



It Wasn't Me

"The Crucible"



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| Grade Level | 11th – 12th Grade |
| Subject | English/Language Arts |
| Course | American Literature |

Essential Question

How does a collective fear affect a larger group? How does someone's interpretation of a piece of literature influence their understanding? How do theatrical choices and performance of a piece of literature influence a person's understanding of that text?

Summary

In this post-reading, cross-curricular lesson on the play, "The Crucible" by Arthur Miller, students participate in a mock trial to determine how many "witches" are in the class. Afterwards, students will read an interview with Arthur Miller in which he describes why he wrote the play. During this exercise, students will pause to write down any parallels to the story that stick out to them. Next, they will evaluate literary devices to support interpretations of the text during an activity called "Novel in a Day," in which students each take on a portion of the play to analyze. Finally, students will select a modern parallel to "The Crucible" that they would like to use for a rewrite of the famous play and decide how they might recast the movie with celebrities today.

Snapshot

Engage

Students participate in a mock trial.

Explore

Students read about and discuss the parallels of McCarthyism and what Arthur Miller was writing.

Explain

Students analyze sections of the play for the literary devices used throughout. Then, students watch a career talk video of Kelsey Hewlett, an actor and comedian living in Los Angeles.

Extend

Students rewrite part of a scene in a modern interpretation.

Evaluate

Students answer the question, "How would you recast the movie with celebrities today?"

Standards

Oklahoma Academic Standards: English Language Arts (Grade 11)

11.3.R.4: Evaluate how literary devices impact theme, mood, and/or tone, using textual evidence:

- figurative language (i.e., simile, metaphor, personification, hyperbole, imagery, symbolism)
- sound devices (i.e., onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance)
- irony (i.e., verbal, situational, dramatic)

Attachments

- [Lesson Slides—It Wasn't Me!.pptx](#)
- [Painting with Words in The Crucible—It Wasn't Me! - Spanish.docx](#)
- [Painting with Words in The Crucible—It Wasn't Me! - Spanish.pdf](#)
- [Painting with Words in The Crucible—It Wasn't Me!.docx](#)
- [Painting with Words in The Crucible—It Wasn't Me!.pdf](#)

Materials

- Lesson Slides (attached)
- “[Why I Wrote ‘The Crucible’](#)” (linked; one per student)
- Painting With Words in “The Crucible” (attached; one per student)
- Deck of cards with Queens removed
- “The Crucible” by Arthur Miller (one per student)
- Paper
- Pen/pencil

Engage

Teacher's Note: Setting the Stage

Before students arrive for class, make sure to remove all of the Queens from the deck and place them securely in your pocket or desk.

Use the attached **Lesson Slides** to guide the activities and instruction. Display **slides 2-3** to share the Essential Questions and Learning Objectives with students. Review these with the class to the extent you feel necessary.

Move to **slide 4** and say "I'm going to come around the room with a deck of cards. When I get to you, pull any card from the deck that you want. If you pull a Queen of any kind, you are a witch. If you pull any other card, you are a regular person. Your goal is to build the largest group of cards possible that does NOT have a witch in it. At the end, any group found to include a witch will spend a week in the stocks."

After students get into their groups say, "Okay, time to find out who the witches are! Everyone pull out your card to show your group." As they do so, allow students to sit with the confusion for a moment before pointing out that "no one in Salem was actually a witch."

Direct students back to their seats and display **slide 5**. Share some background information about the play, "The Crucible."

Explore

Display **slide 6**. Introduce the instructional strategy [Stop and Jot](#) to students and pass out copies of the “[Why I Wrote ‘The Crucible’](#)” article. While the article itself points out many parallels, the goal is for students to draw on their own prior knowledge.

Teacher's Note: Inappropriate Material

The New Yorker article may contain links to inappropriate material when viewed online. To avoid this, consider making paper copies of the article by copying the text into a document or copying the text into a Google Doc and sharing it with students.

Once students have had enough time to read the article, move to **slide 7** and instruct them to discuss their thoughts with a partner and add any additional thoughts they may have had in the margins. Have a few students share out. This is an opportunity for those who struggled to come up with their own examples to get a few ideas that they can add to their notes. As students share out, make a class list on the board that students can refer to later in the lesson.

Sample Student Responses

One comment that students might make while reading this article is that modern-day “cancel culture” parallels the trials and McCarthyism.

Explain

Display **slide 8**. Share the instructional strategy [Novel in a Day](#) with students and pass out copies of “The Crucible.” Divide the class into four equal groups, one per act. Have each group break their act into equal “chunks” based on how many are in that group for reading. Once students have their “chunk” of reading, use **slides 9-12** to review what *imagery*, *tone*, *symbolism*, and *irony* are.

Display **slide 13**. Pass out the attached handout **Painting with Words in “The Crucible.”** Have students record examples of each within their “chunk” of reading. Make sure to remind students that it is important for them to record the page number of the example so everyone can reference it later on.

Once all students have had a chance to complete their “chunk” of reading, display **slide 14**. Have them share out in an order which corresponds to the plot. Allow each student time to present the examples they came across to include the page numbers of each. Depending on time, you may wish to have each student share only one example, but have a class discussion on the example and why it demonstrates that literary device. Encourage students to take notes as others are sharing.

Move to **slide 15**. Share the video of [Kelsey Hewlett’s Career Talk](#). Kelsey is an actor and comedian living in Los Angeles. She has extensive credits in film, television, and commercials, and she performs regularly in live comedy venues throughout Southern California. Kelsey is a graduate of the University of Oklahoma with degrees in drama and political science. When the talk is over, allow some time for students to process and discuss what she shared.

Embedded video

https://youtube.com/watch?v=FOVSVcryf_8

Extend

Display **slide 16** and instruct students to select a modern parallel to “The Crucible” that they would like to use for a rewrite of the famous play. Provide them time to brainstorm the revisions they would make and how they would go about revising the work.

Once students have had enough time to brainstorm, move to **slide 17 or 18** (see teacher’s note) and have students make those revisions to the “chunk” of text they worked on earlier in the lesson.

Teacher's Note: Timing

Depending on the amount of time you have for this portion of the lesson, you could choose to have students either rewrite a scene in the play in a more modern interpretation or write a brief synopsis of how they would rewrite it.

Evaluate

Display **slide 19**. Invite students to think critically about how they would recast a modern interpretation of “The Crucible” with actors of the time. Have them write their responses on a separate sheet of paper and share their choices in small groups or to the entire class.

Resources

- K20 Center. (n.d.). Novel in a day. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/74>
- K20 Center. (n.d.). Stop and jot. Strategies. <https://learn.k20center.ou.edu/strategy/d9908066f654727934df7bf4f5077921>
- K20 Center. (2020). *Actor - Kelsey Hewlett - Zoom Into Your Career* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FOVSVcryf_8&list=PL-aUhEQeaZXlhi-ivvrQTrrEAlWvFWisR&index=15