

Arthur Miller



The Crucible



A View from the Bridge



Death of a Salesman

Contents

The Crucible	Page 1
A View from the Bridge	Page 61
Death of a Salesman	Page 107
Work on More Than One Play	Page 149
Bibliography	Page 150

Using the Pack

- This pack is designed to be used as a photocopiable resource. The activities on *The Crucible* and *A View from the Bridge* are aimed at GCSE/KS4 students. The section on *Death of a Salesman* is written with A level students in mind.
- These materials place considerable emphasis on active drama and role play approaches to the texts, to allow students to explore them as drama to be performed rather than purely as written texts to be read on the page.
- The activities aim to support all students through their reading of the play. They offer a variety of texts, including media and non literary texts, and a range of reading strategies and oral work aimed at meeting the needs of students, the demands of the play and KS4 assessment criteria. While suggestions for writing are included in the materials, teachers and students will want to develop their own writing assignments out of the activities suggested to meet individuals' coursework and exam preparation requirements. Teachers will need to select appropriate activities for their classes rather than necessarily working through all of the activities in a section of the pack.
- The written outcomes in the *Death of a Salesman* section are intended to be appropriate for students studying the text as a set text or a coursework text. No explicit distinction has been made in the material itself, though some tasks are more appropriate for each of the different forms of assessment. Teachers will need to select the tasks with their own syllabus in mind but remembering that creative tasks, group activities and varied written outcomes are often the best preparation for set text examination, rather than a narrow diet of practice in literary critical timed work.
- The video of Volker Schlöndorff's *Death of a Salesman* (1985, Warner Bros) is available from music and video stores for £9.99. The video of Elia Kazan's *On the Waterfront* (1954, Columbia Pictures) is available from music and video stores for £5.99.
- All page references refer to the Penguin editions of the plays.

Acknowledgements

The *Arthur Miller* pack was written by Barbara Bleiman, Sabrina Broadbent, Jane Leggett and Michael Simons.

Additional material by Jenny Grahame, Anne Lamont (Parliament Hill School), teachers on the English and Media Centre *Arthur Miller* course (Autumn 1992), and Philippa Hunt and John Richmond who wrote the original English & Media Centre publication *A View from the Bridge* (1984).

Typeset: Biba Fawkes and Fran Stowell.

Design: Simon Spain, Orangebox Editions.

Photographs: Stills of the National Theatre's production of *The Crucible* (1990) by Richard Mildenhall. Stills of the National Theatre's production of *A View from the Bridge* (1987) by Nobby Clark. Cover photograph of Arthur Miller by Gordon Rainsford. Stills of the National Theatre's production of *Death of a Salesman* (1975), Laslo Benedek's film adaptation of *Death of a Salesman* (1951), Schlondorff's film adaptation of *Death of a Salesman* (1985) and Lumet's *A View from the Bridge* (1961) all from BFI Stills, Posters and Design.

We are grateful to those authors, publishers and organisations who have given permission to use extracts and illustrations. We would be pleased to hear from any holders of copyright whom we have been unable to trace.

Published by The English & Media Centre, 18 Compton Terrace London N1 2UN

English
& Media
Centre



The Crucible

Before Reading

- | | |
|--|----|
| 1. Intimidation and Persecution - Role Plays | 4 |
| 2. A Close Reading of the Opening Scene | 6 |
| 3. What Kind of Society was Salem? | 8 |
| 4. Themes and Issues - A Close Reading of Extracts | 10 |

During Reading

- | | |
|--|----|
| 1. Structure | 11 |
| 2. Characters | 13 |
| 3. Staging | 15 |
| 4. Act One - The Placing of Blame | 18 |
| 5. Act Two - Subtexting the Marriage of John and Elizabeth Proctor | 19 |
| 6. Act Three - 'The Yellow Bird' Scene | 22 |
| 7. Act Four - Making a Stand | 26 |

After Reading

- | | |
|--|----|
| 1. Abigail | 28 |
| 2. Language | 33 |
| 3. Making a Television Adaptation of <i>The Crucible</i> | 37 |
| 4. The Representation of Women in <i>The Crucible</i> | 39 |
| 5. What is <i>The Crucible</i> About? | 43 |

Background and Wider Reading

- | | |
|---|----|
| 1. America in the 1600s | 45 |
| 2. Witches and Witchcraft | 46 |
| 3. Witch-hunts: Salem and McCarthyism | 48 |
| 4. Heroes and Heroines - A Matter of Conscience | 53 |
| 5. Making a Stand in Our World | 59 |



1. Intimidation and Persecution - Role Plays

Role Play One - The Situation

There is a school rule that says that tolerance and courtesy must be extended to all members of the school community. You know that certain pupils in your class are intimidating a person because s/he has a stutter. You are appalled by this bullying but when you try to stop it, you are threatened in turn with physical violence.

It is made clear to you from other pupils in the class that 'grassing' to teachers breaks an unwritten code, and that if you go to another teacher, you may find yourself alone, rejected by other pupils because you have broken the 'alternative' code.

In addition to all this, one of the bullies knows that you once got into quite serious trouble in your primary school. You thought you had put this behind you and you don't want anyone in your new school to know about it.

Tasks

- In pairs, brainstorm ideas for what sort of trouble this might have been.
- You have been talking to a friend about your dilemma and you've told him/her that you're thinking about going to the Head of Year. In pairs, role play the conversation you have at the end of a lesson in which the bullies have been at it again.
- Two of the bullies and a friend of theirs from another class get you on your own in a classroom and begin to question you. One of them is the one who knows about the trouble in your primary school. Play out the scene.

Before Reading



Role Play Two - The Situation

In your school there is a school council system with representatives from each class sitting on a committee which can make recommendations about facilities and has a modest spending budget. Recently the committee has received complaints that lessons are boring and so as an older member of the committee you have suggested circulating a questionnaire to find out the degrees of satisfaction which pupils feel about their lessons.

A local organisation has given you some help in printing the questionnaire but the Head finds out about it, bans the questionnaire and abolishes the school council. You decide to carry on with the council and carry on meeting.

Again the Head hears of this and asks you to attend a meeting together with the two Deputy Heads. It has been made clear to you that you will be expelled from the school if you continue to meet and that the school will not provide a reference for work or further education.

Tasks

- You meet with another member of the council and tell them about the threat from the Head and the planned meeting. What should you do? In pairs, role play the conversation.
- In fours, play out the scene of the meeting between the pupil, the Head and the two Deputies.

Debriefing the Role Plays

- What did it feel like to be in the role you were playing? Can you say what made you feel vulnerable and what made you feel strong?
- Any comments about body language, facial expressions and gestures?
- Who did the most talking?
- Did you notice anything about the kind of language used in the exchanges?



