



YALE NATIONAL INITIATIVE

to strengthen teaching in public schools®

Curriculum Units by Fellows of the National Initiative
2005 Volume III: War and Civil Liberties

Arthur Miller's History Lesson: The Crucible as a Link from the Past through Mccarthyism to Present-Day Terrorism

Curriculum Unit 05.03.13, published September 2005
by Elouise E. White-Beck

Overview

This unit addresses the issue of civil liberties in today's America utilizing Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, which is included with extensive study questions and writing prompts in the McDougell Littell textbook *The Language of Literature: American Literature*, Houghton Mifflin 2002. This three-week unit is designed for eleventh grade scholars. In the Pittsburgh Public Schools, the scholars are students who are higher achieving than mainstream students but who have not qualified for the gifted program. Class size is usually 30 students with a fairly even distribution of males and females. Often, a scholars' class in my school will be made up of 22—25 white students and 5—8 Asian or African American students. In my high school there may be five or six sections each of Mainstream, Scholars, and Gifted English per grade level. Classes meet daily for 43 minutes. Suggestions for adapting this unit to other high school grade levels 9, 10, and 12 are included in **AppendixA**.

Civil liberties affect everyone. In times of war, a citizen's rights are endangered in many ways, including the possibility of the suspension of the writ of habeas corpus. This writ comes from British common law and dates back to 1671. Essentially, it states that a person who is arrested must be brought before a judge who orders the court appearance. In other words, people can't be arrested and held without a specific charge. In order to examine how this and other basic rights have fared in wartime, a brief look at the history of wars that have affected this country and the civil liberties of its citizens will be reviewed. Fortunately, the eleventh grade English curriculum is geared to coincide with that of the required American history course. A wealth of literature, nonfiction, and writing exercises are included, and the required test dates from early inhabitants of North America through the 1990s.

Rationale

Liberty is a major theme running throughout the history of North America. The Native Americans lived within their own microcosms for centuries with only tribal skirmishes interrupting their societies. When the Europeans arrived, conflicts arose between them and the natives whose land they usurped. Shortly thereafter,

Salem, Massachusetts became the site of witch hunts, with the arrest, trial, and execution of women accused of consorting with the devil. At about the same time, Dutch sailors introduced the new problem to the continent of African slaves. In all of these instances, there was no declaration of war, but human rights were violated. If this can happen in times of peace, what can be expected in times of war? World War I saw the civil liberties of German Americans attacked through the Palmer Raids (to be discussed in the next section), while World War II brought the internment of over 100,000 Japanese Americans who were brought inland away from the California coast where they were suspected of communicating with the Japanese armed forces. The Cold War, while undeclared, mushroomed into a massive infringement on American civil liberties through the House Un-American Activities Committee. This "witch hunt" will be a major focus in this paper.

Objectives/Strategies

The student will be able to:

- understand the connection between the past and present—through reading and discussing fiction and nonfiction works concerning civil liberties
- make judgments about the actions of early American settlers and the Native Americans—through evaluation of their motives for these actions
- improve in their ability to transfer knowledge from one experience to another—through comparing the play to the McCarthy Era and 9/11
- explore the idea that human nature doesn't change—through the historical perspective of fear motivating human behavior as evidenced in time of war
- understand dramatic structure and the Well-Made Play format—through material in the text, teacher lecture, hand-outs, and construction of their own Well-Made Play charts.
- write an original narrative based on what they learn from their reading and discussion—through full-process writing
- gain experience and facility in oral presentation—through performing their narratives for the class

The curriculum provides many opportunities to study the conflicts between different groups of people throughout America's history. Drawing on this wealth of literature and nonfiction, focus will be directed to the idea of civil liberties in times of war. With a few additional readings to the core curriculum (see **Bibliography**), students will be awakened to think of the civil liberties of their forefathers and well as their own and those of their descendants. After reading each act of the play, students will consider questions for in-depth discussion in class the next day (see **Appendix D**) and will view that portion of the film aided by a Video Viewing Response form (see **Appendix C**).

In an Internet report about what American high school students know about the First Amendment, a Chicago teacher offers this question:

- What kind of citizens do we want in 10 or 20 or 30 years? Do we want citizens
- that will blindly accept whatever the government tells them, or do we want a
- citizenry that expects the government to operate openly and transparently?¹

This is a question all educators should consider; indeed, most of us do. Our endeavor to help students become

valuable adults and citizens hinges on it.

Anticipatory Set

Prior to beginning the unit, it will be valuable to get the students thinking about their rights, both as citizens and as students in the classroom. This can be done just before the introductory lecture or at the beginning of the school year. I tend toward the second choice in order to set a precedent in the classroom and help to guide classroom behavior and expectations.

The first thing I will do is ask them what their rights are. Students will claim the right to talk, bring their cell phones to school, and listen to their I-Pods during class. They will insist that school personnel should not search their lockers and that if school personnel take away their cigarettes, lighters, and any other contraband items that they should get them back. After straightening out their false notions on these items I hope to get to the right to learn and to be able to learn without undue disruption. This should spark some discussion about whether a student has the right to misbehave to the point of making the classroom too noisy for the teacher to teach. Owning the responsibility for such an action must be made clear to all students. Listing all their ideas on the board (as well as my own ideas) will help to organize what they suggest visually.

After delineating the difference between a citizen's civil rights and liberties and those of a student in an American public school classroom, I can make a chart with the students' rights and responsibilities. Once these have been decided and posted these parameters should guide the workings of the classroom for the entire year and be firmly in place and recognizable when it is time to begin the study of the history of civil liberties described below.

