, and ripples out through the whole community. In this story, which is both history and metaphor, we experience a universal truth when we recognize that their succumbing to fear is actually far more dangerous than the manufactured threat perpetrated upon them. Historically, as the trials proceeded, fields fell to waste, untended cows literally wandered the streets, and people began to desert the village.

In our production we’ll be aiming to share with you a sense of the terrifying, fear-induced descent into chaos, a danger that echoes down the years, warning us to be diligent and suspicious of authority that draws power from fear. The Crucible is great storytelling—a taut courtroom drama that anyone can enjoy without a single thought to contemporary parallels. But when John Proctor, just a regular guy with faults like anyone, finally manages to take a stand for his integrity in the face of certain death, we’ll be trying to impact our audience on a gut level where they won’t be able to avoid sensing the necessity of resistance to the manipulations of Fear.
Some people may think that designing a show set in Salem, Massachusetts during the witch trials of 1692 would not be very interesting for a designer. Obviously, those people would never have read Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*. Though set during this terrible moment in our history, it speaks to much bigger and far reaching issues, issues that we are still grappling with today, in America and across the world. These larger issues are what influence our design for *The Crucible*.

I felt it was important to capture the essence of the Puritan world of Salem, but in no way try to reproduce it. When the audience looks at the set for *The Crucible*, I hope they get a strong sense of the world of Salem, but also grasp the bigger picture. It is important that the set visually represents what this play is saying about the human condition.

The final design consists of a large center playing area raised 16” off the stage floor of Polk Theater and cantilevered over the lowered orchestra pit. The area will be covered in rough hewn lumber and will appear to be floating above the stage and hanging in space. On either side of the main acting area are large walls with doors and windows that connect to the main acting area by bridges. Upstage is a smaller platform area that also connects to the main acting area by a bridge. Each of the four scenes in the production will be augmented by an additional scenic piece that will convey the particular location of the scene in a very simple, stylized way. Furniture and properties will be kept to a bare minimum. I hope that this will convey how the people of Salem, though surrounded by their fellow townspeople, were also very much alone and exposed to scrutiny. During the course of the production, as the society of Salem begins to break down, so will the set. The once strictly regimented walls will begin to deteriorate until we reach the final chilling moment.

I hope the audience will be moved and think about the larger issues of this production. As it has been said, if we do not learn from our past mistakes, we are doomed to keep reliving them.
Arthur Miller was born in New York City in 1915 to a middle class Jewish family. He went to grammar school in Harlem and high school in Brooklyn, playing football and baseball all during his youth and ignoring his grades.

He applied to the University of Michigan, because as he said, “they were one of the few places that took writing seriously back then.” Though he was rejected twice, he wrote a letter to the Dean and impressed the man, who agreed to give Miller a year to prove himself. He did and graduated in 1938. Miller knew he wanted to learn to write, but during college he first discovered the immediacy and impact of playwriting. He queried theatre professors and friends for information about the mechanics of theatre and was even in a production of Shakespeare’s *Henry VIII* (with no lines.) Miller’s college plays won awards from the school and the Theatre Guild’s Bureau of New Plays. Thomas Lanier (Tennessee) Williams also won the prize that same year, but was unable to take advantage of the scholarship.

His first Broadway play, *The Man Who Had All the Luck*, opened in 1944 for four performances followed quickly by the successful *All My Sons* and in 1949 *Death of a Salesman*, which won the Pulitzer Prize. In 1953, spurred by the McCarthy investigations, Miller wrote *The Crucible*, his version of the Salem witch trials.

Miller was married three times: to Mary Grace Slattery in 1940 for 16 years, Marilyn Monroe in 1956 for four years, and photographer Inge Morath in 1962 until her death in 2002.

Miller participated actively in social reform as an advocate for workers, civil rights and against censorship. Editor Christopher Bigsby writes that “Justice was not just a concern in his plays.”

Miller’s brilliant writing has earned him a lifetime of honors, including the Pulitzer Prize, seven Tony Awards, two Drama Critics Circle Awards, an Obie, an Olivier, the John F. Kennedy Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Dorothy and Lillian Gish prize.

He died February 10, 2005 at home in Connecticut.

