

Lesson Ideas

The Crucible: Puritanism in the Salem community

OVERVIEW

These learning materials do not require the teacher or learner to be familiar with *The Crucible* or to have seen the theatre production.

Each activity comprises several short tasks related to religion in *The Crucible* and where relevant, video clips from the production.

The materials include:

- o Objectives and learning outcomes
- o Background notes
- o Key words / Concepts / Key people / Key places
- o Resources

Activities:

1. Church and community
2. Authority and transgression
3. Witches, the Devil and the Existence of Evil (Part One)
4. Witches, the Devil and the Existence of Evil (Part Two)
5. Visions of utopia: extended learning

GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THESE LESSON IDEAS

Objectives and Learning Outcomes

What students can expect to learn and achieve.

Background notes

Background information for each of the five activities.

Key words and concepts

Lists of key words associated with each of the five activities.

Resources

Appendices with suggested structures for lesson planning and background on the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Documents to Download

Word & PDF.

Objectives and Learning Outcomes

Activity 1: Church and community

By the end of these lessons students should have a knowledge and understanding of:

The origins of Salem Puritanism in the Protestant Reformation (At KS3 AT1)
The Christian Church as a community of salvation (At KS3 AT 1) The Christian church as a source of moral guidance (At KS3 AT1)

By the end of these lessons students should be able to reflect upon and evaluate:

The role of community in students' own lives (At KS3 AT 2)

Activity 2: Authority and transgression

By the end of these lessons students should have a knowledge and understanding of:

The authority of the Bible within Protestant Christianity (At KS3 AT1)
The tension between individual believer and pastor in Protestantism (At KS3 AT1)
The nature of fundamentalism in religious community (At KS3 AT1)

By the end of these lessons students should be able to reflect upon and evaluate:

The role of community in students' own lives (At KS3 AT 2)

Activity 3: Witches, the Devil and the existence of evil (Part One)

By the end of these lessons students should have a knowledge and understanding of:

The doctrine of the Fall in Christianity (At KS3 AT1)
The concepts of purgatory, hell and heaven (At KS3 AT1)
The origins of the term evil in Christianity (At KS3 AT1)
The definition of a witch, a non-Christian term (At KS3 AT1)

By the end of these lesson students should be able to reflect upon and evaluate:

The experience of evil and suffering in their own lives and in current and historical events (At KS3 AT 2)

Activity 4: Witches, the Devil and the existence of evil (Part Two)

By the end of these lessons students should have a knowledge and understanding of:

The doctrine of the Fall in Christianity (At KS3 AT1)
The concepts of purgatory, hell and heaven (At KS3 AT1)
The origins of the term "evil" in Christianity (At KS3 AT1)
The definition of the witch, a non-Christian term (At KS3 AT1)

By the end of these lessons students should be able to reflect upon and evaluate:

The experience of evil and suffering in their own lives and in current and historical events (At KS3 AT 2)

Activity 5: Visions of utopia - extending learning

By the end of these lessons students should have an advanced knowledge and understanding of:

The origins of the United Nations as an attempted vision of common moral standards, universal human rights (AT KS3 AT1)
The notion of a utopia and its opposite, a 'dystopia' (At KS3 AT1)

The notion of totalitarianism (At KS3 AT1)
The development of the United Nations (At KS3 AT1)
McCarthyism in America after the Second World War (At KS3 AT1)
By the end of these lessons students should be able to reflect upon and evaluate the complex philosophical issues of:

The problems around moral universals, including the contemporary doctrine of universal human rights (At KS3 AT 2)
Issues of religious freedom in the world today (At KS3 AT2)

Background notes

Activity 1: Church and community

Puritanism has its origins in the Protestant Reformation of Europe in the early sixteenth century. It is generally acknowledged that Martin Luther was the first leader of the Protestants. They were given this name because they protested against the authority of the Pope and Rome.

It all started when, in 1517, Martin Luther posted what came to be known as 95 Theses on his church door at Wittenberg. These were largely protests (hence the term Protestant and Protestantism) against the authority of the Pope. In 1521 the Pope excommunicated Martin Luther, which led to the split of the Christian church between Protestantism and Roman Catholicism.

In Christianity, the Church is not just the pastors or the ministers but the community of believers. Christians believe that life on earth is simply a preparation for eternity, and after death there will be the Last Judgement. (This is recounted in Matthew, Chapter 25.) While it is unfashionable to use the word hell, Christians still believe there will be a reward for the good and punishment for evil.

Protestantism places the individual relationship with God or indeed the Devil as critical – we fight for our own salvation, even if God knows from the beginning what we will choose. This means that the voice of the individual believer is heard. The direct experience of the believer being so crucial is the reason the voice of the accusing girls is so important in *The Crucible*. Their voices and their experiences give powerful testimony to their individual experience of evil in the world.

The Christian church is a community of believers united in a single cause: to be reunited with God. The church can therefore be viewed as a community of salvation. The battles fought against the presence of the Devil and evil in the world are seen as very real.

