

## ***The Crucible* in the High School Classroom**

PBS American Masters for Teachers "Kazan, Miller, and the McCarthy Era"

[https://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/education/lesson30\\_procedures.html](https://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/education/lesson30_procedures.html)

### **Materials:**

Teachers will need the following supplies:

- Board and/or chart paper
- Ideally a screen on which to project the Web-based video clips
- Handouts of Web resources if computers are not available in the classroom
- A copy of *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller. Ideally, each student should have his or her own copy of the play to mark up. If this is not possible, photocopy, with permission, the appropriate number of copies of each act of *The Crucible* for each student.

Students will need the following supplies:

- Computers with the capacities indicated above
- Notebook or journal
- Pens/pencils
- Highlighters

### **Steps:**

#### **Introduction Activity:**

1. Pose the following question to your students: "How would you deal with being falsely accused of a crime simply because of the way you look or because of the people that you are associated with?" As the students are brainstorming answers, record the responses on a large piece of chart paper. Teachers should be aware that similar incidents, such as racial discrimination, may have happened to the students themselves. Teachers must be sensitive to the fact that this could bring up upsetting experiences and memories.

2. Consider the following questions as part of the ongoing discussion. Remember, if students have personal experiences with discrimination, try to be sensitive to the individual student. A student may feel uneasy about his memories or he may find the discussion to be cathartic, given the safe space within a classroom setting. The teacher should gauge whether or not the discussion should be more abstract and hypothetical or more personal in nature.

- How would these allegations impact your daily life, reputation, career and family?
- Are these types of allegations fair? If not, why do they persist?
- Who makes these types of rumors or accusations? Why?
- How do the themes of "panic," "hysteria," "paranoia," and "intolerance" fit into the discussion?
- How does this fit in with the belief that a person is "innocent until proven guilty" under American law?

3. Ask students to write a short journal entry in which they describe an experience of discrimination.

Encourage students to think about the following questions:

- What events, if any, led up to this experience?
- Where were you?
- Who else was there?
- How did they react to the situation?
- How did you react to it?
- What changed after you experienced this?

4. Finally, the class should begin speaking about these injustices in historical terms. When in history have groups of people been falsely accused of crimes because of the way they look? How about in recent history? Answers should include some of the following:

- Japanese internment camps during World War II
- Salem Witch Trials of 1692
- The plight of Arab Americans after September 11
- The Holocaust
- The Cultural Revolution
- Stalin's regime in Russia
- Pinochet's regime in Chile
- McCarthyism in the 1950s

5. End with a brief discussion about McCarthyism. Ask the students what they know about McCarthyism and why it was such a significant aspect of life in the 1950s. The discussion does not have to be too specific because students will watch a segment about it from AMERICAN MASTERS and conduct some background research information about it.

- What is McCarthyism?
- What happened to people in Hollywood because of it?

### **Links for Learning Activities:**

These are the links students and teachers will need for the **Learning Activities**.

Bookmark all of the Web sites used in the lesson and create a word processing document listing all of the links to distribute to students. Preview all of the sites and videos before presenting them to your class.

- **BBC News' On This Day - Witness**  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/low/witness/august/7/newsid\\_2946000/2946420.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/low/witness/august/7/newsid_2946000/2946420.stm)  
Arthur Miller discusses his play *The Crucible* and the McCarthy witch-hunts with Francine Stock, from July 2000.
- **Secrets of the Dead - Crime Scene Investigations Meet History**  
[http://www.pbs.org/wnet/secrets/case\\_salem/resources.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/secrets/case_salem/resources.html)  
Behavioral Psychologist Linnda Caporael investigates a shocking new idea about the girls' convulsions that led to the Salem Witch Trials of 1692.
- **National Geographic Interactive**  
<http://www.nationalgeographic.com/features/97/salem/>  
This interactive Salem Witch Hunt is entertaining and educational. This site will provide students with basic information about the Salem Witch Trials, the inspiration for Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*.
- **Why I Wrote *The Crucible*: An Artist's Answer to Politics by Arthur Miller**  
[http://the\\_english\\_dept.tripod.com/miller.html](http://the_english_dept.tripod.com/miller.html)  
This article appeared in the October 21 & 28, 1996 issue of *The New Yorker*, pages 158-164. The author of the play and screenplay reflects on the 1950's political origins of his play, as the motion picture is about to be released.
- **The Salem Witch Museum**  
<http://www.salemwitchmuseum.com/>  
Students can access this site to find out more information about Salem, the witch trials, and more.