2. A Close Reading of the Opening Scene

Working in small groups, read this version of the opening scene which has had Miller's stage directions deleted. Read it aloud once in your group, then write in your own stage directions, in preparation for acting it out. Try acting it out in your group.

TITUBA: My Betty be hearty soon?

PARRIS: Out of here!

TITUBA: My Betty not goin' die ...

PARRIS: Out of my sight! [*She exits*] Out of my - Oh, my God! God help me! Betty. Child. Dear Child. Will you wake, will you open up your eyes! Betty, little one ... [*Enter Abigail*]

ABIGAIL: Uncle? Susanna Walcott's here from Doctor Griggs.

PARRIS: Oh? Let her come, let her come.

ABIGAIL: Come in Susanna.

PARRIS: What does the doctor say, child?

SUSANNA: He bid me come and tell you, reverend sir, that he cannot discover no medicine for it in his books.

PARRIS: Then he must search on.

SUSANNA: Aye, sir, he have been searchin' his books since he left you, sir. But he bid me tell you, that you might look to unnatural things for the cause of it.

PARRIS: No - no. There be no unnatural cause here. Tell him I have sent for Reverend Hale of Beverly, and Mr Hale will surely confirm that. Let him look to medicine and put out all thought of unnatural causes here. There be none.

SUSANNA: Aye, sir. He bid me tell you.

ABIGAIL: Speak nothin' of it in the village, Susanna.

PARRIS: Go directly home and speak nothing of unnatural causes.

SUSANNA: Aye, sir. I pray for her. [*She exits*]

ABIGAIL: Uncle, the rumour of witchcraft is all about; I think you'd best go down and deny it yourself. The parlour's packed with people, sir. I'll sit with her.

PARRIS: And what shall I say to them? That my daughter and my niece I discovered dancing like heathen in the forest?

ABIGAIL: Uncle, we did dance; let you tell them I confessed it - and I'll be whipped if I must be. But they're speakin' of witchcraft. Betty's not witched.

PARRIS: Abigail, I cannot go before the congregation when I know you have not opened with me. What did you do with her in the forest?

ABIGAIL: We did dance, uncle, and when you leaped out of the bush so suddenly, Betty was frightened and then she fainted. And there's the whole of it.

PARRIS: Child. Sit you down.

ABIGAIL: I would never hurt Betty. I love her dearly.

Before Reading



PARRIS: Now look you child, your punishment will come in its time. But if you trafficked with spirits in the forest I must know it now, for surely my enemies will, and they will ruin me with it.

ABIGAIL: But we never conjured spirits.

PARRIS: Then why can she not move herself since midnight? This child is desperate! It must come out - my enemies will bring it out. Let me know what you done there. Abigail, do you understand that I have many enemies?

ABIGAIL: I have heard of it, uncle.

PARRIS: There is a faction that is sworn to drive me from my pulpit. Do you understand that?

ABIGAIL: I think so, sir.

PARRIS: Now then, in the midst of such disruption, my own household is discovered to be the very centre of some obscene practice. Abominations are done in the forest -

ABIGAIL: It were sport, uncle!

PARRIS: You call this sport? Abigail, if you know something that may help the doctor, for God's sake tell it to me. I saw Tituba waving her arms over the fire when I came on you. Why was she doing that? And I heard a screeching and gibberish coming from her mouth. She were swaying like a dumb beast over that fire!

ABIGAIL: She always sings her Barbados songs, and we dance.

PARRIS: I cannot think what I saw, Abigail, for my enemies will not blink it. I saw a dress lying on the grass.

ABIGAIL: A dress?

PARRIS: Aye, a dress. And I thought I saw - someone naked running through the trees!

ABIGAIL: No one was naked! You mistake yourself, uncle!

Join up with another small group and share each other's enactments. Talk about what is different about the ways in which you've acted out the scene.

In your original group, look at the opening scene with Miller's stage directions inserted. Compare Miller's stage directions with your own.

- What does he tell us about how to interpret the characters of Abigail and Parris?
- What ideas is he trying to bring into the foreground, or emphasise, in his stage directions?

Make some predictions about the rest of the play. For instance:

- What will the characters be like?
- What might the storyline be?
- What themes and issues may be raised?



3. What Kind of Society was Salem?

In his introduction to the play, Miller describes what Salem society was like, to show why the events that happen in the play could have taken place.

Read the quotes taken from his introduction. Try matching each quote to the statements about what Salem society was like.

The Quotes

1. Salem folk 'never conceived that the children were anything but thankful for being permitted to walk straight, eyes slightly lowered, arms at the sides, and mouths shut until bidden to speak.'
2. 'They had no novelists and would not have permitted anyone to read a novel if one were handy. Their creed forbade anything resembling a theatre or 'vain enjoyment'.'
3. 'They did not celebrate Christmas, and a holiday from work meant that they must concentrate even more upon prayer.'
4. 'The people were forced to fight the land like heroes for every grain of corn, and no man had very much time for fooling around.'
5. They had 'a predilection for minding other people's business.'
6. 'The edge of the wilderness was close by. The American continent stretched endlessly west, and it was full of mystery for them. It stood, dark and threatening, over their shoulders night and day, for out of it Indian tribes marauded from time to time.'
7. 'They and their church found it necessary to deny any other sect its freedom, lest their New Jerusalem be defiled and corrupted by wrong ways and deceitful ideas.'
8. 'They were a dedicated folk, by and large, and they had to be to survive the life they had chosen or been born into in this country.'
9. 'Long-held hatreds of neighbours could now be openly expressed, and vengeance taken.'
10. 'Land-lust' was expressed by 'constant bickering over boundaries and deeds.'

Before Reading



Statements about Salem:

- A. There was competition and in-fighting.
- B. People were quick to find fault with each other.
- C. They were frightened of the influence of the outside world destroying their way of life.
- D. Their way of life was bleak.
- E. They thought they were better than other people.
- F. They gave out severe punishment to anyone who broke their rules.
- G. They had to work very hard to survive.
- H. They lived in fear.
- I. Pleasures like dancing were forbidden.
- J. The memory of persecution was recent and bitter in the minds of the older generation.



National Theatre Production, 1990.



4. Themes and Issues - A Close Reading of Extracts

In groups, read the following short extracts from the play:

Extract 1: from Abigail's speech that begins: 'How is Ruth sick?' on page 25 down to Proctor's speech on page 27 which begins: 'Be you foolish Mary Warren?'

Extract 2: from Parris' speech which begins: 'There is either obedience or the church will burn like Hell' on page 35 down to Putnam's speech on page 36 which begins: 'I'll have my men on you, Corey!'

Extract 3: from Hale's speech which begins: 'I am a stranger here' on page 62 down to page 63 when he says: 'Mr Proctor, your house is not a church'.

1. Look back at the list of statements about Salem society on page 9 and decide which ones you see displayed in the extracts.
2. If possible, annotate the extracts and report back to the whole group on the issues, themes, language used, predictions about characters and any other comments or questions they raise for you.



