NYU Steinhardt
Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development

MUSIC AND PERFORMING ARTS PROFESSIONS

PROGRAM IN EDUCATIONAL THEATRE
Presents

Teacher’s Resource Guide

THE CRUCIBLE
by Arthur Miller
Dear Teacher:

Welcome to Educational Theatre at NYU. Our award-winning program is dedicated to developing the next generation of theatre artists and educators for careers in schools, cultural institutions, and various community settings. We have a long and established track record of producing the most innovative theatre educators in New York State and beyond.

Our undergraduate, masters and doctoral students develop their artistic praxis in traditional and non-traditional performance spaces, and they learn how to apply their craft in educational and outreach sites. Students study with notable theatre educators from New York and the world. They learn about the transformative power of theatre, and how to implement and evaluate dynamic theatre arts programs.

At NYU Steinhardt's Educational Theatre program, you have access to:

- Greenwich Village and New York City, the cultural capital of the world
- Carefully supervised teaching placements and internships in New York's finest schools and cultural institutions
- study abroad programs with the world's greatest innovators
- numerous opportunities to develop your skills in such core areas as drama education, theatre for young audiences, play production, and applied theatre
- an internationally renowned and dedicated faculty
- a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in theatre art and pedagogy
- a richly diverse and multicultural community committed to social justice

All of these opportunities take full advantage of a warm and collegial Department of Music and Performing Arts Professions that promotes the development of a grounded aesthetic and permits program electives in numerous disciplines across the University, including drama therapy, musical theatre, and performance studies.

To speak to us personally, or to arrange a visit, please contact our office at ed.theatre@nyu.edu or 212 998 5868.

David Montgomery, PhD
Director
Program in Educational Theatre
Director’s Note

This year celebrates the 60th anniversary of the first Broadway production of legendary American playwright Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*. Written in 1953 during a period of great upheaval in American society, a post World War Two era where fear of communist leanings was palpable, the play examines a world gone quite mad as accusation and innuendo govern human behavior.

Miller set *The Crucible* in Massachusetts during the period of the Salem witchcraft trials of 1692. This locale evocatively captures a zealous judiciary determined to identify and punish the evil-doers while an acquiescent citizenry points the finger in desperate attempts to deflect attention. Scapegoating becomes a major theme of the play but despite this stifling climate there are a few rare individuals like the Proctors and Reverend Hale who speak up for social justice.

Our talented actors, mostly majors in the NYU Educational Theatre program, have been exploring the contemporary parallels, especially those issues related to civil rights’ infringements. We have discussed the Patriot Act, studied the House on Un-American Activities commission, reviewed the trial of Ethel and Julius Rosenberg, and the ever increasing rise of bullying and mob mentality.

Just recently I was working at Sing Sing prison, ironically the same site where the Rosenbergs were executed, studying American drama with 15 inmates. These men wrote modern day scenes where aspects of *The Crucible* were resonate with everyday life. The content focused on harassment in the workplace, domestic violence, the role of government in private life, and peer group pressure. We discovered that the play teaches us the maxim, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

I am sure you will find that our production holds considerable appeal as it analyzes the human condition. I hope your enjoy the work, and I look forward to hearing your responses.

Philip Taylor
pt15@nyu.edu
Dear Teacher:

We have been working for many weeks to prepare this resource guide for you and we hope that you find it useful when helping your students learn from our production of *The Crucible* either before or after seeing the show.

*The Crucible* is a play about a young farmer, his wife, and a young servant-girl who maliciously causes the wife’s arrest for witchcraft. The farmer brings the girl to court to admit the lie—and it is here that the monstrous course of bigotry and deceit is terrifyingly depicted. The farmer, instead of saving his wife, finds himself also accused of witchcraft and ultimately condemned along with a host of others. The mob mentality and witch-hunt at the heart of the play will resonate with students, either from their own experiences or those which they have encountered in school, with friends, or in literature, film, and television.

The main concept behind this guide is a series of historical overviews which have been purposefully prepared to be used as copy masters for handouts for your students if you so choose. The historical information is intended to provide basic and interesting information for the students—some of which they will already be aware of from their history classes and/or life experiences. These documents are intended to serve as cursory overviews and if you feel it appropriate, we encourage students to do a follow-up research project on one of the related topics in our post-show activities.

Following the historical overviews are a series of pre- and post-show activities which utilize the themes and historical information presented in the play or in the documents included here. We hope that you will review these activities and consider using the pre-show activities in your classroom before you attend the performance. It is not necessary to complete these activities in order to understand the work, but the more information the students have before they see the show, the richer their experience will be at the performance.

Each individual activity concludes with a series of reflective discussion questions which will help the students to process their experiences as well as allow them to demonstrate achievement towards the New York State Learning Standards for the Arts.

Please pay particular attention to the Theatre Etiquette piece on page 7 and review this information with your students before attending the performance.

Thank you for bringing your students to our production and we hope that you will consider coming again in the future.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Jones
Program Administrator
NYU Steinhardt
Program in Educational Theatre
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New York State Learning Standards for the Arts
Excerpted from:
Learning Standards for the Arts
New York State Education Department, April 1996

Available online: www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/arts.html

STANDARD 1: Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts
Students will actively engage in the processes that constitute creation and performance in the arts (dance, music, theatre, and visual arts) and participate in various roles in the arts.