### **Links about Arthur Miller and *The Crucible* for Research Purposes**

- Ogram's 17th Century New England Links  
<http://www.ogram.org/17thc/miller.shtml>

- The Arthur Miller Society  
<http://www.ibiblio.org/miller/index.html>
- PBS's American Masters Site  
[http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/database/miller\\_a.html](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/database/miller_a.html)

#### Links about Elia Kazan for Research Purposes

- Books and Writers - biography of Elia Kazan  
<http://www.kirjasto.sci.fi/kazan.htm>
- The Kennedy Center Honors  
<http://www.kennedycenter.org/programs/specialevents/honors/history/honoree/kazan.html>
- "Blacklist and Backstory: Hollywood's unexpected embrace of Elia Kazan by Jacob Weisberg for www.slate.com  
<http://slate.msn.com/id/18121/>

#### Learning Activities

1. Show students the portion of the AMERICAN MASTERS episode: "None Without Sin: Arthur Miller, Elia Kazan, and the Blacklist" beginning at 29 minutes and ending at the 68 minute mark. This segment deals with McCarthyism, House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC), Elia Kazan's role in the hearings with HUAC, and the connection to Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*.
2. After watching the segments, students will research background information about McCarthyism and HUAC. This will serve as background info for *The Crucible*.
3. Introduce *The Crucible* to the class. Tell the students that *The Crucible* is an allegorical re-telling of the McCarthy era red scare that occurred in the United States after World War II. (Note: You may need to explain what an allegory is. According to [www.dictionary.com](http://www.dictionary.com), an allegory is "the representation of abstract ideas or principles by characters, figures, or events in narrative, dramatic, or pictorial form.") Based on historical accounts, *The Crucible*, which means a trial of faith and belief, is set during the 1692 Salem Witchcraft Trials when several young girls accuse innocent town members of witchcraft to avoid getting into trouble for entertaining ideas of witchery themselves.
4. Ideally, the class will have read the entire play. If not, students should read one or two acts, supplemented by summaries and analyses of each of the four acts of the play, found at <http://www.classicnote.com/ClassicNotes/Titles/crucible/fullsumm.html>.
5. As the students read the summaries, they should be able to start making the connections and the parallels between *The Crucible* and the McCarthy Era. You could begin charting their observations. After students examine the text more closely during their practice sessions for the Reader's Theater activity (see below), the group will reconvene to continue the discussion and add to the chart.
6. For the next activity, students will study and then perform one act of *The Crucible* using a strategy called Reader's Theater. Explain to students what Reader's Theater is. Traditionally, Reader's Theater allows students to take any piece of literature, analyze it and adapt it into a script. We have selected a text that is already in script form because of the relevance of the text to the topic at hand. Since the text is already in script form, students should focus on the most important and more relevant lines. Though there are many forms of this type of "theater performance," here are the common traits of Reader's Theater:
  - No full memorization. Actors/readers use scripts during performance.
  - No full costume. If they are used, they should be partial and suggestive, or neutral and uniform.

- No full stage sets. If used, they should be simple and suggestive.
- Narration provides the framework for dramatic action.

7. Divide the students into groups large enough to act out the play's acts. (Note: Acts I and III are much longer than the other two acts.)