Introductory Material

This introductory information on wars and non-war times of conflict will be the opening lecture of the unit. Students will gain an overview of the context in which we will study the play through this.

The Civil War

The teacher will begin the lecture with the introduction of England's Habeas Corpus Act of 1671. The English law stated that a prisoner could only be detained through a special order by the King or the Privy Council. If such an order could not be shown in court, the prisoner was to be released. This basis for America's law substitutes the President and Congress for the British authorities. Abraham Lincoln's executive order suspending the writ of habeas corpus in the spring of 1861 demonstrates how war can cause a disruption in the civil liberties of a nation's citizens based on fear. Lincoln claimed that executive suspension of the writ should be enough to justify detention in any court.

Abraham Lincoln first suspended the writ of habeas corpus on April 27, 1861. Patterned after England's law, the main idea of this law is that it guarantees that a citizen cannot be held without arrest for more than a

specified amount of time before being brought before an officer of the court. Due to the fear of treasonous activity, Lincoln was advised by Attorney General Edward Bates to suspend the writ of *habeas corpus*. Lincoln's reluctance to accept such a grave responsibility was overcome when states began seceding from the union and the question of Maryland's neutrality became central to the union's survival.

Gore Vidal's novel, *Lincoln*, is historical fiction, and although it is not the last word in factual information, it does pose some interesting possibilities. In a letter to General Scott, Lincoln authorized the commanding general of the U.S. Army to suspend the writ of *habeas corpus*, if necessary, in the line of duty (Vidal, 2000, p. 25).

Then John Merryman, a civilian, was arrested on constitutional suspicion of treason. The case of *Ex Parte Merryman* became the first test of Lincoln's authority as the President of the United States to legally suspend the writ of *habeas corpus*. Chief Justice Taney, unpopular with Lincoln due to his decision in the *Dred Scott* case, heard the case and decreed that the President of the United States had no authority to suspend the writ of *habeas corpus*, nor could he authorize any military personnel to do so. Taney later wrote that this authority lay in Congress and that the President alone was not authorized to order it (Vidal, 2000, p. 34).

Taney also ruled that any military officer who arrested a person was obligated to deliver him to a civil authority. This latter action caused great debate and unrest over the legality and feasibility of remanding military arrests to civil courts. The difference between the functioning of the civil courts and the military courts made this decision controversial. In speaking to a special session of the Congress on July 4th, Lincoln pointed out that the Constitution did not specify which part of the government had the authority to suspend the writ. In the meantime, Merryman continued his confinement at Fort Henry, was finally indicted and granted bail, and his case was never brought to trial (Vidal, 2000, p. 39). (ditto)

World War I

World War I, known until the Second World War as the Great War, tested the American public and its laws and government a second time. Fear motivated discrimination against German nationals as well as naturalized citizens of the United States. Even before the United States entered the war there was widespread fear that anti-war sentiment could threaten the authority of the government. Added to this were fears about the radical labor movement and the hint of communism emanating from Europe. This led to massive civil liberty violations in the name of keeping the country safe for democracy (Linfield, 1990, pp. 56-57).

As a result of this turmoil, citizens started vigilante groups to combat any person who did not seem patriotic enough. The rise of labor organizations resulted in martial law enactment to quell riots and uprisings. It seems as though everyone was jumpy, expecting to be attacked by an enemy at any time. While the government was supposedly investigating and controlling anti-American activities, it was also working to suppress labor unions and the feminist movement.

Several laws were passed at this time including the Espionage and Sedition Acts and the Trading with the Enemy Act (1917-18). Many other civil liberties were abused. Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, assisted by J. Edgar Hoover mounted a massive arrest of Russians, deporting them. These Palmer Raids began on December 21, 1919 and continued through May of the following year. The justification of these raids was "to protect U.S. citizens from dangerous radicals. . ." (Rehnquist, 1998, p. 57). Jail conditions were inhuman in many cases. For instance, a hundred prisoners were confined in a cell with only one square yard of space for each. Freedom of the Press was severely curtailed and Freedom of Speech was suppressed. Even the U.S. Postal system was compromised when workers were ordered not to deliver mail with subversive messages. It

took ten years after the end of the Great War for "patriot fever" to die down.

World War II

During World War II the United States interned between 110,000 and 120,000 Japanese Americans in detention camps, further proving how national fear can lead to irrational acts and total violation of civil liberties. Due to proven espionage activity on the Hawaiian Islands prior to December 7, 1941, the U.S. government began to fear a replay of Pearl Harbor on the West Coast of California with so many Japanese Americans residing there. This fear led to Executive Order 9066, ordering all persons of Japanese descent away from the coast and into internment camps further inland. Most of the Japanese Americans complied without question but three young men, Nisei, born, raised, and college-educated in the U.S. refused. Though the Supreme Court ruled otherwise, these cases suggest the unconstitutionality of Executive Order 9066.

The cases of Gordon Hirabayashi, Minoru Yasui, and Fred Korematsu were argued together in San Francisco. Due to procedural variations, the cases reached the Supreme Court at different times. Hirabayashi and Yasui were sent directly to the Supreme Court.

The case of *Korematsu v. The United States* (1945) came before the Supreme Court after Korematsu was convicted of refusal to leave his home in California for a relocation camp in federal court and lost on an appeal in the circuit court (Rehnquist, 1998, p. 267).

The problem in the whole internment question was the legality of such a move at that time. According to the authorities, any decree the government must make in time of war to ensure the safety of its citizens and its soil is permissible. The other half of the problem is the ethics of such an act. Uprooting over a hundred thousand people and forcing them to live under restricted and substandard conditions is a monstrous way to treat people. Fear was the motivation. It seems that fear overcomes good judgment every time.