National Theatre, 1990.



1. Structure

Scenic Units

The Crucible is written in four Acts:

- Act One Betty Parris' bedroom
- Act Two John and Elizabeth Proctor's living room
- Act Three Courtroom
- Act Four A cell in Salem jail

Each Act is made up of smaller segments, unified in some way, where something is said or something happens to move the action of the play on.

These are often marked by the **entrances** or **exits** of characters.

Dividing each Act up into segments or 'scenic units' is a useful way for you to map out the structure of the play and to see how information about the plot, characters and themes are introduced to the audience.

Below are some things to look out for when working out the scenic units of each Act:

- Who are the characters that make up this scenic unit?
- What happens and what is said?
- What are the key quotes which sum up the important issues, feelings, turning points and events in this scene. Limit yourself to about five.

Look at the example of Act One broken down into scenic units on the following page. How much of it do you agree with?



Scenic Units in Act One

1. Reverend Parris and Abigail.

- Parris blames those in the parish for wanting to get rid of him. He is frightened.
- Both Parris and Abigail are concerned that their names are doubted/tarnished.
- Both wish to keep the events of the previous night private.
- Abigail lies.

‘Speak nothin of it in the village Susanna’.

(Abigail)

‘Abigail, do you understand that I have many enemies?’ (Parris)

‘I saw a dress lying on the grass’.

‘Goody Proctor is a gossiping liar!’ (Abigail)

‘She always sings her Barbados songs’.

(Abigail)

2. The Putnams Enter.

- Suspicion.
- Rumour.
- Blame.
- Desire for revenge.
- Grief/loss.

‘There are hurtful, vengeful spirits layin’ hands on these children.’

‘I see her turning strange. A secret child she has become this year.’

‘Tituba knows how to speak to the dead.’

‘There is a murdering witch among us, bound to keep herself in the dark.’

3. Abigail, Mercy, Mary and Betty.

- Alone together, the truth is revealed.
- They fear for their lives.
- Abigail threatens and controls the others.
- Abigail is violent.
- Mary Warren singled out as likely grass.

‘The whole country is talkin’ witchcraft!’ (Mary Warren)

‘I can make you wish you had never seen the sun go down.’ (Abigail)

‘Witchery’s a hangin’ error!’ (Mary Warren)

‘You drank a charm to kill Goody Proctor!’

(Betty)

‘I saw Indians smash my dear parents’ heads on the pillow next to mine.’ (Abigail)

4. John Proctor and Abigail.

- Their affair is revealed.
- He is still drawn to her.
- She still wants/loves him.
- She feels abandoned/ used by Proctor.

‘We were dancing in the woods last night and my uncle leaped in on us.’

‘John - I am waiting for you every night.’

‘It’s she put me out, you cannot pretend it were you.’

‘I look for John Proctor that took me from my sleep and put knowledge in my heart.’

(Abigail)

5. Putnams, Parris, Abigail, Proctor, Rebecca and Giles.

- Betty screams at the sound of the singing and shouting.
- Ann Putnam thinks Betty screamed because she can’t bear to hear God’s name.
- Rebecca Nurse and Giles Corey calm the hysteria with knowledge and experience of human nature.
- Arguments/rifts about land and money.
- People dislike Parris’s sermons.

‘A child’s spirit is like a child.’ (Rebecca)

‘This society will not be a bag to swing around your head Mr Putnam.’ (Proctor)

‘There is a prodigious danger in the seeking of loose spirits. I fear it. Let us rather blame ourselves.’ (Rebecca)

6. Hale and his books.

- The naming of names begins in earnest.
- Tituba takes the lead from Ann and Thomas Putnam and names names.
- When she can go on no longer, Abigail takes over.
- The hysteria has begun.

‘What signifies the readin’ of strange books?’ (Giles Corey)

‘Take courage, you must give us all their names’ (Hale)



2. Characters

Entrances and Exits

A character's first entrance on stage is often a significant one. As you read the play, focus on one character and make notes on the following:

- What first impression do they give of themselves?
- What effect does their entrance have on the mood or action of the play?
- What new information does their entrance bring (to the action, themes and issues)?
- What is the effect on the other characters of their entrance and presence?

How well do you know them?

The extent of your knowledge of a character will depend on how interested you are in them and how important they are to the play. Try building a complete picture of a character, starting with the obvious and then thinking about the more complex aspects of the character:

The Bare Facts: Name? Age? How do they live? Who do they live with? Who are they related to?

The Private Person: What do they think of themselves? What do they think of other people? What are their hopes and fears? What do they want?

The Public Person: What kinds of interactions occur with other characters? What new information do they bring to the play? How do they alter the atmosphere, action and direction of the play? What sort of reputation do they have?

Choose a character to work on either on your own or with a partner.

Experiment with ways of representing the character diagrammatically thinking about the private and the public person.

When you've done the diagram, swap with another pair or person and try working out which character their diagram represents.

During Reading



How do the characters change through the play?

Throughout the play a number of characters undergo changes in the way they see or understand things. Some remain basically the same in their outlook or philosophy of life; others undergo a dramatic change of conscience, having entered and emerged from their own 'crucible'.

Use the chart below to note down the changes for each character as you read the play.

	Act One	Act Two	Act Three	Act Four
Mary Warren				
Tituba				
Reverend Hale				
Reverend Parris				
Abigail Williams				
Giles Corey				
Elizabeth Proctor				
John Proctor				



3. Staging

It is important to remember that plays are dramas intended to be performed before audiences. That means that the way the play looks and sounds is always important.

After reading each Act, talk about and make notes on the decisions you would need to make if you were planning a production of *The Crucible*. For example, for Act One you might want to think about some of the points below.

1. Space

- How does the distance between people and objects affect meaning and mood?
- What effects are achieved and what meanings suggested by having the whole of Act One take place in a young girl's bedroom while below an angry crowd gathers?
- What difference would it make if it took place down in the Reverend Parris' parlour with the crowds outside?
- The bedroom gets full at times. How would you organise the characters within the room?
- How might the mood or meaning of the Act be altered if the bedroom window was large instead of narrow?
- What is the effect of the audience being able to see stairs going down through the open door?
- Who touches who, when and in what way in Act One? What are the likely effects of these moments on the audience?



National Theatre, 1990.



2. Light and Colour

- Where and what are the sources of light?
- What sort of mood does the light give?
- Would there be any colour in a production you were planning?
- What associations would you want the colours on the set to suggest?
- What changes of light do you imagine might occur during the Act and with what effect?
- If you were staging this Act, what use would you want to make of darkness and shadow?

3. Sound

- Think about human sounds. Consider the range of whispers, shouts, sobs, shrieks, singing and screams. What instructions would you give to the actors?
- What other sounds, sound effects or music would you consider using at particular moments and for what reasons?
- Do certain words begin to be repeated? Are some words charged with a particular power at certain points in the Act?