STANDARD 2: Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources
Students will be knowledgeable about and make use of the materials and resources available for participation in the arts in various roles.

STANDARD 3: Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art
Students will respond critically to a variety of works in the arts, connecting the individual work to other works and to other aspects of human endeavor and thought.

STANDARD 4: Understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of the Arts
Students will develop an understanding of the personal and cultural forces that shape artistic communication and how the arts in turn shape the diverse cultures of past and present society.

Theatre
Key Ideas

1: Creating, Performing, and Participating in the Arts
Students will create and perform theatre pieces as well as improvisational drama. They will understand and use the basic elements of theatre in their characterizations, improvisations, and play writing. Students will engage in individual and group theatrical and theatre-related tasks, and will describe the various roles and means of creating, performing, and producing theatre.

2: Knowing and Using Arts Materials and Resources
Students will know the basic tools, media, and techniques involved in theatrical production. Students will locate and use school, community, and professional resources for theatre experiences. Students will understand the job opportunities available in all aspects of theatre.

3: Responding to and Analyzing Works of Art
Students will reflect on, interpret, and evaluate plays and theatrical performances, both live and recorded, using the language of dramatic criticism. Students will analyze the meaning and role of theatre in society. Students will identify ways in which drama/theatre connects to film.

4: Understanding the Cultural Dimensions and Contributions of the Arts
Students will gain knowledge about past and present cultures as expressed through theatre. They will interpret how theatre reflects the beliefs, issues, and events of societies past and present.
Summary

Winner of the 1953 Tony Award for Best Play, this exciting drama about the Puritan purge of witchcraft in old Salem is both a gripping historical play and a timely parable of our contemporary society.

The story focuses on a young farmer, his wife, and a young servant-girl who maliciously causes the wife's arrest for witchcraft. The farmer brings the girl to court to admit the lie—and it is here that the monstrous course of bigotry and deceit is terrifyingly depicted. The farmer, instead of saving his wife, finds himself also accused of witchcraft and ultimately condemned along with a host of others.

Theatre Etiquette

It is essential that students understand that the experience of going to the theatre requires a certain kind of interaction between audience members and the cast of a show. In order to present a successful show, we ask that all audience members:

1) Be respectful to the performers by not talking to others during the show.
2) Stay seated during the performance.
3) Turn off all cell phones.
4) Refrain from eating and drinking in the theatre.
5) Remember that photography and video are not allowed in the theatre.
6) Feel free to laugh, cry, and applaud when appropriate.
7) Enjoy the show!
Character Descriptions  Written by the Actors Who Portray Them

**Ezekiel Cheever** is a clerk of the court that serves under the wishes of Deputy Governor Danforth. Though he does enjoy a drink from his flask from time to time, he always does his duties under the law.

**Giles Corey** is 83 years old and has farmed his entire life. He’s cantankerous and a little bit deaf, but he tries to be hard-working and honest. He has three grown sons, and is currently married to his third wife, Martha. Giles has spent a lot of time in court suing various people for large or small slights.

**Martha Corey** is known for her piety within the community. Martha does not support the witch trials, and so she is accused of being a witch. Her husband unknowingly accused her of witchcraft by stating that Martha seemed to be too invested in her books. She is very honest during the trials, but her life is still taken away.

**Deputy Governor Danforth** is a man of laws. He hasn’t risen to his position in the government by following a skewed or muddled set of principles. He devotes himself to, interprets, and enforces the law. He has never doubted his own judgment for he speaks on behalf of the state, who speaks on behalf of the king, who speaks on behalf of God. It is not often that the Deputy Governor is in unfamiliar waters or in a position where his incredible mastery of language abandons him. But then again, it is not often witches have invaded God’s peaceful people of Salem, Massachusetts.

**Sarah Good** is the town’s ill-tempered, grimy, homeless woman that is accused of witchcraft. She came from a wealthy family but after her parents died, everything went downhill for Sarah because she did not become heir to the family’s belongings. She resorts to wandering around Salem, asking for charity from everyone.

**Reverend John Hale** is a man who is often pulled in many directions. He firmly believes in the almighty power of God, and his convictions give him a sense of superiority to others around him. He can become confused and afraid, however, when the behavior of others cause him to question his beliefs and duties to God.

**Judge Hathorne** is one of the judges and Danforth’s right hand. He strongly believes in the law and the system.

**Mercy Lewis** is 18 years old and has no parents; they died as a result of an Indian attack, and she works as the Putnam’s maid to support herself. She hates feeling like a drudge, and loves when life gives her a chance to ignore her troubles. She is devoted to Abigail Williams; they have known each other since their parents died.

**Francis Nurse** is the 75-year-old candlestick maker of Salem. He and his wife, Rebecca, are devout members of the church until Reverend Parris comes into town. A dear friend of Giles Corey and John Proctor, he becomes outraged when Rebecca and his friends’ wives become accused of witchcraft and begins to question the church and the court’s authority.

**Rebecca Nurse** is a woman that has achieved many great charities throughout her life span, and she thanks God for allowing her to have the ability to do so. Her faith is so strong that she would rather die than succumbing to the idea that witches are living within Salem.
Betty Parris is the ten-year-old daughter of Reverend Parris and Abigail’s cousin. Betty has become entranced by Abigail’s charm and will do whatever she says, even if it means dancing in the woods. However, when Parris catches Betty dancing in the woods, she faints and is unable to wake up. Is Betty bewitched?

