

THE CRUCIBLE

Arthur Miller | Summer Reading

Socratic Seminar Preparation Packet

American History & English | Grade 10

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About This Assignment

In 1692, the town of Salem, Massachusetts, executed twenty people for witchcraft. Arthur Miller wrote *The Crucible* in 1953, not primarily about Salem, but about his own moment: the McCarthy era, when Senator Joseph McCarthy led congressional hearings that accused hundreds of Americans of communist sympathies, destroying careers and lives based largely on rumor, fear, and political pressure.

Miller called his play an allegory which is a story set in one time and place that is really about another. That double meaning is what makes *The Crucible* work for both English and History: it asks us to read across two eras simultaneously, and to ask what conditions allow ordinary people to participate in collective injustice.

Complete all four parts of this packet before the first day of school.

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Academic Honesty Policy

This is an independent assignment. Read it carefully.

No AI. Ever.

Do not use ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini, Copilot, or any other AI tool not to generate answers, not to "check" your answers, or to summarize the play. This includes AI features built into Google Docs, Word, or your browser.

No collaboration.

Do not work on this with classmates, siblings, tutors, or anyone else. Your responses must be entirely your own. Comparing answers, dividing questions, or sharing notes all count as violations.

Consequence: A grade of zero with no opportunity to make up the assignment.

 We will know. AI-generated responses have recognizable patterns, and we are familiar with them. More importantly: this packet feeds directly into your Socratic seminar grade. If you did not genuinely read and think through these questions yourself, it will be apparent the moment the conversation starts. Students who cannot speak to the text in the seminar and who cannot cite a specific passage, build on a classmate's point, or defend their

written answers will receive a failing seminar grade in addition to a zero on this packet. There is no recovery option.

😬 *The only way to succeed on this assignment is to read the play, think for yourself, and write in your own words. That is also the only way to be ready for the seminar*

Part 1 — Two Eras, One Play

The Crucible operates on two historical levels at once. Research both using a reliable source (encyclopedia, .edu site, museum — not AI-generated summaries). Answer the following:

Source used (title + URL or publication): _____

In 2–3 sentences, describe what the Salem Witch Trials actually were. Who was accused, who was executing the accusations, and how did it end?

In 2–3 sentences, describe McCarthyism. What was the 'Red Scare,' what were the HUAC hearings, and what happened to people who were named?

Identify one specific parallel between the two eras : a moment, a mechanism, or a pattern that appears in both. Be specific about both sides:

Part 2 — Choose Your Character

Choose one character from the list below to represent during the seminar. Circle or underline your choice:

JOHN PROCTOR <i>Flawed protagonist; refuses to confess a lie</i>	ABIGAIL WILLIAMS <i>Accusation leader; survivor turned aggressor</i>	REVEREND HALE <i>Expert who arrives certain, leaves shattered</i>	ELIZABETH PROCTOR <i>Accused; quietly endures; chooses truth</i>
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What does your character want most and what are they afraid of? Use a specific line or scene (include Act number):

Does your character make a choice you respect, or one you find troubling — or both? Point to the moment in the play that makes you feel that way:

If this character existed during the McCarthy era instead of Salem, what role do you think they would play? Explain your reasoning:

Part 3 — Your Seminar Positions

Answer each question below before the seminar. Every response must cite a specific Act and, where possible, a page number. Answers without textual evidence will not receive full credit.

Question 1: Is John Proctor a hero?

He is often read as the play's moral center — but he is also an adulterer who waited too long to act. Does his final choice redeem him, or does Miller ask us to hold both things at once? What does heroism look like in a community that has lost its ability to tell truth from accusation?

 Cite a specific passage
(Act & page):

Question 2: What makes the accusations so difficult to stop?

Consider the social, religious, and political structures of Puritan Salem. What systems or beliefs make it nearly impossible for a rational voice to break through? How does Miller use these structures to comment on 1950s America?

 **Cite a specific passage**
(Act & page):

Question 3: Is Abigail a villain, a victim, or something more complicated?

She sets the hysteria in motion — but she is also a teenage servant girl in a society with almost no power available to her. Does the play ask us to understand her, condemn her, or both? What does your answer reveal about how we assign blame during a moral panic?

 **Cite a specific passage**
(Act & page):

Question 4: What does Reverend Hale's arc reveal about the danger of expertise in service of a flawed system?

Hale arrives as the intellectual authority — the expert on witchcraft — and ends the play begging condemned prisoners to lie in order to save their lives. What does his transformation cost him? What does Miller want us to learn from watching a good man do harm?

 **Cite a specific passage**
(Act & page):

Part 4 — Your Seminar Question

Write one open-ended question you genuinely want the class to discuss. It should connect to both the literary craft of the play and the historical period—either Salem, the McCarthy era, or both.

What moment in the play made you want to ask this question? (Act & page)

Briefly sketch two different positions a classmate might take in response:

Position A: _____

Position B: _____



Speak at least twice



Cite an Act & page at least once



Respond directly to a classmate at least once

This packet will be collected after the seminar and counts toward both your English and History grades.