**Arthur Miller and McCarthyism**

The similarities Arthur Miller saw between the McCarthy Era and the time of the Salem witch trials were immediately recognized in *The Crucible*. His country, his industry and his friends were caught up in the panic engendered by the investigations of Senator Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC.) He was himself subpoenaed by HUAC in 1956 and convicted of contempt of Congress for his refusal to identify writers believed to hold Communist sympathies. The following year, the United States Supreme Court overturned the conviction.

The committee came to have such power under the leadership of McCarthy that even to have known anyone who might be suspected of ties to the Communist Party became a danger. Careers and lives were ruined as hundreds of Americans were blacklisted. People were called to testify and name names under threat of unemployment, passport revocation, bankruptcy, and prison. Americans became more afraid of the committee and its accusations than of the influence and dangers of Communism itself. Any kind of dissenting opinion was suspect and freedom of speech was disavowed in the committee hearings; the First Amendment was blocked as a defense. During the height of the fury, even the members of the press declined to stand up to McCarthy, with a few notable exceptions including journalist Edward R. Murrow.
In his own words:

“Those who warp the truth must inevitably be warped and corrupted themselves.”

Arthur Miller: A Playwright’s Life and Works by Enoch Brater, p.23.

The individual, in Mr. Miller’s view, had an abiding moral responsibility for his or her own behavior, and for the behavior of society as a whole. He said that while writing The Crucible, “The longer I worked, the more certain I felt that as improbable as it might seem, there were moments when an individual conscience was all that could keep a world from falling.”

Bob Herbert for The New York Times

I saw the McCarthy thing, but I was writing underneath it, trying to express some universal element in man. Often the historical element is mistaken for the theme.”

Conversations with Arthur Miller, edited by Matthew C. Roudané p.83.

Asked what the genesis of The Crucible was, Miller replied: “I thought of it first when I was at Michigan. I read a lot about the Salem witch trials at that time. Then when the McCarthy era came along, I remembered these stories and I used to tell them to people when it started. I had no idea that it was going to go as far as it went. I used to say, you know, McCarthy is actually saying certain lines that I recall the witch-hunters saying in Salem. So I started to go back, not with the idea of writing a play, but to refresh my own mind because it was getting eerie.”


On the audience reaction to the opening night performance of The Crucible: “You see, I had just I had just had Death of a Salesman on, which was an immense hit. And this play came in, and it wasn’t all that long later. As soon as the sense of what it was about became apparent, you could feel a coating of ice over that audience. It was just thick enough to skate on. It was sheer terror. It was real terror. I had been in the theatre a long time by that time, and I’d never experienced such a sensation. In fact, people I knew quite well—newspaper people and so on—when I was standing in the back of the theater and they came out, didn’t turn to nod at me.”


When he finished his first college play, Miller remembers running through the deserted streets of Ann Arbor...“my head in the stars,” [experiencing the] “magical force of making marks on a paper and reaching into another human being, making him see what I had seen and feel my feelings—I had made a new shadow on earth.”

Arthur Miller: A Playwright’s Life and Works by Enoch Brater, p.23.
Synopsis

The Crucible takes place in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692.

Act I begins in the home of Reverend Parris, whose daughter, Betty, lies unconscious. Around midnight the night before, Parris had discovered Betty, his niece Abigail, and Tituba, his slave, dancing in the woods: his surprise appearance shocked Betty into her present state. The local physician is unable to determine the cause of Betty’s illness. Mr. and Mrs. Putnam arrive and reveal that their daughter Ruth is also ill. There is talk in the village of an unnatural cause.

Abigail warns her friend Mercy Lewis and the Proctors’ servant, Mary Warren, not to reveal what they were doing in the woods and threatens the girls with violence if they tell anyone that she tried to cast a spell in order to kill Goody Proctor. John Proctor enters and angrily sends Mary back home. He and Abigail are left alone, and Abigail becomes angry with Proctor because he refuses to acknowledge any further feelings for her. Prior to the opening of the play, Abigail worked as a servant in the Proctor home, and during that time she had relations with John Proctor. When Elizabeth discovered the affair, she dismissed Abigail.