Reverend Samuel Parris, the minister of Salem churches, becomes panicked when his home is thought to be the center of witchcraft after his niece Abigail, daughter Betty, and slave Tituba are discovered dancing in the woods. Hated by many in the town for his greedy attitude, Parris feels he is not rightfully respected or compensated by the people of Salem, especially from John Proctor, bringing many to question his true intentions in disproving witchcraft.

Elizabeth Proctor is the wife of John Proctor. She shares with John a similarly strict adherence to justice and moral principles. She is a woman who has great confidence in her own morality, even when this principle conflicts with strict Christian doctrine. Although she is regarded as a woman of unimpeachable honesty, it is this reputation that causes her husband to be condemned when she lies about his affair with Abigail, thinking it will save him. However, Elizabeth can be a cold and demanding woman, whose chilly demeanor may have driven her husband to adultery.

John Proctor is a man who has a fierce darkness and filled with passion, both good and evil; trapped in a culture that he has come to see as nothing but a cage. It is as if both his defeats and victories tear at his heart pulling in opposite directions. Yet a part of him is acutely sensible and clear. It is this earnest sense of morality he has come to find that has no place in the culture in which he resides.

Ann Putnam is the wife of Thomas Putnam. She suspects that there is some paranormal reason for the stillborn deaths of seven of her children and blames Rebecca Nurse.

Thomas Putnam is a well-known and prosperous landowner. He and his wife Ann take advantage of the fragile state of Salem and fully support the witch hunt in order to gain more land through others' misfortunes. He accuses his neighbors of witchcraft so he can buy their land.

Susanna Walcott dances in the forest to try to conjure of spirits. This was supposed to be kept a secret, but they are caught by Mr. Parris and now they have to assure that they will not be accused of being witches. Susanna has become an expert at distracting the community’s attention away from the girls and forcing it onto innocent people.

Mary Warren is 18 years old and has been a servant for the Proctor's for about eight months. Mr. Proctor forces Mary to confess that the girls made up the stories up the witches. But Mary soon renounces her confession as she is put under extreme pressure by the whole court and Abigail Williams.

Tituba is Reverend Parris’ Negro slave, in her fifties and knows how to talk with the dead. She loves Betty but secretly hates Reverend Parris. She misses Barbados and wishes to go back.

Abigail Williams is 17 years old, and though she may be young, she knows how to stir up drama in the town of Salem. Niece to Reverend Parris, Abigail leads the girls of the town to cry witchcraft, in the hopes of reuniting with her secret lover, John Proctor. Malicious and sneaky, Abigail is able to craft together a plan that has the whole town of Salem up in arms.

Some descriptions have been augmented or replaced with information from http://www.gradesaver.com/the-crucible/study-guide/character-list/
Witchcraft in Salem

**CHRONOLOGY**

1689  
Samuel Parris arrives in Salem Village and is ordained as minister of the newly formed Salem Church.

1692, January  
Young girls in Parris’ household begin acting strangely.

February  
Parris’ servants bake witch cake to heal the girls. Other girls in community become involved, and first charges of witchcraft are made. Aggressive interrogations begin.

March  
Three women are sent to prison and others are charged. Afflictions prompt day of prayer. Reverend Deodat Lawson and Parris deliver sermons that stir up the populace. Martha Corey, Rebecca Nurse, and Sarah Good’s four-year-old daughter are examined and sent to prison.

April  
John and Elizabeth Proctor, Giles Corey, and George Burroughs are among the twenty-three more people jailed.

May  
Governor William Phips appoints a panel of judges to hear cases as arrests mount.

June  
Bridget Bishop is the first one hanged. A group of ministers in Boston convey their alarm to the governor. Five more persons are sentenced to death.

July  
Rebecca Nurse is among those hanged on Gallows Hill.

August  
John Proctor is among those brought to trial and executed.

September  
Giles Corey is pressed to death and Martha, his wife, is among the last people, a group of eight, hanged.

October  
The governor forbids any more arrests and dissolves the witchcraft court, but another is appointed and some trials go on.

1693, May  
The governor orders the release of all accused witches upon payment of their fees.

1697, January  
Fast Day is held in Massachusetts in penance for witch trials. Judge Samuel Sewall apologizes. Jurors apologize.

1706  
Ann Putnam, the youngest accuser, apologizes.

1711  
Disgrace is officially removed from those accused, and compensation is ordered.
HISTORICAL FIGURES

Those Executed:

June 10, 1692  Bridget Bishop
July 19, 1692  Sarah Good, Sarah Wildes, Elizabeth How, Susanna Martin, Rebecca Nurse
August 19, 1692  George Burroughs, John Proctor, George Jacobs, John Willard, Martha Carrier
September 19, 1692  Giles Corey
September 22, 1692  Martha Corey, Mary Esty, Alice Parker, Ann Pudeator, Margaret Scott, Wilmont Reed, Samuel Warwell, Mary Parker

Panel of Judges:

William Stoughton, Chief Justice
Samuel Sewall, John Hathorne, Jonathan Corwin, Bartholomew Sergeant

