

DIGITAL THEATRE+

LESSON PLAN



THE CRUCIBLE

BY ARTHUR MILLER

LESSON PLAN LENGTH: 60 MINUTES

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Feel confident as they begin an early stage analysis of the complex characters, situations and ideas/themes within the play
- Immerse themselves in the world of the play by participating in a variety of practical exercises
- Think critically about character motivations and choices
- Discuss and evaluate connections between themes in the play, current events and contemporary issues

For standards alignment, please refer to the end of the lesson plan.

To teach this lesson, you will need the following resources found in your toolkit:

- [The Crucible Study Guide](#)
- [Video – On Acting: Jack Ellis](#)
- [Video – On Acting: Adrian Schiller](#)
- [Video – On Acting: Natalie Gavin](#)
- [Video – On Acting: Richard Armitage](#)
- [Video – Arthur Miller: BBC Documentary](#)
- [Video – Richard Armitage in Conversation](#)
- [Headlines](#)
- [Character Cards](#)

Plus:

- Post-it notes
- Pens
- Highlighters
- Tape or blu-tack
- 4 large sheets of paper – titled as follows and pre-set on the walls of your classroom:
 - Fear and Persecution
 - Respect and Reputation
 - Secrets and Deceit
 - Justice and Religion
- Pre-made slips of paper – enough for the whole class – 3-5 should be marked with a red X, the remaining slips should be marked with a black X.

EXERCISE 1

THE CRUCIBLE IS...

- Push the desks back and have your students form a circle in the centre of the room.
- Going around the circle one by one, ask each person to say any word or phrase that comes to mind when finishing the statement '*The Crucible* is...' All responses should be encouraged.
- At the end of this sequence, based on everything they've heard, have the students write down one word on a post-it note to describe the play. Then ask them to stick the notes on the wall.
- Have students return to their seats and watch the following interview chapters:
 - [On Acting: Jack Ellis](#) – The Play (1 min 47 sec)
 - [On Acting: Adrian Schiller](#) – The Play (2 min)
 - [On Acting: Natalie Gavin](#) – What is *The Crucible* About? (2 min 43 sec)
 - [On Acting: Richard Armitage](#) – The Play (1 min 8 sec)
- Without any discussion, direct your students to once again write down one word on a post-it note to describe the play, based on the new information they have just heard. Then have them stick these notes on the wall.



ESTIMATED TIME:
12 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is to encourage students to speak about the play, sharing their initial thoughts and ideas with the group.

Students will also hear what actors who have been in a production of the play think when answering a similar question.

EXERCISE 2

CONTEXT, THEMES AND CONNECTIONS



ESTIMATED TIME:
15 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is to provide the context in which the play was written and to discover connections between themes in the play and contemporary issues in the news.

- Have your students return to their seats and watch the following interview clips:
 - Arthur Miller – BBC Documentary (36 min 56 sec – 38 min 48 sec)
 - Richard Armitage in Conversation – *The Crucible's* Parable (4 min 46 sec)
- Draw your students' attention to the 4 pieces of paper you have hanging on the wall, each with a theme written at the top. Take them through each theme with the following explanations:

Fear & Persecution

Many characters in the play are driven by fear: fear of each other, fear of the law, fear of God.

Respect & Reputation

Just because people project an image of respectability, does not mean their reputation reflects their true nature.

Secrets & Deceit

Throughout the play, characters are forced to lie to save themselves. Some of the secrets and lies are exposed to us. Other times, we do not know whether characters are telling the truth or not.

Justice & Religion

In the 17th-century time period of the play, Salem is a theocratic society, which means that the church and the state are one and the same; justice and religion are very much intertwined.

- In small groups, give students 3-4 minutes to jot down as many current events as they can think of which relate to these themes (each event should be on a different post-it note) and then place the post-it notes on the paper with the corresponding theme.
- Allow an additional 1-2 minutes for students to have a look at what their peers have written down.

EXERCISE 3

FEAR AND PERSECUTION

- Focusing on the theme of Fear & Persecution, open a class discussion by posing the following questions:
 - 'Can you think of any groups in society that are persecuted today?'
 - 'Might this be because of fear?'
- If you have additional time, refer to the current events students have posted on the wall under any of the themes and discuss the connections between those events and themes in *The Crucible*.



ESTIMATED TIME:
10 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is to discuss and evaluate connections between *The Crucible* and current events.

EXERCISE 4

FEAR AND PERSECUTION: ACTIVITY

- Discuss the notion of community with students, asking:
 - ‘What examples can you think of from your own life?’
 - ‘What kind of characters might we see in those communities?’
 - ‘Are there any stereotypes and, if so, are they fair or realistic?’
- Push the desks back to create an empty space in the centre of the room.
- Ask your students to walk neutrally in the space and as they are doing so, ask them to imagine that they are in the world of a happy community – there’s not a care in the world, everyone is happy, everyone has a smile on their face, everyone gets along, and all is well.
- After a few moments, ask them to reflect on how they feel, how they have changed physically and what facial expressions they have used.
- Keep them moving around the room throughout the sequence. Once they are fully committed to the world of the happy community, ask them to acknowledge each other as they pass. Ask them ‘How do you greet your friends and neighbours in this happy community?’
- Once you feel that the atmosphere of the room has been affected by the group mood, stop the movement. Then, by tapping students on the shoulder, ask them to talk about what they were feeling and discuss the atmosphere in the room.
- Now ask them to imagine that they are no longer in this world, but in the suspicious community. In this world, people are argumentative and judgmental. There are disputes over land, property, farming rights, and church privileges. Your name and reputation are the most important things. Fear of dishonour drives you and the other townsfolk to desperate and deceitful ends. Everyone is quick to point the finger at each other to save themselves. You can’t trust anybody.
- Ask the students to move around the space in the suspicious world. Suggest that at any moment, the finger could be pointed at you, and you will be accused of something awful.