Act One, National Theatre, 1990.

During Reading



4. Dramatic Features of Staging

Fill in the following chart after you have read each Act. Think about the look of the play as you would if you were looking at a painting.

What patterns, images, moods and symbols emerge?

Here is an example done for you for Act One. What changes would you make?

	Dramatic features/Staging	Comments/Ideas/Emerging Patterns
Setting/Objects	<i>A teenage girl's bedroom. Unconscious girl lying on bed. A man kneeling beside her.</i>	<i>Sight of praying man with girl is disturbing. Has he done something to her Misery, grief, fear.</i>
Use of light	<i>Narrow shaft of sunlight through window. A candle flame.</i>	<i>Light kept out Candle = all night vigil, church fear, hope? Not seeing clearly</i>
Date/Season/Time	<i>Spring 1692</i>	<i>Spring normally symbolises new life, growth, hope, youth, - but it's being shut out. It's early in the year, early in Americas's history - the beginning</i>
People on Stage	<i>Praying Parris Unconscious Betty Tituba Abigail</i>	<i>A sense of things out of joint - anxiety. religion, children, slavery, fear.</i>
Points of Dramatic Climax	<i>Abigail hits Betty. Abigail clutches Proctor, pleads with him Betty screams Naming names</i>	<i>Abigail a powerful force - anger, violence, determination. Sexual intimacy Repetition of 'Devil', 'Woman' + 'Goody'</i>



4. Act One - The Placing of Blame

In the real events on which the play is based, those accused of witchcraft could save their lives by confessing and naming other witches.

When Ruth and Betty fall into a trance after the seance and dance in the wood, the townspeople readily look to witchcraft as the cause. Most of the characters in Act One try to blame someone or something outside themselves.

Use a chart like the following to help you keep track:

Character	Who/What is blamed?	Why/For what?
Reverend Parris		
Ann Putnam		
Tituba		
Thomas Putnam		
John Proctor		
Rebecca		
Giles Corey		

Share your chart with other people's.

- Do you notice anything significant in your findings?
- Can you come up with three reasons to explain why a witch-hunt took place in Salem?



5. Act Two - Subtexting the Marriage of John and Elizabeth Proctor

The beginning of Act Two is the first time we are introduced to John and Elizabeth as a couple. To find out what this scene tells us about their relationship you could try subtexting the extract below taken from the beginning of Act Two.

Subtexting is a way of listening to different interpretations of a text by imagining the thoughts and feelings that lie below the surface of the spoken word.

Work in fours for the subtexting activity.

One pair needs to concentrate on Elizabeth and the other pair on John. In these pairs, decide which of you are going to speak the character's words as given in the script (Readers) and which of you are going to speak their thoughts (Thinkers).

Work through the extract in sections if you like. The Readers should read the speech as it appears on the page. Then in the first person, the Thinkers should speak that character's inner voice - what is being felt but not said at that point. For example:

Elizabeth's inner voice	Miller's script	John's inner voice
<i>I've been worried about you - afraid that it's started again.</i>	What keeps you so late? It's almost dark.	
	I were out planting far out to the forest edge.	<i>I can't explain- she's too fragile. She'll sympathise with the dangers I have to risk out there.</i>
<i>How could you do what you did? How can you expect me to talk?</i>	Oh, you're done then?	

It is always interesting to hear the the subtexting that other groups have come up with.

Listen to each other's.

How many different interpretations of this scene are there?



Subtexting Extract

ELIZABETH: What keeps you so late? It's almost dark.
PROCTOR: I were planting far out to the forest edge.
ELIZABETH: Oh, you're done then.
PROCTOR: Aye, the farm is seeded. The boys asleep?
ELIZABETH: They will be soon.
PROCTOR: Pray now for a fair summer.
ELIZABETH: Aye.
PROCTOR: Are you well today?
ELIZABETH: I am. It is a rabbit.
PROCTOR: Oh, is it! In Jonathan's trap?
ELIZABETH: No, she walked into the house this afternoon; I found her sittin' in the corner like she come to visit.
PROCTOR: Oh, that's a good sign walkin' in.
ELIZABETH: Pray God. It hurt my heart to strip her, poor rabbit.
PROCTOR: It's well seasoned.
ELIZABETH: I took great care. She's tender?
PROCTOR: Aye. I think we'll see green fields soon. It's warm as blood beneath the clods.
ELIZABETH: That's well.
PROCTOR: If the crop is good I'll buy George Jacob's heifer. How would that please you?
ELIZABETH: Aye, it would.
PROCTOR: I mean to please you, Elizabeth.
ELIZABETH: I know it, John.
PROCTOR: Cider?
ELIZABETH: Aye!
PROCTOR: This farm's a continent when you go foot by foot droppin' seeds in it.
ELIZABETH: It must be.
PROCTOR: You ought to bring some flowers in the house.
ELIZABETH: Oh, I forgot! I will tomorrow.
PROCTOR: It's winter in here yet. On Sunday let you come with me, and we'll walk the farm together; I never see such a load of flowers in the earth. Lilacs have a purple smell. Lilac is the smell of nightfall, I think. Massachusetts is a beauty in the spring!
ELIZABETH: Aye, it is.
PROCTOR: I think you're sad again. Are you?
ELIZABETH: You come so late I thought you'd gone to Salem this afternoon.
PROCTOR: Why? I have no business in Salem.
ELIZABETH: You did speak of going, earlier this week.
PROCTOR: I thought better of it since.

During Reading



Writing

Use the points listed below to help structure a piece of writing which explores the marriage of John and Elizabeth Proctor. A scripted subtext or an account of the different subtexts that groups came up with could form part of your essay.

- What do you see as the strengths and weaknesses of these two people?
- What sort of 'trial' is going on in their marriage?
- Which of them do you feel most sympathy or admiration for?
- Why do you think Miller chose to place a relationship like this at the centre of his play?
- What has their marriage got to do with the other themes and issues of the play?
- What is the significance of this Act on the play as a whole?



6. Act Three - The 'Yellow Bird' Scene

1. Warm Ups

Who's the Leader?

For this activity the whole group needs to sit in a large circle. One volunteer should leave the room. While s/he is away one of the group should be chosen to lead the mime. Ask the first volunteer back into the room and then the mime leader must begin to mime any action they choose eg. doing the washing up, at which point the rest of the group must immediately begin to copy the mime leader. S/he can and should change the mime action at any time, and the rest of the group must follow. The volunteer who left the room must guess who is leading the group in their miming.

Group Pressure

The whole group sits in a large circle. One person goes out of the room. The rest of you agree on a signal such as a common word (eg. 'well') or a gesture (eg touching the hair). When this signal is given you must all make the same agreed response such as a sigh, pointing to the ceiling, shouting a word.

