

## Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*: The Burning Truth

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### INTRODUCTION

When I go to the theatre, I try to enter with no expectations but with many hopes. I hope to be entertained. I hope to be moved. Most of all I hope to learn. Perhaps I will learn some history or philosophy. Perhaps I will learn to see a different point of view. If it is good theatre or good art, I will undoubtedly learn something about myself.

Theatre has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. I was actually in a play years before I was an audience member. I played the White Rabbit in our fourth grade production of "The Trail of Alice in Wonderland." I spoke my lines and sang my song as directed by our music teacher, Mrs. Mott. I don't remember being aware of my fellow actors or of the play as a whole. My tasks as actor consumed my little fourth-grade mind. For the next few years, my experience in the world of theatre consisted only of attempts to make the nearest family member (usually my cousin Jennifer, who was the same age as me and an indiscriminant giggler) laugh. Then my parents took me to see a production of *Alice in Wonderland* at the Alley Theatre. I was entranced by the show. Somehow, an entire other existence – another world – had been created on that arena stage. This world was full of vibrant, three-dimensional characters who interacted with the world and each other. But more than that, it all had *meaning*. Through this thing called theatre, I was allowed to be a part of this world in a way that Saturday morning cartoons would never allow. I was there as the story was happening. I was a part of it. I could have reached out and touched Alice or the Caterpillar or even the White Rabbit. It was then that I first began to realize that theatre had power, though I did not yet understand the nature of that power.

My next venture into acting came in the ninth grade. Auditions for the school contest one-act play were being held. It was to be a production of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. It was after school, and my mother, who taught at the high school, suggested I try out. The memories of the Alley Theatre came flooding back, and I was hooked. I won a small role as "Snug the Joiner." At the first rehearsal we read through the play, and I thought, "Wow! What a cool story." Then Mrs. Tucker, the drama teacher and our director, began a discussion of what we wanted the audience to think and feel. This was something I had not imagined. I was not sure we really had that much power over our audience, so I asked, "We can make the audience think and feel?" Mrs. Tucker responded with vigor, telling of the universality of the themes in Shakespeare and how theatre was a collaborative art including playwright, performers, directors, designers, and finally, the audience. So *this* was the power that I felt at the production of *Alice in Wonderland*. That connection with the audience allowed for an exchange of thoughts and feelings. That much I now had clear in my mind, but I was still unaware of how all of

these theatre artists could use this connection to awaken their audiences to know their own minds, hearts, and souls.

During my senior year in high school, my grandmother took me to New York as a graduation present. It was 1988, and we had tickets to three shows. Two of them were brand new, and one was a Broadway classic. They were *A Chorus Line*, *Into the Woods*, and *Les Misérables*. All of these shows had a profound affect on my perception of theatre, but it was this last production, *Les Misérables*, that pierced my soul. I became completely involved with the story, the characters, and the themes of the show. As the final curtain fell I was sobbing, literally sobbing. I wanted to join the standing ovation but I was not able to stand. The house lights came up and the audience began to exit. I did not want to leave the theatre. I did not want the actors to leave and I did not want the audience to leave. I wanted all of us to stay and talk about what just happened. Finally, at the urging of my grandmother, I got up and left. As we exited the lobby of the theatre, my eyes and my face were red, and my abdominal muscles ached from emotional outburst. My mind eventually cleared that evening, and I marveled at myself and my reaction to the musical. I did not focus on the power of the piece of theatre until a few years later.

I started college as a music major, studying saxophone. I was passionate about music. I had been moved at age nine or 10 by classical music and felt that same connection when I played certain pieces. However, I missed the theatre. What was it that I missed? I was still a performer as a musician. What was missing? I decided that it was the connection with the audience. As a musician I was certainly connecting to the piece of music, but I never felt my audience give back nearly what I was giving to them. I never felt that the audience left a concert thinking about the music or exploring their reactions to it. I changed my major after that first year.

The Lamar University Theatre Department was very into the American College Theatre Festival. We always prepared a play to be judged at the festival. My first A.C.T.F. production was *A Company of Wayward Saints*. As we proceeded through the rehearsal process, I noticed that the director, Dr. Placette, was doing so much more than I could find in the script. She was not adding dialogue, but there was just more . . . something. After our performances I would hear audience members talking about how moving, disturbing, or surprising the production was. I still did not get it until we arrived at the festival. At A.C.T.F. one of the other schools presented a production of *The Boys Next Door* by Tom Griffin. The play deals with the mentally challenged and asks the audience members to examine the way they think about them. I was moved. I could not get to sleep that night from thinking about the play, my reaction to it, and my own views of the mentally challenged. My mind and my heart were captivated by the play and its performance. The next day at the festival, I found myself seeking out the performers from that production. I felt the need to tell them how powerful their performance had been and to talk about how I reacted to it. That was when I realized that theatre does not

have to be an art form contained within its performance space, but can be a force that reaches far out into the world and helps to reshape our existence.