ESTIMATED TIME:
7 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is to immerse students in the world of the play. Getting them to experience the atmosphere and tension, and opening them up to the impact of different physical actions and emotions.

By immersing students in this way, they are better able to analyze the text once they begin reading it as they will have a physical connection and understanding of what they are reading.

- Ask students how this makes them react to others; what their body was doing and what their face was doing.
- Next, have students draw slips of paper – each piece has been marked with an X. If their X is red, they are guilty; if it is black, they are not guilty.
- Have students walk around the space again with this new found knowledge. Ask students:
 - ‘Do you dare show your paper to anyone?’
 - ‘Do they know if you are guilty or not guilty?’
- After a brief period of time, stop and ask the students how this affected or changed the way they interacted with the others.

EXERCISE 5

INTRODUCING THE STORY: HEADLINES

- Ask your students to return to their seats.
- Pass a hat or bowl around which has folded pieces of paper in it.
- Each student should take one piece of paper.
- On each piece of paper is a number and a Headline. These are the key Headlines of our story, and the order in which they should be read. There are 20 Headlines – you may need to print them more than once if you have more than 20 students in your class – in that case, some Headlines will be repeated and will be read aloud in unison.
- Have students read the Headlines aloud in numerical order.
- Refer back to the themes on the wall – have students tape their Headline to the theme they feel it most closely relates to.



ESTIMATED TIME:
5 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is to introduce students to the framework of the story and the conflict within it.

EXERCISE 6

CHARACTER INTRODUCTIONS

- Hand out a copy of the [Relationship Map](#) to each student (found in [The Crucible Study Guide](#)).
- Then, have each student draw a [Character Card](#). There are 20 characters, therefore, you may need to print the cards more than once if you have more than 20 students in your class. In this case, some characters will be worked on by more than one student.
- Allow students a few moments to read about their character and discover how they are connected to the other characters in the Relationship Map.
- They must then choose 3 key points about their character which they will share with the group.
- Have each student introduce themselves as their character to the group.
- They should do this by standing up, saying 'My name is [insert character name] and I...' and then sharing the 3 details which they have decided are the most important.



ESTIMATED TIME:
6 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is to introduce the individual characters of the story and to have students put themselves in role as one of the characters.

EXERCISE 7

WANTS AND FEARS



ESTIMATED TIME:
5 MINUTES

The aim of this exercise is to have students look more in-depth at their character as they begin understanding their choices and motivations.

- Going back to the Character Cards, have students highlight any of their character's wants and fears, which are either included or inferred in the character description. Keeping in mind the questions: 'What does my character want? What is my character frightened of?'
- While they are doing that, place two chairs in the centre of the room. Explain that one chair is an 'I want' chair and the other is an 'I fear' chair.
- In no particular order, invite your students to sit on a chair. Each chair must be occupied at all times, and students must sit in both the 'I want' and the 'I fear' chair at least once.
- When seated on the 'I want' chair, the student introduces themselves as the character and then expresses a particular want. 'My name is _____ and I want _____.'
- The same applies to the 'I fear' chair. 'My name is _____ and I fear _____.'
- What the students say aloud is drawn from the Character Cards and all of the other information they have learned.

This exercise is fast-paced and should be continually moving with no downtime.

Additional video:

- [On Directing: Yael Farber](#) – The Play (6 min 19 sec)

US ELA Common Core 9-10

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2 - Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3 - Analyze how complex characters (e.g. those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.9 - Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g. how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.10 - By the end of grade 9, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 9-10 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 10, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 9-10 text complexity band independently and proficiently.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1 - Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9-10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.C - Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that relate the current discussion to broader themes or larger ideas; actively incorporate others into the discussion; and clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.1.D - Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives, summarize points of agreement and disagreement, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views and understanding and make new connections in light of the evidence and reasoning presented.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.2 - Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse media or formats (e.g. visually, quantitatively, orally) evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.9-10.4 - Present information, findings, and supporting evidence clearly, concisely, and logically such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and task.

US ELA Common Core 11-12

- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2 - Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3 - Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g. where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.9 - Demonstrate knowledge of eighteenth-, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century foundational works of American literature, including how two or more texts from the same period treat similar themes or topics.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.10 - By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range. By the end of grade 12, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of the grades 11-CCR text complexity band independently and proficiently
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1 - Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.C - Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1.D - Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.2 - Integrate multiple sources of information presented in diverse formats and media (e.g. visually, quantitatively, orally) in order to make informed decisions and solve problems, evaluating the credibility and accuracy of each source and noting any discrepancies among the data.
- CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.4 - Present information, findings, and supporting evidence, conveying a clear and distinct perspective, such that listeners can follow the line of reasoning, alternative or opposing perspectives are addressed, and the organization, development, substance, and style are appropriate to purpose, audience, and a range of formal and informal tasks.

For further resources to help you teach ***The Crucible***, including our **full-length production**, and **Study Guide**, visit **www.digitaltheatreplus.com**

Want more resources to support your teaching? Discover thousands of engaging lesson materials from Digital Theatre+. Explore some of our most popular content by clicking the links below.

Hamlet

By William Shakespeare

Royal Shakespeare Company Production

Practical Workshop Guide

Study Guide

Hamlet Soliloquy Compare and Contrast

Antigone

By Sophocles

BBC Production

Practical Guide

Study Guide

Teaching Antigone with Digital Theatre+

A Doll's House

By Henrik Ibsen

Young Vic Production

Study Guide

Practical Guide

Audio Theatre

Romeo and Juliet

By William Shakespeare

Shakespeare's Globe Production

Study Guide

Historical Context Workbook

Shakespeare In Your Space Workshop

And more!