

**American Literature and McCarthyism:
The Effects of Paranoia and Hysteria as Seen Through Film**

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INTRODUCTION

Film is a medium that captivates audiences, young and old. When we watch a film, we are transported into another world with deliberately crafted visual and auditory stimuli. As a united group, the audience follows the lens of the camera and shares in the universal emotional reaction based upon the provided sensory images. Often film producers are able to achieve collective and poignant reactions from their audience that novelists strive to affect. The components of a film are able to successfully appeal to all of the moviegoers in a uniform fashion. With the carefully edited cut scenes, lighting, special effects, and background music, the film producer is literally able to choreograph the audience's response.

Often the most memorable films grapple with the most pivotal social concerns of our country by providing insight into the political climate, reflecting on social movements and defining generations by immortalizing the shared experiences. Whether it is the Roaring Twenties (complete with bootlegging and notable criminals), or a graphic and in-depth portrayal of a war, the sweeping history of our country has been captured and enhanced by the multi-dimensional power of film. No one can forget experiencing the intensity of the opening scene of Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* in 1998. Indeed, that film is often credited with simultaneously changing the way combat movies were made, as well as sparking a renewed interest in WWII. In fact, regardless of a person's age group, the struggles and triumphs that movie characters experience are generally relatable and accessible to movie-going audiences everywhere.

The brawn and might behind the experience of viewing mainstream films are found in the scope of their distribution and influence. Likewise, mass market novels are able to reach a wide-ranging audience because they are so affordable and broadly distributed, being available not only in bookstores but also in drugstores and other retail outlets. Moreover, with modern access to the Internet, the general public is able to rent or purchase an even larger quantity of movies, music, and books. With this flood of resources at their fingertips, today's classrooms need to reflect the kind of world that our students live in, with technology as a primary learning component.

OBJECTIVES: TEKS -- 110.44. English III

- 1.A. Students will write in a variety of forms.
- 1B. Students will write in a voice and style appropriate to audience and purpose.
- 2.D. Students will frequently refine selected pieces to publish for general and specific audiences.
- 2.E. Students will use technology for aspects of creating, revising, editing, and publishing texts.
- 4.C. Students will compile information from primary and secondary sources in systematic ways using available technology.
- 7.B. Students will draw upon their own background to provide connection to texts.

- 8. A. Students will read to be entertained, to appreciate a writer's craft, to be informed, to take action, and to discover models to use in their own writing.
- 8.D. Students will interpret the possible influences of the historical context on literary works.
- 9.B. Students will compare text events with their own and other readers' experiences.
- 10.C. Students will analyze written reviews of literature, film, and performance to compare with their own responses.
- 11.E. Students will connect literature to historical contexts, current events, and their own experiences.
- 14.A. Students will demonstrate proficiency in each aspect of the listening process such as focusing attention, interpreting, and responding.

RATIONALE

Teenagers and young adults (ages 13-24) are not only the segment of our population with the most disposable income; they are also responsible for watching an average of 24 movies per year (Honig). With television, radio and film being such influential components of how our students receive information, classroom lessons can greatly benefit from integrating these resources into standard instructional practices. Film producers are often more capable of achieving the universal and emotional reactions from their audience that novelists can only strive to affect. With the benefit of emotive actors, perfectly cued background music, and special effects, film producers are able to orchestrate every detail of a film to produce specific and targeted feelings from the audience.

In addition to film, radio is a powerful medium for achieving emotional reactions from an audience. Perhaps one of the most notorious examples of this was Orson Welles's 1938 broadcast of *War of the Worlds*. This is perhaps one of the most immediate and infamous social reactions to fear-based information ever documented. And, in this event lies a universal truth. Fear is one of the most effective tools that can be used to control the emotional response of the general public.

To consider the power of fear, take for instance the infamous effectiveness of propaganda. By nature, the concept of propaganda implies the intentional distribution of information for a specific outcome – whether it is an individual, company, or religious organization that is trying to persuade the public – the purpose is deliberate. In fact, any study of widely-used advertisement strategies will reveal the motive of the advertiser behind the funding. Motive is everything, whether it is the arrangement of the grocery store – which requires customers to walk the entire perimeter to acquire the necessary staples like milk, bread, and eggs – or the politicians telling us that they are for the people (and not the lobbyists). However, as these practices are considered acceptable and tolerated by today's society, one must reflect on the more sinister history of the abuse of power. It is when individuals use the power of fear for personal gain, at the expense of others, that it is most nefarious.