I now teach theatre arts to seventh- and eighth-graders. Over the past few years, I have noticed that what captivates them most in entertainment is spectacle and not substance. The television and movies they are drawn to seem to consist of a series of car chases, fight scenes, explosions, and endings you could see coming from the very first scene. Their favorite shows wrap up nice and tidy with nothing to think about after the credits roll. This entertainment is purely escapist and offers nothing for them to take back and apply to their own lives. They are capable of making such connections. At ages 13 and 14, they are able to begin to understand character development, ethical issues, and thought provoking paradoxes, and they need to have the ability to take these things “out of the box” and into their world.

## **THE SALEM WITCH TRAILS**

“Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.”

-Exodus 22:18

In 1692 mass hysteria and group paranoia gripped New England, and 25 people died as a result of the famous Salem witch trails. Nineteen people were hanged, five died in prison, and one was pressed to death for refusing to enter a plea. These deaths were the result of the accusations of a group of girls who were said to be “afflicted” by witches, but many believe that the fuel for this fire was stockpiled long before the witch-hunt began.

Witch-hunts and the execution of witches were not new. France, Italy, Germany, and England had been doing it for nearly 300 years. In 1484 A.D., Pope Innocent VIII declared witchcraft a heresy and proclaimed the appropriate punishment was death. Massive witch-hunts swept through Europe, and many thousands of accused witches were burned at the stake, hanged, or tortured to death. The government authorities did little to stop this and, along with the church, even encouraged suspicion in the community as means of purification. Consequently, accusing someone of witchcraft became a convenient way of disposing of one’s enemies. In fact, historians have suggested that social tension was indeed the main cause of much of the violence:

Belief in the diabolical conspiracies of witches was a prerequisite for the Great European Witch-hunt, but social forces provided the impetus. As numerous as they were, only certain areas of Europe experienced witch-hunts, and those areas were commonly characterized by the high anxiety that accompanies political, social, economic, and religious problems (Le Beau 11).

In 1531 King Henry VIII broke with the Roman Catholic Church and declared himself not only head of state, but also head of the Church of England. As a result, the

crime of witchcraft was not only a crime against God, but a crime against king and country as well. The Puritans carried this sentiment to America. In 1648, the first witch trial in Massachusetts was against Margaret Jones, a midwife and healer. She was said to cause sickness and tell the future. Since the burning of witches was outlawed 150 years earlier, she was hanged instead. Several more trials occurred through the years, but it was not until 1688 that a highly publicized witch trial captured the interest of the colony. In 1688 Goodwife Glover was accused and convicted of bewitching four Boston children. The investigator in the case was a man by the name of Cotton Mather. Mather subsequently published a book entitled *Memorable Providences* about his experiences with witchcraft and witches. The book included such subjects as the practices of witches and ways to identify a witch. *Memorable Providences* was published in Boston and likely distributed throughout the colony or further. The people of Salem would surely have known his work. It is possible that this publication brought the topic of witchcraft to the forefront of their minds. If witches and witchcraft were topics of discussion for adults, their children would certainly have overheard and learned much, which is a possible explanation for the fact that the Salem witch trials began by the action of children.

Like many New England settlements, Salem was a Puritan community. Puritanism was a religion that focused on living life as dictated by biblical scripture. Emphasis was placed on a strong work ethic and the pursuit of good moral character. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, Salem was divided into the prosperous Salem Town and the rural farming community of Salem Village. Different viewpoints on many issues of worship, politics, and daily life divided the inhabitants into factions. The town folk tended to be more liberal minded and the villagers more conservative. There were, however, factions of each brand within both the town and village. Salem Village eventually requested a break from Salem Town and the right to appoint its own minister. In 1689, it was granted this right, and Reverend Samuel Parris, a former merchant of Boston, was appointed to the post of minister. Parris, however, caused controversy of his own. He was very demanding of his congregation. Because the various factions within Salem Village could not agree on anything, they had ousted or forced the resignation of several ministers, including the latest, George Burroughs. Consequently, Parris required of them (one presumes as a means of job security) the personal deed to the parsonage. This was not traditionally granted to the minister, and the demand was looked upon unfavorably. He was also aggressive about his salary and other contribution to the church. This outraged some in the already fractured community. Church attendance fell, and many stopped contributing to the church, including paying a portion of Parris' salary as required by the town charter.