Activity 2: Authority and transgression

Protestantism placed great emphasis upon the individual's relationship to God, encouraging the individual reading of the Bible, and believing that a Christian could ask forgiveness for his or her sins directly of God. Early Protestantism thus greatly weakened the authority of the Church organisation – and moved away to form many different churches from Roman Catholicism. This is where the term Reformation comes from – the re-forming of the (Catholic) Christian Church.

Martin Luther believed that the State or the government of a country had authority over the day-to-day affairs of the population. In his day in Germany the authorities were kings and princes (and they had long resented the interference of the Pope in Rome.) He believed, however, that the Bible should remain the ultimate guide to how the individual Christian should lead his or her life. How a Christian lived – according to the Bible or transgressing against it – was a matter on which his or her eternal salvation might depend.

Luther argued that people were so flawed that only faith could save them – good works they might do would be a sign of their being saved. The Bible was, and remains, the main guide to a Protestant Christian's salvation, and faith in the Bible is more important than any good works they might do, or any church organisation or minister.

Protestant Christianity developed in many different forms, some stricter than others. The other great leader of the Reformation was a man called John Calvin (1509-1564). He was French-born but lived in Geneva for most of his later years. His main ideas are contained in the Institutes of the Christian Religion.

John Calvin believed that the rule of the Bible should be the only rule in a society: the rule of the Bible was supreme. In other words, God's law was superior to laws made by men and women. Although Protestantism made the individual important, this form of Protestantism gave the pastor, the interpreter of God's law, immense power.

In Geneva, Calvin developed a form of society called a theocracy, meaning ruled by the law of God. (We also have the word democracy, meaning rule by the will of the people.) The Protestant followers of Calvin believed in a strict moral code and forbade any form of entertainment that might lead to a weakening of people's will to obey God's word – so dancing and indeed theatre were banned. Although such bans are not in the Bible, Calvinism taught that the risk to the individual Christian soul from the Devil was so great that any action that might lead to worse moral weaknesses or sins (adultery for example) were to be avoided.

An inflexible or very fixed and rigid attitude to religious life is often called fundamentalism, a term applied to many religious traditions, and often associated with religious fanaticism.

Activity 3: Witches, the Devil and the Existence of Evil (Part One)

Calvin taught a very strict doctrine of predestination. The doctrine of predestination taught that God – in Christian theology, all knowing and all powerful – had, since the beginning of Creation and the Fall known that some people would be eternally 'saved' and be welcomed in heaven and others eternally 'damned' and sent by God, after the Last Judgement, to hell.

The term heaven is used as a realm where human beings eternally enjoy the presence of God. The term hell refers to the realm where human beings are eternally excluded from God's presence.

In much biblical and later literature hell is referred to as a place of burning. Roman Catholics believe in a 'purgatory', a place after death where a person unworthy as yet for heaven, might receive time for preparation. Protestants abandoned this notion as unscriptural. With no leeway in purgatory, Protestantism tended, certainly in its early years, to emphasise a stark choice between heaven or hell. The most famous account of a journey through purgatory, hell and heaven is by Dante (1265-1321), the famous Italian poet, in his dramatic poem *The Divine Comedy*.

The Fall is the term theologians use to describe the rebellion of human beings, freely chosen, against God's will. It is symbolised by the exclusion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden, the story given in the first chapters of the book of Genesis.

Forms of Protestantism deriving from Calvinism sometimes emphasised hell and damnation to a greater extent than the positive things in Christianity, such as God's love for Creation. Puritanism was a form of Protestant Christianity much influenced by John Calvin. In a new world, the Salem settlers in New England believed they had the opportunity to create a theocracy like John Calvin's in Geneva. In the early scenes of *The Crucible* we see the signs of this: the girls' fear of being caught dancing in the forest and John Proctor's statement that all he heard in the church of Reverend Parris was talk of hell.

In this, one of the several exchanges between Hale and the Proctors, we have an insight into the Puritan view of the world.

Extract

PROCTOR: ... the Bible speaks of witches, and I will not deny them

HALE: And you, woman?

ELIZABETH: I – I cannot believe it.

HALE (shocked): You cannot!

PROCTOR: Elizabeth, you bewilder him!

ELIZABETH, (to Hale): I cannot think the Devil may own a woman's soul, Mr Hale, when she keeps an upright way, as I have. I am a good woman, I know it; and if you believe I may do only good work in the world, and yet be secretly bound to Satan, then I must tell you sir, I do not believe it.

HALE: But, woman, you do believe there are witches in –

ELIZABETH: If you think that I am one, then I say there are none.

HALE: You surely do not fly against the Gospel, the Gospel –

PROCTOR: She believe in the Gospel, every word!

ELIZABETH: Question Abigail Williams about the Gospel, not myself!