The Cold War

Following World War II, the U.S. government was not relaxed about national security. Although the continental United States had escaped invasion and air attacks throughout the war, the fear remained. In the years after World War II, there were bomb-shelter manias, air raid drills, and instructional films on how to "duck and cover" and how to scrub well under your fingernails if you happened to be in a fallout area. Grade school children in the 1950s learned to tell the difference between the fire alarm and the air raid alarm. Special drills were practiced where children were marched to the basement of the school with their coats and instructed to lie on the floor—on the left side, to protect your heart—alternating boy/girl. This last was supposed to protect us girls by having a strong male nearby. Or maybe it was so that if half the building was bombed there wouldn't be only girls or only boys dying.²

Without a group to intern during this time, fanatics went on a hunt to ferret out Communists. This was a huge fear in post-war America. The idea lurked everywhere that the "Reds" were coming to destroy our way of life.

To this end, Senator Joseph McCarthy made it his personal mission to identify each and every Communist and Communist sympathizer within his reach. He extended his reach through intimidation, forcing people to "name names," ultimately jeopardizing the careers and freedom of many Americans. The more prominent of these were people in the entertainment industry. Once a person had been "named" he was blacklisted and could not work—at least under his own name. Hollywood writers made it through this time by hiring "fronts" or other writers to submit scripts under their names.

This is an embarrassing chapter in American history. Once again, motivated by fear, peoples' baser instincts overtook reason and what is right. One person who zeroed in on this was playwright Arthur Miller. His drama, *The Crucible*, utilized the Salem witch trials of the 1600s to illustrate how hysteria can lead to disastrous results. Published in 1952, the play soon found its way to Broadway in the 1953 season where it enjoyed box office and critical success despite losing out in comparison to Miller's previous *Death of a Salesman*. It was no secret at the time that Miller targeted McCarthy but critics upheld the play's integrity as a self-contained work that highlighted the witch trials in American history.³

In his eighties, Miller adapted his play for the screen. The major adjustment to the action was the playing out of the dancing in the woods. In the stage version this is past action reported by Abigail and others. The film offered an irresistible opportunity to show the event as the inciting incident. Performances by Winona Ryder and Daniel Day-Lewis drive this film, but, not surprisingly, it was not as well received as the play. Critics note the distance between the McCarthy Era and today's society as the reason. If this is true then the play's power as integrated drama does not bear out. However, in the light of this new Terrorist Age, the American public, and definitely the students, should once again be reminded of the terrible price of profiling, whether it is racial, ethnic, or any other arbitrary classification one can discern or invent.

America in the 21st Century

Today's students remember 9/11. The threat of terrorism is ever-present as an open-ended war with no declaration of war or any specific country to attack. These conditions make everyday situations seem threatening. Every day, students at my high school must pass through a metal detector and are monitored in the hallways by cameras. At airports, not only are our bags checked, we must submit to removing jackets and shoes. What will happen in the future on security matters and how important is this specifically to today's students and their ability to enjoy the liberty so hard won by their forebears? Many students will not have thought much about their civil liberties before, and even those that have will be thinking about them in a more personal way at the end of the unit.

Narrative

Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and McCarthyism

The transition to the discussion of American literature will reflect how art imitates life in an effort to understand and deal with the problems and fears people face in stressful times of war and civil unrest. This will be the emphasis for the study of *The Crucible*. While this play is widely taught as a caveat to students about judging others, the implications that Miller was presenting are often lost on high school students. After delving beyond the surface story of the Salem witch hunts, drawing the parallel to McCarthyism is a difficult transition for many students. Through the introduction of a possible, present-day threat to the students' own

civil liberties, they may be better able to make a connection.

Why did Arthur Miller feel compelled to write this play? What were his personal connections to the injustices being done by the House Un-American Activities Committee? And why choose the Salem witch trials as his parallel? Looking back at the theocracy governing Salem, perhaps Miller saw a parallel between that rule and the government in the Cold War era. The Salem goal was "to keep the community together, and to prevent any kind of disunity that might open it to destruction by material or ideological enemies" (McDougell Littell, 2002, p. 168). E. Miller Budick points out in his essay, "History and Other Spectres in *The Crucible*" that in the introduction to his *Collected Plays*, Miller asserts that he was attracted to the story of the Salem witch trials before McCarthyism. What he was really interested in was authoritarian systems and how they operated:

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 a terror, but a new subjective reality, a veritable mystique which was gradually assuming even a holy resonance. . . . It was as though the whole country had been born anew, without a memory even of certain elemental decencies which a year or two earlier no one would have imagined could be altered, let alone forgotten.⁴

The theocracy of Salem was absolute in its power. Later, the House Un-American Activities Committee became a power almost as strong. The fervor was contagious; many wanted to jump on the bandwagon while others were terrified into complying. In the McCarthy hearings as well as in the Salem witch trials, once one person opened up, others followed. What Miller highlighted was the inability of people to judge one another. While a government must make attempts to try people for crimes fairly, the task is monumental and the system an imperfect one.

Joe McCarthy didn't see it that way. He took on the arduous task of single-handedly weeding the Communists out of America. When he was finally censured by the Senate it was apparent what a brute and bully he had become. This is summed up quite succinctly by British writer Iris Murdoch: ". . . politicians aren't concerned with justice being done, they're concerned with justice seeming to be done as a result of their keen-eyed vigilance" (Murdoch, 1978, p. 34).