The daily life of a Salem Villager was not at all a comfortable and stress free existence. The town was surrounded by woods that were believed to be infested with evil forces and could at any moment erupt with an Indian attack. Puritans knew as a certainty that the devil and his forces were very real. They were invisible but existed all around and were waiting for any opportunity to grab any Puritan soul. This soul was the devout

person's charge. God had demanded that this soul be guarded and moral character be developed and preserved. This was the life's work of every Puritan. In a more mundane sense, each person's life's work was to take care of home and family, which also meant hard work. The rural Salem Village was miles from Salem Town, and survival meant working hard to keep a home and feed the family whether by farming, keeping shop, or serving others. These hardships along with the strife of a community divided and bickering over social issues created much stress and animosity. Neighbors were feuding with neighbors, community bonds were stretched to the limit, and the stage was set for something to snap.

As is expected of a minister, Reverend Parris and his wife spent much time away from home visiting parishioners. During these times Parris left his nine-year-old daughter, Betty, and his 11-year-old orphaned niece, Abigail Williams, in the care of his South American Indian slave Tituba. To entertain the girls Tituba told them stories of witchcraft and engaged in fortune telling games and rituals. The girls shared this intriguing world of magic with their friends, and the group of girls grew. Whether this group's activities were discovered is unknown, but in late January of 1692, Betty Parris and Abigail Williams began to display unusual behavior. They had "fits" and "spells" and at times appeared to be comatose or catatonic. The Reverend called in a doctor to examine the girls but could find no physical cause. The doctor suggested looking to spiritual causes for the symptoms. The girls were presumed to be bewitched. In an attempt to route this evil from their community, the ministers and townspeople pressured the girls for the names of their tormentors. Betty finally named Tituba and later both girls accused Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne. These accusations made sense given Tituba's origins and knowledge of voodoo and other black arts. Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne also made likely targets considering their status on the social hierarchy. Sarah Good was the town beggar and Sarah Osborne was an old bedridden woman who had disgracefully married her indentured servant. Neither woman had good church attendance records.

Women were viewed as weak in mind, body, and spirit. The role of the woman in Puritan society was to be silent, submissive, and subservient. She was expected to stand by her husband's side or stay at home and tend to house and family. It is notable that, at first, only women were accused and only women were considered "afflicted" by these evil forces. A woman was much more likely to be tempted into the devil's service and therefore was a natural choice for Abigail and Betty's accusation. Also, this role of "afflicted" accuser elevated these girls to a new and more powerful status in their community, a status they could never have hoped to enjoy before this opportunity. Soon several other girls in the community became "afflicted" in the same manner.

Tituba, Sarah Good, and Sarah Osborne were arrested and examined by magistrates to find out if they were witches. Other than oral examination, there were several tests for this. One was to look for the "devil's mark" or "witch's tit" on the body of the accused. This blemish was any sort of discoloration or mark on the skin. It was said that this was

where the servants of Satan would suckle when they appeared to the witch. If such a mark was found, then the test was to pierce it with a needle. If it bled and there was pain then the accused was innocent. However, if it did not bleed or no pain was felt then the accused was declared a witch. Another test was to “float” a witch. The idea here was that water, being pure, would accept a pure soul and reject a befouled one. If a witch were thrown into water, she would float because the “pure” water was rejecting her. If she sank (and usually drowned) then she was pure.

During examination Tituba confessed and implicated Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne. Tituba also stated that there was a conspiracy of witches in Salem and that the devil was at work. Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne denied any wrongdoing. Thus began the witch-hunt.

The town was abuzz with gossip, which the girls were bound to hear. Who was a witch and who was not? People suspected their neighbors, their friends, and certainly their enemies. The “afflicted” girls were the center of attention. They continued to make accusations, and more villagers were arrested and questioned; many were imprisoned. However, some of the accusations fell on members of the community who were admired and respected or who would not traditionally have been thought of as being witches. An elderly woman by the name of Rebecca Nurse was revered and seemed above reproach to many. To many of the villagers, “she was the very essence of the Puritan mother—pious and beloved” (Le Beau 83). When she was named as a witch, the accusation was met with skepticism by some. A few men were also named. Men were not usually thought to be as susceptible to the devil’s lure as women. A four-year-old girl was also arrested. This began to cause even more fracturing in the community. In early April one of the “afflicted” girls, named Mary Warren, admitted to lying and indicated that her fellow accusers were doing the same. Later, however, Mary Warren recanted her admission and rejoined the girls. The search for evil continued.