The Puritan worldview stressed evil and the presence of Satan or the Devil. Sometimes evil and the presence of the Devil (all the dangers Christians faced) were stressed more than the goodness of human beings and of Creation.

The Gospels are the first four books of the New Testament, named each after their authors: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They are accounts of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus himself meets with the Devil in Chapter 3 of Luke's Gospel, and in many passages in all four Gospels he exorcises demons from possessed people, often as it happens, children. But there are no witches in the Bible as a whole, and certainly not in any of the four Gospels.

The term Gospel is used in *The Crucible* in a no doubt deliberately misleading way. The settlers represented in Salem were largely uneducated people; we find little evidence of formal education for most characters in the play. Those people that were educated tended to be the ministers, which gave them a double advantage – to be used for good or otherwise. The most educated person in the play is Samuel Parris, who we learn went to Harvard College. Harvard was one of the first universities to be established in the newly settled eastern part of America and today is one of the world's prestigious universities. It is in present day Boston, close to the historical location of Salem, so Parris had returned from Barbados to a part of America he already would have known well.

Activity 4: Witches, the Devil and the Existence of Evil (Part Two)

The definition of witches is part of the wider world-view of evil presented by Puritan Christianity, but it is important to be clear about the different meanings of the term 'witch'.

In 17th-century New England, a witch was seen as being in a pact with the devil who, in Christian thought is the personification of evil. In other words, just as Christians believe that God took a human form through Jesus (the incarnation), they believe too that evil has a physical and spiritual form. The Devil is often portrayed in human or human-like form, often with hooves and horns, to suggest an animal nature.

The religions of Judaism and Islam also have a belief in the personification of evil. Indeed, Christianity borrowed belief in the devil from the Jewish scriptures. In the Garden of Eden it was the Devil who tempted Eve to encourage Adam to eat fruit from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which God had strictly forbidden.

It was this first sin (going against the will of God) that Christians call the 'Fall'. The removal from the Garden of Eden (heaven, paradise) is a sign of separation of God's creatures from their Creator. Because God created human beings with free will this separation is seen as their own choice. God accepted that some creatures would wish not to be in harmony with the creator but in league with those who oppose his will. The devil is the embodiment of this opposition. God sent his son Jesus to earth in order to re-establish harmony between God and his creatures. The Devil in Christian thought still tries to keep creatures separate from God.

In the Christian scriptures Jesus himself is tempted by the Devil (see Luke Chapter 3). *The Book of Revelation* (the last book in the Bible, sometimes called *The Book of Apocalypse*) envisages a vast universal struggle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. According to Christian tradition, the *Book of Revelation* was written by Saint John on the Greek island of Patmos. In the book, John has visions of the vast struggle between good and evil, describing many horrific scenes of violence and destruction, including the end of the world.

In many ways Christianity strengthened this world view, in which good struggles with evil. It borrows from ancient Greek thinking, especially the writings of the famous Greek philosopher Plato (c.429 BC–c.347 BC). Plato wrote a vast number of philosophical works, and one of his key ideas was that the physical world was just a poor reflection of the heavenly world.

This was a very simple but powerful idea that influenced the development of early Christianity. Some key Christian thinkers like Saint Augustine knew the writings of Plato well. The idea of a perfect heaven and an imperfect heaven had the effect of making early Christians consider many things of the world to be bad and the things of heaven good. Christianity does have some strict moral laws on how people should treat each other, including guidance on sexuality. In the history of Christianity, for example, the excessive seeking of sexual pleasure is often associated with evil, and has led to associations with the devil. Christians also use the term Satan for the Devil.

It is easy to dismiss the world view of the Salem Puritan community as primitive and superstitious. And indeed, in the play, Arthur Miller is clearly trying to say that the charges of witchcraft were made maliciously. There is no hint that there was any foundation whatsoever to the accusations. However, the existence of evil in the world continues to fascinate people. Philosophers struggle with what is known as 'the problem of evil'. A major problem is how to reconcile the idea of an all-good, all-powerful God with suffering in the world.

Philosophers often distinguish two types of evil: natural and moral. Natural evil is the pain and anguish caused by the existence of disasters, disease, tragedies of all kinds, indeed death itself. Moral evil is concerned with the inclination some people have to commit acts which deliberately set out to inflict pain and suffering on others. In Salem the struggle is with moral evil, but there are different ways of regarding this. First there is the struggle with the moral evil embodied by the Devil and 'witches'. Second, and from Miller's point of view, there is the moral evil of how Christians are themselves guilty, evident not only in the lying of the girls but in the abuse of religious authority by the Reverend Parris and by the Judges Hale and Danforth.

Activity 5: Visions of utopia – extended learning

In 1945, after two world wars and the mass slaughter of millions upon millions, the international community formed the United Nations. The twentieth century witnessed many variations of government called totalitarianism – National Socialism (or Nazism) in Germany with the rise of Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) and Soviet Communism. Soviet Communism was particularly repressive under Joseph Stalin (1879-1953). After the Second World War, the Cold War defined relationships between America and the Soviet Union. The two superpowers were constantly on the verge of war without actually fighting. The great threat was nuclear war.

