

# The Salem Witch Trials and McCarthyism: Parallels in Public Hysteria



**An ELA Performance Task  
Curriculum-Embedded**

## The Salem Witch Trials and McCarthyism: Parallels in Public Hysteria

### Introductory Classroom Activity (30 minutes)

- Have students sit in small groups of about 4-5 people. Each group should have someone to record its discussion and someone who will report out orally for the group.
- Present on a projector the video clip of the documentary “He may be a communist.” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWeZ5SKXvj8>)
- After watching the trailer once, ask each group recorder to create two columns on a piece of paper. In one column, the group will list techniques used in the clips to promote fear and distrust in the communist party; in the other column, the group will be asked to list positive images from the clip used to promote anti-communist fervor.
- To clarify this assignment, ask the following two questions:
  1. What evidence do you see of strategies being used to create feelings of fear or discomfort about the communist party? (Possible responses: “physical appearance counts for nothing”—they could be anywhere among us; characters are shady sometimes (man in fedora), strident and borderline manic (woman giving speech); they work silently among us; loaded language like “red menace”; communists break into home of all-American family; recruitment of youth who are brainwashed automatons; fear of being reported to authorities.)
  2. What elements were present showing that to be anti-communist is a sign of goodness and patriotism? (Possible responses: repeated use of American flag; references to God and country; Statue of Liberty; patriotic music playing under the marches (a contrast to the marches shown earlier in the reel of communist sympathizers); youth in uniform; father bravely attempting to protect his family, although powerless to stop communists.)
- Have the students watch the trailer one more time while keeping these questions in mind.
- Allow about 5 to 10 minutes for students to work in their small groups to complete their lists.
- Have students report out on their group work, starting with question #1. Repeat the report-out process with question #2.
- To complete the discussion, as a full group briefly talk about any possible parallels to the witch trials and events in *The Crucible*.

## The Salem Witch Trials and McCarthyism: Parallels in Public Hysteria

### Task Overview:

Playwright Arthur Miller had more on his mind than the “witches” of Salem, Massachusetts when he penned what became one of his most-produced plays, *The Crucible*. Written in 1953 during the height of what has been called the McCarthy era, the play has many thematic parallels to the communist hunt spearheaded by Senator Joseph R. McCarthy of Wisconsin beginning in the 1940s.

You will be examining several resources relating to these two events in U.S. history. After reading the passages and answering a couple of questions, you will write an explanatory essay that discusses factors common to both events that contributed to their beginnings as well as helped them retain momentum.

### Part 1:

You will now examine several sources. You can re-examine the sources as often as you like during your completion of this performance task.

After examining the sources, use the rest of the time in Part 1 to answer three questions about them. Your answers to these questions will be part of your score for the reading portion of this assessment. Also, your answers will help you think about the information you have read and viewed, which should help you write your explanatory essay. Both your margin notes and your answers to the questions, along with a copy of *The Crucible*, will be available to you as you work on your essay.

### Source 1: Arthur Miller, “Are You Now Or Were You Ever?”

*The McCarthy era’s anti-communist trials destroyed lives and friendships. In this essay published in 2000, Arthur Miller describes the paranoia that swept America during this period and how it led to his writing of THE CRUCIBLE.*

*Notes on my thoughts, reactions and questions as I read.*

IT WOULD PROBABLY NEVER HAVE OCCURRED TO ME to write a play about the Salem witch trials of 1692 had I not seen some astonishing correspondences with that calamity in the America of the late 40s and early 50s. My basic need was to respond to a phenomenon which, with only small exaggeration, one could say paralyzed a whole generation and in a short time dried up the habits of trust and toleration in public discourse.

I refer to the anti-communist rage that threatened to reach hysterical proportions and sometimes did. I suppose we rapidly passed over anything like a discussion or debate, and into something quite different, a hunt not just for



subversive people, but for ideas and even a suspect language. The object was to destroy the least credibility of any and all ideas associated with socialism and communism, whose proponents were assumed to be either knowing or unwitting agents of Soviet subversion.