UNIT BACKGROUND

My goal is to revive the thematic elements of the McCarthy era in a way that engages students while leaving an imprint on them. It is my desire that the student be made aware of the “worst case scenario” of unchecked accusations (like the Salem witch trials portrayed in *The Crucible* and the small town speculation that spreads through Hester Prynne's community in *The Scarlet Letter*), while giving them the non-fiction context of Senator McCarthy's efforts to cleanse our country. If every lesson that I have listed in my unit was given all the time necessary to present every full-length movie and radio broadcast to the students, it would likely span the length of a full six-week cycle. In order to save classroom time with the literature demands of this unit, I have designed my lessons to build on the students' understanding of the novels by having them do all of the reading outside of the classroom. However, for every lesson plan in my unit, it

would be extremely easy to reduce the overall presentation time for this unit by picking and choosing only a few of the films and showing only the most effective excerpts from the films. Also, specific excerpts from the *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast could be played in class if the entire one-hour broadcast cannot be accommodated. Additionally, students can always view some of the movies on their own in order to ensure that the in-class focus is on the group discussions and activities. With basic modifications, this unit is infinitely customizable for grade level and time allotment.

The benefit of adopting selectively chosen films enhances the depth of learning that takes place inside the classroom. Rather than simply telling students that Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible* is a response to Senator Joseph McCarthy's "Red Scare," the enduring impact of this historical series of events will be conveyed through readily-available media. With a careful selection of films including comedies, dramas, and documentaries, which were released between 1953 and 2008, the McCarthy era (1952-1954) becomes both personal and relevant. In an age where the current presidential administration has ventured dangerously close to the tendencies of McCarthy's philosophy with the creation of a Homeland Security agency, the Patriot Act, and color-coded terrorist alert-levels, this is a topic that students will find both riveting and terrifying.

By implementing the multi-media approach, students will become engaged with the information and "experience" it in a way that will last far longer than simply using a standard lecture-based instruction. Students are acutely aware of the ever-evolving face of politics, even now, with the Presidential election making headlines everyday. In this time of evolution, students need a frame of reference to understand the lingering implications of some of our country's decisions. It is important for them to understand our country's history beyond Bush and Clinton, and even beyond Kennedy and Nixon. It is critical to know that in the short time (comparatively speaking) that our country has existed we have experienced pivotal movements of thought and policy. From the Golden Age of Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation to the looming threat of Communism during the Cold War, our country is rich with issues that have come to enrich the foundation of today's government platform. It is important for students to recognize the value of the lessons "learned" from our history so that they can recognize similarities in cyclical patterns and hopefully even avoid making some catastrophic mistakes again.

Through the integration of a radio broadcast, films, and literature, the student will be able to empathize with the individuals caught up in the hysteria (by experiencing the *War of the Worlds* radio broadcast) and connect the elements of McCarthyism in film to literature (written both before and after McCarthy's term of office). I believe that this comprehensive submersion into the ideals of moral righteousness will create an enduring and inspirational impression upon the students.

Paranoia and Hysteria

During the Orson Welles 1938 broadcast of *War of the Worlds* on Sunday, Halloween Eve of that year, millions of radio listeners were shocked by the "news" that our country was being invaded by Martians (Rosenberg). Families packed up their cars and abandoned their homes; people called their local police, news stations, and politicians; and others braced themselves for the imminent attack. The panicked public had missed the occasional disclaimers in the radio broadcast clarifying that it was, in fact, fiction. Initial public reactions of shock escalated into panic, and panic soon became wide-spread hysteria.

The danger of paranoia leading to hysteria was infamously evident in the circumstances surrounding the period of the 1692 witch trials in Salem, Massachusetts. In January of 1692, in the small village of Salem, young girls started displaying odd behavior. The local physician could not provide a reasonable diagnosis for their ailment, which included seizures, blasphemous shouting and catatonic stupors ("The Salem Witch Trials"). When the townsfolk pressed the

young girls to confess who in the community was bewitching them with such a curse, they named three citizens of the town. The children named a slave and two upstanding women of the community. The citizens of Salem had no explanation for the behavior of the children, so they believed their symptoms to be the work of the devil. Panic, fear and hysteria ran rampant throughout their community. When it was all said and done, “nineteen victims of the witch-hunt had been hanged, one crushed to death under the weight of stones and at least four died in prison awaiting trial” (“The Salem Witch Trials”). In addition to the human casualties of the Salem witch trials, one dog suspected of witchcraft was also hanged.