The philosophy of Communism was most famously defined by Karl Marx (1818-1883) in the *Communist Manifesto* (1848). Communism is also distinctive as an ideology (or view of the

world) in that it is atheistic. Religious believers were persecuted in the era of Soviet Communism, and still today religious freedom in Communist countries is in question.

It was in a period of great tension during the Cold War that Arthur Miller wrote *The Crucible*. The play makes an analogy between the persecution of innocent people charged with witchcraft and the persecution of innocent Americans in the 1950s whose so-called crime was to have Communist sympathies.

Arthur Miller himself was charged with contempt of Congress for failing to co-operate with the trials chaired by Senator McCarthy (the House Committee on Un-American Activities hearings) and refusing to name any members of the Communist Party.

The forming of the United Nations in 1945, at the end of the Second World War, had taken place less than a decade before the McCarthy hearings in America, and the writing of *The Crucible*. In many ways Salem Puritanism and the United Nations were based on idealist principles. Indeed, Reverend Parris is described in the play as an idealist who believed in what he was doing sincerely and who had sacrificed a good living in Barbados to minister to a new Puritan community in New England.

Senator Joseph McCarthy, like Parris, was also an idealist who must have sincerely believed that what he was doing was in the interests of America, protecting it from what he believed to be the threat of Communism, but *The Crucible* demonstrates what dangers there can be in rigid adherence to ideals, what today we sometimes call fundamentalism.

Key words and Concepts

Activity 1: Church and community

Key words and concepts

• Protestant/ Protestantism • Puritanism • the Pope • Roman Catholicism • authority • salvation • church • community

Key people (in addition to those in the play)

• Martin Luther (1483-1546)

Key places

• Salem, Massachusetts, America (United States) • Rome, Italy • Wittenberg, Germany

Activity 2: Authority and transgression

Key words and concepts

• Bible • Democracy/ theocracy • faith • fundamentalism • predestination • salvation

Key people (in addition to those in the play)

• Martin Luther (1483-1546) • John Calvin (1509-1564)

Key places

• Salem, Massachusetts, America (United States) • Rome, Italy • Wittenberg, Germany • Geneva, Switzerland

Activity 3: Witches, the Devil and the existence of evil (Part One)

Key words and concepts

• witches • Devil or Satan • evil • Gospel

Key people (in addition to those in the play)

• Samuel Parris (c. 1653-1720) • Dante (1265-1321)

Key places

- Harvard, Boston, Massachusetts, America (United States)

Activity 4: Witches, the Devil and the existence of evil (Part Two)

Key words and concepts

- Devil or Satan • evil • Gospel • The Book of Revelation (or Apocalypse)

Key people (in addition to those in the play)

- Jesus • Plato (c.429 BC–c.347 BC)

Key places

- 17th-century New England, America (United States)

Activity 5: Visions of utopia - extended learning

Key words/ concepts

- community • McCarthyism • Communism • the Communist Manifesto • totalitarianism • the United Nations

Key people (in addition to those in the play)

- Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) • Joseph Stalin (1879-1953) • Arthur Miller (1915-2005) • Senator Joseph McCarthy (1909-1957) • Karl Marx (1818-1883)

Resources

Appendix I: LESSON PLANNING FOR TEACHERS

SHORT TERM PLANNING		
LESSON PLAN: Citizenship through Religious Education		
Key Stage:	Theme:	Link to Programme of Study:
Date:	Class:	

<p>Religious Education Learning Outcomes (Attainment Targets 1 and 2) [WITH LINKS TO NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION OR, AS APPROPRIATE FOR GCSE, FOR EXAMPLE, AO1, AO2, AO3]</p> <p>AT 1 (Learning about religion)</p> <p>AT 2 (Learning from religion)</p> <p>(Brief) Potential Links to Citizenship Learning Outcomes (using appropriate assessment criteria in relation to):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens2. Developing skills of enquiry and communication3. Developing skills of participation and responsible action

Key Skills Checklist

Communication

Application of number

ICT

Working with others

Improving own learning and performance

Problem solving

Religious Education Lesson/ Activity Introduction

Activity 1

Activity 2

Activity 3

Conclusion

Differentiation

SEN (Confidential – liaison with SEN co-ordinator)

Assessment Opportunities

Informal (written formative, peer/ self-assessment, oral question and answer)

- 1.
- 2.

Formal (diagnostic, summative, coursework/ examination preparation)

- 1.
- 2.

Appropriate assessment criteria: Yes/ No

Recorded: Yes/ No

Feedback to pupils: Yes/ No

Reported externally (for example, parents): Yes/ No

Resources

Detail

1. ICT
2. TV/ video/ camcorder/ projector
3. Visitor/ guest speaker
4. Visit

Other

- 4.
- 5.