An ideological war is like guerrilla war, since the enemy is an idea whose proponents are not in uniform but are disguised as ordinary citizens, a situation that can scare a lot of people to death. To call the atmosphere paranoid is not to say that there was nothing real in the American-Soviet stand-off. But if there was one element that lent the conflict a tone of the inauthentic and the invented, it was the swiftness with which all values were forced in months to reverse themselves...

In 1948-51, I had the sensation of being trapped inside a perverse work of art, one of those Escher constructs in which it is impossible to make out whether a stairway is going up or down. Practically everyone I knew stood within the conventions of the political left of center; one or two were Communist party members, some were fellow-travelers, and most had had a brush with Marxist ideas or organizations. I have never been able to believe in the reality of these people being actual or putative traitors any more than I could be, yet others like them were being fired from teaching or jobs in government or large corporations. The surreality of it all never left me. We were living in an art form, a metaphor that had suddenly, incredibly, gripped the country. And if this seems crazy now, it seemed just as crazy then, but openly doubting it could cost you.

So in one sense *The Crucible* was an attempt to make life real again, palpable and structured. But it is impossible to convey properly the fears that marked that period. Nobody was shot, to be sure, although some were going to jail, where at least one, William Remington, was murdered by an inmate hoping to shorten his sentence by having killed a communist. Some greatly talented people were driven out of the US to work in England: screenwriters like Carl Foreman and Donald Ogden Stewart, actors like Charlie Chaplin and Sam Wanamaker. I no longer recall the number of our political exiles, but it was more than too many and disgraceful for a nation prideful of its democracy...

In 1956, the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) subpoenaed me—I was cited for contempt of Congress for refusing to identify writers I had met at one of the two communist writers' meetings I had attended many years before. By then, the tide was going out for HUAC and it was finding it more difficult to make front pages. However, the news of my forthcoming marriage to Marilyn Monroe was too tempting to be passed. That our marriage

had some connection with my being subpoenaed was confirmed when Chairman Walters of the HUAC sent word to Joseph Rauh, my lawyer, that he would be inclined to cancel my hearing if Miss Monroe would consent to have a picture taken with him.

The offer having been declined, the good chairman, as my hearing came to an end, entreated me to write less tragically about our country. This lecture cost me \$40,000 in lawyer's fees, a year's suspended sentence for contempt of Congress, and a \$500 fine. Not to mention about a year of inanition in my creative life.

My fictional view of the period, my sense of its unreality had been, like any impotence, a psychologically painful experience. A similar paralysis descended on Salem. In both places, to keep social unity intact, the authority of leaders had to be hardened and words of skepticism toward them constricted. A new cautionary diction, an uncustomary prudence inflected our way of talking to one another. The word socialism was all but taboo. Words had gotten fearsome.

Paranoia breeds paranoia, but below paranoia there lies a bristling, unwelcome truth, so repugnant as to produce fantasies of persecution to conceal its existence. The unwelcome truth denied by the right was that the Hollywood writers accused of subversion were not a menace to the country, or even bearers of meaningful change. They wrote not propaganda but entertainment, some of it of a mildly liberal cast, but most of it mindless, or when it was political, entirely and exuberantly un-Marxist.

In time to come, the notion of equating the red-hunt with the witch-hunt would be condemned as a deception. There were communists and there never were witches. The deeper I moved into the 1690s, the further away drifted the America of the 50s, and, rather than the appeal of analogy, I found something different to draw my curiosity and excitement.

Anyone standing up in the Salem of 1692 and denying that witches existed would have faced immediate arrest, the hardest interrogation and possibly the rope. Every authority not only confirmed the existence of witches but never questioned the necessity of executing them. It became obvious that to dismiss witchcraft was to forgo any understanding of how it came to pass that tens of thousands had been murdered as witches in Europe. To dismiss any relation between that episode and the hunt for subversives was to shut down an insight into not only the similar emotions but also the identical practices of both officials and victims.