McCarthyism

On February 9, 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy grabbed the attention of the country during his infamous speech in Wheeling, West Virginia. Senator McCarthy began his speech with the line: “Today we are engaged in a final, all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity. The modern champions of communism have selected this as the time. And, ladies and gentlemen, the chips are down, they are truly down” (McCarthy 191). With this speech he began a tumultuous and unforgettable period of persecution and tyranny against anyone and everyone who was in his path. It was during this very speech that he declared: “I have in my hand 57 cases of individuals who would appear to be either card-carrying members or certainly loyal to the Communist Party, but who nevertheless are still helping to shape our foreign policy” (McCarthy 193). With the sheer weight of his words, Sen. McCarthy had effectively cast a dark shadow of doubt upon the purity of our citizens: from the government officials, to Hollywood executives, to the neighbor living next door.

In spite of the freedom from any invasive and baseless persecution (such as religion-based) guaranteed by our founding fathers, almost instantaneously our country was turned on its side by the implication that Communists could be anyone, anywhere. Senator McCarthy brought the suspicion of others into our midst, and it was a cloud of hypercognitive awareness that our country could not shake. It is the domino-effect of fingers pointing at fingers, bringing the routine operation of our government under intense scrutiny. Senator McCarthy was successful in achieving an immortal name for himself in the history books as the term “McCarthyism” has become integrated into our everyday language as synonymous for a tyrant-breeding hysteria with the baseless persecution of innocent individuals.

During the era of McCarthyism, even the most routine event could cause everyday citizens to go out of their way to avoid speculation:

In the late 1950s a group of graduate students at the University of Chicago wanted to have a coffee vending machine installed outside the Physics Department for the convenience of people who worked there late at night. They started to circulate a petition to the Buildings and Grounds Department, but their colleagues refused to sign. They did not want to be associated with the allegedly radical students whose names were already on the document. (Schrecker 92)

This event was representative of many of its kind. Citizens were driven to avoid any social interaction or association that might provoke allegations of allegiance to the Communist party. During the height of the McCarthyism era unemployment was not only happening at the hands of the government. “Major corporations like General Electric and U.S. Steel announced that they would discharge any worker who took the Fifth Amendment, and other employers made it equally clear that they would do the same” (Schrecker). Additionally, “the *New York Times* justified its firing of a copyreader in the foreign news department as a matter of national security; had he worked on the sports desk, the *Times* explained, he could have kept his job” (Schrecker). The darkest hours of the “Red Scare” pitted family members, friends, and neighbors against each other. With the cloak of suspicion descending into every corner of society, it is only natural that

the movie industry would reflect the plight of the country because no one was immune to McCarthyism.

McCarthyism in Hollywood

McCarthyism spread into Hollywood “in June 1950 with the publication of... a 213-page compilation of the alleged Communist affiliations of 151 actors, writers, musicians, and other radio and television entertainers” (Schrecker). Once their name was on a list, it was practically impossible for them to get cleared in time to save their careers. Often, the accused had to resort to whatever means they could in order to survive the scrutiny. “The show business people who couldn’t or wouldn’t clear themselves soon became unemployable and ostracized. Some left the country – if they could get passports” (Schrecker). In fact, some of the most notable and popular actors of this time period had to make public fools of themselves in order to get back into the good graces of their fans. Humphrey Bogart’s “rehabilitation required an article in a fan magazine confessing, ‘I’m no Communist,’ just an ‘American dope’”(Schrecker). Some blacklisted writers began writing under pseudonyms in order to continue working. However, writers who used pseudonyms or other people operating as “fronts” to represent their writing were no longer able to command their previous salaries.

During the period of the McCarthyism era, both the television and the film industry suffered quite a bit. Citizens were taught, through watching the examples of others, to be cautious in their personal and professional lives. As a result, “the blacklist contributed to the reluctance of the film industry to grapple with controversial social or political issues” (Schrecker 93). The industry, and its professionals, were dealt an extreme blow during the pivotal paranoid persecutions of individuals thought to have ties with the Red Scare.

Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* & Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*

Arthur Miller wrote his play *The Crucible* in direct response to the events he witnessed as a result of Senator Joseph McCarthy’s desire to eradicate Communism from our country. In 2000, Arthur Miller directly addressed the motivation he had to write his play as a mirror to the events of McCarthyism. He describes the frustration of resisting the notion-based war of the Red Scare because an “ideological war is like guerrilla war, since the enemy is an idea whose proponents are not in uniform but are disguised as ordinary citizens” (Miller, “Are You Now”). During the persecution of his friends and colleagues, as well as his own experiences in resisting the contagion of paranoia, Miller chose to write the play as a way of both keeping himself grounded and sending a message to the public. Miller states that “*The Crucible* was an attempt to make life real again, palpable and structured” (“Are You Now”). It was an acceptable outlet for Miller’s creative energy and personal social commentary to be received by an audience. One of the aspects that Miller fought against was the social paralysis that American citizens felt in their everyday lives. It wasn’t enough to worry about what your friends and family thought about you, now you had to worry what strangers in your community were thinking about you. To explain his choice of the Salem witch trials as the backdrop for his depiction of the events of the McCarthyism era, Miller stated:

A similar paralysis descended on Salem. In both places, to keep social unity intact, the authority of leaders had to be hardened and words of skepticism toward them constricted. A new cautionary diction, an uncustomary prudence inflected our way of talking to one another. The word socialism was all but taboo. Words had gotten fearsome. (“Are You Now”)

Almost as frightening as the general inaction of the American public was the deliberately eerie parallel to the historic events of the Salem witch trials.

Nathaniel Hawthorne's novel, *The Scarlet Letter*, originally published in 1850, depicts the social isolation that Hester Prynne faces from her small Puritanical community after she refuses to reveal the identity of her forbidden lover (Hawthorne). As a married woman in a Puritan community, shame and persecution are the result of an extra-marital affair. As Hester is led through the crowd in the opening scene of the novel with her daughter Pearl in her arms, her descent into complete ostracization from the community begins. According to the Puritan custom, Hester must wear a badge of her shame, the letter "A" for her sin of adultery. Hester turns her badge of shame into a work of envy with her superior embroidery skills. Even though she is shunned by her peers, Hester peacefully lives out the remainder of her life as an unacknowledged asset to her community (Hawthorne). Hester Prynne lives a life of persecution and abuse at the hands of her town's intolerant views. It is the "group think" mentality that rules the community. As long as the Puritan community can despise Hester for the beautifully embroidered sin she wears upon her chest, they can presume that their own lives are secure from the unsavory influence of the convicted sinner. It is the same "us" versus "them" philosophy that fired the flames of the hysteria surrounding the era of McCarthyism.

McCarthyism in Films

Throughout my selection of films, I hope to provide a vast selection of diverse works to impart to students how deeply and profoundly the Red Scare affected the sensibilities of the patriotic and innocent "everyman" during the 1950s. Two notable documentaries that provide poignant and insightful glimpses into the American response to Communism were the 1961 documentary *Point of Order* and the 1983 documentary *Red Scare*. *Point of Order* incorporates actual televised footage of the Army-McCarthy hearings. *Red Scare*, also known as *Seeing Red: Stories of American Communists*, is a portrait of the courageous individuals who participated in the U.S. Communist Party and what that meant for their personal lives. For the older movies and the documentaries I have had luck searching for used copies on the internet, and they might also be available through a local library.

With the classic films *Manchurian Candidate* (1962), *North By Northwest* (1959), *A King In New York* (1957), and *The Front* (1976) I hope to provide a glimpse into the studio-released movies that were filmed immediately after (or shortly after) the end of The Red Scare. The two films in this section that are the most notable are *The Front*, with Woody Allen, and *A King In New York*, with Charlie Chaplin. Allen's film tells the story of the Red Scare era while incorporating footage of authentic survivors. This depiction of the actual victims of McCarthy's agenda allows the true telling of the personal impact that McCarthyism had on the lives of individuals. And, Chaplin's film is a priceless rendition of the hysteria of the Red Scare. It is my hope that with these movies the students will get a firsthand impression of the tone and pervasive mood that immediately resulted from the unfounded persecution of everyday citizens, as well as the initial impressions of the long-lasting impact that the convict-now-ask-questions-later philosophy of the McCarthy supporters has permanently imparted upon our American landscape.

