

UNIT 7 The American Dream
Postwar Era 1945 to 1960

A GSEEM school
FROEBEL
BILINGUAL SCHOOL
Home of the Space Generation



Arthur Miller's The Crucible

with Jim Soto

crucible

noun - crucible \ 'krü-sə-bəl \

1. a pot in which metals or other substances are heated to a very high temperature or melted
2. a difficult test or challenge
3. a place or situation that forces people to change or make difficult decisions

MODERN AMERICAN DRAMA



'Modern American Drama' is a title used to define some of America's most important drama from the 20th Century. Economic, political, social and cultural changes occurring in America began this era of writing and influenced authors to write some of the most influential plays that are still widely known today.

GETTING STARTED : background

The Crucible is a central work in the canon of American drama. It is a 1953 play by Arthur Miller. It is a dramatized and partially fictionalized story of the **Salem witch trials** that took place in Massachusetts Bay during 1692-93. Miller wrote the play as an allegory of **McCarthyism**, when the U.S. government blacklisted accused communists.





What was McCarthyism? It is the practice of making accusations of subversion or treason without proper regard for evidence and using unfair investigative techniques to restrict political criticism. It was originally coined to criticize the anti-communist pursuit of Republican U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy during the early 1950s.



Given the paranoia during the 1950s about America being infiltrated by communists, it is easy to see why Arthur Miller could comment on this situation by comparing it to the witch trials that occurred in 1692. Not surprisingly, Miller himself became the target of one of these anti-communist investigations four years after *The Crucible* appeared. The play is a warning against hysteria and intolerance.

LITERARY FEATURES

Literary concepts you will deal with in this work include:

- Drama
- Dramatic irony
- Stage directions
- Dialogue
- Characterization
- Allusion
- Mood
- Theme



LITERARY FEATURES:

continued

Literature has three main forms. These include: prose, poetry, and drama, the specific mode of fiction represented in performance. The term comes from a Greek word meaning action, which is derived from the verb meaning to do or to act. The final goal of drama is its performance.



LITERARY FEATURES:

continued



Dialogue and stage directions contribute to effective characterization, which is the **process of creating and developing characters in a work of fiction**. It allows us to empathize with the characters, and feel that what happens to these people in the story is vicariously happening to us; and it also gives us a sense or the semblance of reality.

An allusion is a **reference to a well-known person, event, object, or work from history or literature**.

LITERARY FEATURES:

continued



Stage directions are notes included in a play for the purpose of describing how something should be performed on stage. They describe setting, lighting, music, sound effects, entrances and exits, properties, and the movements of characters.

Dialogue is conversation between two or more characters.

LITERARY FEATURES:

continued



Mood or atmosphere, is the emotion created in the reader by part or all of the work.

A theme is a central message or perception about life revealed through a literary work. When stated it's presented directly, when implied it must be inferred. A universal theme is a message about life than is understood by people of most cultures.

LITERARY FEATURES:

continued



Finally, *The Crucible* features dramatic irony, which occurs when the audience or the reader knows something the characters don't.

In Shakespeare's play, *Romeo and Juliet*, we know what each one of them is trying to do so be together, but tragically, they don't.

As you read Act 1 of *The Crucible*, make a simple chart listing the different kinds of details Miller provides in stage directions. Also identify three examples of dialogue that contain stage directions. For instance, early in Act 1, Abigail announces that Susanna Walcott has arrived and Parris says “Let her come.” Their exchange directs another character to enter the drama.



ASSESSMENT: Act 1

After reading pages 591-623 in your book, complete the activities:

1. REFER TO TEXT &
2. REASON WITH TEXT
3. & ANALYZE LITERATURE

Stage Directions and Dialogue - What kinds of details does Miller provide in stage directions? For instance, what is the setting of the play? What details does Miller provide about characters' appearance, emotions, movements, and so on?

How does Miller use dialogue to present stage directions? What other information about characters is revealed through dialogue?

ASSESSMENT: Act 2

After reading pages 624-642 in your book, complete the activities:

1. REFER TO TEXT &
2. REASON WITH TEXT
3. & ANALYZE LITERATURE

Characterization and Allusion - Review the examples you found of direct and indirect characterization. Which method does Miller use most often? What do we learn about Reverend Hale through Miller's characterization of him? Discuss why this might be significant.