Turning to Salem was like looking into a petri dish, an embalmed stasis with its principal moving forces caught in stillness. One had to wonder what the human imagination fed on that could inspire neighbors and old friends to

emerge overnight as furies secretly bent on the torture and destruction of Christians. More than a political metaphor, more than a moral tale, *The Crucible*, as it developed over more than a year, became the awesome evidence of the power of human imagination inflamed, the poetry of suggestion, and the tragedy of heroic resistance to a society possessed to the point of ruin.

In the stillness of the Salem courthouse, surrounded by the images of the 1950s but with my head in 1692, what the two eras had in common gradually gained definition. Both had the menace of concealed plots, but most startling were the similarities in the rituals of defence, the investigative routines; 300 years apart, both prosecutions alleged membership of a secret, disloyal group. Should the accused confess, his honesty could only be proved by naming former confederates. The informer became the axle of the plot's existence and the investigation's necessity.

The witch-hunt in 1692 had a not dissimilar problem, but a far more poetic solution. Most suspected people named by others as members of the Devil's conspiracy had not been shown to have done anything, neither poisoning wells, setting barns on fire, sickening cattle, aborting babies, nor undermining the virtue of wives... To the rescue came a piece of poetry, smacking of both legalistic and religious validity, called Spectral Evidence. All the prosecution need do was produce a witness who claimed to have seen, not an accused person, but his familiar spirit—his living ghost—in the act of throwing a burning brand into a barn full of hay. You could be at home asleep in your bed, but your spirit could be crawling through your neighbor's window to feel up his wife. The owner of the wandering spirit was obliged to account to the court for his crime. With Spectral Evidence, the air filled with the malign spirits of those identified by good Christians as confederates of the Beast, and the Devil himself danced happily into Salem village and took the place apart.

I spent 10 days in Salem courthouse reading the crudely recorded trials of the 1692 outbreak, and it was striking how totally absent was any sense of irony, let alone humor. I can't recall if it was the provincial governor's nephew or son who, with a college friend, came from Boston to watch the strange proceedings. Both boys burst out laughing at some absurd testimony: they were promptly jailed, and faced possible hanging.

I am glad that I managed to write *The Crucible*, but looking back I have often wished I'd had the temperament to do an absurd comedy, which is what the situation deserved. To lose oneself day after day in that record of human delusion was to know a fear, not for one's safety, but of the spectacle of intelligent people giving themselves over to a rapture of murderous credulity.

## Source 2: Cotton Mather Biography

*The following brief biographical sketch of Cotton Mather gives a quick overview of his contributions to the Salem Witch Trials.*

*Notes on my thoughts, reactions and questions as I read.*



COTTON MATHER, THE MINISTER of Boston's Old North church, was a true believer in witchcraft. In 1688, he had investigated the strange behavior of four children of a Boston mason named John Goodwin. The children had been complaining of sudden pains and crying out together in chorus. He concluded that witchcraft, specifically that practiced by an Irish washerwoman named Mary Glover, was responsible for the children's problems. He presented his findings and conclusions in one of the best known of his 382 works,

"Memorable Providences." Mather's experience caused him to vow that to "never use but one grain of patience with any man that shall go to impose upon me a Denial of Devils, or of Witches."

As it happened, three of the five judges appointed to the Court of Oyer and Terminer that would hear the Salem witchcraft trials were friends of Mather and members of his church. Mather wrote a letter to one of the three judges, John Richards, suggesting how they might approach evidentiary issues at the upcoming trials. In particular, Mather urged the judges to consider spectral evidence, giving it such weight as "it will bear," and to consider the confessions of witches the best evidence of all. As the trials progressed, and growing numbers of person confessed to being witches, Mather became firmly convinced that "an Army of Devils is horribly broke in upon the place which is our center." On August 4, 1692, Mather delivered a sermon warning that the Last Judgment was near at hand, and portraying himself, Chief Justice Stroughton, and Governor Phips as leading the final charge against the Devil's legions. On August 19, Mather was in Salem to witness the execution of ex-minister George Burroughs for witchcraft. When, on Gallows Hill, Burroughs was able to recite the Lord's Prayer perfectly (something that witches were thought incapable of doing) and some in the crowd called for the execution to be stopped, Mather intervened, reminding those gathered that Burroughs had been duly convicted by a jury. Mather was given the official records of the Salem trials for use in

