

Puritanism, Witch Trials, and McCarthyism

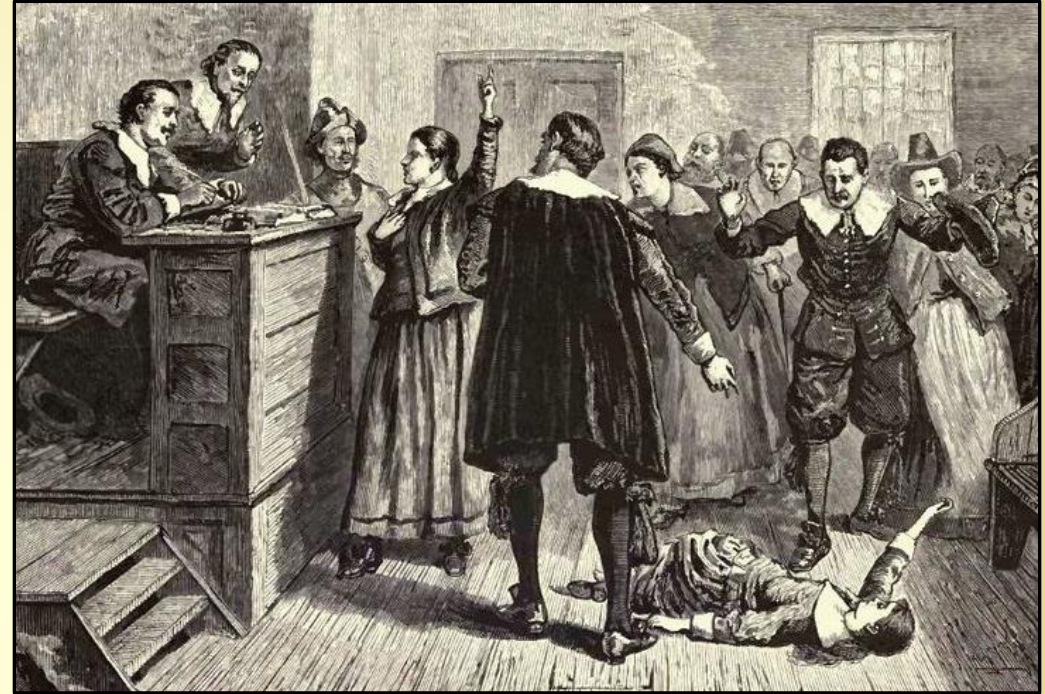
1. Question & Research Task

Can writing a play set three hundred years in the past really protest a situation in the present? That is what Arthur Miller attempts with his famous play *The Crucible*. Though the play is set during [The Salem Witch Trials](#), it is also an [allegory](#) for 1950s America, the era of [McCarthyism](#).

Today you will explore similarities and differences in conditions that led to both the Salem Witch Trials and McCarthyism, or the Second Red Scare. Using your findings, you will evaluate the effectiveness of *The Crucible*'s historical context in protesting McCarthyism.

In this Slam Dunk, you will conduct brief, focused research to respond to the inquiry question:

How does literature convey the idea of protest in America?



The Salem Witch Trials, Image Source: Public Domain

For resources requiring passwords, you will need to login. You can find passwords at BCPS **Digital Content** in the [Apps Portal](#), or ask your teacher for the password.

2. Information Sources

Use the sources below to explore events surrounding the Salem Witch Trials and McCarthyism and consider parallels between the two.

The Salem Witch Trials

- [TedED: What really happened during the Salem Witch Trials?](#)
- [Puritanism](#)
- [The Victims](#)
- [Data Analysis](#)
- [Primary Sources](#)

McCarthyism (or the Second Red Scare)