Imagine being a member of a small community with virtually no contact with the world outside the two dozen or so farms making up that community. Now think about the kind of people who inhabited the Salem, Massachusetts community in 1692. These Puritans were bound by strict rules governing their daily lives and their beliefs. Life in Salem in the 1690s would offer little variety. You would rarely meet anyone new, your chores would change only with the seasons, and the company you kept would be strictly controlled by church law, family interventions, and the limited leisure time available. What would young people do for amusement? In the play, Tituba became the novelty for the young girls because of her knowledge from her native Barbados. She spoke and sang in a language unknown to the others and mixed a cauldron of soup containing chicken blood. The girls danced around this in secret, as dancing was prohibited in Salem.

All these little things started out as tiny guilty pleasures, but soon, fear and guilt overtook the girls and what had started out as sport due to boredom, grew as the accusations became deadly. Think about the power of suggestion. If someone tells you she is casting a spell on you and you are a suggestible personality, you might allow yourself subconsciously to believe it. The beginning of group hysteria is easy to see at the end of Act I of *The Crucible*. Once Tituba confesses publicly to Reverend Parris, Betty and Abigail start naming names, too. This natural occurrence in the play is the first of many parallels to the naming of names in the McCarthy hearings.

In the commentary in the McDougell Littell text, a suggestion is made that the reader is led to see the Devil as a necessary part of a respectable view of cosmology (McDougell Littell, 2002, p. 182). It balances out good to acknowledge evil. In the Puritan society so concerned with beating the natural tendencies of evil out of a person, the manifestation must become very real. Voltaire said that if there were no God, it would be necessary to invent Him. If this is true, then man must surely invent the Devil, too. This is the only convenient place to place blame. Psychologists would call this *transference*, the act of transferring the responsibility of blame from oneself to another person or object.

So the question may come down to whether or not the accused were guilty of witchcraft or the accusers were just intent on blaming them or maybe the events surrounding the Salem witch trials were just due to the rye crop and the fungal infestation, *Ergotism*. In her book *Poisons of the Past*, Mary Kilbourne Matossian traces the spread of this disease from Eastern Europe and documents the climatic conditions that made it a likely source for the "fits" experienced by the people in Salem in 1692. Due to a failed wheat crop, rye became a staple grain. Rye that is infested with ergot appears with small buds or spurs growing among the grain on each stalk. Many of the symptoms of its consumption correspond to those reported by the citizens of Salem. These included hallucinations, and feelings of being pricked or pinched. The basic ergot alkaloid is lysergic acid hydroxyethylamide, or LSD (Matossian, 1989, pp. 115-122). This possibility could explain some of the behaviors of the era, but could not have been responsible for everything. For that, group hysteria must occur. In a small community with one outsider, represented in *The Crucible* by Tituba, the slave from Barbados, it was easy to assign, or *transfer* the blame. In the same vein, blaming the Communists for everything was en vogue in The Cold War era.

How does one explain away the hysteria during the McCarthy Era? Was there something in the water? Was Brigadier General Jack D. Ripper (from *Dr. Strangelove*) right about our "precious bodily fluids" being poisoned through some plot involving fluoridation? In contrast to the society at the time of the Salem trials, the 1950s found this country enjoying a return to solid family life following WWII. In the documentary, *Rosie the Riveter*⁵, five women who were in the workforce during World War II recall their experiences. "Rosie the Riveter" was a popular poster featuring a white American female with her hair tied up and sleeves rolled up to show her capable biceps. This indicated the willingness of the American women to step in and temporarily take over for the boys who were away at war. Following the end of the war, women were encouraged to get back into their nurturing roles as homemakers as the men went to college on the GI Bill or reassumed their jobs (*Rosie the Riveter*, 1980). Everything should have been fine but everything wasn't fine. Senator Joe McCarthy felt compelled to ferret out the subversive element in American society that he was sure would cause the end of democracy. Many law-abiding citizens' careers and lives were destroyed by political zealotry in his endeavor to keep America safe for democracy. The fear of an invasion still loomed; or perhaps he was just ambitious. Regardless, there was enough fear and suspicion to sway many people. How did he get away with it? Did he have that charisma that sucked others into his realm, making them believe in his cause simply because of his enthusiasm? If that was the case, then who was doing the bewitching?

Senator Joe McCarthy began his life as the fifth of what was to be a family with nine children, born in Wisconsin to farmers of Irish descent. An unattractive child with short arms and a barrel chest, he was protected by his mother who told him to "be somebody" (Rovere, 1959, p. 80). Nothing in his upbringing suggested that he would rise to the power he achieved. His five years of fame began only three years after he became a senator and ended three years before his death at age forty-eight.

At the beginning of his term he was unremarkable. Then, on February 10, 1950 he made a speech in Wheeling, West Virginia in which he stated that he and the Secretary of State had a list of several known

Communists in the State Department. That did it. Overnight, it seems, Joe McCarthy became an eponym. The political cartoonist Herbert Block (Herblock) coined the term "McCarthyism."⁶ To this day, the term is not a compliment, intimating that if something resembles McCarthyism it is extreme and unproven.

Fear soon overtook good judgment. McCarthy had boasted of knowledge and that gave him an aura of power. This blatant act was just the beginning of his desecration of American civil liberties. The Truman administration was completely cowed by him and *The Washington Post* voiced its hope that the Eisenhower era would stem the power McCarthy wielded, but it was not so. He flaunted his confidence and even was likened to Hitler (Rovere, 1959, p.18). While he was not anti-Semitic, he nevertheless wanted to "cleanse" away the Communist element. Rovere further recounts personal stories of some of the officials in Washington at the time actually blanching at the sound of McCarthy's name (Rovere, 1959, p.16). Just possessing the ability to instill that much fear in an entire administration is reminiscent of Hitler's reported charisma. The known difference is that McCarthy had no far reaching plans for what to do once he had rid the country of the Reds.