And, in order to provide the most comprehensive glimpse possible, I have incorporated several modern, or contemporary, films that address the issues of McCarthyism. The 1991 Robert DeNiro film, *Guilty by Suspicion*, examines the role and the power of the HUAC (House Un-American Committee). In 2005's *Good Night and Good Luck*, the contemporary film noir represents the courage it took to stand up against a government system based entirely on paranoia and hysteria. The most recent film that I have included in my curriculum unit is one that I think will surprise and captivate the students while reinforcing the relevance of the residual effects of McCarthyism in today's social climate. The full-length animated feature film, *Justice League: New Frontier*, released this year, is a re-imagining of the formation of the "Justice League." In this film, when the founding members create the League it is in response to the growing fear of Communism and alien invasion. With the selection of films I have collected to support my

curriculum unit, the students will be able to track the influence and impact of Senator McCarthy's legacy from its origin to the present day.

LESSON PLANS: Lessons are designed for approximately 3-4 weeks (90 minute lessons) or 5-6 weeks (45 minute lessons)

Lesson Plan One: Understanding Emotional Responses

Objectives: TEKS 14.A. - 9.B. - 1.B. - 7.B.

Materials/Resources: Audio copy of *War of the Worlds* by Orson Welles, Student Response Journal, Student Response Handout, and strips of paper.

Warm-Up/Do-Now: Instruct students to write for 5 minutes about something that they have seen or heard on the television or radio that they had an emotional response to when they saw it. Ask them to write down everything that they remember about what they saw and heard and how it made them feel. If they need additional assistance getting started, prompt them by providing examples such as Hurricane Katrina or September 11, 2001. Take a few minutes at the beginning of class to allow the students to voluntarily share their journal responses with the class. As a class, briefly discuss their journal responses. What do they remember most clearly, the images or the sounds? Why?

Procedure/Activities:

After completing the warm-up exercise, provide each student with a worksheet that has guided emotional-response question prompts on it. This worksheet will be the student response handout that they will use to record their emotional responses to the radio broadcast.

After everyone has a handout, ask them to listen to the following radio broadcast and actively take notes of their emotional responses while they are listening. (Example questions for the student response handout: What is your initial response to the announcer? Why? What does his voice make you think of? What is the tone (mood) set by the announcer? What is the most striking sound effect? Does this broadcast sound like it is "authentic" or manufactured? Why? Etc. Please note that because the original broadcast is almost an hour in length, this activity could carry over into the second day.

After the students have listened to the entire radio broadcast, guide a whole class discussion on their individual responses. During the discussion, ask them to consider and respond to the following:

1. How has your environment (educational/classroom setting during the daytime) impacted or influenced your emotional response? Why?
2. Considering the environmental setting of Orson Welles's audience members (Halloween night in living rooms across America), what was the potential for a different emotional response? Why?
3. How does the environment of an audience change the potential for an emotional response to this broadcast?

After they have had ample opportunity to consider the broadcast from the perspective of the original audience members, ask them to partner-up to work in pairs. Once they have been grouped into pairs, ask each group to create one original statement that would cause fear and panic among the student population *if it were read on the morning announcements tomorrow*. (For Example: "All students who do not adhere to the dress code will be suspended immediately," etc.)

Hand each group one strip of paper on which to write their statement. After each group has contributed a strip of paper with an original statement written on it, collect them and display them

on the board at the front of the class. Read the list of statements aloud to the entire class. Ask them to imagine how their peers might respond to each one of these statements if they were spoken over the morning announcements without knowing that they were not true. Finally, have the students review their responses to the guided questions on their student-response worksheet.

Evaluation/Assessment: At the end of class, have the students discuss and reflect how and why their view of Orson Welles's radio broadcast might have changed. Also, looking back at the statements that were created for the announcements, have the students provide a peer-assessment of each other's work. As a class, rank the fabricated announcements in order from least believable (and least likely to cause an emotional response) to the most believable (and the most likely to cause an emotional response).

Lesson Plan Two: Introduction to McCarthyism

Objectives: TEKS 1.A. – 8.A. – 4.C.