Teaching Methods Checklist

1. Art
2. Discussion
3. Drama
4. Experiential
5. Formal assessment
6. Group work
7. Pair work
8. Question and Answer
9. Research
10. Test
11. Visit
12. Visitor
13. Written work

Other

- 14.

MEDIUM TERM PLANNING

SCHEME OF WORK: Religious Education

Key Stage: **Theme:** **Link to Programme of Study/
Scheme of Work:**

Date: **Class:**

**Religious Education Learning Outcomes (Attainment Targets 1 and 2)
[WITH LINKS TO NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR RELIGIOUS EDUCATION
OR, AS APPROPRIATE FOR GCSE, FOR EXAMPLE, AO1, AO2, AO3]**

AT 1

AT 2

**Link to Citizenship Learning Outcomes
(using appropriate assessment criteria in relation to):**

1. Knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens
2. Developing skills of enquiry and communication
3. Developing skills of participation and responsible action

Key Skills Checklist

Communication

Application of number

ICT

Working with others

Improving own learning and performance

Problem solving

**Religious Education Scheme of Work
Lesson outlines and learning outcomes in brief**

Lesson 1

Lesson 2

Lesson 3

Lesson 4

Lesson 5

Differentiation

SEN (Confidential – liaison with SEN co-ordinator)

Assessment Opportunities

Informal (written formative, peer/ self-assessment, oral question and answer)

1.

2.

Formal (diagnostic, summative, coursework/ examination preparation)

1.

2.

Appropriate assessment criteria: Yes/ No

Recorded: Yes/ No

Feedback to pupils: Yes/ No

Reported externally (for example, parents): Yes/ No

Resources

Detail

1. ICT

2. TV/ video/ camcorder/ projector

3. Visitor/ guest speaker

4. Visit

Other

4.

5.

Teaching Methods Checklist

11. Art

12. Discussion

13. Drama

14. Experiential

15. Formal assessment

16. Group work

17. Pair work

18. Question and Answer

19. Research

20. Test

11. Visit

12. Visitor

13. Written work

Other

14.

15.

Appendix II: The United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights

The United Nations was set up as a guardian of moral standards that all nations could agree to, regardless of religious, political or cultural background. Has the subsequent history of the world since that time would seem to be one of marked failure? Some would argue yes and the organising the world by committee is too impossible and infringes too many of the freedoms of nation states. Others argue that without the United Nations powerful countries would always run roughshod over poorer and less powerful countries.

On December 10, 1948, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted and proclaimed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The preamble to the declaration provides a foundation for modern-day human rights, based on the recognition that all humans have the right to freedom, justice and peace in the world. The preamble goes on to explain that when inalienable human rights are ignored, "barbarous acts" have occurred. And as the international legal implications of the original 30 articles are becoming ever more foundational to all aspects of the social and political life nations, so too the influence of religion and culture have proliferated, and in ways arguably unexpected in a mid-twentieth century world increasingly dominated by secular and often militantly atheistic ideologies.

In abbreviated form the thirty articles from the Universal Declaration are as follows.

UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 1

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.

Article 2

Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status.

Article 3

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of person.

Article 4

No one shall be held in slavery or servitude; slavery and the slave trade shall be prohibited in all their forms.

Article 5

No one shall be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.

Article 6

Everyone has the right to recognition everywhere as a person before the law.

Article 7

All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law.

Article 8

Everyone has the right to an effective remedy by the competent national tribunals for acts violating the fundamental rights.

Article 9

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary arrest, detention or exile.

Article 10

Everyone is entitled in full equality to a fair and public hearing by an independent and impartial tribunal.

Article 11

Everyone charged with a penal offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law in a public trial.

Article 12

No one shall be subjected to arbitrary interference with privacy, family, home or correspondence.

Article 13

Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state.

Article 14

Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution.

Article 15

Everyone has the right to a nationality.

Article 16

Men and women of full age, without any limitation due to race, nationality or religion, have the right to marry and to found a family.

Article 17

Everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others.

Article 18

Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

Article 19

Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression

Article 20

Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.

Article 21

Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country

Article 22

Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security.

Article 23

Everyone has the right to work.

Article 24

Everyone has the right to rest and leisure.

Article 25

Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being.

Article 26

Everyone has the right to education.

Article 27

Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community.

Article 28

Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.

Article 29

Everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible.

Article 30

Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein.

The most fundamental critique of the UN era of human rights is in terms of practical rather than theoretical terms. Human rights in the UN system imply universality. Yet human values are by their nature contested and history reveals a tragically imperfect world where inequalities abound and justice is too often absent. At the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna expressions were made of the dismay and condemnation of the human rights' violations that continue to be implemented in certain parts of the world. It is this most fundamental sense of inequality in the geographical expressions of human rights' abuses that arguably presents the greatest cause of conflict the world over.