Chief Accusers:

Elizabeth Parris, Abigail Williams, Ann Putnam and her daughter, also named Ann, Mercy Lewis, Thomas Putnam, Mary Walcott, Mary Warren, Elizabeth Hubbard, Tituba and John Indian

Other Supporters of the Proceedings:

The Reverend Samuel Parris, Deodat Lawson, John Hale, and Cotton Mather

Chief Critics of the Proceedings:

Thomas Brattle, Francis Nurse, Robert Calef, and the Reverends Increase Mather and Samuel Willard

From Understanding the Crucible: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents by Johnson and Jonson (pp. 63 – 65)
Witch-Hunts in the 1950s

THE TARGETS OF THE WITCH-HUNT

In considering the parallels drawn between the 1950s and Salem in 1692, it is important to realize that many citizens were put in the same class with Communists: to have once been a member of the Communist Party was considered just as bad as being a member unless, as with the Salem witch-hunts, one confessed, was repentant, and named others. It is instructive to remember that membership in the Communist Party was a perfectly legal act at the time. As time went on, however, other political behavior was classed as just as despicable as membership in the Communist Party: to have been associated with Franklin Roosevelt, to be a radical member of the Democratic Party, to speak too strongly about civil liberties, to be involved in any peace movement, to criticize elected officials or big business, to feel too sorry for the poor, to mention communism in any objective way in teaching students about systems of government, or to be seen in the company of people to be considered trouble makers.

Similarly, the phrase “conspiring to overthrow the U.S. government” was broadly interpreted. This did not mean only plotting to turn the United States over to the Russians; some legislators even interpreted this to mean overthrowing in fair and honest elections the politicians then in the U.S. government. It was interpreted to mean working to change the way that business in America treated its workers, or making the tax system more equitable, or providing social services, or creating a minimum wage, or opening up higher education without regard to economic status, social status, race, or gender. Many people regarded capitalism as it was enjoyed by big business as a sacred, patriotic system that was the American way. To opine that it needed some alteration was to advocate the overthrow of America.

ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON UN-AMERICAN ACTIVITIES

Official investigations into communism in the United States go back to Congress’s establishment in 1938, well before American involvement in World War II, of the House Committee on Un-American Activities, known as HUAC. Ostensibly, to be legal, these hearings could be held only in preparation for formulating legislation. The committee, led by Texas conservative Martin Dies, contended that Roosevelt and New Deal supporters were little more than tools of Communists.

Dies and his could not have functioned without the widespread support they enjoyed throughout the country. There was little question that the great majority of Americans, both those on the right and on the left, felt uncomfortable with what
they perceived as the growing threat of international communism’s possible impact on the United States. It is also true that a few Americans were already going to the extreme in opposing communism. After 1939, unhappiness with the Communist Party in America skyrocketed on both the political right and left, not only because of the activity of the Dies committee but because of the actions of the Soviet Union in signing a nonaggression pact with Hitler and because it started on its own path of expansion, overrunning parts of Poland, Finland, and Romania.

In 1940, the Smith Act was passed, requiring aliens to register with the government, but also allowing the government to bring to trial anyone perceived as advocating the violent overthrow of the government, a charge that could be (and was) easily brought against many non-Communists, including union organizers.

In 1947, Richard M. Nixon was responsible for the revitalization of the old Dies HUAC, which had been operating in disrepute under the leadership of Mississippi representative John Rankin, Martin Dies’ successor. Probably because of its political potential, the primary target of the committee was Hollywood and ten writers who were known to be Communists or had been Communists. These men refused to plead the Fifth Amendment; that is, they refused what then seemed a sure way out of trouble with the committee: all they had to do was to say that they refused to testify on the grounds that it might incriminate them. This they would not do even though they were led to believe that doing so would keep them out of jail. Instead, they turned to the First Amendment, which guaranteed freedom of speech. All ten were cited for contempt of Congress, many of them were jailed, and all were blacklisted by Hollywood, unable to work again.

In June 1947, Republicans passed the Taft-Hartley Act which made it illegal for union officials to be members of the Communist Party. That same year, President Truman introduced Executive Order 9835 which forbid anyone judged to be “subversive” from working at a government job. Truman would later regret putting this in place as it became a nightmare in the hands of FBI director Hoover and empowered a Republican senator, Joseph McCarthy, to turn the power the order gave him against the president himself, calling Truman subversive and the years of Roosevelt’s and Truman’s administrations “twenty years of treason.”

Young people first learned of the far-reaching hand of HUAC and the loyalty boards when teachers disappeared from the schools they were attending. In most cases, they were fired for trying to give their students some objective idea of what this ideology called communism was. To speak of communism in a way that was intellectual rather than purely emotional was grounds for immediate firing.
Comparison: 1692 and the 1950s

- Both sets of “trials” occurred outside the bounds of legal practice. The Salem witch trials were first conducted at extralegal hearings. Citizens were arrested solely on the accusations of others. It was not mandatory to follow legal rules of evidence. Similarly, the congressional hearings were not court trials. Yet citizens were hauled before Congress on the secret accusations of others. Furthermore, the accused had none of the legal rights expected in a regular trials (like being able to confront their accusers), while the committee had the powers of subpoena and investigation usually given to courts.