Rovere's book was published in 1959. In 1968, Roy Cohn published his book, *McCarthy*. In his description of how he met the senator, Cohn refers to Rovere as "a kind of one-man bureau of misinformation on the subject. . ." (Cohn, 1968, p. 45).

The transcript of Edward R. Murrow's interview with McCarthy from his television show *See it Now* reveals McCarthy's questioning tactics and Murrow's preparedness for the interview. Murrow pointedly corrects McCarthy with accurate documentation. For instance, when McCarthy states that only the left wing press criticized him, Murrow brings out a chart with quotes from eight major U.S. papers.

Another example was McCarthy's questioning of Reed Harris about the content of a book he had written in 1932—more than two decades earlier, *and* further criticized the man for allowing himself to be represented by an attorney provided by the American Civil Liberties Union. The point McCarthy was making was that the ACLU was *listed* as a front for the Communist Party. Murrow's point was that Harris' case was important to McCarthy only as a vehicle for pointing out the ACLU's alleged alliance with the Communist party. One month later McCarthy said that Murrow was "the leader and the cleverest of the jackal pack which is always found at the throat of anyone who dares to expose Communist traitors."⁷

What about today? What do we believe here and now? Do we feel safe, and why or why not? How can we really tell? We are now facing an uncertainty unlike any seen on this continent since the Revolutionary War. Since 9/11 everything in America has changed, and for the first time since then, we Americans live with the uneasy knowledge that terrorists could strike again—anywhere—not overseas, but here—right here where we live. How safe do we feel that the government is protecting us? And how far are we willing to go to be safe, i.e. what civil liberties are we willing to compromise in order to maintain our safety and the safety of our way of life?

These are difficult questions. To bring these questions to a place in a teenager's reality it is vital to come up with an issue that is near and dear to a teenager's heart. This would be his/her music. With this in mind, the original narrative exercise will put forth several questions for the students to consider, forcing them to choose between obeying the law or breaking it and to examine what they believe and how strongly they believe it (see **Appendix E**).

A culminating project for the unit will be a speculative narrative. This is a problem-solving exercise for the students that will ask them to consider how they would react to a suspension of some of their civil liberties

(see **Appendix F**). For example, how would they react if recorded music were suddenly outlawed because of some belief that subversive messages were encoded that posed a threat to the government? No CDs, no I-Pods, only live music without amplification. Students will be forced to decide how they will react to this encroachment on their lives. Will they find a way to circumvent this government edict (or outright break the law) or will they obey it? Will any of them mount a legal campaign to overturn it?

My hope is that the students will discover for themselves the role that human nature plays in all of these events and in all events in which people are involved. Through examining two examples from the past, they will come to realize that regardless of the laws of men or nature, civil liberties must be constantly fought for in an effort to maintain the balance between democracy, First Amendment Rights, and national security—a formidable, but not impossible task.

Classroom Activities

This unit will encompass fifteen days of classes plus homework reading and writing.

Day One

Teacher lecture will be drawn from the above narrative with opportunities to stop for Q&A and discussion. One suggestion is to have "habeas corpus" written on the board when the students come in and see what their reactions are. Some may know what it means and offer explanations and some will not know. Whether any of the students will wonder why it's on the board in *English* class will be interesting to discover. Following the discussion/definition of *habeas corpus*, the teacher will proceed with the lecture encompassing the highlights from the Civil War, WWI and WWII, the Cold War, and 9/11.

Day Two

Background information from the textbook about colonial times and Puritan customs will be read and discussed. Students will receive Handout #1 with definitions, study questions and the Well-Made Play Chart (see **Appendix B**).

Day Three

Students will volunteer to read aloud the roles in Act I and will begin reading, stopping often to check for understanding and for Q&A. Homework will be to continue filling in the Well-Made Play Chart.

Day Four

Students will finish reading aloud Act I and then will view that portion of the 1996 Nicholas Hytner film accompanied by a Video Viewing Response Form #1 (see **Appendix C**). Homework will be the *Comprehension Check* items (see **Appendix D**). Students will continue to fill in their Well-Made Play Charts.

Day Five

At the end of the first week, one class will be devoted to reviewing everything read, viewed, written and discussed concerning Act I.

Day Six

Students will volunteer to read aloud the roles in Act II. They will read the entire act, stopping to check for understanding and Q&A. Students will watch the second part of the film accompanied by Video Viewing Response Form #2 (see **Appendix C**). Homework will be the *Comprehension Check* in the text (see **Appendix D**). Students will continue to fill in their Well-Made Play Charts.

Day Seven

Students will volunteer to read aloud the roles in Act III and will begin reading, stopping to check for understanding and Q&A. Students will receive Handout #2 detailing their writing assignment (see **Appendix E**). Students will continue to fill in their Well-Made Play Charts.

Day Eight

Students will finish reading aloud the third act and watch the next part of the film with Video Viewing Response Form #3 (see **Appendix C**). Homework will be the *Comprehension Check* in the text (see **Appendix D**).

Day Nine

At the end of the reading Acts II and III a class will be devoted to reviewing everything read, viewed, written and discussed concerning these two acts.

Day Ten

Students will volunteer to read aloud the roles in Act IV and reading will begin, stopping often to check for understanding and Q&A. Homework will be the *Comprehension Check* in the text (see **Appendix D**).