Ask the volunteer to come back in and play 'Just a Minute' - get them to talk, without stopping for one minute on any subject the group chooses, eg. School, Holidays, Television. As they talk, the group responds with the agreed signals.

Debrief

- What happened exactly?
- What did it feel like to be the volunteer?
- How did individuals in the whole group feel?
- Was there one person who automatically became the leader? Why?
- What tactics, if any, could the volunteer have employed to resist the group?

2. Still Pictures.

Re-read from page 100 where Hale says: 'This girl has always struck me false' as far as page 104 where Mary Warren says: 'I sign, I sign....'

In two large groups arrange yourselves into a still picture that shows the others one aspect of this scene. Freeze-frame the picture so that the other group can walk around your picture.

When you're looking at another group's pictures think about and make notes on the following:

During Reading



- the way people are arranged in the picture;
- gestures;
- the distances between people;
- look at people's eyes and expressions;
- what is the focus or central point of the picture?
- what questions, words or phrases does the picture make you think of?

After the class has looked at a series of still pictures, sit down with your scribbled notes and try drafting a short poem using the words and ideas in front of you.

3. Staging the Scene - Forum Theatre

Create a semi-circular space as the stage. Everyone who is not an actor has a role as director sitting around the outside of the space.

Begin by acting out the 'Yellow Bird' scene as it is written by Miller (page 100 to 104). As you do this, agree upon the arrangement of space and the use of any props.

Start the dialogue and at any point in the 'rehearsal', an actor may stop and ask for advice. Similarly, a director may stop the action and make a suggestion.

These interruptions could be about:

- the way a line is spoken;
- positioning of people and props on the stage;
- gestures, looks;
- changing Miller's script or stage directions.

Changing the Action

Once you have run through the scene and talked about it discuss whether there are parts of the scene you would like to try doing differently to the way Miller has written it. Are there changes you would like to try out? For example, change the outcome of the scene so that Abigail is exposed and breaks down in the court.

There may be several changes your group want to try.

Experiment with changing the scenes.

During Reading



4. Mary Warren

The 'Yellow Bird' scene is a particularly important scene for Mary Warren and John Proctor because we know that they have decided to reveal the truth despite the cost to themselves.

In this activity you're going to concentrate on Mary Warren's part in this scene and John Proctor's use of her

A lot of pressure is put on Mary in the courtroom to save lives and stop the madness. Why is it that she is unable to do what John Proctor wants? What choices does someone like Mary really have in a situation like this? To help you answer these questions, get into two groups. One group should make a list of all the lines spoken **about** Mary in the play including Miller's stage directions. The other group should list all the lines Miller gives to Mary to speak in the 'Yellow Bird' scene. Write them up on two big charts so everyone can see them.

Words spoken about Mary Warren	Words given to Mary Warren to speak
<i>I say shut it, Mary Warren!</i>	<i>Abby!</i>
<i>Be you foolish mary Warren?</i>	<i>Abby, I'm here</i> <i>I cannot!</i>

For discussion:

- What do you notice about these two lists?
- Are any explanations offered here for Mary Warren's inability to perform in court as John Proctor wishes?
- What reasons can you think of for Mary's conscience not being powerful enough to enable her to act as she had promised in court?
- What do you learn of Mary's position in relation to Abigail, the other girls and John Proctor?

Divide into two groups, A and B.

The As are those who are angry with Mary. The Bs are those who have sympathy for her. Meet at opposite ends of the room and talk about Mary's situation:

- What questions do you want to ask her?
- What advice would you want to give?
- What do you think the group at the other end of the room ought to understand about Mary?

During Reading



Hot - seating Mary Warren

Arrange the chairs into a horseshoe and ask one person to volunteer being Mary. She or he sits facing the horseshoe. This is the chance for the others to ask her about the 'Yellow Bird' scene and other events in the play, to find out why she behaved as she did or to suggest ways that she might return to the court and change things for the better. Several people need to try out the role of Mary.

Writing

Use what you have learned from this activity to write about the role Mary Warren plays in this play. It would make sense if this assignment were made up of several fragments. You could choose a few of the following suggestions:

- Extracts from the hotseating activity written as dialogue.
- A letter of advice to Mary.
- A conversation among the girls about Mary written as a script or prose.
- Language and Power - use the work you did on what Mary says and what is said about her. This could be in the form of a poem or an essay.
- A poem about the 'Yellow Bird' scene using the poem you began drafting after the still pictures.
- A statement written by Mary that she asks to have read out in court the next day.



The 'Yellow Bird' scene, National Theatre, 1990.



7. Act Four - Making a Stand

It is hard to understand this Act unless you accept the strength of the characters' strict Christian beliefs in God, the day of judgement and heaven and hell. For them, eternal damnation was a reality.

Once accused, although you could save your life by naming other witches and confessing, to lie in doing so would be to condemn yourself to hell for ever.

Several characters in the play make a stand for a principle, from their sense of conscience, including the Proctors. In the end, they are prepared to die for it.

A definition of conscience - 'the sense of right and wrong that governs a person's thought and actions.'

Re-read the final climax of the play, from page 116, where Elizabeth says: 'I promise nothing. Let me speak with him', to the end of the play.

Discuss the principles which each is prepared to die for, starting with John Proctor. Look through this list and decide which you think are most true. Make your own list of statements for the principles for which Elizabeth Proctor makes a stand.

For example - Statements for John Proctor:

He isn't prepared to betray his friends.

He isn't willing to tell lies.

He wants to be a good man.

He wants to be seen by others to be a good man.

He wants to be a good example to his children.

He won't allow others to decide for him what is right and wrong.

He wants to be a 'saint'.

He isn't perfect, but even he has limits beyond which he will not go in terms of honesty and decent behaviour.

He wants to be true to himself and his name.

He is shamed by seeing how 'good' Rebecca Nurse is.

He fears what will happen to his society if people like him don't make a stand.

He wants Elizabeth to respect him.

During Reading



A Conscious Hero?

Miller has said of *The Crucible*:

‘I was drawn to the subject because I could use an episode from the past to give my character a higher state of awareness. I had explored the subjective world in *Death of a Salesman* now I wanted to move closer to a conscious hero’.

Being ‘conscious’ suggests thought, awareness and understanding of yourself and your situation.

Talk about who you think Miller means in the play when referring to ‘a conscious hero’? Which of the following aspects of conscience apply to which characters in the play?

- Do they think a lot about their moral dilemmas?
- Do they weigh up their faults and their good qualities?
- Do they learn about themselves in the course of the play?
- Do they discover what their principles are?
- Do they come to understand the nature of their society and what is wrong with it?

Find one quote in the play to show them doing each of these things .