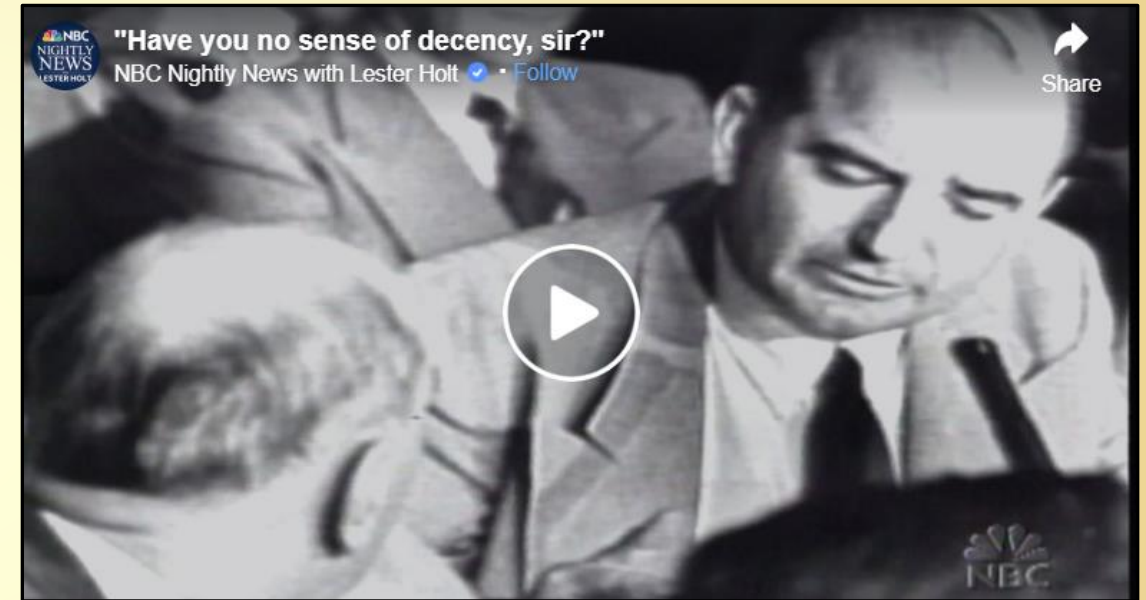
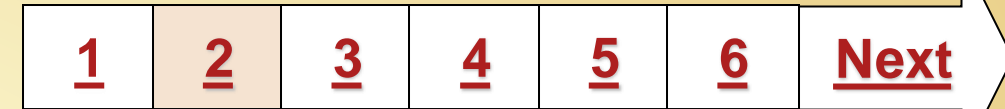
- [TedEd: What is McCarthyism? And how did it happen?](#)
- [McCarthyism](#)
- [The Victims: 6 Hollywood Artists Blacklisted](#)
- [Arthur Miller's Testimony](#)
- [Primary Sources](#)

Both

- [Why I Wrote the Crucible by Arthur Miller](#)
- [From Salem to McCarthy](#)
- [A political history of the term "witch hunt"](#)

**If you are prompted to log in to access a database or digital content links, your teacher/librarian can provide login information.

SLIDE NAVIGATION



Scroll down on the linked page to view this NBC video about the McCarthy hearings.

Image Source: NBC News

3. Student Activity

Step 1: Use the resources on [Slide 2](#) to research the Salem Witch Trials and McCarthyism, noting similarities and differences between the two. Use the [notes](#) sheet to track your findings.

Step 2: Review your answers and decide if they show more similarities between the two events or more differences.

In addition to the sources listed on [Slide 2](#), you may want to use resources from the BCPS digital content in the [Apps Portal](#) or reputable online sources, such as periodicals, museums, or other educational sites.

****Remember-** If you are prompted to log in to access a database or digital content links, your teacher/librarian can provide login information.



Watch the trailer for the film version of *The Crucible* to see Miller's interpretation of how accusations of witchcraft spread during the Salem Witch Trials. Does this seem similar to accusations of communism during the Second Red Scare?

Image Source: FHEfoxconnect

4. Assessment Activity

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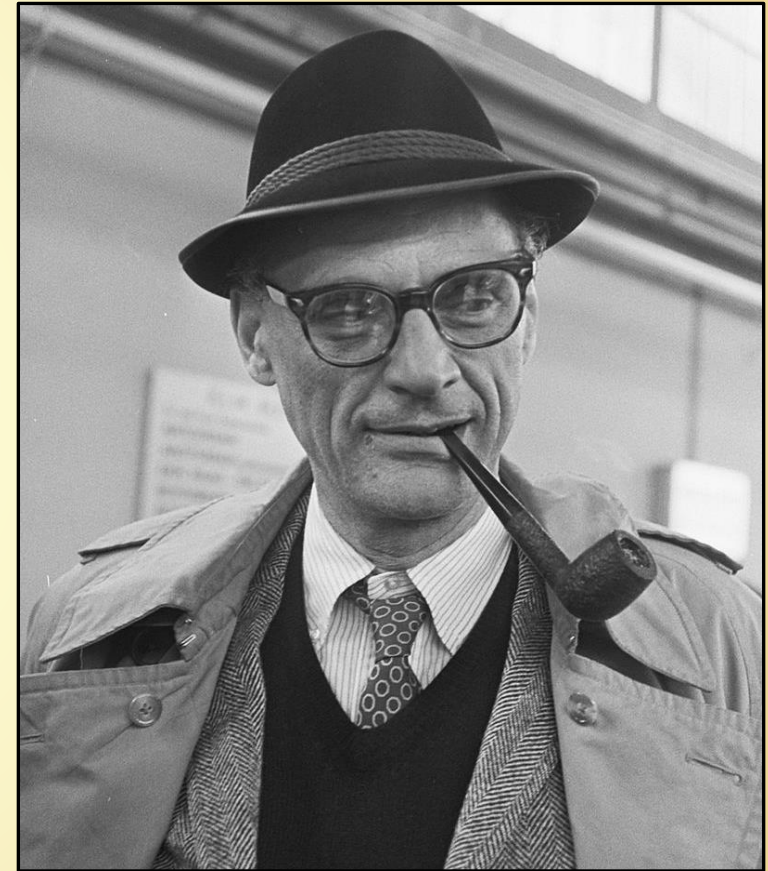
How does literature convey the idea of protest in America?