- Act I - 13 characters (Tituba, Parris, Abigail, Susanna, Mrs. Putnam, Putnam, Mercy, Mary Warren, Proctor, Giles Corey, Rebecca, Hale and Betty)
- Act II - 9 characters (Elizabeth, Proctor, Mary Warren, Hale, Giles, Francis, Cheever, Herrick, and Francis Nurse)
- Act III - 14 characters (Hathorne, Martha Corey, Giles, Danforth, Herrick, Parris, Proctor, Mary Warren, Hale, Cheever, Putnam, Abigail, Mercy Lewis, and Susanna Walcott)
- Act IV - 11 characters (Herrick, Sarah Good, Tituba, Hopkins, Danforth, Hathorne, Cheever, Parris, Hale, Elizabeth, and Rebecca)

8. As the groups are working, distribute the Reader's Theater rubric. Review the criteria with students so that they are aware of your expectations.

9. After sufficient rehearsal time during class and as part of their homework assignments, the students will perform their scene.

10. After reading, studying and performing the play, the teacher should initiate a discussion about the play and its relationship to McCarthyism.

- Why is it considered an allegory?
- Where are the parallels? (The teacher should chart the ideas that come out of the discussion.)
- What other historical or mythical stories could you use to create an allegory about discrimination? What topics would you choose to create an allegory about discrimination in your own life?

11. Tell students that they will now write a brief script that allegorizes their own experience of discrimination. (Explain to them that they may present this brief script for their culminating activity, and that they can use a narrator to describe the action of the scene.) Ask students to take the brief journal entry they wrote about an experience of discrimination and match it with one of the allegory topics they generated. Suggest that they begin by considering:

- What would be a good title for your script?
- Who are the characters? How will you rename them?
- What is the chain of events?
- Have things changed between the beginning and end of your script? How can your audience see that things have changed?

Students may need time to work with you individually to generate their ideas. Be sure to allow ample class time for this activity.

### **Culminating Activity/Assessment:**

1. Tell students that for the culminating activity, the class will create an "exhibition" about discrimination in America and the McCarthyism controversy. Each student will contribute one project for the exhibition.
2. Tell students that they may choose the medium they will use. (See the table below for suggested presentation formats.) This will accommodate different learning styles, abilities and interests among students. Encourage variety among the types of projects students choose to prepare. Students are also allowed to work

together on projects. The size of the group should be commensurate with the scope of the project.

3. Students should be encouraged to find peers who can act out the scripts they wrote about their own experiences. As with the reading of *The Crucible*, above, students can present these dramas with minimal memorization, costumes or scenery - to focus on the story more clearly -- and they may use a narrator to explain the action of the drama if necessary.

<b>Different Ways to Present Information</b>	<b>Content (Concepts, People, Events) That Needs to Be Addressed in the Overall Exhibition</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Biographies</li><li>• Timelines</li><li>• Photo collages</li><li>• Debates</li><li>• Poster Boards</li><li>• Recreations of newspapers or magazine articles about the era</li><li>• Reviews</li><li>• Powerpoint presentations</li><li>• Plays</li><li>• Speeches</li><li>• Songs</li><li>• Documentary</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arthur Miller</li><li>• Elia Kazan</li><li>• McCarthyism</li><li>• Blacklisting</li><li>• The Hollywood Ten</li><li>• House Committee on Un-American Activities</li><li>• Marilyn Monroe</li><li>• Salem Witch Trials</li><li>• Personal experience</li></ul>

4. Allow sufficient time for rehearsal or in-class Web research using the bookmarked sites above, but tell students that the bulk of the project should be completed at home. You should also make the AMERICAN MASTERS video accessible for any students who want to view it again.

5. Hand out "General Assessment Rubric for the Arthur Miller and Elia Kazan Exhibition." Review the evaluation criteria with students.

6. Schedule a day for the exhibition. Extend invitations to other classrooms and/or parents and others who may have experienced the McCarthy era firsthand.

**Source: PBS American Masters for Teachers**

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