Materials/Resources: Copy of the 1961 documentary, *Point of Order*, and the 1984 documentary *Seeing Red*.

1. **Guided lecture student handout:** Because the background history of Senator McCarthy, and his era of McCarthyism, is extensive, I recommend providing each student with a guided lecture handout. This handout should be derived directly from the informative background lecture that will be presented to them. The handout will mirror the lecture precisely, with the exception that several key concepts, dates, or names will be replaced with blanks. The students will follow along with the lecture to fill-in the missing information. This method will keep the students engaged and convey a large amount of historical information at the same time.
2. **Student Film Response Handout:** Provide a student film response packet for each student to record their emotional responses and opinions of each film that they watch throughout the unit. Each film shown to the students should be represented in the packet, and every film should have the same guiding questions following it. (Example questions for the packet: What is your initial response to this film? What is the most striking aspect of this film (characters/setting/sound effects/etc.)? Is this film presenting a biased viewpoint? What perspective is the story being told from? What does the director want the audience to remember about this film? Etc.) Inform the students that they must keep this packet to record their responses for every film.

Warm-Up/Do-Now: Ask students to take the first few minutes of class to define propaganda. While they are defining the term in their own words, ask them to classify it as “helpful” or “harmful.” During their response time, ask them to consider how they would apply it to measures that our own government might take for our own protection, and then ask them to consider some scenarios that might make propaganda a useful and effective tool to get a message out to the general public.

Procedure/Activities:

Instruct the students to follow along on their guided lecture handout as they receive the corresponding historical background presentation. Present the class with a concise and detailed lecture covering the origin, development, and overall impact of McCarthyism. Be sure to highlight the paranoia and hysteria that followed Senator Joseph McCarthy's actions.

Explain to the class how a documentary film differs from a cinematic studio-production. Explain that a documentary can be a neutral and informative representation of an issue, or it can deliberately slant the information shown to manipulate the audience into sharing the views of the

filmmaker. Show the students the two documentaries (or excerpts from them) and instruct them to record their responses on their response packet.

Instruct the students to begin reading Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible*.

Evaluation/Assessment: After everyone has finished the film response packet questions, ask the entire class to describe how these films are presented. Are the films biased? Are they related to each other? How do they differ? Ask them if these films have changed their views, and if so, how and why? And finally, ask the students if these films appear to be accurate representations of the era of McCarthyism. Ask them to explain why or why not. Ask them to explain if (or how) these documentaries have the same potential to create an emotional reaction like the Orson Welles radio broadcast. And finally, ask the students to explain how the documentaries and the radio broadcast were designed and executed to evoke specific emotional responses.

Lesson Plan Three: McCarthy's "Witch Hunt"

Objective: TEKS 11.E.

Materials/Resources: Copy of the 1962 film *Manchurian Candidate*. Copy of the 1976 film *The Front*. Copy of the 1959 film, *North by Northwest*. Copy of the 1957 film, *A King in New York*.

Warm-Up/Do-Now: Ask the students to get into groups of 2-3 students. As individual groups, have the students discuss and predict the impact that the allegations of communism would have had on the private lives of citizens. Ask them if they think that the era of McCarthyism would have affected Hollywood, and why or why not. After 5-10 minutes, have each group present its prediction to the entire class.

Procedure/Activities:

Building on the instructional lesson about the history of Senator Joe McCarthy and the evolution of McCarthyism, emphasize the dramatic impact that the accusations had on the lives of the suspected individuals. Discuss the state of the economy of our country at the time and emphasize that all it took was a single visit to an informational meeting on the philosophy of communist ideals for a person to become implicated.

Discuss the particular effect that the "Red Scare" had on Hollywood. As a class, discuss the specific ways that Hollywood (writers, actors, and producers) fought back against the "Red Scare."

Present the class with the background information that inspired Arthur Miller to write *The Crucible*. Provide basic background knowledge of the Salem witch hunts to connect Miller's play to the events of the McCarthyism era.

Show the films (or excerpts): *Manchurian Candidate*, *The Front*, *North by Northwest*, and *A King in New York*. Have the students examine the distinctions between the roles of drama and humor used in these films, particularly as tools to express the attitudes towards McCarthyism. In addition, have the students consider how humor is used to represent the variations in overall attitude portrayed in the 1957 Charlie Chaplin film and the 1976 Woody Allen film. Ask the students to elaborate on how their views have changed towards the Anti-Communist attitudes of 1950s' Americans. Do they feel that the average American reacted reasonably to the threat of Communism? Why, or why not?

