

Teacher Guide

Grades 9–12

The Crucible

Arthur Miller

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THE CRUCIBLE

by
Arthur Miller

Teacher Guide

Written by
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Note

The text used to prepare this guide was the Penguin Books paperback edition. Page references may vary if other editions are used.

Please note: Please assess the appropriateness of this play for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading and discussing it with your class.

ISBN 978-1-60878-348-9

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Publisher Information
For a complete catalog, contact—
Novel Units, Inc.
P.O. Box 97
Bulverde, TX 78163-0097

Web site: novelunits.com

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Act One

Vocabulary

predilection 5	parishioners 5	heathen 5	citadel 5
innate 5	defiled 5	ingratiating 6	ideology 6
antagonistic 6	differentiation 6	junta 6	paradox 7
theocracy 7	manifestation 7	press 7	injunctions 7
land-lust 7	dissembling 9	conjured 10	faction 10
abominations 11	deference 11	providence 13	demonic 14
vindictive 14	contention 13	trepidation 18	subservient 18
calumny 20	cover-up 24	notorious 25	prodigious 25
arbitrate 25	conjugation 26	iniquity 26	defamation 31
diametrically 32	circulation 34	surge 34	Dionysiac 35

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the setting (time and place) of *The Crucible*? (*Salem, Massachusetts; spring, 1692*)
2. Make a list of at least five words that describe Reverend Parris. (Some possibilities are: *villainous, paranoid, superior, inflexible, unloving, unkind, circumlocutory.*)
3. Describe the town. (It is *a tiny outpost—barely a village on the edge of the wilderness.*)
4. How did the village's residents regard the forest and its Indian inhabitants? (*The forest was seen as "the devil's last preserve." Few Indians were converted to Christianity, partly because of the nobility of the Puritans and partly because they would rather steal land from the "heathen" than from Christians.*)
5. From what paradox did the Salem tragedy develop? (*For the tragedy developed so the colony could survive, consensus was a threat. The witch-hunt was the result of a kind of panic that developed when a need for individual freedom began to be felt.*)
6. Miller wrote that we, too, "shall be pined someday." What do you think he meant? Give some examples of why people who look back on us from the year 2400 will pity us.
7. What behaviors of Betty Parris and Ruth Putnam made some feel they were possessed by witches? (*They seemed to be in trances, punctuated by fits of hysteria.*)
8. What did Reverend Parris see in the woods? (*He saw Abigail, Betty, Tutuba and others girls dancing, and thought he saw someone running naked through the woods.*)
9. Why was Abigail discharged from service at the Proctor household? (*She was having an affair with John Proctor, and his wife found out about it.*)

26. How does Reverend Hale make Tituba feel important? (*He tells her she has been chosen to help cleanse the village.*)
27. Who does Tituba say are also witches? (*Sarah Good and Goody Osburn*)
28. How do Abigail and Betty take advantage of what is happening to make sure they will not be blamed for dancing in the forest? (*They begin to call out names, and Abigail says she wants to go back to Jesus.*)
29. Miller includes many of his own opinions in the play's notes. If you were producing the play on a stage, how would you handle these notes?

Activities

1. In the note about Reverend Hale (pages 32-36), Miller writes that many people still believe in the existence of the devil and witchcraft. That there are modern covers is no secret. Depending on the make-up of your class and on your own feelings and opinions, you might want to have a lively debate on the subject of whether or not one can really bend others to their wills through witchcraft. Alternatively, you can have students write their opinions individually.
2. On page 5, Miller wrote, "This predilection for minding other people's business was time-honored among the people of Salem, and it undoubtedly created many of the suspicious spirits were to feed the coming madness." Have the students discuss how they feel about those who mind other people's business." How can others be hurt?
3. Discuss Miller's language, which will seem quite archaic to the students. Have them offer reasons as to why Miller chose to use this old language. Have the students compare the relatively calm dialogue at the beginning of the act with the panic-stricken speeches at the end.
4. Have groups of students choose short scenes to memorize and present to the class.
5. Use the Personal Word List on the following page for students to list a word that is only the words with which they are unfamiliar. If they can't readily define a word, it belongs on their list.

Writing Suggestions

1. On page 7, Miller wrote, "It is still impossible for man to organize his social life without repressions, and the balance has yet to be struck between order and freedom." Do you agree that this is still true? Do we have too much freedom, or not enough?
2. Write a paragraph describing the contention between the various characters: How do Parris and Proctor feel about each other? Putnam and Proctor? Putnam and Giles Corey?

Personal Word List

In the left-hand column, list any word you cannot define, either from prior knowledge or from the context in which it is used. Then write a brief definition and a sentence using the word.

Word	Definition	Sentence

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Story Map



Characters _____

Time and Place _____

Problem _____

Goal _____

Beginning → Development → Outcome

Resolution _____

Vocabulary, Discussions, Questions, Activities, Worksheets