

Name _____

Date _____

The Crucible as an Allegory

Directions: On a literal level, *The Crucible* is a drama about happenings in Puritan Salem in 1692. As an allegory, it is more concerned with events in Washington, D.C., in the 1950s. Use the following chart to analyze allegorical elements.

| Topic | The Crucible—1692 | The McCarthy Hearings—1950s |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------------------|
| Social climate | | |
| Cultural beliefs | | |
| Cultural fears | | |

Name _____

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| Topic | <i>The Crucible</i> —1692 | The McCarthy Hearings—1950s |
|----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Experts | | |
| Trial proceedings | | |
| Treatment of victims | | |

The McCarthy Hearings

Directions: Read the following fictionalized dialogue, which is based on various accounts of interrogations by Senator Joseph McCarthy. As you read, keep in mind that McCarthy was a ruthless, tyrannical questioner, Cohn was his right-hand man, and many of those investigated were in prominent social positions. Some were former members of the Young Communist League.

Setting: a hearing room in Washington, D.C.

Time: late afternoon

McCarthy: (*very softly, almost inaudibly*) You are called here today on suspicion of sympathy and collaboration with the Communist Party. Mr. Cohn, here, will question you.

Cohn: How many books have you written?

Witness: Several . . . Some when I was a member of the YCL and others since then. The last two were vigorously anti-Communist.

Cohn: How about the content of the first two books?

Witness: At the time I wrote them I was a member of the YCL, so they certainly are not anti-Communist.

Cohn: Well, did they follow the Communist line?

Witness: Yes.

Senator McCarthy interrupts and takes over.

McCarthy: Are you acquainted with other people who are members of the Young Communist League, or who were members of the Young Communist League?

Witness: I am going to answer that question because I believe it is a citizen's responsibility to testify before a Senate Committee whether he likes the committee or not.

McCarthy: (*loudly*) I know you do not like this committee.

Witness: I answer the question solely because I recognize your capacity for misinterpretation of a failure to answer. To my knowledge, I now know no Communists.

McCarthy: (*relentlessly*) Do you know anyone who once was a member of the Communist Party?

Witness: Yes.

McCarthy: (*harassingly*) . . . Have you ever verbally attacked Mr. Hoover and the FBI?

Witness: I believe, as you do, that any government agency, even the FBI, is not above criticism.

McCarthy: (*angrily*) Have you criticized the Chairman of the House Un-American Activities Committee? [McCarthy]

Witness: Yes, I have made my views of these hearings known.

McCarthy: You are opposed also to the Chairman of the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee, are you not? Don't you think he is a dangerous man?

Witness: Senator, I certainly believe *you* are dangerous.

McCarthy: (*insinuatingly*) Supposing one of us was a member of the Communist Party and we wished to perpetuate it, wouldn't an effective way to do this be to pretend we had deserted the Party? Don't you think that would make sense?

Witness: I don't recall any case where the Party has ever done this.

McCarthy: (*changing tactics*) Do you believe you are being treated unfairly here?

Witness: I believe that you are trying to intimidate anyone who does not believe that McCarthyism means patriotism.

McCarthy: (*softly*) You have not been intimidated, have you?

Witness: I am aware, Senator, that you are trying to undermine my reputation. But I believe this is a free country, and I am going to fight to keep it that way.

McCarthy: (*in a menacing tone*) Well, sir, we are going to ask you for a list of names of all your associates in the YCL. Remember, you are under oath.

Witness: How absurd to think that I can remember the names of my associates in an organization I belonged to years ago.

McCarthy: Well, we are asking you for the list. You say you broke with the party?

Witness: That has been on my record for years. I (*McCarthy here breaks in, pounding on the table.*)

McCarthy: I don't know if that is true or not. I know that you never testified in a case against an ex-Communist. I know that you have been consistently and viciously attacking anyone who does testify against Communists, anyone who exposes Communists.

Witness: That is not true, Senator. I would like to say that the only way I could prove my devotion to America and the validity of my break with Communism would be to support Senator McCarthy. This I do not plan to do.