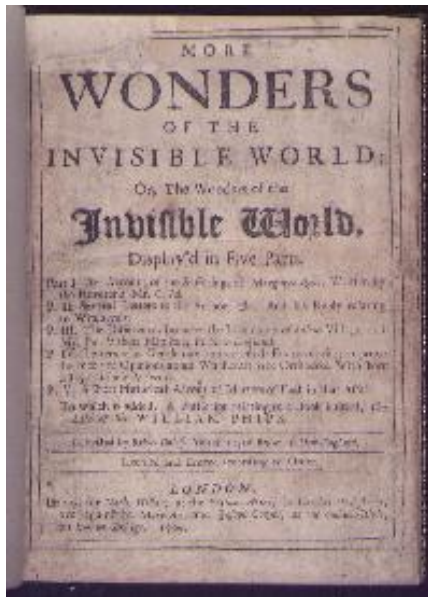
preparation of a book that the judges hoped would favorably describe their role in the affair. The book, "Wonders of the Invisible World," provides fascinating insights both into the trials and Mather's own mind.

When confessed witches began recanting their testimony, Mather may have begun to have doubts about at least some of the proceedings. He revised his own position on the use of spectral evidence and tried to minimize his own large role in its consideration in the Salem trials. Later in life, Mather turned away from the supernatural and may well have come to question whether it played the role in life he first suspected.

### Source 3: Excerpt from Wonders of the Invisible World

Here is a short excerpt from Cotton Mather's book, referenced in the previous article. Although the spelling and punctuation are rather archaic, Mather's message (and its relevance to the events in Salem as depicted in THE CRUCIBLE) should still come through pretty clearly.

Notes on my thoughts, reactions and questions as I read.



Wherefore the Devil is now making one Attempt more upon us; an Attempt more Difficult, more Surprizing, more snarl'd with unintelligible Circumstances than any that we have hitherto Encountered; an Attempt so *Critical*, that if we get well through, we shall soon enjoy *Halcyon Days* with all the Vultures of hell *Trodden under our Feet*. He has wanted his *Incarnate Legions* to Persecute us, as the People of God have in the other Hemisphere been Persecuted: he has therefore drawn forth his more *Spiritual* ones to make an Attacque upon us. We have been advised by some Credible Christians yet alive, that a

Malefactor, accused of *Witchcraft* as well as *Murder*, and Executed in this place more than Forty Years ago, did then give Notice of, *An Horrible PLOT against the Country by WITCHCRAFT, and a Foundation of WITCHCRAFT then laid, which if it were not seasonably discovered would probably Blow up, and pull down all the Churches in the Country.* And we have now with Horror seen the *Discovery* of