Day Eleven

Students will finish reading aloud the play and watch the end of the film with Video Viewing Response Form #4 (see **Appendix C**).

Days Twelve, Thirteen, and Fourteen

The writing assignment will be due on Day Twelve. Students will be scheduled to present their work and open their ideas to discussion.

Day Fifteen

The unit will end with either a test or a paper for which the students will be allowed to use the text, their notes, and the Video Viewing Response Forms and comparing the film to the text (see **Appendix F**).

Annotated Bibliography/Resources

Annotated teacher bibliography

Bloom, Harold, ed., *Arthur Miller*, Chelsea House, 1987

This collection of critical essays includes work about many of Miller's plays.

Broudin, Jean Christophe, 2003, online at <http://www.geocities.com/ResearchTriangle/Lab/4191/MILLER/millers.html>. This site offers questions and discussion about why Arthur Miller wrote *The Crucible*.

Cohn, Roy, *McCarthy*, New American Library, 1968

This first person account by McCarthy's loyal supporter and notorious prosecutor is biased but worth consulting.

Demos, John, *A Little Commonwealth: Family Life in Plymouth Colony*, Oxford University Press, 1970, 2000

This book describes family hierarchy, laws and customs, and descriptions of objects found in the home.

Goldstein, Robert J., *Political Repression in Modern America*, Univ. Of Illinois Press, 2001

A good source of information about the time just prior to World War I and during the war

Gussow, Mel, *Conversations with Miller*, Applause Theatre and Cinema Books, 2002

A series of conversations that took place in 2001 and 2002 offering insight in the playwright and his work

<http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/cold.war/kbank/profiles/mccarthy>

This offers a brief biography and photo of McCarthy. Accessed 12/7/04

Hytner, Nicholas, dir., *The Crucible*, 20th Century Fox, 1996 (film)

Newest film version with Daniel Day-Lewis and Winona Ryder, pictures from which are used in the McDougell Littell text

Johnson, Claudia Durst, and Johnson, Vernon E., *Understanding the Crucible*, The Greenwood Press, 1998

A handbook for teachers and students with issues, sources, and historical documents, written to be easily accessible for students.

Lambiek, online at http://www.lambiek.net/block_herbert.htm. Accessed 7/14/05

Site devoted to cartoons of the late Herbert Block.

McDougell Littell, *The Language of Literature: American Literature*, Houghton Mifflin, 2002

Eleventh grade core text including prose, poetry, drama, grammar, and writing all rooted in American literature. The entire text of *The Crucible* along with study questions, writing assignments and photos of the Hytner film. The text comes with accompanying grammar book and workbook.

Matossian, Mary Kilbourne, *Poisons of the Past*, Yale University Press, 1989

An examination of diseases, fungi, and other illnesses from past centuries, with illustrations and tables

Mills, Michael, 2005, online at <http://www.moderntimes.com/palace/kazan/>

This site is about Elia Kazan and Arthur Miller and what happened when Kazan was called before the HUAC. Accessed 1/10/05

Murdoch, Iris, *The Nice and the Good*, Penguin Books, 1978

This novel set in England in the 1960s concerns many everyday citizens from politicians to children, all who make up the household and friends of a particular family. Included here for Murdoch's opinions.

Murrow, Edward R., online at <http://honors.umd.edu/HONR269J/archive/Murrow540309.html>

This is a transcript of Edward R. Murrow's television show *See it Now* from March 9, 1954 entitled "A Report on Senator Joseph R. McCarthy." Accessed 12/7/04

Reeves, Thomas C., ed., *McCarthyism*, The Dryden Press, 1973

A dozen essays from supporters and detractors of Senator McCarthy including both Cohn and Rovere

Rehnquist, William, *All the Laws but One: Civil Liberties in War Time*, Vintage Books, 1998

This offers extensive background material on laws during the Civil War and the events that caused Lincoln to suspend the writ of *habeas corpus*.

Rovere, Richard H., *Senator Joe McCarthy*, Harcourt, Brace, World, 1959

This biography of McCarthy written soon after the fact by someone who was present throughout most of McCarthy's tenure is valuable because of the short space of time between the events and when the author reported them—many of which he experienced firsthand.

Schrecker, Ellen, *Many Are the Crimes: McCarthyism in America*, Little, Brown, 1998

Schrecker's book begins by personalizing the far-reaching effects of the McCarthy Era and expands her childhood experience showing the repercussions of those times.

Thill, Barbara, Publications Adviser/Journalism Teacher, Chicago, online at <http://www.mindfully.org/Reform/2005/Future-First-Amendment31jan05.htm>

This site offers a discussion about the First Amendment and high school students' knowledge of what it means. Accessed on 7/14/05.

Vidal, Gore, *Lincoln*, Vintage, 2000

Vidal's book gives more insight into Lincoln and his decisions during the Civil War.

Annotated reading list for students

Hytner, Nicholas, dir., *The Crucible*, 20th Century Fox, 1996 (film)

Newest film version with Daniel Day-Lewis and Winona Ryder, pictures from which are

used in the McDougell Littell text

Johnson, Claudia Durst, and Johnson, Vernon E., *Understanding the Crucible*, The Greenwood |Press, 1998

A handbook for teachers and students with issues, sources, and historical documents

McDougell Littell, *The Language of Literature: American Literature*, Houghton Mifflin, 2002

Eleventh grade core text including prose, poetry, drama, grammar, and writing all rooted in American literature.