In May the new Governor of Massachusetts, Sir William Phipps, convened a court in Salem to hear the witchcraft cases. This court decided to allow “spectral evidence.” Spectral evidence was the assertion that witches were sending their spirit or specter out to torment someone, in this case the “afflicted” girls. This specter was attempting to turn the tormented to do Satan’s work. This sort of evidence was controversial at best. On June 2, Bridget Bishop was the first to be tried, convicted, and sentenced to death on the basis of spectral evidence. She was hanged on June 10, 1692. Eighteen more followed, and Giles Cory, an accused man, was pressed to death for refusing to enter a plea. The court could not continue a trial without the defendant entering a plea. Being “pressed” was literally just that. He was forced to lie down, a board was placed over him and heavy stones were placed on the board. More and more weight was added in an attempt to “press” the truth out of him. He refused. Eventually, toward the end, all he said was “more weight.”

In October the Reverend Increase Mather, father of Cotton Mather, denounced the use of spectral evidence, and Governor Phipps declared it inadmissible. Relatives of both Phipps and Mather had been mentioned by the “afflicted” girls in court. The accusations became more and more outrageous, and the Governor eventually shut down the court and released all prisoners. In 1711 the colony passed a bill of rights restoring the good names of accused citizens and making restitution to all the affected families. Finally, in 1957, the state of Massachusetts formally apologized for the events of 1692.

## **COMMUNISM IN THE UNITED STATES**

Mass hysteria and group paranoia again reared its ugly head and caused massive witch-hunts in America. This time, it was over two centuries later, and the witches were called communists.

In October, 1917, the Bolsheviks led a revolution and took control of Russia. This brought communism to power. In America, it was the end of World War I, and a sense of nationalism was sweeping the country. Any group or individual who did not agree with the United States’ involvement in the war or who did not in every way support the country was suspect. This was the climate that produced the first “Red Scare” in America. To “loyal” Americans, these anti-American dissidents were believed to be communists trying to incite a Bolshevik-style revolution in the U.S. This feeling was not isolated to citizens. The government set its sights on finding and ousting these radicals. However, by 1920 the hysteria and paranoia had died down and life in America went on as usual . . . but not for good.

After the stock market crash of 1929, the United States plummeted into economic disaster. The unemployment rate skyrocketed, and quality of life for many Americans was poor. Because so many people were looking for change, the ideas of the communist party resurfaced, and the party itself began to grow again. In 1936, Franklin Delano Roosevelt became President of the U.S. and instituted his “New Deal” programs. The Communist Party supported the “New Deal,” and party membership began to grow rapidly. By 1939 there was much political tension in Europe. Germany, dissatisfied with its treatment after World War I, was becoming aggressive. Nazi Germany and the USSR entered into a non-aggression treaty and subsequently invaded Poland, starting World War II. American communists were initially against the U.S. entering the war. Once again, the fear and distrust of communism rose in hearts of many Americans. The Nazis however, invaded the USSR, and the soviets became allies in the war against Germany. This again bolstered Communist Party membership in the U.S. The war ended in 1945, and in 1946, the reconstruction of governments became the job of the allies. The USSR made it clear that it was against free elections in Eastern Europe and U.S.-Soviet relations again became tense. The feeling in America was that communists wanted to impose their form of society and government around the world. Hysteria and paranoia again gripped the nation.

The government had already taken steps to identify and suppress political radicals within its borders. In the late 1930s, a committee (that would later become the House Un-American Activities Committee or HUAC) was formed to investigate the activities of radical groups, especially communists. J. Edgar Hoover of the Federal Bureau of Investigation diligently spied and collected names and information and fed it to the committee. The committee prosecuted these insurgents on the charge that they were conspiring to overthrow the government.

In 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin burst onto the scene with a speech claiming that he had a list of 81 communists working in the State Department. Using this sensationalism, he rode the wave of hysteria and paranoia to celebrity status. With his celebrity came power:

McCarthy's real triumph, both in 1950 and afterwards, lay in making himself a personal symbol of these issues. Once he had accomplished this, the task of dislodging or even restraining him became most complicated. He held a privileged position in American politics, and he was bold enough, audacious enough, perhaps even desperate enough, to exploit this privilege for five long years (Griffith xxvii-xxviii).