such a *Witchcraft!* An Army of *Devils* is horribly broke in upon the place which is the *Center*, and after a sort, the *First-born* of our *English* Settlements; and the Houses of the Good People there are fill'd with the doleful Shrieks of their Children and Servants, Tormented by Invisible Hands, with Tortures altogether preternatural. After the Mischiefs there Endeavoured, and since in part Conquered, the terrible Plague, of *Evil Angels*, hath made its Progress into some other places, where other Persons have been in like manner Diabolically handled. These our poor Afflicted Neighbours, quickly after they become *Infected* and *Infested* with these *Daemons*, arrive to a Capacity of Discerning those which they conceive the *Shapes* of their Troublers; and notwithstanding the Great and Just Suspicion, that the *Daemons* might Impose the *Shapes* of Innocent Persons in their *Spectral Exhibitions* upon the Sufferers (which may perhaps prove no small part of the *Witch-plot* in the issue), yet many of the Persons thus Represented being Examined, several of them have been Convicted of a very Damnable *Witchcraft*: yea, more than one *Twenty* have *Confessed* that they have Signed unto a *Book*, which the Devil show'd them, and Engaged in his Hellish Design of *Bewitching*, and *Ruining* our Land. We know not, at least *I* know not, how far the *Delusions* of Satan may be Interwoven into some Circumstances of the *Confessions*; but one would think, all the Rules of Understanding Humane Affairs are at an end, if after so many most Voluntary Harmonious *Confessions*, made by Intelligent Persons of all Ages, in sundry Towns, at several Times, we must not Believe the *main strokes* wherein those *Confessions* all agree: especially when we have a thousand preternatural Things every day before our eyes, wherein the *Confessors* do acknowledge their Concernment, and give Demonstration of their being so Concerned. If the Devils now can strike the minds of men with any *Poisons* of so fine a Composition and Operation, that Scores of Innocent People shall Unite, in *Confessions* of a Crime, which we see actually committed, it is a thing prodigious, beyond the Wonders of the former Ages, and it threatens no less than a sort of Dissolution upon the World.

#### Source 4: “Enemies from Within”

*The following selection is the text of a speech Senator Joseph McCarthy gave in Wheeling, West Virginia in 1950. The speech is preceded by an introduction that details events leading up to the delivery of this speech.*

*Notes on my thoughts, reactions and questions as I read.*

Wisconsin Republican Joseph R. McCarthy first won election to the Senate in 1946 during a campaign marked by much anticommunist Red-baiting. Partially in response to Republican Party victories, President Harry S. Truman tried to demonstrate his own concern about the threat of Communism by setting up a loyalty program for federal employees. He also asked the Justice Department to compile an official list of 78 subversive organizations. As the midterm election year got underway, former State Department official Alger Hiss, suspected of espionage, was convicted of perjury. McCarthy, in a speech at Wheeling, West Virginia, mounted an attack on Truman’s foreign policy agenda by charging that the State Department and its Secretary, Dean Acheson, harbored “traitorous” Communists. There is some dispute about the number of Communists McCarthy claimed to have known about. Though advance copies of this speech distributed to the press record the number as 205, McCarthy quickly revised this claim. Both in a letter he wrote to President Truman the next day and in an “official” transcript of the speech that McCarthy submitted to the Congressional Record ten days later he uses the number 57. Although McCarthy displayed this list of names both in Wheeling and then later on the Senate floor, he never made the list public.



Ladies and gentlemen, tonight as we celebrate the one hundred forty-first birthday of one of the greatest men in American history, I would like to be able to talk about what a glorious day today is in the history of the world. As we celebrate the birth of this man who with his whole heart and soul hated war, I would like to be able to speak of peace in our time—of war being outlawed—and of world-wide disarmament. These would be truly appropriate things to be able to mention as we celebrate the birthday of Abraham Lincoln.

Five years after a world war has been won,

men's hearts should anticipate a long peace—and men's minds should be free from the heavy weight that comes with war. But this is not such a period—for this is not a period of peace. This is a time of "the cold war." This is a time when all the world is split into two vast, increasingly hostile armed camps—a time of a great armament race.

Today we can almost physically hear the mutterings and rumblings of an invigorated god of war. You can see it, feel it, and hear it all the way from the Indochina hills, from the shores of Formosa, right over into the very heart of Europe itself.

The one encouraging thing is that the "mad moment" has not yet arrived for the firing of the gun or the exploding of the bomb which will set civilization about the final task of destroying itself. There is still a hope for peace if we finally decide that no longer can we safely blind our eyes and close our ears to those facts which are shaping up more and more clearly . . . and that is that we are now engaged in a show-down fight . . . not the usual war between nations for land areas or other material gains, but a war between two diametrically opposed ideologies.