- In both periods, people were forced to appear and defend themselves in extralegal trials against charges based almost solely on two kinds of evidence: first, accusations that were patently unreliable and second, their associations. Accusations in Salem were made chiefly and at first by young women and girls who protected themselves from charges of witchcraft and lewdness by accusing others; later accusations were made by those who themselves had been accused and confessed to witchcraft in order to save themselves from the gallows. In the 1940s and 1950s, the charges were initially brought by ex-Communists who wanted to prove their “loyalty.” In both cases, people were accused on the basis of their associations. In Salem, these often had to do with familial and clan connections. In 1952, they had to do with one’s friends and causes.

- At the root of both trials were ulterior motives having little to do with witchcraft or communism. In Salem of 1692, the base motives seem to have been feuds, vengeance, and land grabs. In Washington in 1952, the base motives seem to have been Republican resentment of Democratic presidencies and vote grabs.

- In both cases, the accused were guilty until proven innocent, rather than the other way around. Furthermore, the trials had as a basic assumption the idea that the accused were naturally liars and that any arguments or evidence they accused could muster in their own defense were faked. The arguments went as follows: witches can distort reality and manufacture evidence in their defense, and Communists naturally lie and put up a false front in society to further their cause. An accused man claims that he is a churchgoer to the committee; the committee response is that Communists deliberately put up a false front by going to church in order to throw the government off and conceal their true identities.

- Confession and the naming of names were required in both cases in order to save oneself. Just as in the witchcraft trials, the committee required that those accused confess their past political activity, make a grand show of penitence, and name others who were Communists.

From Understanding the Crucible: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents by Johnson and Johnson (pp. 140 – 141)
The following excerpts are from a speech Miller delivered in 1999 discussing Cold War paranoia in McCarthyist America which led to many artists having their loyalty questioned, drawing parallels to the Salem Witch Trials.

It would probably never have occurred to me to write a play about the Salem witch trials of 1692 had I not seen some astonishing correspondences with the calamity of the America of the late Forties and early Fifties. There were other enticements for me in the Salem period, however; most especially the chance it afforded me to write in what was for me a practically new language, on that would require new muscles.

I was never a scholar or an historian, of course; my basic need was somehow to respond to a phenomenon which, with only small exaggeration, one could say was paralyzing a whole generation and in an amazingly short time was drying up the habits of trust and toleration in public discourse. I refer, or course, to the anticommmunist rage that threatened to reach hysterical proportions and sometimes did. I can’t remember anyone calling it an ideological war, but I think now that that is what it amounted to. Looking back at the period, I suppose we very rapidly passed over anything like a discussion or debate and into something quite different, a hunt not alone for subversive people but ideas and even a suspect language. The object, a shock at the time, was to destroy the least credibly of any and all ideas associated with socialism and communism, whose proponents had to be either knowing or unwitting agents of Soviet subversion. An ideological war is like guerilla war, since the enemy is first of all an idea whose proponents are not in uniform but are disguised as ordinary citizens, a situation that can scare a lot of people to death.
“Who lost China!” almost instantly became the Republican mantra. Who were the traitors inside the Democratic administrations, going back to Roosevelt, that had sold out our favorite Chinese, Chiang Kai-shek? This, I think, was the first notable injection of the idea of treason and foreign agents into domestic political discourse. To me the simplicity of it all was breathtaking. There had to be left-wing traitors in government, otherwise how could the Chinese—who everyone knew, loved Americans more than anybody—have turned against the pro-American Chiang Kai-shek in favor of a Soviet agent like Mao Tse-tung?

All I knew about China in 1949 was what I read by Edgar Snow and Jack Belden and Teddy White and other American reporters. What it amounted to was that the Nationalist regime was feudal and thoroughly corrupt and that the Reds were basically a miserably exploited peasantry that at long last had risen up and thrown their exploiters into the sea. I thought it was a great idea. In any event, the idea of our “losing” China seemed the equivalent of a flea losing an elephant. Nevertheless, there was a growing uproar in and out of Congress. One read that the Chin Lobby, a wealthy support group backing Chiang Kai-shek’s hopes to return to Beijing from Taiwan, was reportedly paying a lot of the bills ad that Senator McCarthy was one of their most effective champions. The partisan political manipulation of a real issue was so patent that President Truman could dismiss the Republican scare as a “red herring.” But it is an indication of its impact on the public mind that he soon had to retreat and institute a loyalty board of his own to investigate the allegiance of government employees.

To call the ensuing atmosphere paranoid is not to say that there was nothing real in the American-Soviet standoff. To be sure, I am far more willing that I was then, due to some experiences of my own with both sides, to credit both the American and Soviet leadership with enough ignorance of each other to have ignited a third world war. But there was something of the inauthentic, the spurious, and the invented in the conflict, if only because of the swiftness with which all values were being forced in a matter of months to literally reverse themselves.

Death of a Salesman opened in February of 1949 and was hailed by nearly every newspaper and magazine; parenthetically, I should add that two exceptions come to mind, one Marxist, the other ex-Marxist. The Marxist was the Daily Worker, which found the play defeatist and lacking a militant protest; the ex-Marxist, Mary McCarthy, who seemed outraged by the idea of elevating it to the status of tragedy and just hated it in general, particularly, I thought, because it was so popular. Real tragedy would have been to close in two weeks. Anyway, several movie studios wanted it, and it was finally Columbia Pictures that bought it and engaged a star, Frederic March, to play Willy.

