

AP English 3: Language and Composition Summer Reading Assignment

The Crucible, by Arthur Miller

I. Arthur Miller (1915 – 2005)

Arthur Miller was called the greatest living American playwright. Known best for writing *Death of a Salesman* and *The Crucible*, Miller's plays share the theme of morality vs. pressures from society and family. *The Crucible* won the Antoinette Perry award in 1953, but soon closed because the comparison between the Salem witch trials and McCarthy hearings made many viewers uncomfortable. In 1956, Miller was himself summoned before the very trials he criticized in his play. Like John Proctor, he refused to implicate his friends and was tried for and convicted of contempt of Congress. In 1958, his conviction was overturned.

II. Senator Joseph Raymond McCarthy and the Communist trials of the 1950s

Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy (1908 – 1957), arguably the greatest demagogue in American history, gained national attention in 1950 when he claimed that the State Department had been infiltrated by Communists. In a speech in West Virginia, the Senator proclaimed, "I have in my hand a list of 205 cases of individuals who appear to be either card-carrying members or certainly loyal to the Communist Party." For the next four years, he searched for Communist subversion through televised and highly publicized hearings before the House Committee on Un-American Activities. He subpoenaed some of the most prominent entertainers of the era (e.g., Orson Welles, Lucille Ball, Dashielle Hammett, and Lillian Hellman) before HUAC, demanding "the naming of names." Careers and lives were ruined by McCarthy's accusations, which were based on unidentified sources, and weak evidence. In April 1954, McCarthy accused the Secretary of the Army of concealing foreign espionage activities. The Secretary countered that members of McCarthy's subcommittee staff had threatened army officials in order to obtain preferential treatment for an associate of the subcommittee who had been recently drafted. The Senator and his committee were cleared of these charges, but McCarthy was censured by the Senate, and his power slowly declined.

Blue Book Assignment: One-paragraph responses

After you read the play, use the internet to research and read more about each of these events in American History, then write well developed explanations as to how **FOUR** of the following concepts contributed to one or both events. Each of your responses should be a paragraph that includes a topic sentence, concrete evidence, and your personal analysis/commentary.

Hysteria
Integrity
Pride
Vengeance
Credibility

Motivation
Honesty
Fear
Validity of Evidence

To Kill A Mockingbird, by Harper Lee

Many critics say that Harper Lee modeled the character of Scout after herself. Harper Lee was born in Monroeville, Alabama in 1926, so she would have been the same age as Scout when *To Kill a Mockingbird* takes place. Lee's father was a small-town lawyer, just like Atticus Finch, and Harper Lee spent many hours at the local courthouse with her father. Although there is no proof, it is rumored that a mysterious recluse lived in Lee's neighborhood on which the character of Boo Radley is based. Finally, Harper Lee's mother's maiden name was Frances Finch.

In April 1931, in Scottsboro, Alabama, nine African-American men—the youngest being twelve years old—were tried for raping two white women. Medical testimony showed that the two women had not been raped, but the all-white jury convicted the men and sentenced them to death. In six appellate trials, most of the convictions were overturned, and all but one of the men were subsequently freed or paroled. Even though she was only six years old when the first trial took place, this trial had a significant impact on Harper Lee, and it served as the basis for the trial in *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Harper Lee's close childhood friend was the famous author Truman Capote. Lee and her brother spent their summers playing with Truman, and her friendship with him continued until his death in 1984. She worked as his research assistant when he went to Kansas to write his award-winning novel *In Cold Blood*. Many critics believe that Capote was the model for Lee's character Dill in *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Capote supported Lee's book by writing the following for the front flap of the first edition's book jacket:

Someone rare has written this very fine first novel: a writer with the liveliest sense of life and the warmest, most authentic humor. A touching book; and so funny, so likeable.

Blue Book Assignment: Two-paragraph responses

Write TWO well-developed paragraphs explaining EACH of the following.

1. Explain Atticus' definition of a gentleman. Cite examples of Jem's increasing awareness of this definition and the impact on his behavior.
2. Read the passage from Chapter 20, beginning in the middle of page 202 with, "We looked down again..." and ending at the bottom of page 205 with Atticus' statement, "In the name of God, do your duty."

The use of a monologue gives a writer the means to have a character explain his beliefs, attitudes, and feelings about humanity and life in general.

Using Atticus' closing arguments to support your statements, explain Lee's use of the monologue to further define Atticus' character and moral beliefs.