Betty wakes, screaming. The well-respected Rebecca Nurse is visiting the Parris household and calms her. Rebecca counsels Rev. Parris that identifying witchcraft as the cause of Betty’s illness will set a dangerous precedent and lead to problems in Salem. Betty’s screams have brought more people to the room. An argument ensues between Thomas Putnam, John Proctor, Rev. Parris and Giles Corey over the authority to call in a witchcraft expert. The quarrel quickly progresses to old conflicts over the leadership of Salem, payment terms for the minister, and land disputes.

The witchcraft expert, Reverend Hale, arrives from another town to determine whether witchcraft is behind the children’s illnesses. His interviews unnerve Abigail, and she blames Tituba for the episode in the woods. Tituba is summoned; both she and Abigail elaborate on their stories and confess to all manner of things. Betty wakes and she and Abigail begin accusing villagers of being in league with the Devil.

Act Two moves the action to John and Elizabeth Proctor’s house, eight days later. Elizabeth discovers that Proctor spoke to Abigail privately while in Salem, and they argue over this. Mary Warren comes home from Salem where she is now serving as an official of the court, and gives Elizabeth a poppet (doll) that she made for her while sitting in the courtroom. Mary Warren tells Proctor that some of the girls accused Elizabeth of witchcraft, but the charges were dismissed because Mary Warren defended her.
Hale arrives at the Proctor house and questions John and Elizabeth to prove of their faith. Proctor names nine of the Ten Commandments but forgets the commandment forbidding adultery. Proctor tells Hale that Abigail admitted to him that the witchcraft charges were false. Giles Corey and Francis Nurse enter to report that their wives have been arrested, and shortly thereafter, Ezekiel Cheever and Marshal Herrick arrive with nine men to arrest Elizabeth. Earlier that evening, Abigail felt a needle-stab, and she accused Elizabeth of attempted murder. The men search the Proctor house and discover the poppet with a needle in its stomach. Hale questions Mary Warren and learns that Mary sewed the poppet, stored the needle inside it, and that Abigail saw her do it. Nevertheless, Elizabeth is arrested.

**Act Three** moves to the Salem Meeting House. The court convicts Martha Corey and Rebecca Nurse of witchcraft. Giles Corey tells the court he has proof that Putnam is accusing his neighbors of witchcraft in order to gain their land. Out in the vestry room, Judge Danforth asks the name of the witness who gave Corey the information, but Corey refuses to cooperate. The officials arrest him.

Mary Warren tells Danforth that she pretended to see spirits and falsely accused others of witchcraft. She reveals that Abigail and the other girls are also lying. Abigail denies Mary Warren’s charge, however, and she and the others claim that Mary Warren is sending out her spirit against them right there in the room.

Proctor denounces Abigail’s charge against Mary Warren and informs the court of his affair with Abigail. He claims that she is lying in order to have Elizabeth executed, thereby providing herself with the opportunity to become his wife. After Proctor agrees that Elizabeth would never lie, the court summons Elizabeth and questions her about the affair. Not knowing that her husband has confessed it, Elizabeth lies about the affair to protect him and is returned to jail. Abigail resumes her claim that Mary Warren is attacking her until Mary Warren recants her confession and charges John Proctor with being the Devil’s man.

**Act IV** opens in the prison after several months. Proctor is in prison, scheduled to hang, along with Rebecca Nurse. Elizabeth is also in prison. Because she is pregnant, the court has delayed her execution until after she gives birth. Hale attempts to convince the prisoners to confess rather than hang, but all refuse. Proctor finally agrees to make confession and signs a written affidavit, but he destroys the document rather than have it posted on the church door. Proctor is taken to the gallows.
Characters:

**Townspeople**

Reverend Parris
Tituba
John Proctor
Elizabeth Proctor
Rebecca Nurse
Francis Nurse
Thomas Putnam
Ann Putnam
Giles Corey
Martha Corey (offstage voice)

**Girls**

Abigail Williams
Betty Parris
Mary Warren
Mercy Lewis
Susanna Walcott

**Examiners and Court Officials**

Reverend John Hale
Ezekiel Cheever
Marshal Willard
Deputy Governor Danforth
Judge Hathorne