The UN today is far more representative than it was in 1948, with more than three times the number of nation states represented at the UN General Assembly. Ironically, the 1948 Universal Declaration is certainly the least democratically representative of all UN documents in human rights though remaining the most foundational. (The irony that two key signatories, Britain and France, retained at the time of the UN Declaration were exploitative vestiges of colonial empires in their overseas territories and dominions – is not lost on many developing

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STAGEWORK
issues - ideas - people - performance

nations.) In general, this is why there are ongoing debates about whether the original 30 articles have universal status as an outline statement of moral intent, let alone as a system of detailed moral and ethical guidance.

Activities

Activity 1: Church and community

Exercise 1

Visit: **Productions**, and links to **The Girls**. Read the interviews and background material on the actors who play Abigail, Mercy, Betty and Mary: 'Abigail's Journey'; 'Role of Mercy Lewis'; 'Mercy Lewis's journey'; 'Mary Warren's journey'; 'Role of Betty Parris'.

Visit: **Rehearsals**, especially: 'Preparing for her role'; 'Mercy Lewis' objectives in Act 1'; 'Challenges in the play'; 'Playing sleeping Betty'; 'Can Betty fly?'; 'Character development in rehearsal'; 'Waking up Betty'; 'Mary Warren enters the bedroom'; and 'Betty tries to fly'.

Visit also: **Productions**, and follow links to **Performance**. Watch the sequence of video clips under the headings: 'In the bedroom of Betty Parris'; 'Motivation of Mercy Lewis'; 'Mary Warren's Perspective'.

These Stagework links will help you understand the girls in their community setting but also how the actors prepared to recreate their situations. The girls' actions have set themselves – from their dancing in the woods onwards – outside the community and the Church.

Would you describe the girls as religious? Discuss ways have they been influenced by malice or by their religious upbringing?

Leah Muller, the actor who plays Abigail, believes that her character's behaviour throughout the play is a result of the repressed society she lives in. Discuss ways in which you think the Christian community at Salem is repressive.

Can you think of anything positive to say about the strict rules of behaviour set by the church there? Do you think Christianity today is too strict or too easy in terms of its moral guidance to young people, or to any age group?

Exercise 2

Review: **Productions**, links to **The Girls**. Read again the interviews and background material on the actors who play Abigail, Mercy, Betty and Mary, especially what the actors say about character development.

Imagine you are a reporter for a newspaper at the turn of the seventeenth century, the beginning of the 1700s. Your newspaper is producing a special edition of the most notable events in Massachusetts over the 1600s. Your editor has given you the task of writing about the Church in Salem in the late 1680s and early 1690s. But the editor wants some original material and has asked you to track down the central characters in the story to find out about their religious beliefs – then and now.

Either: improvise and possibly record an imaginary interview with one or more of the girls (Abigail, Mercy, Betty and Mary) and Tituba. Play back and discuss.

Or: write up an imaginary interview with one or more of the girls (Abigail, Mercy, Betty and Mary) and Tituba. Read out and discuss.

In either case, make sure you focus upon the religious beliefs of the girls and how they reflect on the trials in Salem (regret, remorse, bitterness, satisfaction) and whether it has affected their religious beliefs ten years or so later, as a New Year brings in 1700.

Exercise 3

Religious groups are frequently intolerant. Religious and cultural groups are also and often severely persecuted themselves.

We should not forget that the New England Puritans were settlers on lands that were once the sole domain of indigenous peoples, the Native American Indian populations, who were themselves demonised as 'pagans' and 'savages' by the Puritans. [Follow link to words spoken by Abigail, in the scene in Rev Parris's attic: **Issues**, links to **Transgression**, 'In the bedroom of Betty Parris'.]

Find out more about issues of religious freedom in the world by investigating the contents of some of these United Nations declarations (See Appendix I):

Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief (25 November 1981)

Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities (18 December 1992)

Oslo Declaration on Freedom of Religion and Belief (1998)

World Conference against Racism, Xenophobia and Related Forms of Discrimination (September, 2001)

For full texts, follow links at www.ohchr.org, or visit the website of Freedom House: www.freedomhouse.org

In what ways, especially post-11 September 2001, have issues of religious freedom and persecution become important today?

Arrange a discussion around this theme, (but use material from one of the websites listed in order that your discussion is well-informed and not itself prejudicial).

Activity 2: Authority and transgression

Exercise 1

Visit: **Productions** and follow the links for **Hale, Danforth and Parris**. Find out how the actors recreated the personalities behind the trials through the further links: 'Developing the role of Reverend Parris'; 'Fundamentalism'; 'Fine-tuning the role of John Hale'; 'Role of Danforth'; 'The jail scene'; 'Class differences'; 'The role of Reverend John Hale'; 'Reverend John Hale's doubt'; 'Hale's silence in the court'; 'Role of Reverend Parris'; 'Stress experienced by Reverend Parris'; 'Different facets of Reverend Parris' character'; 'Comparing Proctor and Hale's journeys'.