McCarthy led the HUAC hearings in 1951, focusing on government employees, intellectuals, and especially the entertainment industry. Writers, directors, and actors were called to the hearings to enter their plea of being communist and to name the names of other communists and sympathizers. Those who refused were blacklisted by the Hollywood studios and denied any work in the industry. Ten individuals refused to testify at all, citing their fifth-amendment rights. They were subsequently found guilty of contempt and sentenced to jail time.

McCarthy was re-elected to the Senate in 1952. Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* premiered on Broadway in 1953, making an obvious comparison between McCarthyism and the Salem witch trials. In 1954, McCarthy, along with the HUAC, set his sights on the United States Army. Determined to find the communist element in the Army, McCarthy convened hearings. These Army-McCarthy hearings were the first nationally televised congressional inquiries. All of America watched as Joseph McCarthy poked and probed, searched and questioned. Eventually, McCarthy came up empty-handed and all of America saw the true nature of McCarthyism. As *The Crucible* suggested, McCarthy had been on a witch-hunt. In late 1954, the Senate voted to censure McCarthy for his behavior during the HUAC hearings.

### **ARTHUR MILLER AND *THE CRUCIBLE***

In 1952, theatre and film director Elia Kazan was called before HUAC and pressured to admit his affiliation with the Communist Party and to name those he knew to be Communists. Kazan submitted to the demands of McCarthy and the committee, much to



the dismay of his colleagues. Most of all, this wounded his best friend Arthur Miller. Kazan had directed Miller's *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*, and they were said to be as close as brothers. Miller and Kazan did not speak for 10 years.

Miller was outraged at what HUAC was doing to his colleagues and amazed that the committee was given such power. In the "Introduction" to *Arthur Miller's Collected Plays*, he states:

It was not only the rise of "McCarthyism" that moved me, but something which seemed much more weird and mysterious. It was the fact that a political, objective, knowledgeable, campaign from the far Right was capable of creating not only terror, but a new subjective reality a veritable mystique which was gradually assuming even a holy resonance (39).

His outrage gave him the impetus to write on a subject he already had pondered. As a literary scholar, he began to identify similarities in the actions of HUAC and the story of the Salem witch trials he had come across in earlier readings and research. The intangible enemies (communism and witchcraft), the mass hysteria and paranoia, the naming of names, the absolution by admission of guilt and pledge of loyalty, and the obvious self-gratification of the accusers were all parallels that seemed compelling and comparable. The product was *The Crucible*. Though not completely historically accurate, *The Crucible* told the story of the Salem witch trails and was produced in 1953, when comparisons to HUAC were inevitable. The play forced the audience to look at Salem in 1692 when the same mistakes were being made and the consequences were horrific. In 1957 Miller was called before HUAC to testify about a meeting of Communist writers that he attended. Miller refused to name names. He was found in contempt of Congress and sentenced to jail time. *The Crucible* remains one of Miller's most popular plays.

### **WHY TEACH THIS?**

American playwrights have been reflecting American life through their writings for more than two centuries. Twentieth-century playwrights have explored politics, ethics, society, families, morals, sex, and self and exposed the best and worst of all. When we read or see a play by Miller, Tennessee Williams, or Eugene O'Neill we must respond on several levels to appreciate it to its fullest. The most basic is the specific, textual level. We must understand the plot. Also important is the thematic level. What themes is the playwright exploring? Finally, the historical and cultural level must be recognized. What does this play say about the people in this culture during this time period, and how does it relate to me today? Once we begin making connections on all of the levels, a play really comes to life.

Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* exists so fully in each of the aspects discussed above that it is a prime example for study. The story is based on the Salem witch trials of the

late 1600s, but is intended as a searing indictment of the proceedings of the House Un-American Activities Committee in the 1950s. Through this script we see the parallels between the events in each time period. The theme of injustice runs strong throughout the text. We see the innocent forced to lie in order to save their own lives. The playwright is acting as a social conscience, but we can also trace the source of this play to very personal events in the life of Miller. His life, career, and friendship with director Elia Kazan were directly affected by the proceedings of the House Un-American Activities Committee. When we connect all of these pieces, the play gains power and significance in many ways. We have all at one time or another and in varying degrees been unjustly accused of something and perhaps have unfortunately been the unjust accuser. When we see the devastating effects of this injustice in both time periods, the play resonates within us and prompts us to think. If theatre does nothing else but cause us to think, it is a glorious victory.