Writing

1. Write John Proctor’s last letter home from prison to his children, explaining why he has come to the decision he has and telling them about himself and what kind of man he has been.
2. Write the playscript of Proctor’s last meeting with his children at the jail, before he is killed, explaining his actions and decisions.
3. Elizabeth Proctor returns home to tell her sons what has happened to their father and why. Write this as a piece of descriptive writing.



1. Abigail

What do you think lies behind Abigail's behaviour in the play?
Is she fighting for her own survival in Salem, is she taking her revenge on Proctor for rejecting her or is she just hell-bent on doing evil?

1. Subtexting Abigail

In small groups, try doing two contrasting subtexts for **one** of these key scenes from Act One and Act Three. (Look back to p19 for instructions on how to subtext).

One version should be a sympathetic reading of Abigail, and the other an unsympathetic reading where she is presented in the worst possible light.

Act One: From page 28 when Mercy Lewis exits to page 30 when Betty whines loudly at the sound of the singing.

Act Three: From page 97 when Danforth says: 'You will prove this! This will not pass!' down to page 101 where the stage directions say: [*ABIGAIL, with a weird, wild, chilling cry, screams up to the ceiling.*]

Perform one of your two versions to the class. Make sure that for each scene a sympathetic and an unsympathetic reading are performed. Talk about what is revealed of Abigail's situation and behaviour from the various subtext versions.

On the board compile two lists - one headed 'Sympathy for Abigail' and the other 'No Sympathy'. What are people's reasons for feeling as they do about Abigail?

2. A Scene from the Past

We are told in the play that Abigail used to work for the Proctors as a servant.

Split into three groups around the room.

Group A is Proctor, **Group B** is Elizabeth and **Group C** is Abigail.

Brainstorming

In your groups make a list of the positive and negative things your character might feel about the time before the play begins.

Still Pictures

Now get yourselves into mixed groups of about 6 made up of **As**, **Bs** and **Cs**. Your task is to work on a still picture that shows the rest of the group a little of what that time was like in the Proctor household for those three people and the children.

After Reading



When you are ready to show your scene, bring it to life for a couple of seconds and then on a count of three, freeze it. (Look back at pages 22 and 23 for suggestions about what to look for in a still picture.)

Observers may ask the characters what they are thinking if they wish. Jot down words, ideas and questions on the still pictures as you look at them. You could use these as the basis for a poem about one of the characters or the Proctor household.

3. The Missing Scene

The following scene was added to Act Two by Arthur Miller for his revised version of the play, which had its first production in New York in July 1953. However, when his Collected Plays were published in 1958, this scene was omitted.

SCENE: A wood. Night.

Proctor appears with lantern. He enters glancing behind him, then halts, holding the lantern raised. Abigail appears with a wrap over her nightgown, her hair down. A moment of questioning silence.

PROCTOR [*searching*]: I must speak with you, Abigail. [*She does not move, staring at him.*] Will you sit?

ABIGAIL: How do you come?

PROCTOR: Friendly.

ABIGAIL [*glancing about*]: I don't like the woods at night. Pray you, stand closer. [*He comes closer to her, but keeps separated in spirit.*] I knew it must be you. When I heard the pebbles on the window, before I opened up my eyes I knew. I thought you would come a good time sooner.

PROCTOR: I had thought to come many times.

ABIGAIL: Why didn't you? I am so alone in the world now.

PROCTOR [*as a fact. Not bitterly*]: Are you? I've heard that people come a hundred mile to see your face these days.

ABIGAIL: Aye, my face. Can you see my face?

PROCTOR [*holds the lantern to her face*]: Then you're troubled?

ABIGAIL: Have you come to mock me?

PROCTOR [*sets lantern and sits down*]: No no, but I hear only that you go to the tavern every night, and play shovelboard with the Deputy Governor and they give you cider.

ABIGAIL [*as though that did not count*]: I have once or twice played the shovelboard. But I have no joy in it.

PROCTOR [*he is probing her*]: This is a surprise, Abby. I'd thought to find you gayer than this. I'm told a troop of boys go step for step with you wherever you walk these days.

After Reading



ABIGAIL Aye, they do. But I have only lewd looks from the boys.
PROCTOR: And you like that not?
ABIGAIL: I cannot bear lewd looks no more, John. My spirit's changed entirely. I ought to be given Godly looks when I suffer for them as I do.
PROCTOR: Oh? How do you suffer, Abby?
ABIGAIL [*pulls up dress*]: Why, look at my leg. I'm holes all over from their damned needles and pins. [*Touching her stomach.*] The jab your wife gave me's not healed yet, y'know.
PROCTOR [*seeing her madness now*]: Oh it isn't.
ABIGAIL: I think sometimes she pricks it open again while I sleep.
PROCTOR: Ah?
ABIGAIL: And George Jacobs. [*Sliding up her sleeve*]. He comes again and again and raps me with his stick — the same spot every night all this week. Look at the lump I have.
PROCTOR: Abby — George Jacobs is in the jail all this month.
ABIGAIL: Thank God he is, and bless the day he hangs and lets me sleep in peace again! Oh, John, the world's so full of hypocrites. [*Astonished, outraged*]. They pray in jail! I'm told they all pray in jail!
PROCTOR: They may not pray?
ABIGAIL: And torture me in my bed while sacred words are comin' from their mouths? Oh, it will need God himself to cleanse this town properly!
PROCTOR: Abby — you mean to cry out still others?
ABIGAIL: If I live, if I am not murdered I surely will, until the last hypocrite is dead.
PROCTOR: Then there is no one good?
ABIGAIL [*softly*]: Aye, there is one. You are good.
PROCTOR: Am I? How am I good?
ABIGAIL: Why, you taught me goodness, therefore you are good. It were a fire you walked me through, and all my ignorance was burned away. It were a fire, John, we lay in fire. And from that night no woman dare call me wicked any more but I knew my answer. I used to weep for my sins when the wind lifted up my skirts - and blushed for shame because some old Rebecca called me loose. And then you burned my ignorance away. As bare as some December tree I saw them all — walking like saints to church, running to feed the sick, and hypocrites in their hearts! And God gave me strength to call them liars, and God made men to listen to me, and by God I will scrub the world clean for the love of Him! Oh, John, I will make you such a wife when the world is white again! [*She kisses his hand in high emotion.*] You will be amazed to see me every day a light of heaven in your house, a . . . [*He rises and backs away, frightened, amazed*] - Why are you cold?
PROCTOR [*in a business-like way but with uneasiness, as though before an unearthly thing*]: My wife goes to trial in the morning, Abigail.
ABIGAIL (*distantly*): Your wife?
PROCTOR: Surely you knew of it?

After Reading



ABIGAIL [*coming awake to that*]: I do remember it now. [*As a duty.*] How - how - is she well?

PROCTOR: As well as she may be, thirty-six days in that place.

ABIGAIL: You said you came friendly.

PROCTOR: She will not be condemned Abby.