**Given Character Ages:**

Tituba – early forties
Reverend Parris – middle forties
Betty Parris - nine
Abigail Williams - seventeen
Susanna Walcott – little younger than Abigail
Mrs. Ann Putnam- forty-five
Thomas Putnam – near fifty
Mercy Lewis - eighteen
Mary Warren - seventeen
John Proctor – middle thirties
Rebecca Nurse – seventy-two
Giles Corey – eighty-three
Reverend John Hale – near forty
Marshal Willard – early thirties
Judge Hathorne – sixties
Deputy Governor Danforth - sixties

**Household Groups:**

Reverend Parris
daughter, Betty
twin, Abigail
servant, Tituba

Thomas and Ann Putnam
servant, Mercy Lewis

Elizabeth and John Proctor
servant, Mary Warren

Rebecca Nurse
Francis Nurse

Giles Corey
Martha Corey
Historians and others continue the attempt to satisfy a grim fascination with the momentum and ferocity of the Salem Witch Trials. Many individuals have examined and analyzed the episode from a variety of angles and developed theories about components that may all have had a contribution to the tragedy.

**Physical Conditions:** Circumstances were hard. The Puritans colonists worked their farms to provide enough food for their families, to survive illness and cold Massachusetts winters, and to carve out a civilization with 91 houses spread out over twenty square miles. In addition, Indian attacks were a very real threat and descriptions of massacres gave colonists new nightmares to imagine.

**Government:** In 1689, England had two new rulers. William and Mary came to the throne after Parliament forced the abdication of James II. The colonists had felt the turmoil before England’s change of rule: in 1684 the Massachusetts Bay Colony charter for self-government had been revoked, a hated English governor had ruled two years and been overthrown, and in early 1692, the charter still had not been renewed. As Frances Hill writes, “the colony was plunged into legal and political limbo.”

**Religion:** The Puritans believed in strict self-discipline, a good quality for the conditions they faced everyday. They did not condone amusements or entertainments, but restricted their activities to work and church. They were severe in their expectations of children, in their punishment of rule-breaking, and in their belief in the power of the Devil and the punishment of Hell.
Lack of knowledge of the natural world: Their narrow understanding of disease, of animals, and the weather left them open to explaining natural phenomena in terms of good and evil of supernatural and religious origins.

Lack of knowledge of psychology: The Puritans would have no understanding or ability to recognize the panic attacks, clinical hysteria, manic states or self-mutilation (biting, sticking themselves with pins) that may have driven some of the girls’ behavior.

Underlying dissent in Salem Village: Recent years had produced factions in the village centering on the conflicts of choosing ministers and the boundaries of land. The arguments were multi-generational and very bitter. The Putnam family was well-represented, determined, and set against the Porter and Nurse families. Many historians suspect that though it may not have been their plan at the beginning, the Putnams deliberately fueled the frenzy for personal gain and power. Though she does not figure in The Crucible, young Ann Putnam, age twelve, was one of the primary and most constant accusers listed in documents, as well as both her mother and father.

Natural Causes: Some experts have explored the theory that the villagers were ingesting the ergot fungus that can attack rye, a staple of the Early American diet. Ergot poisoning attacks the central nervous system, causing symptoms that might explain the girls’ fits.

Flawed legal system: The courts did not allow the accused to summon lawyers. Most court officials had no legal training; judges made assumptions of guilt and badgered witnesses; accusations given by people trying to avoid hanging were taken as proof; religious fears and prejudices took the place of rational judgment; and “spectral evidence” was allowed in court. Stories that defendants had sent their spirits or “specters” “out to hurt and threaten people not only were accepted, but dominated the court proceedings.

Superstition: Puritans believed in the Devil, not as a distant ruler of Hell, or an interior conscious tempter or a lesser being conquered by God, but as a dark force constantly present in the world with the power to inhabit everyday objects and events. Anything unfamiliar or not understood was easily attributed to the Devil. Once the Devil was mentioned, all other reasons for the girls actions seem to have disappeared at the horror of this suggestion.