In something like two years or less, as I recall, with the picture finished, I was asked by a terrified Columbia to sign an anti-communist declaration in order to
ward off picket lines which apparently the American Legion was threatening to throw across the entrances of theatre showing the film. In the numerous phone calls that followed, the air of terror was heavy. It was the first intimation of what would soon follow. O declined to make any such statements, which, frankly, I found demeaning; what right had any organization to demand anyone’s pledge of loyalty? I was sure the whole thing would soon go away, it was just too outrageous.

But instead of disappearing, the studio, it now developed, had actually made another film, a short which was to shown with Salesman. This was called the Life of a Salesman and consisted of several lectures by City College School of Business professors. What they boiled down to was that selling was basically a joy, one of the most gratifying and useful of professions, and that Willy was simply a nut. Never in show business history has a studio spent so much good money to prove that its feature film was pointless. I threatened to sue (on what basis I had no idea), but of course the short could not be shown lest it bore the audience blind. But in less than two years Death of a Salesman had gone from a masterpiece to a pariah that was basically fraudulent.

In 1948, ’49, ’50, ’51, I had the sensation of being trapped inside a perverse work of art, one of those Escher constructs in which it is impossible to know whether a stairway is going up or down. Practically everyone I knew, all survivors of the Great Depression of course as well as World War II, was somewhere within the conventions of the political left of center; one or two were Communist Party members, some were sort of fellow travelers, as I suppose I was, and most had had one or another brush with Marxist ideas or organizations. I have never been able to believe in the reality of these people being actual or putative traitors any more than I could be, yet others like them were being fired from teaching or other jobs in government or large corporations. The unreality of it never left me. We were living in an art form, a metaphor that had no long history but, incredibly enough, suddenly gripped the country. So I suppose that in one sense, The Crucible was an attempt to make life real again, palpable and structured—a work of art created in order to interpret an anterior work of art that was called reality but was not.

Again—it was the very swiftness of the change that lent it this unreality. Only three or four years earlier an American movie audience, on seeing a newsreel of—let’s say—a Russian soldier or even Stalin saluting the Red Army, would have applauded, for that army had taken the brunt of the Nazi onslaught, as most people were aware. Now they would have looked on with fear or at least bewilderment, for the Russians had become the enemy of mankind, a menace to all that was good. It was the Germans who, with amazing rapidity, were turning good. Could this be real? And how to mentally deal with, for example, American authorities removing from German schoolbooks all mention of the Hitler decade?
My subpoena before the House committee came some four years after *The Crucible* was produced, but I had been shot at more than once as a result of that play. Shortly after its production, the renewal of my outdated passport had been denied when I applied in order to go to Belgium, at the invitation of the Belgo-American Association, to attend the first European performance of the play. The stated grounds for confiscating my passport were that my presence abroad was not in the best interests of the United States. A rather farcical situation soon developed—and I should say that farce was always a step away from the tragedies of the period. Since the play was the first and practically only artistic evidence Europe had of resistance to what was considered a fascistic McCarthyism, the applause at the final curtain was intense and insistent, and since the newspapers had announced that I had accepted the invitation to be present, there were calls for the author. These went on and on until the American ambassador felt compelled to stand and take a bow. A species of insanity was spreading everywhere. Here was the ambassador, an officer of the State Department, acknowledging the applause for someone deemed by that department too dangerous to be present. In must surely have struck some of the audience as strange, however, that an author would be wearing a wide diplomatic sash diagonally across his chest; and the next morning’s papers had loads of fun with the scene, which, of course, could hardly have advanced the best interests of the United States.

By 1956, when HUAC subpoenaed me, the tide was going out, and the committee was finding it difficult to make the front pages anymore. However, the news of my forthcoming marriage to Marilyn Monroe was too tempting to pass up. That it had some connections with my being subpoenaed was confirmed when Chairman Walter of HUAC sent word to my lawyer that he would be inclined to cancel my hearing altogether if Miss Monroe would consent to have a picture taken with him. The offer having been declined, the good chairman, as my hearing came to an end, proceeded to entreat me to write less tragically of our country. This lecture cost me some $40,000 in lawyer’s fees, a year’s suspended sentence for contempt of Congress, and a five-hundred-dollar fine. Not to mention about a year of inanition in my creative life.

Paranoia breeds paranoia, of course, but below paranoia lies a bristling, unwelcome truth, a truth so repugnant as to produce fantasies of persecution in order to conceal its existence. For example, the unwelcome truth denied by the Right was that the Hollywood writers accused of subversion were not a menace to the country or even the bearers of meaningful change. They wrote not propaganda but entertainment, some of it a mildly liberal cast, to be sure, but most of it mindless; or when it was political, as with Preston Sturges or Frank Capra, entirely un-Marxist. In any real assessment, the worst they could do was contribute some money to Party coffers. But most Hollywood writers were only occasionally employed, and one doubted that their contributions could have made any difference to a party so completely disregarded by the American public and, in the bargain, so thoroughly impregnated by the FBI. Yet they had to be portrayed as an imminent danger to the republic.
Pre-Show Activity: The Crucible Jigsaw

While this play is not intended to be historically accurate, many of the characters and the details of the trials are indeed based in historical fact. As such, it will be helpful for students to be introduced to the historical facts such that they can begin to situate the ways in which the historical elements from 1692 resonated in the 1950s and continue to do so today.