ABIGAIL [*her holy feelings outraged, but she is questioning*]: You brought me from my bed to speak of her?

PROCTOR: I come to tell you, Abby, what I will do tomorrow in the court. I would not take you by surprise, but give you all good time to think on what to do to save yourself.

ABIGAIL [*incredibly, and with beginning fear*]: Save myself!

PROCTOR: If you do not free my wife tomorrow, I am set and bound to ruin you, Abby.

ABIGAIL [*her voice small - astonished*]: How - ruin me?

PROCTOR: I have rocky proof in documents that you knew that poppet were none of my wife's; and that you yourself bade Mary Warren stab that needle into it.

ABIGAIL [*a wildness stirs in her; a child is standing here who is unutterably frustrated denied her wish - but she is still grasping for her wits*]: I bade Mary Warren. . . ?

PROCTOR: You know what you do, you are not so mad!

ABIGAIL [*she calls upwards*]: Oh, hypocrites! Have you won him, too? [*Directly to him.*] John, why do you let them send you?

PROCTOR: I warn you, Abby

ABIGAIL: They send you! They steal your honesty and . . .

PROCTOR: I have found my honesty

ABIGAIL: No, this is your wife pleading, your snivelling, envious wife! This is Rebecca's voice, Martha Corey's voice. You were no hypocrite!

PROCTOR [*he grasps her arm and holds her*]: I will prove you for the fraud you are!

ABIGAIL: And if they ask you why Abigail would ever do so murderous a deed, what will you tell them?

PROCTOR [*it is hard even to say it*]: I will tell them why.

ABIGAIL: What will you tell? You will confess to fornication? In the court?

PROCTOR: If you will have it so, so I will tell it! [*She utters a disbelieving laugh.*] I say I will! [*She laughs louder, now with more assurance he will never do it. He shakes her roughly.*] If you can still hear, hear this! Can you hear! [*She is trembling, staring up at him as though he were out of his mind.*] You will tell the court you are blind to spirits - you cannot see them anymore, and you will never cry witchery again, or I will make you famous for the whore you are!

ABIGAIL [*she grabs him*]: Never in this world! I know you, John — you are this moment singing secret Hallelujahs that your wife will hang!

PROCTOR [*throws her down*]: You mad, you murderous bitch!

After Reading



ABIGAIL [*rises*]: Oh, how hard it is when pretense falls! But it falls, it falls! [*She wraps herself up as though to go.*] You have done your duty by her. I hope it is your last hypocrisy. I pray you will come again with sweeter news for me. I know you will - now that your duty's done. Good night, John. [*She is backing away, raising her hand in farewell.*] Fear naught. I will save you tomorrow. From yourself I will save you. [*She is gone.*]

Proctor is left alone, amazed, in terror. He takes up his lantern and slowly exits as the curtain falls.

Read this scene in groups and discuss what it adds to your understanding of the characters of Abigail and Proctor and the play as a whole. Why do you think Miller took this scene out?

The following statements might help your discussion:

- Miller's decision to write this scene shows he was still in two minds about the character of Abigail. Is she genuinely self-deceived, driven mad by love or is she calculatingly cruel in this scene?
- This scene emphasises the bond between John and Abigail and therefore suggests Abigail has a right to feel the need for revenge.
- This scene presents Proctor in a poor light. It emphasises his weakness and his responsibility for what has happened.
- This scene interrupts the dramatic momentum of the play from the moment of the arrests in Act Two.

Writing

1. Develop the poetry drafts you began after the still pictures work at the beginning of this section. You could write three separate pieces representing the different voices and viewpoints of Elizabeth, Abigail and Proctor.
2. Using the ideas from your work on still pictures write a script that shows a scene from the past in the Proctor household when Abigail worked there as a servant. Remember to include stage directions.
3. Imagine that Abigail and Mercy write to Susanna Walcott after the events of *The Crucible*. Where are they? How are they earning money and keeping going? How do they see past events?
4. Write four internal monologues for Abigail at the end of each Act in which you show your interpretation of her state of mind.
5. Write a commentary about the missing scene in which you explore the ways in which its inclusion in the final version of the play would have altered the audience's sympathies for Abigail and Proctor.



2. Language

What Language says about People

Look at the following extract in pairs and read it aloud. Note down on the extract any observations you have about the following:

- What clues does the language give of the situation, the issues and the society in which the play is set?
- How can you tell that Danforth is the one with the power in this exchange?
- What are the similarities and differences between the language used here and dialects you are familiar with?

DANFORTH: Come here, woman. [*Elizabeth comes to him, glancing at Proctor's back.*] Look at me only, not at your husband. In my eyes only.

ELIZABETH [*faintly*]: Good, sir.

DANFORTH: We are given to understand that at one time you dismissed your servant, Abigail Williams.

ELIZABETH: That is true, sir.

DANFORTH: For what cause did you dismiss her? [*Slight pause. Then Elizabeth tries to glance at Proctor.*]

You will look in my eyes only and not at your husband. The answer is in your memory and you need no help to give it to me. Why did you dismiss Abigail Williams?

ELIZABETH [*not knowing what to say, sensing a situation, wetting her lips to stall for time*]: She - dissatisfied me. [*Pause.*] And my husband.

DANFORTH: In what way dissatisfied you?

ELIZABETH: She were - [*she glances at Proctor for a cue.*]

DANFORTH: Woman, look at me! [*Elizabeth does.*] Were she slovenly? Lazy? What disturbance did she cause?

ELIZABETH: Your Honour, I - in that time I were sick. And I - my husband is a good and righteous man. He is never drunk as some are, nor wastin' his time at the shovelboard, but always at this work. But in my sickness - you see, sir, I were a long time sick after my last baby, and I thought I saw my husband somewhat turning from me. And this girl - [*she turns to Abigail.*]

DANFORTH: Look at me.

ELIZABETH: Aye, sir. Abigail Williams - [*she breaks off.*]

DANFORTH: What of Abigail Williams?

ELIZABETH: I came to think he fancied her. And so one night I lost my wits, I think, and put her out on the high-road.

DANFORTH: Your husband - did he indeed turn from you?

ELIZABETH [*in agony*]: My husband - is a goodly man, sir.

DANFORTH: Then he did not turn from you.

After Reading



ELIZABETH [*starting to glance at Proctor*]: He -
DANFORTH [*reaches out and holds her face, then*]: Look at me! To your own knowledge, has John Proctor ever committed the crime of lechery? [*In a crisis of indecision she cannot speak.*] Answer my question! Is your husband a lecher?
ELIZABETH [*faintly*]: No, sir.
DANFORTH: Remove her, Marshal.



National Theatre, 1990.



