

Theme: The American Dream—*The Scarlet Letter* and *The Crucible*
Junior Honors English Level III

First Unit

Essential Questions

How do dreams contribute to a meaningful life as an American?
What is the American Dream and how has its interpretation changed over time?
What are the roots of the American Dream?
Are the roots of the American Dream still viable elements of the dream today?
What effect does the theme of alienation have on American literature?
How do the characters embody the evolution of a common set of beliefs in our society?
Is the American Dream of individuality a destructive or empowering force, or a combination of both?
As a teenager today, how are you affected by the American Dream? (Are you part of it, victimized by it, or redefining it?)

Enduring Understandings

- The American Dream is a pervasive element of the American cultural identity.
- Alienation, whether imposed by society or self, is often a catalyst for development of the individual identity within the American Dream.
- The American identity is tied to its roots in the colonial period, which lays the foundation for our concepts of political, religious, and individual freedoms.
- As the writers of the American Renaissance strive for a distinctly American voice, they explore issues of individuality and conformity in colonial America and its effects on the American identity and culture.
- Literature is one artistic medium through which people grapple with the issues and conflicts of their time.
- All good literature reveals truths about the human experience that transcends its time.

Content

The Junior Honors American Literature course is an integrated language arts program which focuses on reading and interpreting literature of the various periods and genres of the American literary tradition as well as the other four modes of writing. Literature study includes pre-colonial American literature, literature of the American revolution, Neoclassical American literature, literature of the New England Renaissance, literature of the Civil War era, literature of realism and the frontier, literature of the Modern Age, and the literature of Contemporary America. The course also includes instruction in speaking, listening, and writing, with regular attention given to grammar, usage, and vocabulary development. Preparation for the SAT/ACT is also incorporated into 11th grade English as well as the study of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

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This course provides intensive instruction in critical reading, writing, speaking, and listening through literary analysis of the genres of drama, fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Students will be familiarized with the literary conventions which appear in their assigned readings and be given the opportunity to practice these conventions in the expository, persuasive, self-expressive and literary modes of composition.

21st Learning Expectations

Students

- Communicate effectively for a variety of purposes: written, oral, and presentation skills emphasized.
- Value human, cultural and natural diversity
- Employ research and data-gathering skills effectively
- Take responsibility for their own learning and behavior.

21st Century Learning Skills

21st Learning skills in the Language Arts classroom include:

- Information and communication skills which include media literacy, information literacy and ICT literacy.
- Thinking and problem-solving skills which include critical thinking, problem identification formulation and solution, creativity and intellectual curiosity specific to the unit genre.
- Interpersonal and self-directional skills which include both *Flexibility* and *Adaptability* with regard to cooperative groupings and pairings, and literature circles.
- Initiative and Self-Direction
- Social and Cross-Cultural Skills
- Productivity and Accountability
- Leadership and Responsibility

Connecticut State Standards

- ✓ Content Standard 1.1 Students use appropriate strategies before, during and after reading in order to construct meaning.
- ✓ Content Standard 1.2 Students interpret, analyze and evaluate text in order to extend understanding and appreciation.
- ✓ Content Standard 2.4 Students recognize that readers and authors are influenced by individual, social, cultural and historical contexts.

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Objectives

Students will be able to:

- ✓ Analyze key symbols and symbol patterns.
- ✓ Describe and analyze the narrative structure of the novel *The Scarlet Letter* and play *The Crucible*.
- ✓ Analyze contrasting elements in a novel.
- ✓ Analyze the effect of alienation as a theme in American literature.
- ✓ Evaluate levels of moral reasoning in the novel.
- ✓ Analyze the effects of the Colonial Period on contemporary American views.

Assessments

Assessment: Create an altered ending for either *The Scarlet Letter* or *The Crucible* to perform for the class (Rubric 1.1: Communicate—Student writes effectively for a variety of purposes; Rubric 1.3 Communication—Student speaks/presents effectively for a variety of purposes)

Five-paragraph literary analysis examining the theme of alienation in either or both works (Rubric 7.0—Student employs research and data-gathering skills effectively; Rubric 1.1: Communicate—Student writes effectively for a variety of purposes)

Reading Check Quizzes (Rubric 1.2: Communication—Student reads effectively for a variety of purposes) and Multiple Choice/Short Answer Unit Test (Rubric 1.2: Communication—Student reads effectively for a variety of purposes).

Other evidence of learning may include dialectical journals, story maps, group discussion, concept cube, and Socratic seminar.

Resources

School-issued student laptops, selections from *Prentice Hall Literature Common Core* Edition as well as Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*, www.shmoop.com; www.grammarbook.com; supplemental essays and articles provided by the instructor such as "I Hear America Singing," "I Sit and Look Out," "In Another Country."