List of materials for classroom use

- Textbook— McDougell Littell, *The Language of Literature: American Literature*, Houghton Mifflin, 2002

- Video of *The Crucible*, 20th Century Fox, 1996, directed by Nicholas Hytner

- Handouts and other teacher-prepared materials from the Appendices

Appendix A

Topic suggestions for other grade levels:

Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451* is the designated ancillary text in the Pittsburgh Public Schools 9th grade curriculum. Truffaut's film of the same name is a great accompaniment.

Kurt Vonnegut's short story, "Harrison Bergeron" is in the 10th grade curriculum and is included in the McDougell Littell text.

Excerpts from Elie Wiesel's *Night* are included in the 12th grade McDougell Littell text.

There is no film for either of these but parts of *Schindler's List* could be used for *Night*.

Appendix B

Day One handout with due dates, definitions and study questions

English 3 PSP NAME _____

The Crucible—Handout #1

White-Beck

Today we will begin the study of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. Provided for you here are: the schedule for our work on the play, key words and terms for you to define while we are reading, and questions for you to consider while reading. Bring this packet to class and be ready to show your progress daily.

Key words and terms for understanding the background information

First Amendment Rights

civil liberties

war

habeas corpus

The Civil War

World War I

sedition

treason

World War II

internment

curfew

McCarthyism

communism

The Cold War

9/11

Terrorism

(This Dramatic Terminology can be a poster displayed right next to your Well-Made Play chart as well as a student handout)

Dramatic Terminology

Theme the main idea or point of the story

Plot what happens

Dialogue speech between two or more characters

Monologue speech by one character

Soliloquy speech by one character alone on stage made to let the audience know what s/he is thinking

Aside speech addressed to the audience by a character which the other characters on stage are not supposed to hear

Subtext the underlying meaning of the line of dialogue; what the character is thinking or really means

Stage Directions appear in italics and let the reader know what action is taking place

Protagonist the character that the audience wants to win his or her objective

Antagonist the character trying to prevent the protagonist from achieving his or her objective

(The **Well-Made Play Chart** is included at the end of the unit.)

In the **Exposition Column**, students will fill in the following: Who, What, Where, and When. Use a familiar story as an example; a Disney movie is usually a good choice. For *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* the Exposition column would include this information:

- Snow White, a young girl despised by her stepmother for her beauty
- Maleficent, her stepmother, intent on being the "fairest of them all."
- A Talking Mirror that advises Maleficent
- In a small kingdom long ago surrounded by woods

In the **Rising Action/Complications** column add in the problems that occur and that are likely to occur:

- Maleficent orders her servant to have Snow White killed.
- Her servant is unable to kill Snow White.
- Snow White finds shelter with Seven Dwarfs where she meets and falls in love with The Prince.
- The Mirror tells Maleficent Snow White is still alive.
- Maleficent disguises herself and successfully poisons Snow White.

The **Crisis Decision** is made by the character that determines the **Climax**, or the Highest Point in the story:

The Prince arrives to find Snow White in her glass coffin and decides to give her a last kiss. This decision dislodges the poisoned apple from her throat and she is restored to life.

The **Falling Action** is what happens as a result of the Climax.

- The Dwarfs are overjoyed.
- Maleficent's evil plan is foiled.

The **Resolution/Conclusion** is the new order that is in place as a result of all the earlier actions:

Snow White and The Prince live Happily Ever After.

This chart should be drawn on the board by the teacher and the Exposition part filled in as a group. Then, students should fill in the rest of the information as they read. This helps them to identify the information that fits into each category. Through this activity, students can sort out the events in the story and should be able to identify the theme through tracing the flow of events.

Appendix C

Video Viewing Response Forms #1—#4

Video Response Sheet for *The Crucible*—Act I

- How does the film compare to the play? What about the historical information you have learned? Is the
1. film the same or different? If it is different, does it work? Choose an example and explain whether or not you support the filmmaker's choices.
-
-

(NOTE: add lines in where necessary in items below as shown above before printing.)

How would you describe the music and the way it is used to someone who had not seen the film but had read the play? What does the composer do that is effective?

2. Which character(s) do you like and why? Which character(s) do you dislike and why?

White-Beck

NAME _____

Video Comparison Sheet for *The Crucible*—Act II

1. How are symbols portrayed in the props and set pieces?
2. What differences can you discern in tone or mood? How does the filmmaker achieve these changes?
3. Have your feelings or insights about any of the characters changed? How and why (or why not)?

White-Beck NAME _____

Video Response Sheet for *The Crucible*—Act III

1. How is the music helping to define the tone of the action? Is there a particular scene in which the music is effective?
2. Have you changed your opinion about the characters you liked and disliked since watching Acts I & II? Offer examples and explain.
3. What do you think of the crowd scenes in the film? Is it more effective on the screen or reading it? Offer examples and explain.

White-Beck NAME _____

Video Response Sheet for *The Crucible*—Act IV

1. Does the action seem more real and moving when you see and hear it than when you read it aloud? Why do you think this is so?

2. Now that you've seen the end of the film what is your overall impression? Would you recommend the film to anyone? Who and why?

Appendix D

Comprehension Check items for each of the four acts based on the McDougell Littell textbook

White-Beck NAME _____

The Crucible—Act I

Comprehension Check

Think about the accusations in Act I. Write one or two sentences explaining why you think these accusations are believable or not. What can you think of today that is similar to the accusations made by these characters? Is this true throughout history?

Why do you think Tituba and Abigail accused others? Write one or two sentences offering possible reasons. Have you experienced someone accusing someone falsely? Why do people do this? Think about fear and its motivations. How does this fit in considering what we discussed concerning the McCarthy Era?

The Crucible—Act II Comprehension Check

Who is arrested in Act II and on what grounds? Why did people come to believe in witches at this time and in this place?