Entertainment: As gruesome as it sounds, the girls were able to say and do things they would never have been permitted to do in a Puritan society, and some villagers may have been drawn in by the spectacle.
THE PLAY - COULD IT HAPPEN TODAY?

What knowledge can we get from the play to answer this question that we can’t get from the stories of history?

Theatre helps us understand the situation on a level beyond straight rationality. Arthur Miller’s play takes the audience back through the progression of events to experience, with the mysterious synthesis of live performance, the emotions and choices that took the people of Salem down such a dreadful path. No matter what conditions applied there were still choices to be made that can resonate with everyone. What would you have done?

Arthur Miller explained:

“This play is not history in the sense in which the word is used by the academic historian. Dramatic purposes have sometimes required many characters to be fused into one; the number of girls involved in the “crying out” has been reduced; Abigail’s age has been raised; while there were several judges of almost equal authority, I have symbolized them all in Hathorne and Danforth. However, I believe that the reader will discover here the essential nature of one of the strangest and most awful chapters in human history. The fate of each character is exactly that of the historical model, and there is no one in the drama who did not play a similar—and in some cases exactly the same—role in history.”

The job as an audience member is to bring attention to that “essential nature” and see it, mingle what you perceive and understand with the vision and knowledge of the playwright, the actors, the director and designers so that you leave the play with an altered awareness.

If you ask no other question after the performance, ask this one:

What did The Crucible say to you?
An actor must not only step into a character’s shoes, but into their hearts and minds. The actor needs to figure out the character’s thought process and their emotions. Actors spend a lot of time with the play and do a lot of research to understand their characters. But actors also must use their own personal knowledge of human nature. They have to find a way to absorb all those thoughts and feelings of the character and show them on stage so that the audience will believe.

Read the following excerpts from The Crucible to yourself. Think about what you know about each character. Use your own knowledge of people. What is each character thinking and feeling when they say the following lines?

Abigail Williams (to Mary Warren, Mercy Lewis and Betty Parris at the beginning of the play)
“Now look you. All of you. We danced. And Tituba conjured Ruth Putnam’s dead sisters. And that is all. And mark this. Let either of you breathe a word, or the edge of a word, about the other things, and I will come to you in the black of some terrible night and I will bring a pointy reckoning that will shudder you. And you know I can do it; I saw Indians smash my dear parents’ heads on the pillow next to mine, and I can make you wish you had never seen the sun go down!”

Mary Warren (telling John Proctor why she joined the other girls to label Sarah Osburn a witch)
“I never knew it before. I never knew anything before. When she come into the court I say to myself, I must not accuse this woman, for she sleep in the ditches, and so very old and poor. But then—then she sit there denying and denying, and I feel a misty coldness climbin’ up my back and the skin on my skull begin to creep, and I feel a clamp around my neck and I cannot breathe air; and then (entranced)—I hear a voice, a screamin’ voice, and it were my voice—and all at once I remember everything she done to me!”

John Proctor (as his wife, Elizabeth, is being arrested)
“If she is innocent! Why do you never wonder if Parris be innocent, or Abigail? Is the accuser always holy now? Were they born this morning clean as God’s fingers? I’ll tell you what’s walking Salem—vengeance is walking Salem. We are what we always were in Salem, but now the little crazy children are jangling the keys of the kingdom, and common vengeance writes the law! This warrant’s vengeance! I’ll not give my wife to vengeance!”

Deputy Governor Danforth (refusing to give the condemned more time to confess)
“Now hear me, and beguile yourselves no more. I will not receive a single plea for pardon or postponement. Them that will not confess will hang. Twelve are already executed; the names of these seven are given out, and the village expects to see them die this morning. Postponement now speaks a floundering on my part; reprieve or pardon must cast doubt upon the guilt of them that died till now.”

Say the line out loud (by yourself or in a group) and try to convey those thoughts and feelings in the way you say the line. Use your knowledge of yourself. What if you felt those feelings? What would you have to be thinking to say these lines?

Practice. Is it difficult to capture the emotions to their fullest in your voice? Does the intensity of the words make them hard to say? What must you do to make it believable? Try it several ways. If you are working in a group, what changes do you hear when each line is read by a different person?

Listen for these lines during the play.