Visit: **Issues**, follow links to **Fundamentalism**. Find out more about the 'fundamentalist' Christianity in the Salem community, and social as well as religious life there.

Write an obituary for one of the three authority figures: Hale, Danforth, and Parris. An obituary should balance the high points and low points of a person's life, but you should emphasise their successes and the failures of their religious beliefs in practice.

Exercise 2

Divide a piece of paper into two, drawing a line down the middle. On one side write the heading LAWS; and on the other side write AUTHORITY.

Under the heading LAWS, draw up a list in private of all the rules you have to obey – whether school, parents/guardians, church, clubs, friends, personal – and even perhaps the rules you are expected to obey but don't. [Privacy should be respected.] Under AUTHORITY, draw up a list of where these rules come from.

Which are the most important rules and sources of authority? Which do you feel comfortable with transgressing and which would you feel you could never break? Share your lists – as you feel comfortable.

Get into groups of four or five. Imagine you are young Puritan teenagers, part of the group discovered dancing in the woods. How would you have reacted? Would you have behaved as Abigail and the others did?

Now imagine yourselves today – create a role-play or a short, scripted play – having just been discovered doing something illegal (you choose). You can save yourselves from punishment or even prosecution by informing on an adult. What would you do? What if the adult were a good person who had trusted you? What if the adult in question was innocent but your statement could get you off any punishment. What if your confession could finally get you vengeance against someone who you feel did you harm – even if they are innocent of this? Make up the details of the story. If there is time or space, write and perform the play.

Go back to your list of rules and sources of authority – consider which been infringed. Share, discuss and present your findings.

Activity 3: Witches, the Devil and the Existence of Evil (Part I)

Exercise 1

In some ways the children have the most power in the play, but only the judges have authority. Compare these passages from Act 1.

Extract 1

PUTNAM: I have never heard you worried so on this society, Mr Proctor. I do not think I saw you at Sabbath meeting since snow flew.

PROCTOR: I have trouble enough without I come five mile to hear him preach only hellfire and bloody damnation. Take it to heart, Mr Parris. There are many others who stay away from church these days because you hardly mention God anymore.

PARRIS (now aroused): Why, that's a drastic charge!

REBECCA: It's somewhat true; there are many that quail to bring their children –

PARRIS: I do not preach for children Rebecca. It is not the children who are unmindful of their obligations toward this ministry.

REBECCA: Are there really those unmindful?

PARRIS: I should say the better half of Salem village –

Extract 2

REBECCA: ...Pray calm yourselves. I have eleven children, and I am twenty-six times a grandma, and I have seen them all through their silly seasons, and when it come on them they will run the Devil bowlegged keeping up with their mischief ... A child's spirit is like a child, you can never catch it by running after it; you must stand still, and, for love, it will soon itself come back.
.....

PARRIS: A wide opinion's running through in the parish that the Devil may be among us, and I would satisfy them that they are wrong.

The first passage presents children as needing to be protected from the harsh teaching of hell and damnation, as vulnerable members of the community, needing to be protected from the religious fanaticism of Parris.

In the second passage, spoken in humour, children are portrayed as being a match for the Devil! Taking into account all their malevolent scheming, try and summarise your views on the portrayal of children in the play. In society nowadays, children are often seen as vulnerable and in need of special protection (Child Line is available; the United Nations has a special Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most ratified of all such conventions).

Exercise 2

Visit: **Productions**, and follow the links for **Hale, Danforth and Parris**.

Imagine you are making a documentary programme arguing that Hale, Danforth and Parris have been misunderstood figures. Your programme will be designed to give a new angle and an alternative understanding to the usually critical appraisal of Salem Christianity.

If you were to be controversial, you could write the documentary from a perspective that Christian belief was actually a defence against the forces of the Devil and that Salem was about a real struggle between good and evil. You could suggest that Christianity today has forgotten too much about the existence of evil in the world and is too 'wishy-washy', and that this is the reason many Christian churches are so empty.

Activity 4: Witches, the Devil and the Existence of Evil (Part II)

Exercise 1

Visit: **Issues**, and follow links to **Transgression**.

Re-visit: **Issues** and follow the links to **Community** to see some of the ideas discussed on the Church in Salem.

Re-visit: **Issues** and follow links to **Fundamentalism**, about the 'fundamentalist' Christianity in the Salem community, social as well as religious life there.

Discuss whether the idea of fundamentalism has any relevance to today's society in the twenty-first century.

Why might a fundamentalist religious way of thinking and ordering society help keep a community together?

Discuss the dangers of fundamentalism. Discuss the dangers in combating fundamentalism. You might wish to use events in politics and the news post-11 September 2001, such as, for example, the so-called 'war on terror'.

Exercise 2

Create a scenario where a group of up to ten of you (more might be possible) are to form a community. Describe in detail how you came to be isolated from all other human beings – be imaginative: your community can be earth-bound (at the end of a devastating war, it might be a voluntary choice – there are many television programmes about this) or on another planet.