The Crucible—Act III Comprehension Check

Discuss the testimony offered in court. Is it believable? Which character seems to be parallel to Joe McCarthy? What do you make of John Proctor's confession and arrest? The affair between Abigail and John Proctor was fiction. Why did Arthur Miller invent that, i.e., what dramatic function does it fulfill?

The Crucible—Act IV Comprehension Check

What was the outcome for Abigail and Mercy, Betty, and Giles Corey? How did John Proctor's choices affect his life and marriage afterwards? What about Mrs. Proctor's choices?

Appendix E

Writing assignment: Students' personal reactions to a threat to their own civil liberties

White-Beck NAME _____

English 3 PSP

Civil Liberties in the future

Imagine that the government has suspected that terrorists are communicating vital information through the airwaves and recorded music. To curtail this subversive activity, a new law has been passed banning the listening to any broadcast or recorded music. The only music allowed is non-amplified live performances. All electronically recorded music has been confiscated and rewards are out for reported violators. What would you do?

Imagine a court case in which you or someone you love has been accused and you were subpoenaed to testify.

Essay test on *The Crucible*

English 3 PSP NAME _____

The Crucible—Essay Test

White-Beck

Using your copy of the play and any notes you have, respond to the following:

For a possible "A" choose one of the following:

1. How does Reverend Hale's character change as the play progresses? Examine each of his scenes and identify his objective in each, noting what makes him change his objective.
2. Choose 3 of Abigail's tactics and explain how they worked, both dramatically, and as plausible action in the characters' lives.
3. How could the situation in the play be replicated in today's society? Which group in today's society would be likely to be treated as "Witches?" How would the situation play out, i.e., who would win?

For a possible "B" choose one of the following:

4. The Climax of the play hinges on Mary Warren. Through her earlier scenes, show how her character and personality traits make it believable to the reader that Mary will crack.
5. Which is the better choice: to lie about your beliefs (or actions or affiliations) or to die in defense of them? Which choice does Arthur Miller prefer? Cite specifics from the script to support your answer.
Examine the relationship between the Proctors. From their first scene together, the climate of their marriage over the past few months is demonstrated. How is this portrayed? How does their relationship change throughout Act 2? Act 3? And finally, how would you describe their relationship at the very end of the play?
- 6.

For a possible "C" choose one of the following:

7. Describe the plot and actions of the play in 1—3 sentences for each of the four acts.
8. Which character is the protagonist? Offer three examples to support your choice.
9. Reproduce the Well-Made Play Chart with at least 80% of the rising action completed and the other sections 100% complete.

Appendix H

Writing assignment comparing the text and the film

English 3 PSP NAME _____

The Crucible—Comparison/Contrast Essay

White-Beck

DIRECTIONS: Using your Video Viewing responses and any class notes you have, choose only ONE of the following items and write an essay comparing and/or contrasting the play script and the film.

1. Reread the character description of one of the major characters as written by Arthur Miller, then think about the portrayal of that character as you saw it on the screen. Is the film true to the play? Explain why or why not using at least three specific examples. In your opinion, did the filmmaker make the right choice for this role? Explain why.
2. Compare the depictions of the scene in the woods; what did the film do that made it easier to understand?
Identify the theme of the play. Is this theme adequately realized in the film? Find the
3. Crisis decision and explain how the film's portrayal succeeded or failed to create the same Climax as the play.

Standards

Pennsylvania Content Standards for Communications: Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking

1. All students use effective research and information management skills, including locating primary and secondary sources of information with traditional and emerging library technologies.
2. All students read and use a variety of methods to make sense of various kinds of complex texts.
3. All students respond orally and in writing to information and ideas gained by reading narrative and informational texts and use the information and ideas to make decisions and solve problems.
4. All students write for a variety of purposes, including narrate, inform, and persuade, in all subject areas.
5. All students analyze and make critical judgments about all forms of communication, separating fact from opinion, recognizing propaganda, stereotypes and statements of bias,
6. recognizing inconsistencies and judging the validity of evidence.

7. All students exchange information orally, including understanding and giving spoken instructions, asking and answering questions appropriately, and promoting effective group communications.
8. All students listen to and understand complex oral messages and identify the purpose, structure and use.
9. All students compose and make oral presentations for each academic area of study that are designed to persuade, inform or describe.
10. All students communicate appropriately in business, work and other applied situations.

Well-Made Play Chart

(chart 05.03.13.01 available in print form)

Notes

1. Thill, Barbara, Publications Adviser/Journalism Teacher, Chicago, online at <http://www.mindfully.org/Reform/2005/Future-First-Amendment31jan05.htm>. Accessed 7/14/05
2. White-Beck, Elouise, personal recollection
3. http://www.law.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/salem/SAL_CRU.HTM. Accessed 7/14/05
4. Bloom, Harold, ed., *Arthur Miller*, Chelsea House, 1987, p.128
5. *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*. Documentary Film. Dir. and Prod.: Connie Field. C.I.N.E. Golden Eagle, 1980
6. http://www.lambiek.net/block_herbert.htm. Accessed 7/14/05
7. Broudin, 2003, <http://www.geocities.com/ResearchTriangle/Lab/4191/MILLER/millers.html>. Accessed 7/14/05

<https://teachers.yale.edu>

©2023 by the Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute, Yale University, All Rights Reserved. Yale National Initiative®, Yale-New Haven Teachers Institute®, On Common Ground®, and League of Teachers Institutes® are registered trademarks of Yale University.

For terms of use visit https://teachers.yale.edu/terms_of_use