After the performance, think back. Did the actor convey the meaning and emotion of the line? Was the delivery similar or different to the one you did? Did you believe in the character?
Student Explorations: Your good name - your reputation?

Consider the Salem townspeople as a social group with loyalties and divisions like any other.

Discuss: What do you think defined a good reputation in the Puritan culture?
How would a good or bad reputation affect a person’s life?
What is the usual power of a reputation?
Is a reputation built on something others think of you or how you think of yourself?

Did reputations influence the first allegations of witchcraft? The first accused were Tituba, considered a non-person as a slave; Sarah Osburn, known as a loose woman and town troublemaker; and Sarah Good, known as a bad-tempered beggar. What happened when the accusations shifted to Rebecca Nurse, acknowledged as the backbone of the church and a hard-working, respectable woman?

In the last scene of *The Crucible*, after months in prison, John Proctor finally lies in order to avoid hanging and says he has seen the Devil. He is willing to tell the lie to the judges, but not to have his signed confession posted on the church for everyone to see. The judges demand to know what difference it makes if he has confessed.

Proctor says, “Because it is my name. Because I cannot have another in my life!”
What does John Proctor mean? Is he talking about his reputation or something else more important?

Student Explorations:
The girls - why did they do it?

Have you ever gotten caught up in a situation where you found yourself doing something you didn’t want to do, but the momentum of events and your friends’ opinions made it hard to stop? How would you explain the behavior of the girls who made all the accusations?

Was it the power over others?
Was it just peer pressure?
Was it lack of education?
Was it the need for attention?
Was it repression?
Was it boredom?

Use historical accounts, the play, even the movie and imagine why they acted as they did; if they really believed or half-believed all that they said; and how they convinced the entire town.

Rank with percentages the possible reasons that drove the girls. Use any of the above factors that you believe apply and add any other reasons that you consider relevant. As high school students, you are close to the age of many of these girls (9-19) when they made their accusations. You can bring important insight to the puzzle.

Note: The historical Abigail Williams was only twelve during the witch trials, and John Proctor was sixty. Most scholars do not give credence to a real-life parallel to the relationship between the theatrical Abigail and Proctor of Arthur Miller’s play, though some including Miller have said it was possible.
Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary

Main Entry: **witch hunt**

Function: **noun**

1: a searching out for persecution of persons accused of witchcraft
2: the searching out and deliberate harassment of those (as political opponents) with unpopular views

**Look up** the definition of witch hunt in other dictionaries, encyclopedias, and resources. The term is now applied to other periods in our history as well as to characterize present day events that might never make it into the history books. If someone were to say: “The board of directors of the company in essence began a witch hunt among their employees,” what would that mean?

Arthur Miller wrote *The Crucible* during and in response to the “McCarthy era” in the early 1950’s.

World War II had ended in 1945, and though the Soviet Union had been an Ally against Germany and Japan, Americans began to perceive the threat posed by the Soviet Union’s ruthless leader, Joseph Stalin, as well as their possession of nuclear technology. Many countries in Europe and Africa, as well as China, came under the Communist form of government which created conditions completely opposite of the freedoms that Americans prized.

Senator Joseph McCarthy put the Congressional investigations of the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) into overdrive with his well-publicized and broad-ranging accusations of Communist sympathizers, whom he claimed planned to overthrow the American government. Though eventually McCarthy was censured by the Senate for his extreme behavior, the HUAC hearings plunged America into a time of extreme paranoia and repression that threatened the very freedoms they professed to protect.
Answer the following:
Many people called the hearings of the House Un-American Committee that went on at that time a “witch hunt.” Why?
What’s the difference between an investigation and a hunt?
Can you think of other instances in history in which a government or group of people conducted a “witch hunt”?

List:
What conditions have to exist for a witch hunt to happen?
What has to happen to spark it?
What has to happen to fuel it?
What has to happen to stop it?

Imagine a scenario with partners.

Detail the circumstances under which a witch-hunt could happen at your school…
What are they hunting for?
What are they afraid of?
Who would be part of the “court”?
What insignificant activities or statements might suddenly become proof of guilt?
How would it be stopped?