The great difference between our western Christian world and the atheistic Communist world is not political, gentlemen, it is moral. For instance, the Marxian idea of confiscating the land and factories and running the entire economy as a single enterprise is momentous. Likewise, Lenin's invention of the one-party police state as a way to make Marx's idea work is hardly less momentous.

Stalin's resolute putting across of these two ideas, of course, did much to divide the world. With only these differences, however, the east and the west could most certainly still live in peace.

The real, basic difference, however, lies in the religion of immoralism . . . invented by Marx, preached feverishly by Lenin, and carried to unimaginable extremes by Stalin. This religion of immoralism, if the Red half of the world triumphs—and well it may, gentlemen—this religion of immoralism will more deeply wound and damage mankind than any conceivable economic or political system.

Karl Marx dismissed God as a hoax, and Lenin and Stalin have added in clear-cut, unmistakable language their resolve that no nation, no people who believe in a god, can exist side by side with their communistic state.

Karl Marx, for example, expelled people from his Communist Party for mentioning such things as love, justice, humanity or morality. He called this "soulful ravings" and "sloppy sentimentality." . . .

Today we are engaged in a final, all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity. The modern champions of communism have selected this as the time, and ladies and gentlemen, the chips are down—they are truly down.

Lest there be any doubt that the time has been chosen, let us go directly to the leader of communism today—Joseph Stalin. Here is what he said—not back in 1928, not before the war, not during the war—but 2 years after the last war was ended: “To think that the Communist revolution can be carried out peacefully, within the framework of a Christian democracy, means one has either gone out of one’s mind and lost all normal understanding, or has grossly and openly repudiated the Communist revolution.” . . .

Ladies and gentlemen, can there be anyone tonight who is so blind as to say that the war is not on? Can there be anyone who fails to realize that the Communist world has said the time is now? . . . that this is the time for the show-down between the democratic Christian world and the communistic atheistic world?

Unless we face this fact, we shall pay the price that must be paid by those who wait too long.

Six years ago, . . . there was within the Soviet orbit, 180,000,000 people. Lined up on the antitotalitarian side there were in the world at that time, roughly 1,625,000,000 people. Today, only six years later, there are 800,000,000 people under the absolute domination of Soviet Russia—an increase of over 400 percent. On our side, the figure has shrunk to around 500,000,000. In other words, in less than six years, the odds have changed from 9 to 1 in our favor to 8 to 5 against us.

This indicates the swiftness of the tempo of Communist victories and American defeats in the cold war. As one of our outstanding historical figures once said, “When a great democracy is destroyed, it will not be from enemies from without, but rather because of enemies from within.” . . .

The reason why we find ourselves in a position of impotency is not because our only powerful potential enemy has sent men to invade our shores . . . but rather because of the traitorous actions of those who have been treated so well by this Nation. It has not been the less fortunate, or members of minority groups who have been traitorous to this Nation, but rather those who have had all the benefits that the wealthiest Nation on earth has had to offer . . . the finest homes, the finest college education and the finest jobs in government we can give.

This is glaringly true in the State Department. There the bright young men who are born with silver spoons in their mouths are the ones who have been most traitorous. . . .

I have here in my hand a list of 205 . . . a list of names that were made known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping policy in the State Department.

As you know, very recently the Secretary of State proclaimed his loyalty to a man guilty of what has always been considered as the most abominable of all crimes—being a traitor to the people who gave him a position of great trust—high treason. . . .

He has lighted the spark which is resulting in a moral uprising and will end only when the whole sorry mess of twisted, warped thinkers are swept from the national scene so that we may have a new birth of honesty and decency in government.

### Sources 5 and 6: Two Testimonies

*The final two sources are brief excerpts from the testimony of two men: Giles Corey at his witchcraft trial in 1692 and that of Paul Robeson before the House Committee on Un-American Activities in 1956.*

*Notes on my thoughts, reactions and questions as I read.*



Giles Cory, they accuse you, or your appearance, of hurting them, and bringing the book to them. What do you say? Why do you hurt them? Tell us the truth.