Instruct the students to finish reading Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible*. And, instruct the students to begin reading Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*.

Evaluation/Assessment – to be achieved over the course of several days: In small groups, have the students use humor or drama in order to create a one-act play script that reflects one of the fears they have previously listed as a response to the Orson Welles radio broadcast. After every

group has prepared a script, have the student groups perform their own miniature plays. As a class, evaluate the effectiveness of their use of humor or drama to get the proper emotional response from their audience.

Lesson Plan Four: Miller’s “Witch Hunt”

Objectives: TEKS 2.D. – 8.D. – 10.C.

Materials/Resources: Arthur Miller’s play, *The Crucible*, Copy of the 2008 full-length animated feature *The Justice League: New Frontier*. Copy of the 1991 film, *Guilty by Suspicion*. Copy of the 2005 film *Good Night and Good Luck*.

Warm-Up/Do-Now: Ask the students to write a brief description of how they think that McCarthyism might be portrayed in today’s films. Ask them to write down any differences that they would predict between the films made during and after the “Red Scare.” Have the students share their predictions with their classmates.

Procedure/Activities:

Show the recent films *The Justice League: New Frontier*, *Guilty by Suspicion*, and *Good Night and Good Luck* in their entirety, or in brief selected excerpts. Discuss how these films respond to the era of McCarthyism in different ways than the previous films.

Ask the students to discuss the characters and events of *The Crucible* as a parallel to the events and individuals that were prominent in the era of McCarthyism. Have the students relate the themes of manipulated emotional responses, propaganda, McCarthyism and the metaphorical “witch hunt” to Arthur Miller’s desired response to his play through the use of a graphic representation (like a Venn diagram). Students may work in small groups to collaborate.

Instruct the students to continue reading Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter*.

Evaluation/Assessment:

Continuing in the style of small group discussions, have the students group themselves by their favorite film from the unit. Once the students are grouped, ask them to work together to find 5 reasons (that they all agree on) that make this their favorite film. Have the groups share their answers with the class.

Lesson Plan Five: Persecution and Group Think

Objectives: TEKS 2.E. – 9.B. – 11.E.

Materials/Resources: Copies of Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* and Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*. Copy of the 1997 film, *The Crucible*, and the 1995 film, *The Scarlet Letter*.

Warm-Up/Do-Now: Ask the students to create a chart with three columns on a sheet of paper. At the top of each column, have the students write one of the following three headings: McCarthyism, *The Crucible*, *The Scarlet Letter*. Have the students work independently, or in pairs, to list the “group think” events and accusations that led to the persecution of individuals. Whenever possible, have the students refer to specific names, events, or specific results that occurred as a result of the events for each category.

Procedure/Activities:

Ask students to consider the enduring impact of the “Red Scare” on our country. Ask them to consider how paranoia and hysteria are easily spread. Refer to *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Crucible* as a foundation for their perspective. Show the films, or excerpts from the films, to highlight the contemporary responses to the events of the “Red Scare.”

Emphasize the similarities between the Puritan Witch Hunts of Salem in *The Crucible*, the social persecution of *The Scarlet Letter*, and use them to compare & contrast the contemporary manifestations of McCarthyism through these films.

Instruct the students to complete Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* by the beginning of this lesson.

Evaluation/Assessment:

Using the literature for comparison with the films, ask the students to explain why contemporary movies are still discussing the resonating aspects of McCarthyism. Why is this still relevant to us? To them? And finally, ask the students how much longer they think that movies and writers will still be discussing the era of McCarthyism and why.

CONCLUSION

My goal is to depict the themes of unchecked hysteria and persecution through the backdrop of the McCarthy era in a way that will engage students. It is my desire that the student be made aware of the ramifications of power and paranoia without a system of checks and balances. Through the events of the Salem Witch trials (portrayed in *The Crucible*) and the small town speculation that engulfs Hester Prynne's community (in *The Scarlet Letter*) I hope to have given my students an in-depth source of meaning to decipher the madness of Senator Joseph McCarthy's efforts to cleanse our country of Communism.

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