Either: devise a set of rules and responsibilities for a brave new world, including rules about who will be in charge or authority, how decisions will be made. Write up and report.

Or: write a diary, drama or short story portraying, accounting for and outlining some of the difficulties of living in your new world where the rules of community have to be started from scratch.

In both cases, what then if you discover a larger group of people who suddenly intrude or you discover were there in the first place – who claim that it is their land and their rules should take precedence over yours.

(In both scenarios of course you might well bring to your brave new world elements from the old world – the Bible or any other holy scripture might remain a guide, so too might the Universal Declaration. In the early days of settlers arriving in New England, America was known as the New World.)

Activity 5: Visions of utopia – extended learning

Exercise 1

The origins of the term 'McCarthyism' was in a cartoon of 29 March 1950 in the *Washington Post*, parodying the excesses of the un-American Activities Committee. It was in 1954 that the hearings were televised for the first time, when mass television was becoming the norm, and networks needed to fill afternoon slots. On television, the injustice of the manner of the investigation became fully apparent for the first time to many Americans and a backlash began against McCarthy.

In Arthur Miller's notes for the play he suggests that "The Devil or diabolical associations are used by all political sides to justify their cause." (249-250), and that:

The Catholic Church through its Inquisition, is famous for cultivating Lucifer as the arch-fiend, but the Church's enemies relied no less upon the Old Boy to keep the human mind enthralled. Luther was himself accused of alliance with Hell, and he in turn accused his enemies. To complicate matters further, he believed that he had contact with the Devil and had argued theology with him. I am not surprised at this, for at my own university a professor of history – a Lutheran by the way – used to assemble his graduate students, draw the shades, and commune in the classroom with Erasmus.

At this writing, only England has held back before the temptations of contemporary diabolism.

In the countries of the Communist ideology, all resistance of any import is linked to the totally malign capitalist succubi, and in America any man who is not reactionary in his views is open to the charge of alliance with the Red hell.

Political opposition, thereby, is given, an inhumane overlay which then justifies the abrogation of all normally applied customs of civilized intercourse.

This is a complex passage but one in which Miller usefully summarises his intentions in writing the play. Get a teacher to help unpack the ideas expressed by Miller – and then summarise the main themes of the play under some key headings:

- ? Authority
- ? Childhood
- ? Community
- ? Evil
- ? Freedom
- ? Fundamentalism
- ? Law
- ? Sin and Transgression

Exercise 2

Look at the information sheet on the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Appendix I). Go back to your Rules from the first series of lessons. Are there any similarities or differences?

Which of the 30 Articles of the Universal Declaration do you think most important? (The UN system says they are all as important as each other – they are inalienable and incontestable basic rights for all human beings. But despite their universality, vast numbers of human beings possess access to [NONE OF THEM, surely] – especially rights to health or education.)

Which of the 30 Articles of the Universal Declaration are infringed in the Salem witch trials, as portrayed in Arthur Miller's play?

Exercise 3

Only a few years after writing *The Crucible*, Arthur Miller was himself indicted. On 31 May 1957 Arthur Miller was cited for Contempt of Congress and given a 30-day suspended sentence. His conviction was later quashed by the Supreme Court. His 'crime' was refusing to supply investigators with the names of a literary circle that had supposed 'Communist' associations.

Arthur Miller was not the only writer to suffer persecution as well as writing about it. The detective fiction writer Dashiell Hammett was amongst the most famous of those to be imprisoned, and the writer and satirist, Lillian Hellman, was also indicted.

Censorship and literary restriction remain present-day realities for authors, novelists, and journalists. In the 1980s, the *cause célèbre* of Salman Rushdie is a famous case in point and post-2001 there are many new contexts where freedom of expression is challenged. In recognition of the plight of such writers, the New York-based human rights organisation Human Rights Watch provides small awards of financial assistance to writers (literary and journalistic) who have suffered persecution, the Hellman-Hammett Grants. The Hellman-Hammett Grants are named after Lillian Hellman and Dashiell Hammett.

Details of the award and its origins can be found at www.hrw.org.) Human Rights Watch also provides detailed information about other abuses of human rights worldwide.

Visit the Human Rights Watch website and find out more about the reasons why writers might have their work censored or repressed today.

Exercise 4

Many writers throughout history have written about the idea of a perfect society. In prison during the Reformation, Sir Thomas More, who was later sainted, wrote a famous book called *Utopia*.

Other modern writers have tended to take a more sceptical view of the world and write about systems that have failed or where nightmare states have absolute and total control over their citizens. These books are often called science fiction but can take a very philosophical look at the future as a dystopia.

Authors and books which are most famous include: Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984* (written in the same year as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1984 is an anagram of 1948) and *Animal Farm*, even William Golding's *The Lord of the Flies* deals with some dystopian themes.

Read and write a review of one of these books. You might head the review: Is it possible to get a perfect society?