For this activity, the teacher should reproduce “Witchcraft in Salem: Chronology,” “Witchcraft in Salem: Historical Figures,” “Witch-Hunts in the 1950s” and “Comparison: 1692 and the 1950s” (pages 10-14) for the students.

Divide the class into four teams. Each team will get one document, “Witchcraft in Salem: Chronology,” “Witchcraft in Salem: Historical Figures,” “Witch-Hunts in the 1950s” or “Comparison: 1692 and the 1950s.” As a team, they will be responsible for reading the document and answering the questions that follow. As a team, they will be come up with a way to present the information to the rest of the class in their own words. Each group will then take turns teaching the rest of the class about their assigned reading.

These questions should include:
Where did this take place?
Who was involved?
When did this happen?
What happened?

Rather than reading from the document, presenting the information in their own words will allow students the opportunity to demonstrate comprehension of the text as well as reflect meaningful conversations about the subject matter that they had within their teams.

After each group has shared, use the discussion questions at right to facilitate a discussion about the activity. The questions have been designed to reflect on the activity, connect the experience to the students’ lives, and to begin making predictions about the play.

Discussion Questions

1. Why might this information be important?
2. How do you expect to see this information presented in the play?
3. What questions do you have about the historical information?
4. What can we predict about the plot of the play The Crucible if this information is being provided for us?
Pre-Show Activity: *The Crucible*: Character Predictions

The characters in a play are utilized by the playwright to help tell the story. Their relationships, situations, conflicts, and desires propel the narrative forward.

For this activity, the teacher should reproduce the character descriptions on pages 8 and 9 of this guide. The sheets should be cut into strips so that one character description is on each strip of paper.

The students will work in groups of four; each group will receive four different characters to work with (duplicates between groups are fine, but each student within an individual group must have a different character). The students will be responsible for creating a short scene using the characters they were given. The scene can take place in any time or place and can involve any situation, provided that the scene is titled “The Crucible.”

The teacher may need to distribute the definitions that appear below. The scenes should clearly identify who the characters are and what their relationships to each other are (some of this will come from the descriptions, and some will be invented by the students).

Some questions to explore may include:
- Who is there?
- Who speaks?
- What activities are they doing?

After the students have had a few minutes to brainstorm and rehearse, ask for volunteers to show their scenes to the class.

The teacher should use the discussion questions at left in order to facilitate a reflective conversation about the activity. The questions have been designed to reflect on the activity in terms of content and performative aspects.

After viewing the full play, students should revisit their ideas about the characters and situations they explored in this activity and compare the two. What was the same? What was different or surprising?

**crucible:** 1. a vessel of a very refractory material (as porcelain) used for melting and calcining a substance that requires a high degree of heat; 2. a severe test; 3. a place or situation in which concentrated forces interact to cause or influence change or development

Pre-Show Activity: Dancing in the Woods

Like many good dramatic texts, this play opens after a significant event has already occurred: the girls were dancing in the woods. Depending on which character speaks, the details of why they were dancing and what else was going on may change, but fundamentally, it is this dancing that sets the action of the play in motion.

In this activity, the students will listen to evocative instrumental music that the teacher will play for them (I suggest selections from the “Twin Peaks” Season One Soundtrack, particularly “Audrey’s Dance,” “Dance of the Dream Man,” and “Love Theme,” which can easily be accessed on YouTube) and will engage in a round of “follow the leader.”

As space permits, students can either stand in a circle or make a line that can move around the room. The person to begin will move to the music as they see fit, and everyone else is to replicate their movement. Periodically (perhaps every 15-20 seconds), the teacher will call “Next!” signaling that the next person in the circle is now the leader, or if in a line, the front person will join the back of the line and the new head of the line will be the leader. This continues until everyone has had a turn to lead.

Following the movement, the students will reflect on the activity in a large group discussion using the questions at right.

Discussion Questions

1. What did you like about this activity?
2. What did it feel like to lead the group? How was this different from when you were a follower?
3. If someone walked into the room and didn’t know what we were doing, how might he or she react? What would he or she understand? What might he or she misinterpret?
4. When the play starts, we know that the girls have been dancing in the woods, behavior which is forbidden. How might the adults react? How might the girls defend their actions? What might happen as a result of their behavior?
Pre-Show Activity: Thematic Scenes

The themes present in *The Crucible* are universal, impacting various individuals and groups of people over time. Among them are intolerance, reputation, and empowerment. In this activity, students will have the opportunity to explore when these themes have appeared in their own lives and will share these experiences in creative ways.

**Pair Share**

Break students up into pairs and number the pairs 1, 2, or 3. Each pair that is given #1 will work with intolerance, #2, reputation, and #3, empowerment. The pairs will first brainstorm events in their lives that relate to that theme (positive or negative – encourage both) but keep in mind that they must be comfortable with the possibility of sharing these experiences with the class. After a short time, they will share their ideas with their partner.

**Evaluation and Selection**

The pairs will choose one experience that they will continue to work with. The pairs will be combined into groups of four where they can share their ideas (it doesn’t matter what theme they were initially working with). They will then evaluate their ideas and select one experience about which they will create a short scene.