Engaging mentally is exactly what I want my students to do. One of the best assets a person can have is the ability to respond thoughtfully. To give students knowledge – a context in which to assess things they experience – is useless without teaching them *how* to assess. Specifically, this unit will teach students how to look at a play and make connections to it from outside the context of the story. How is this play relevant? We will make connections of many different types: historical, ethical, moral, societal, political, familial, and personal. If we can teach students to think in this way, they will continue to learn long after they have left the classroom. Through the ability to respond thoughtfully, they will become responsible for their own education.

Additionally, studying this play will give students some insight into the process a playwright goes through to write a dramatic piece. They will see the project transform from idea to written word to theatre. In researching the background of this play to make these “connections” I ask for, they will also further develop their research skills. Finally, students will be exposed to two analogous events in American history and their effects on society. Students should benefit from this unit across the curriculum and into their own personal lives.

## **IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES**

In teaching this play, I want students to experience it in every possible way. I want them to see it, hear it, read it, and perform it. But before all that happens, some groundwork must be laid. I plan to start off with some brief direct instruction by discussing how a play is most often not just a story to be played out for pure entertainment. I will introduce the playwright, the play, the Salem witch trials, the House Un-American Activities Committee, and the theme of injustice, and tell the class that we will become experts in all of these areas as we connect them to the play.

The class will be divided into groups, and each group will be responsible for doing research and giving a report with visual aids to present to the class. The research topics I

propose are as follows: the House Un-American Activities Committee, McCarthyism, the Hollywood blacklist, the Salem witch trials, the relationship between Arthur Miller and Elia Kazan, and Communism. We will begin each class with one group giving its presentation. Each day of this unit, we will also listen to one act of the “Alive & Aloud” recording of *The Crucible*. The “Alive & Aloud” series is a program produced by LA Theatre Works. This program provides recording of plays with study guides at no cost to schools. Enroll in the program at <<http://latw.org>>. As we listen we will read along and stop to discuss some aspects of the background of the play. We will also watch and discuss some scenes from the film version. After reading half of the play, we will divide into groups, and each group will choose a scene that we have read to perform for the class. Finally, after reading the entire play, the class will divide into groups again. Each group will write its own short scene about injustice. They will practice and then perform this scene for the class. The effect I hope to get from students is the realization that there is an entire structure around a play and that the playwright is not writing in a vacuum. I want them to look for meaning, to look for that burning truth that exists in all good art.

## **LESSON PLANS**

The following lesson plans are intended for a 90-minute class period.

### **Lesson Plan 1**

The introduction to this unit should be done at least a week before the unit actually begins in order to give the research group that will present first enough time to complete its work.

#### ***Materials needed***

- Overhead projector
- Transparency with definition of the word “injustice”
- Articles and stories as examples of injustice
- One copy of *The Crucible*
- Example of research report
- Example of visual aid for presentation
- Example of handout for presentation

#### ***Procedure***

As students enter for class, I will have the following focus assignment on the chalkboard or the overhead projector: “In one paragraph or less, define or give an example of injustice.” I will give them about five minutes to write as I take attendance. First, I will call for volunteers to read their definitions of injustice. We will compare and contrast all the different definitions and finally look at the dictionary definition. Then I will have those students who chose to write examples of injustice read their paragraph. We will compare their examples to the definition and discuss the nature of injustice until we all

have a clear understanding. I will supplement student examples with newspaper articles and stories of injustice to further clarify.

Next, I will explain to the class that we will be studying a play that has injustice as a major theme and that the impetus to write this play came from the playwright's own experience with injustice. I will briefly introduce the topics of the Salem witch trials, the Red Scare, and Arthur Miller and tell the class we will become experts on all these topics and how they relate to the play by doing group research projects. The class will divide into groups of five students. Each group will be assigned one of the following topics: the Salem witch trials, Communism, Arthur Miller and Elia Kazan, the House Un-American Activities Committee, McCarthyism, and the Hollywood blacklist. Two of the group members will research the topic and write a two-page report. The report should answer who, what, when, where, why, and how about the topic. One group member will be responsible for creating or obtaining a visual aid for the presentation. It can be a presentation board or a poster or an artifact. One group member will create a worksheet that reinforces the major points of the presentation. The class will do the worksheet as a part of the presentation. The worksheet may be fill-in-the-blanks, a crossword, a word search, etc. The final member of the group will be responsible for delivering the presentation to the class.

Next, I will model a presentation for the class. I will do a presentation on the Red Scare in the United States. I will read my report, show my presentation board with pictures and explanations, and pass out a worksheet on the Red Scare for the class to do. After this presentation is a good time to answer questions students have about the project.

