

# North Haven High School: Summer 2015

Summer Reading English 11 L3

***The Crucible* by Arthur Miller**

***The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ch. 1-11**

*(You will be reading Chapters 1-11 before the first day of class; you do **NOT** have to read "The Custom House" introductory.)*

**BACKGROUND:** In his great essay called "Tragedy and the Common Man" Arthur Miller argues that tragedy is the result of man's attempt to "evaluate himself justly," to retain his integrity.

Miller's hero, John Proctor, is a man in the middle of the Salem Witch crisis who finds himself and many of his fellow townspeople accused of a heinous crime unable to "prove" their innocence. Miller's play, written about the McCarthy hearings of the 1950's (which were designed to root out supposed Communists in the entertainment industry) is relevant in all times wherever people are scapegoated.

Hawthorne's protagonist, Hester Prynne, also finds herself embroiled in scandal when she gives birth to a child – the aptly named Pearl – out of wedlock. For the crime of adultery, Hester is compelled to wear the scarlet "A" on her bosom and stand on the public platform alone, an object of scorn for the entire town. Following the stories of not only Hester but also her husband and lover, the novel tracks the effects of isolation, guilt, and revenge on the human psyche.

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**ASSIGNMENT:** Before you read, you should first conduct brief but thorough research on the American colonial period, specifically focusing on Puritan culture. Record ten (brief) key facts that you learn, being certain to specifically note the source(s) of your information.

Then, as you actively read, take note of the aspects of *The Crucible* and chapters 1-11 of *The Scarlet Letter* (not including "The Custom House") that both adhere to and depart from historically accurate depictions of the period. You are also encouraged to view the terrific film version of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, a play about the time focusing on the origins of the Salem Witchcraft trials. Your notes will not be collected, but you are strongly encouraged to bring them to class on our first day.

Finally, you should write a 1-2 page (typed, MLA format) reaction to the following prompt, which will serve as the prewriting for your first formal writing in the course:

*What are your impressions of Puritan society, based on your research, viewing, and reading? What expectations does society appear to place on its members? Include at least two well-explained quotes, one or more from each text.*

You will be graded on the quality and originality of your conclusions. In the first week of school, you will upload your typed response to TurnItIn.com, so please email a copy of your document file to yourself, which will enable you to upload it from a school computer. Of course, any response found to have been influenced by unattributed outside sources, including but not limited to internet websites like SparkNotes.com, will automatically receive a zero and will result in a write-up to the grade principal.

**DUE DATE:** First day of class, reading and writing (10 facts + typed response) completed in full.