**Planning and Preparation**

The students will devise a short scene that illuminates the experience that related to one of the themes. As a group, they can decide to change elements of the story in order to insure that they are meeting the scene criteria (refer to the criteria chart at left for group instructions).

**Presentation**

Each group presents their scene. The teacher should encourage students to use the audience response questions below when responding to each scene.

**Audience Response Questions**

- What happened in the scene?
- What theme was present?
- Have you experienced something like this in your own life?

**Reflection**

After each group has presented and all scenes have been debriefed, use the discussion questions at left to reflect on the activity as a whole and anticipate what the class will see when they attend the performance.

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**Discussion Questions**

1. What were the challenges of creating this scene?
2. How do you think a playwright overcomes these challenges when writing a play?
3. When we are confronted with these themes in our own lives, how do we respond? Why?
4. Based on this activity, what do you anticipate will happen in *The Crucible*? How might the characters deal with these themes? Why?

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**Scene Criteria**

1. Everyone must have an equal role
2. The roles and relationships must be clear
3. The theme should not be referred to by name, but the action of the scene should clearly relate to the theme.
Post-Show Activity: Response Letters

When watching this or any play, there is certain to be some disagreement among audience members about the events of the play and the reasons certain characters behaved the way they did. The purpose of this activity is to try to illuminate the spectrum of understanding that exists within the class.

At the end of *The Crucible*, John Proctor agrees to give an affidavit that he practiced witchcraft in order to free himself, but refuses to both name the names of his friends and associates as well as sign the document, which prevents him from having his death sentence revoked. At the same time, his wife Elizabeth is pregnant with their child, imprisoned, and also sentenced to death. Imagine that you are John Proctor and were given the opportunity to write a letter to your unborn child. What would you say? What would you want him or her to know about their father whom they will never meet?

Once the students have written their letters, ask them to get into small groups and read their letters to each other. Once they have all shared, use the first set of discussion questions at right to debrief the activity.

Post-Show Activity: Alternate Ending

As with any good dramatic text, *The Crucible* does not have a predictable outcome. The students should reflect on their understanding of the play and contemplate alternative outcomes.

Option A: Narrative or Dramatic Writing

Each student is asked to think about a possible alternative ending or extension to the play, and is given some time to write a narrative or short scene of their new ending.

Option B: Improvisational Acting

The class is broken into groups and each group is responsible for improvising (that is, making up a scene without a script) that resolves the play in a new and interesting way.

The students should share their work. For the narrative activity, small group sharing is best. For the improvisational options, they can show their scenes to the class. Use the second set of discussion questions at right to reflect on the activity.
Post-Show Activity: Hysteria and Witch-Hunts

By far the most persistent and frightening issue suggested by The Crucible is the mass hysteria or community terror that gives rise to modern-day witch hunts. Sometimes the differences between hunter and hunted are dramatically clear, as when people of one color hunt down and persecute people of another color. More often, distinctions between hunter and hunted are less dramatic, as when those of one religion or cultural or tribe or clan are driven by hysteria to hunt down those unlike themselves, whether it be Jews and Muslims hunting down one another in Israel or the various ethnic and political groups waging civil war and genocide in various regions of Central Africa (particularly in Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Darfur region in the west of Sudan) [Adapted from Johnson and Johnson, p. 205].

Distribute copies of the excerpts from Arthur Miller’s speech, “The Crucible in History.” Have students read the document in order to gain an understanding of the particular circumstances that led Miller to write this play. Discuss the text with students and expand upon it as follows:

Witch-hunts also still occur on smaller, more local scales, as they did in Salem and in the 1950s. What are some of these witch-hunts? Who are the individuals on the opposing sides? Who supports them and who opposes them?

Posters
Lead a class discussion about modern-day witch-hunts and generate a list. Have students select a topic for further research. The students should then use poster board or chart paper, magazines, newspapers, advertisements, internet sources, markers, tape, glue, etc. to create an informational poster. The posters should include detailed information and images about their selected topic. When complete, they should be shared with the rest of the class. The students should be encouraged to explain how their work related to The Crucible and how their research experience deepened their understanding of the play.

Post-Show Activity: Discussion Questions

Various elements of the plot of The Crucible pose powerful questions for the audience to consider. As such, the students may have a number of questions about the production (beyond those they addressed to the cast after seeing the show) and it may be worthwhile to allow them a space to talk about these lingering questions.

Some questions you might consider exploring are:

- What do you think Abigail’s life was like after the trials are over? Why?
- How do you think the girls feel about their actions? Why?
- How do you think the members of the judiciary feel about their participation in the trials? Why?
- What do you think happened to Reverend Parris after the trials? Why?
- Would any coldness on Elizabeth’s part justify John’s adultery? Why or why not?
- Ann Putnam, the younger, blamed her actions on the Devil’s deception. On what might other characters blame their behavior if they looked back?
- If you took the place of one of the characters in the play, would you behave the same way that he or she did or might you act differently? Why?
- What other plays, stories, movies, or television shows did this play remind you of? Why?
- What do you think we can learn from a play like The Crucible?
- Find a good definition of the word tragedy and make an argument: The Crucible is or is not a tragedy.
References