Explain the allusions in this act of the play, particularly those in reference to biblical figures and events. For instance, what does Elizabeth's allusion to the parting of the Red Sea suggest about Abigail's influence? What does John Proctor suggest by alluding to Pontius Pilate?

ASSESSMENT: Act 3

After reading pages 643-666 in your book, complete the activities:

1. REFER TO TEXT &
2. REASON WITH TEXT
3. & ANALYZE LITERATURE

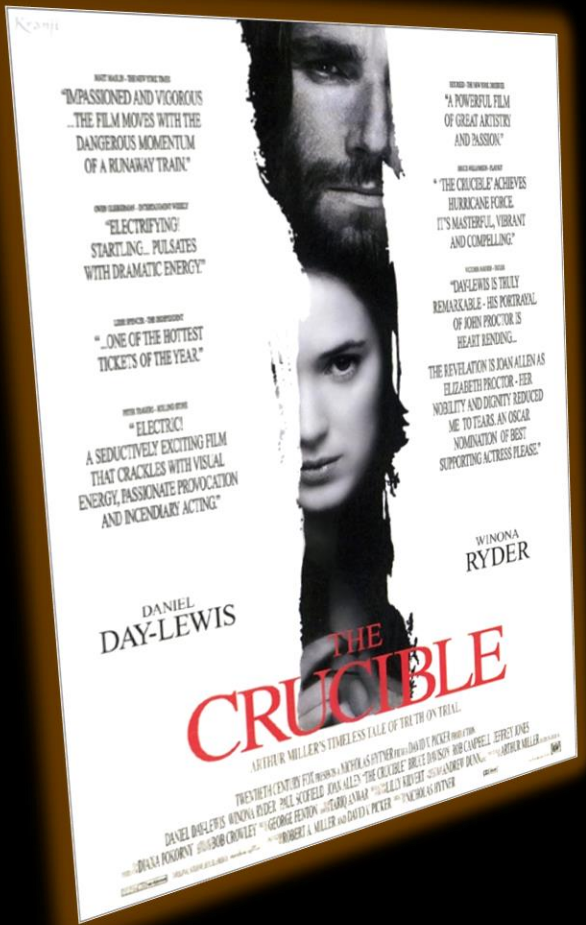
Irony and Mood - Review the examples and types of irony in Act 3. Explain the irony behind Elizabeth Proctor defending her husband's good name with a white lie. What type of irony is this? How does the mood of the drama change throughout Act 3? What different emotions did you experience as a reader? How does Miller achieve these shifts in mood?

ASSESSMENT: Act 4

After reading pages 667-681 in your book, complete the activities:

1. REFER TO TEXT &
2. REASON WITH TEXT
3. & ANALYZE LITERATURE

Theme - In Act 4, Reverend Hale directly states an important theme when he tells Elizabeth, "Cleave to no faith when faith brings blood." What other themes did you identify in *The Crucible*? Which are stated and which are implied? Write a sentence stating what you believe is the primary theme of the play. Is it a universal theme?



Comparing Text & Media

Arthur Miller's

The Crucible

FEATURES

Concepts you will deal with in this work include:

- stage directions
- dialogue



LITERARY FEATURES:

Drama relies on action through the dialogue of acting characters and stage directions. Dialogue, or a particular passage of conversation in a dramatic work. Its three functions are advancing the plot, giving background info about the characters, and explaining the conflict/characters.

Stage directions are the part of the script of a play that tells the actors how they must move or speak their lines.

Guess who these characters are...

Elizabeth Proctor



Rev. Parris



Abigail Williams



Sometimes we encounter media that is an interpretation of a written text. Works such as *The Hunger Games* series and *The Great Gatsby* have their origins in written works. Today, you will decide how a film version of *The Crucible* relates and compares to the original play. Take notes as you see Raymond Rouleau's adaptation of the famous play.



As you see *The Crucible* analyze the choices the filmmakers made regarding elements such as:

- the casting of the actors
- the way lines are delivered
- the actors movements in front of the camera (blocking)
- the mood created by the lighting
- the sets and costumes

Take notes for later use in the assessment.



ASSESSMENT: The Movie

Did you think the play was better, or was it this film? Write a paper (500 words min.) persuading the reader why the play or the movie is better.





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