Write a letter to Arthur Miller (yes, he died in 2005--use your imagination) about his choice of setting for *The Crucible*. **Do you think using the Salem Witch Trials to represent the Second Red Scare effectively protests McCarthyism?** Consider the similarities and differences you noted between the two periods. If you have not read *The Crucible* yet, predict how the story will act as a protest against McCarthyism. If you have read the play, use details from the text to support your claim.

An effective response will:

- Be written in letter format and at least three paragraphs long
- Make a strong claim about *The Crucible* as a form of protest
- Use evidence from your research to support your claim
- Either make predictions about *The Crucible* or use textual evidence from the play
- Be well organized, with a clear beginning, middle, and end
- Follow proper CUPS (capitalization, usage, punctuation, and spelling)

Your teacher may choose to grade your response according to this [rubric](#).



Playwright Arthur Miller, in 1966

Image Source: Wikimedia Commons

5. Enrichment Activities

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Some people identifying as witches or Wiccans are offended by the political use of the term witch hunt. Watch the video to learn more.

Image Source: CNN

What qualifies as a witch hunt?

In America, the term witch hunt has taken on [political meaning](#). According to the Washington Post, President Trump tweeted the term over 300 times as of January 2020. Today, the phrase [witch hunt](#) refers to political accusations, bad publicity, and even cancel culture. But is it appropriate to use the term witch hunt in this context? Why or why not?

Explore the resources on this page to take a stand on the issue. Be prepared to discuss your take or post a Schoology discussion post. Use evidence to support your answer.

- [Trump's impeachment trial is no witch hunt](#)
- [The Crucible: the play that warned us about cancel culture](#)
- [Twitter's cancel culture: a force for good or a digital witchhunt?](#)
- [It's not a witch hunt, it's about public safety](#)
- [Djokovic accuses critics of witch-hunt](#)
- [Witch Hunts: A Global Problem in the 21st century](#)

If direct links to BCPS database content are accessed from home or outside the BCPS network, you may need to authenticate first by clicking once on the database icon on the Digital Content page; then come back and select the direct link.

6. Teacher Resources

Grade Level and Content Area

Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy

Reading: 1. Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Writing: 7. Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects based on focused questions, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

AASL Standards Framework for Learners - Inquire: Build new knowledge by inquiring, thinking critically, identifying problems, and developing strategies for solving problems.

Think: Learners display curiosity and initiative by: I.A.2 Recalling prior and background knowledge as context for new meaning.

Create: Learners engage with new knowledge by following a process that includes: I.B.1 Using evidence to investigate questions. I.B.3 Generating products that illustrate learning.

Share: Learners adapt, communicate, and exchange learning products with others in a cycle that includes: I.C.1 Interacting with content presented by others.

Grow: Learners participate in an ongoing inquiry-based process by: I.D.2 Engaging in sustained inquiry.

ISTE Standards for Students:

3. Knowledge Constructor – 3d. Students build knowledge by actively exploring real-world issues and problems, developing ideas and theories and pursuing answers and solutions.

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Grade 11 Unit 3

Objective: Students will analyze information about the Salem Witch Trials and McCarthyism in order to evaluate *The Crucible* as a work of protest.

Time Frame: One to two 90-minute sessions

Differentiation strategies for this lesson:

- Direct students to use learning tools included in our BCPS-licensed databases, such as: audio read-aloud, labeled reading levels/Lexile, and embedded dictionaries.

Learning Styles addressed in this lesson:

Field dependent, field independent, global, auditory, visual, tactile

Notes to the teacher:

- Collaborate with your school library media specialist to implement this lesson.
- Videos require headphones or speakers.
- Provide students with login information as needed to authenticate BCPS Digital Content. Login information is on the BCPS Digital Content page in the [Apps Portal](#).

Last updated: July 2022 Report broken links to [BCPS Library Media Programs](#)

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