Finally, I will divide the students into groups and assign their topics. The remainder of the class will be spent in the library, where the groups may begin their research. I will notify students that there will be no other class-time opportunity for research in the library, so most of the project will be done as homework.

## **Lesson Plan 2**

### ***Materials needed***

- Copies of student-created worksheet for class
- “Alive & Aloud” recoding of *The Crucible*
- Class set of *The Crucible*
- CD player

### ***Procedure***

We will begin by reviewing our understanding of injustice and reintroducing *The Crucible*. Next, the first group will give its presentation on the Salem witch trials. After the presenters complete the oral report, the class will complete the worksheet the group has prepared to go along with their presentation. After the worksheet is done, I will distribute the scripts, and we will begin listening to the “Alive & Aloud” recording. This

and other recorded readings of plays can be obtained for any public school for free. “Alive & Aloud” is an L.A. Theatre Works education and outreach program. Schools may enroll in the program at <http://latw.org>. After listening to Act One, I will lead discussion connecting information and ideas from the presentation to the part of the play we have heard. At the end of class, remind the next group that they will be presenting in the following class.

### **Lesson Plan 3**

#### ***Materials needed***

- Copies of student-created worksheet for class
- “Alive & Aloud” recoding of *The Crucible*
- Class set of *The Crucible*
- CD player

#### ***Procedure***

We will begin by reviewing what we learned from the previous presentation and what is happening so far in *The Crucible*. Next, the second group will give its presentation on Communism. After the presenter completes the oral report, the class will complete the worksheet the group has prepared to go along with its presentation. After the worksheet is done, I will distribute the scripts, and we will begin listening to the “Alive & Aloud” recording. After listening to Act Two, I will lead discussion connecting information and ideas from the presentation to the part of the play we have heard. At the end of class, remind the next group they will be presenting in the following class.

### **Lesson Plan 4**

#### ***Materials needed***

- Copies of student-created worksheet for class
- Class set of *The Crucible*
- Handout: Breakdown of scenes and character in those scenes

#### ***Procedure***

We will begin by reviewing what we learned from the previous presentation and what is happening so far in *The Crucible*. Next, the third group will give its presentation on Arthur Miller and Elia Kazan. After the presenter completes the oral report, the class will complete the worksheet the group has prepared to go along with their presentation. After the worksheet is done, I will distribute a breakdown of scenes and characters in those scenes. Students will break into groups and choose a scene to practice and perform for the class. Groups will have 30 minutes to rehearse. I prefer not to let the students use props or costumes so that they focus on the text. After each group performs, the class will evaluate the performance. I will also ask some actors how they felt about the character they played and connect those feelings to what we learned about Miller from

the presentation. At the end of class, remind the next group they will be presenting in the following class

### **Lesson Plan 5**

#### ***Materials needed***

Copies of student-created worksheet for class  
“Alive & Aloud” recoding of *The Crucible*  
Class set of *The Crucible*  
CD player

#### ***Procedure***

We will begin by reviewing what we learned from the previous presentation and what is happening so far in *The Crucible*. Next, the fourth group will give its presentation on the House Un-American Activities Committee. After the presenter completes the oral report, the class will complete the worksheet that the group has prepared to go along with its presentation. After the worksheet is done, I will distribute the scripts, and we will begin listening to the “Alive & Aloud” recording. After listening to Act Three, I will lead discussion connecting information and ideas from the presentation to the part of the play we have heard. At the end of class, remind the next group they will be presenting in the following class.

### **Lesson Plan 6**

#### ***Materials needed***

Copies of student-created worksheet for class  
“Alive & Aloud” recoding of *The Crucible*  
Class set of *The Crucible*  
CD player

#### ***Procedure***

We will begin by reviewing what we learned from the previous presentation and what is happening so far in *The Crucible*. Next, the fifth group will give its presentation on McCarthyism. After the presenter completes the oral report, the class will complete the worksheet the group has prepared to go along with their presentation. After the worksheet is done, I will distribute the scripts, and we will begin listening to the “Alive & Aloud” recording. After listening to the final act, I will lead discussion connecting information and ideas from the presentation to the play. At the end of class, remind the final group they will be presenting in the following class.