*I never did hurt them.*

It is your appearance hurts them, they charge you; tell us what you have done.

*I have done nothing to damage them.*

Have you ever entered into contract with the devil?

*I never did.*

What temptations have you had?

*I never had temptations in my life.*

What, have you done it without temptations?

What was the reason (*said goodwife Bibber*) that you were frightened in the cow-house? and then the questionist was suddenly seized with a violent fit.

Samuel Braybrook, goodman Bibber, and his daughter, testified that he had told them this morning that he was frightened in the cow-house. Cory denied it.

This was not your appearance but your person, and you told them so this morning: why do you deny it? What did you see in the cow-house?

*I never saw nothing but my cattle.*

Divers witnessed that he told them he was frightened. Well, what do you say to these witnesses? What was it frightened you?

*I do not know that ever I spoke the word in my life.*

Tell the truth, what was it frightened you?

*I do not know any thing that frightened me.*

All the afflicted were seized now with fits, and troubled with pinches. Then the court ordered his hands to be tied.

What, is it not enough to act witchcraft at other times, but must you do it now in the face of authority?

*I am a poor creature, and cannot help it.*

Upon the motion of his head again, they had their heads and necks afflicted.

Why do you tell such wicked lies against witnesses, that heard you speak after this manner, this very morning?

*I never saw any thing but a black hog.*

You said that you were stopt once in prayer; what stopt you?

*I cannot tell; my wife came towards me and found fault with me for saying living to God and dying to sin.*

What was it frightened you in the barn?

*I know nothing frightened me there.*

Why here are three witnesses that heard you say so to-day.

*I do not remember it.*

## Testimony of Paul Robeson before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, June 12, 1956

*Many African-American witnesses subpoenaed to testify at the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) hearings in the 1950s were asked to denounce Paul Robeson (1888–1976) in order to obtain future employment. Robeson, an All-American football player and recipient of a Phi Beta Kappa key at Rutgers, received a law degree at Columbia. He became an internationally acclaimed concert performer and actor as well as a persuasive political speaker. In 1949, Robeson was the subject of controversy after newspapers reports of public statements that African Americans would not fight in “an imperialist war.” In 1950, his passport was revoked. Several years later, Robeson refused to sign an affidavit stating that he was not a Communist and initiated an unsuccessful lawsuit. In the following testimony to a HUAC hearing, ostensibly convened to gain information regarding his passport suit, Robeson refused to answer questions concerning his political activities and lectured bigoted Committee members Gordon H. Scherer and Chairman Francis E. Walter about African-American history and civil rights. In 1958, the Supreme Court ruled that a citizen’s right to travel could not be taken away without due process and Robeson’s passport was returned.*

*Notes on my thoughts, reactions and questions as I read.*

THE CHAIRMAN: The Committee will be in order. This morning the Committee resumes its series of hearings on the vital issue of the use of American passports as travel documents in furtherance of the objectives of the Communist conspiracy.

Mr. ARENS: Now, during the course of the process in which you were applying for this passport, in July of 1954, were you requested to submit a non-Communist affidavit?

Mr. ROBESON: We had a long discussion—with my counsel, who is in the room, Mr. [Leonard B.] Boudin—with the State Department, about just such an affidavit and I was very precise not only in the application but with the State Department, headed by Mr. Henderson and Mr. McLeod, that under no conditions would I think of signing any such affidavit, that it is a complete contradiction of the rights of American citizens.



Mr. ARENS: Did you comply with the requests?

Mr. ROBESON: I certainly did not and I will not.

Mr. ARENS: Are you now a member of the Communist Party?

Mr. ROBESON: Oh please, please, please.

Mr. SCHERER: Please answer, will you, Mr. Robeson?

Mr. ROBESON: What is the Communist Party? What do you mean by that?