Compare the following characteristics and find out more about each one.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salem Witch Trials</th>
<th>McCarthy/ HUAC Trials</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear of the Devil</td>
<td>Fear of Communism (Red Scare)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Need for unity (Early America’s difficult conditions)</td>
<td>Need for unity (true threats posed by Soviet Union)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arrests for questioning</td>
<td>Subpoenas to Congressional hearings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saved from hanging for confessing</td>
<td>Saved from prison and blacklist for confessing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Call to accuse others</td>
<td>Call to accuse others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False accusations</td>
<td>False accusations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Created a community panic</td>
<td>Created a nationwide panic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judges’ assumption of guilt before questioning</td>
<td>Chairman’s assumption of guilt before hearings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelated factors used as evidence</td>
<td>Unrelated factors used as evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Began with outcasts and poor</td>
<td>Began with regular citizens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressed to church members</td>
<td>Progressed to members of the State department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Progressed to the Governor’s wife</td>
<td>Progressed to the US Army and the Sec. of Army</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destroyed good names and lives</td>
<td>Destroyed reputations and lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 people hanged</td>
<td>Over three hundred on the official blacklist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authorities finally recognized the unbridled abuse of justice (Governor Phips disbanded the Salem Court and released those in jail awaiting execution)</td>
<td>Authorities finally recognized the unbridled abuse of justice (The President, Congress and the Supreme Court censured McCarthy and committee tactics; overturned many cases)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Web Quests

1. Take a trip through the hysteria of Salem. What happens if you are accused? Do you have a choice? Keep reading and clicking until you get to EXPERIENCE THE TRIALS. Find out what a witch cake was. 

   http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/97/salem

2. Take a look at the real thing. Museums and Historical Archives have scanned the actual court documents. Read transcripts of the examinations and trials and the descriptions of the girls (and women by the end) interrupting the procedure. Original petitions, trials, and death warrants are also included. Find documents and transcriptions for two of the characters in the play. Find at least one crazy sequence when the girls are having fits in court. 

   http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/

3. Hunt around the towns listed under the 1692 Sites Tour section and find the Rev. John Hale house, the Rebecca Nurse house, and the John Proctor house. 

   http://www.salemwitchmuseum.com/index.shtml

4. Find out the story of Mary Easty and read her letter. 

   http://school.discovery.com/schooladventures/salemwitchtrials

5. Check the biographies. What two participants later apologized for their part in the Salem witch trials? 

   http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/salem.htm

6. Look at the names of some of the people on the House of Un-American Activities Committee blacklist. Do you recognize any of them? Pick one name and find out what happened to them after they were blacklisted. Look up additional biographies to find out more about their work. 

   http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAmccarthyism.htm

7. Find out who Arthur Miller’s daughter married and when. What’s the coincidence? 

8. The TOWN of Salem was miles away from the VILLAGE of Salem where the trials actually took place. The town kept its name and is now a city. The village changed its name in an attempt to leave the past behind. Find out the current name of the REAL Salem. 

9. What famous author is rumored to have added a “w” to his name to separate himself from a great-grandfather involved in the Salem Witch Trials?
RESOURCES for teachers

The Witch Trials

The top site for original documents and transcriptions – [http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/](http://etext.virginia.edu/salem/witchcraft/)


The city of Salem’s info on the trials and tourist sites – [http://www.salemweb.com/witches.htm](http://www.salemweb.com/witches.htm)


McCarthy Era

Comprehensive and succinct – [http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAmccarthyism.htm](http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/USAmccarthyism.htm)

Web-sites chronicling 20th century and contemporary witch-hunts around the world –


Arthur Miller

An enlightening essay written by Arthur Miller around the time of the release of the 1996 movie of The Crucible, over forty years after he had written the play – [http://the_english_dept.tripod.com/miller.html](http://the_english_dept.tripod.com/miller.html)


Books- All four were used as references for this guidebook.

A Delusion of Satan: The Full Story of the Salem Witch Trials by Frances Hill
Arthur Miller: A Playwright’s Life and Work by Enoch Brater
Conversations with Arthur Miller edited by Matthew C. Roudané
McCarthyism: The Great American Red Scare by Albert Freid
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615-687-4288