### **Lesson Plan 7**

#### ***Materials needed***

Copies of student-created worksheet for class

Class set of *The Crucible*

Handout: Breakdown of scenes and characters in those scenes

### ***Procedure***

We will begin by reviewing what we learned from the previous presentation and what is happening so far in *The Crucible*. Next, the sixth group will give its presentation on the Hollywood Blacklist. After the presenter completes the oral report, the class will complete the worksheet the group has prepared to go along with their presentation. After the worksheet is done, students will break into groups and choose a scene to practice and perform for the class. They should already have a copy of the breakdown of scenes and characters. Groups will have 30 minutes to rehearse. I prefer not to let the students use props or costumes so that they focus on the text. After each group performs, the class will evaluate the performance. I will also ask some actors how they felt about the character they played and connect those feelings to what we learned about being ostracized from the presentation. At the end of class, tell students they will be writing, rehearsing, and performing their own scenes about injustice.

### **Lesson Plan 8**

For this lesson students will divide into groups and write a scene about injustice. I will start by reviewing our understanding of injustice and the role it played in *The Crucible*. I will tell students to try to focus on a subject about which they feel strongly for the script they will write. Then they will break into groups and write for 40 minutes. The next 30 minutes will be spent rehearsing the written scene. At the end of class, I will tell students to make any necessary script changes for homework.

### **Lesson Plan 9**

During this class, students will spend the first 30 minutes rehearsing their scenes. The last half of class will consist of performances, evaluations, and discussion. After each performance, I will ask the class to evaluate the effectiveness of the scene. Did the group effectively communicate their message? In what way? I will also ask each group this question: If you could have anyone see your scene, who would it be and why? We will conclude the class by discussing how theatre can be an important force in our society.

## ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

### Works Cited

Griffith, Robert. *The Politics of Fear*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1987.

This is a history of Joseph McCarthy's political career.

Le Beau, Bryan F. *The Story of the Salem Witch Trials*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1998.

This piece includes detailed accounts of the various trials brought before the courts.

Mather, Cotton. *Memorable Providences*. Reprint Services Corporation, 1999.

About Cotton's experiences with witchcraft and witches, this book includes such subjects as the practices of witches and ways to identify a witch.

Miller, Arthur. *Arthur Miller's Collected Plays*. New York: The Viking Press, 1957.

This collection includes the text of *The Crucible* as well as an in-depth introduction by Miller.

\_\_\_\_\_. *The Crucible*. LA Theatre Works, 1994.

This is a radio play version of the play on CD.

### Supplemental Resources

Abbotson, C.W. *Student Companion to Arthur Miller*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2000.

The sections on Miller's life and on HUAC are pertinent here.

*Arthur Miller*. Executive Producer, Diana Lashmore. British Broadcasting Corporation, 1998.

This video is an interview with Miller and includes clips from some productions of his plays. He answers questions about criticism during the McCarthy era.

Hinman, Sheryl, et al. *The Crucible: Teacher's Study Guide*. Ed. Jae Evans. Los Angeles: LA Theatre Works, 1994.

This study guide accompanies the LA Theatre Works radio play version of the play. It contains many activities and discussions valuable to the study.

*In Search of History: Salem Witch Trials*. Executive Producers Robb Weller and Gary H. Grossman. A&E Television Networks, 1998. (50 minutes)

This video is a good look at the actual history of the Salem witch trials.



Johnson, Claudia D. and Vernon E. Johnson. *Understanding The Crucible: A Student Casebook to Issues, Sources, and Historical Documents*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1998.

This work analyzes the play, the Salem witch-hunts, the 1950s witch-hunts, and modern witch-hunts.

Kahn, Gordon. *Hollywood on Trial*. New York: Boni & Gaer, 1948.

This book, written before McCarthy's rise to fame and power, tells the story of 10 film industry professionals who were indicted by the House Un-American Activities Committee

*Modern Critical Views: Arthur Miller*. Ed. Harold Bloom. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1987.

Here is another good collection of essays on Miller and *The Crucible*, edited and with an introduction by esteemed literary critic and scholar Harold Bloom.

O'Reilly, Kenneth. *Hoover and the Un-Americans*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1983.

This book chronicles the House Un-American Activities Committee and puts the proceedings into a clear socio-political context.

*Reading on Arthur Miller*. Ed. Thomas Diebold. San Diego: Greenhaven Press, Inc., 1997.

This collection of essays contains good information on Miller's life and a whole chapter on *The Crucible*.

*The Specter: Original Essays on the Cold War and the Origins of McCarthyism*. Eds. Robert Griffith and Athan Theoharis. New York: Franklin Watts, Inc., 1974.

Here are more essays that take viewpoints from various sides for a more well-rounded look at HUAC.