Mr. SCHERER: I ask that you direct the witness to answer the question.

Mr. ROBESON: What do you mean by the Communist Party? As far as I know it is a legal party like the Republican Party and the Democratic Party. Do you mean a party of people who have sacrificed for my people, and for all Americans and workers, that they can live in dignity? Do you mean that party?

Mr. ARENS: Are you now a member of the Communist Party?

Mr. ROBESON: Would you like to come to the ballot box when I vote and take out the ballot and see?

Mr. ARENS: Mr. Chairman, I respectfully suggest that the witness be ordered and directed to answer that question.

THE CHAIRMAN: You are directed to answer the question.

*(The witness consulted with his counsel.)*

Mr. ROBESON: I stand upon the Fifth Amendment of the American Constitution.

Mr. ARENS: Do you mean you invoke the Fifth Amendment?

Mr. ROBESON: I invoke the Fifth Amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Do you honestly apprehend that if you told this Committee truthfully—

Mr. ROBESON: I have no desire to consider anything. I invoke the Fifth Amendment, and it is none of your business what I would like to do, and I invoke the Fifth Amendment. And forget it.

THE CHAIRMAN: You are directed to answer that question.

MR, ROBESON: I invoke the Fifth Amendment, and so I am answering it, am I not?

Mr. ARENS: I respectfully suggest the witness be ordered and directed to answer the question as to whether or not he honestly apprehends, that if he gave us a



truthful answer to this last principal question, he would be supplying information which might be used against him in a criminal proceeding.

THE CHAIRMAN: You are directed to answer that question, Mr. Robeson.

Mr. ROBESON: Gentlemen, in the first place, wherever I have been in the world, Scandinavia, England, and many places, the first to die in the struggle against Fascism were the Communists and I laid many wreaths upon graves of Communists. It is not criminal, and the Fifth Amendment has nothing to do with criminality. The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Warren, has been very clear on that in many speeches, that the Fifth Amendment does not have anything to do with the inference of criminality. I invoke the Fifth Amendment.

Mr. ARENS: Have you ever been known under the name of "John Thomas"?

Mr. ROBESON: Oh, please, does somebody here want—are you suggesting—do you want me to be put up for perjury some place? "John Thomas"! My name is Paul Robeson, and anything I have to say, or stand for, I have said in public all over the world, and that is why I am here today.

1. Select at least three sentences from the Arthur Miller essay (Source 1) that draw a direct or implied parallel between the Salem witch trials and the communist scare in the 1950s. Highlight (or underline) them in the text of the article.
2. In Source 1, Miller refers to an “anti-communist rage that threatened to reach hysterical proportions.” In the space below, indicate any references or examples you can find from the other articles that relate to “hysteria” or “hysterical behavior.” Be sure to note in which source you found the example.

| Example of “hysteria” or hysterical behavior | Found in which source? |
|----------------------------------------------|------------------------|
|                                              |                        |
|                                              |                        |
|                                              |                        |
|                                              |                        |
|                                              |                        |

3. The Miller essay (Source 1) and the biography of Cotton Mather both refer to “spectral evidence.” Based on how the term is described in the articles, what is *spectral evidence* and how was it an important factor during each of the two historical periods?

4. Fill out the table below to identify the primary motivation or goal each of the individuals that are the subjects or authors of the source material.

| Source author or subject | His primary motivation for writing/saying what he did |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| Arthur Miller            |                                                       |
| Cotton Mather            |                                                       |
| Sen. Joseph McCarthy     |                                                       |
| Giles Corey              |                                                       |
| Paul Robeson             |                                                       |

### Part 2: Explanatory Essay

Using the Salem Witch Trials and the McCarthy Era as examples, write an essay about the impact of creating and exploiting public hysteria as a means to obtain power and manipulate people. Use information from the resources you have read as well as from the text of the play *The Crucible*. You do not have to use each of the source documents, just those with information that supports the claim you are making.