Language in Time

When Arthur Miller visited Salem to look at the court records of the trials it was mainly 'to study the actual words of the interrogations'. He knew that in order to place *The Crucible* historically, he would have to re-capture the people's 'gnarled way of speaking'. He writes:

'After a few hours of mouthing the words - often spelled phonetically in improvised shorthand of the court clerks or the ministers who kept the record as the trial proceeded - I felt a bit encouraged that I might be able to handle it, and in more time I came to love the feel of it, like hard burnished wood. Without planning to, I even elaborated a few grammatical forms myself, the double negatives especially, which occurred in the trial record much less frequently than they did in the play.'

He invented a language which reflected the play's time and place:

For example:

- He uses words like 'poppet' instead of doll when there is a visual representation of a doll to make the meaning clear, but rejects the historically accurate word 'dafter' for daughter, because it could lead to confusion.
- He uses non-standard forms of verbs (or syntax) such as 'he have' for he has, and 'she be' for she is. They are still in use in some parts of Britain.
- He uses the title 'Mister' as a form of address which is sometimes used in a formal sense and sometimes meant to be hostile.
- What can you find out about the title 'Goody'?

In pairs look at the language within the play and find your own examples of the following:

- devices used by Arthur Miller to evoke time and place;
- language spoken by characters which reveals aspects of their personalities;
- unusual and striking images and word order;
- sentences and phrases you can compare to other styles and registers;
- aspects of the language which particularly appeal to you.

Write these examples down and pass them round the class so that you can share each other's ideas.

After Reading



In pairs or small groups select one or two of the following page references where you will find examples of Miller's Salem language in use. Read the extracts aloud a few times and discuss how you think the lines should be said by the characters.

(Pages: 18-19, 29-30, 55, 65-66, 72, 97-98, 110-111, 118-119.)

- Discuss how the dialogue differs from Standard English. Look out for unusual or unexpected words and phrases, for example:

- non-standard forms of verbs;

- comparisons which stand out;

- the use of double negatives.

- Look out for examples of the ways in which the language of the Bible is reflected in the speech of the characters.

Writing

1. Annotate some of the extracts suggested in this section as part of an assignment that explores language use. Try to draw attention to the ways in which Arthur Miller has created a language which reflects the small seventeenth century Puritan community in which the play is set.

2. Imagine that a government decree has ordered that the text of *The Crucible* must be changed into Standard English so as not to encourage non-standard speech among Britain's school children. Write a letter to the Secretary of State for Education expressing your views on such a move and explaining what would be lost from the play if such changes were made.

3. Re-write your favourite scene from the play in a dialect you know well. Write a commentary to go with it in which you demonstrate the kinds of knowledge about language that you're drawing on in your adaptation.



Mary Warren,
National Theatre, 1990.

The Crucible



3. Making a Television Adaptation of *The Crucible*

In this activity you are asked to imagine yourselves in role as members of an independent television production company with the task of producing a three-part TV mini-series adaptation of *The Crucible*.

Read the following memo very carefully in your group:

Channel 6 Memo

As you know, Channel 6 is commissioning a new mini-series adaptation of *The Crucible*, and has invited us to submit a treatment. The series will be screened over three consecutive nights during peak time - Channel 6 are looking for big audiences. They have asked you to present them with the following:

1. An outline structure showing how you will break down the play into three 50-minute episodes. You will need to consider:

- whether you will stick to the chronological sequence of the play or re-organise the narrative, introduce flash-backs, etc.
- whether you will need to edit the play - should anything be left out?

2. A brief synopsis of each of the three episodes.

Not more than a single paragraph each. Remember, this is a play in four Acts - think carefully about how we can adapt it into three parts. It might help to focus your attention on the opening and ending of each episode.

3. Detailed suggestions for the title sequence for the series.

Preferably in storyboard form, this will be important as a way of attracting and identifying your audience and setting up expectations of the series. Here you will need to think about:

- visual imagery which represents the themes of the play in some way. This might include stills of the characters; motifs running through the play; historical material; key moments;
- the lettering and colour of the title itself;
- theme music, sound effects etc.

(over)



4. Preliminary ideas for studio sets and locations.

5. Suggestions for casting, particularly of the main characters.

Consider this carefully; you will need to consider actors who:

- a) will effectively portray the essence of Miller's characters;
- b) will successfully attract large audiences.

6. A brief paragraph for *The Radio Times* previewing the new series.

At this point, money is not an issue, although if you're planning a lavish production you'll need to be able to justify the budget to the Channel 6 Programme Controller. Be prepared to report back with a full and persuasive rationale for all your choices.

Writing

Write a detailed written account of your treatment for the Channel 6 Programme Controller, explaining the thinking behind it and why you think it will draw large audiences. This could take several different forms:

1. A press release or a feature article for *The Radio Times* which previews and promotes your mini-series.
2. Devise a storyboard for the title sequence for the series, using not more than 10 shots. Write a commentary for your storyboard to show how it represents the ideas and themes of Miller's play.
3. Script a 60-second outline trailer for the series, based around four key moments in the play. You may use any of the following:
 - dialogue from the play;
 - suggestions for music/sound-effects;
 - voice-over previewing the series;
 - story-boarded images to illustrate the 'look' of the production.

Include a brief commentary explaining your choice of format and extracts.



4. The Representation of Women in *The Crucible*

Look at the following theatre review by Betty Caplan, written in the form of a letter. In it she argues that *The Crucible* is sexist in its portrayal of women.

- In pairs, brainstorm anything about this play that could be interpreted as sexist or anti-women. Share your ideas with another pair.
- In small groups, read Caplan's piece aloud, one paragraph at a time.
- Make a note on the text where you find yourself in agreement or disagreement with her. Make a note where there is something you don't understand. Stop after each paragraph to talk about your response to the ideas she is raising.
- What kind of tone of voice does Caplan use and what is the effect of her writing it as a letter to Mr Miller? See whether you can trace the main points of her argument. How effective do you find her arguments?
- Use the activity as a way of discussing your knowledge of the play, your awareness of Miller's intentions and the ways in which gender affects any reading of it.



Act 2, National Theatre, 1990.

After Reading



Dear Arthur Miller,

I recently saw a production of *The Crucible* for the first time. I have to admit that for a while, I was bewitched. But the more I thought about it, the uneasier I became. Why, I began to wonder, has the play convinced so many people? Why was I so swept away by it at first?

Melodrama can be very powerful. Puccini knew that. Wouldn't he have relished this one, I can't help thinking, with its tailor-made shrieks and trills? What might he have called it - *La Fanciulla del Frozen North*? Simple characterisation, passionate feeling thwarted by death or social stigma (usually amounting to the same thing) - these are the basic ingredients of melodrama. Well, what's wrong with that? In this context, a lot, in my opinion.

Melodrama is hardly the right vehicle for a play about the serious social issues surrounding the McCarthyite era in the US. You choose for your allegory an incident in American history - the witch-hunt in Salem - which, although it has become notorious, was far from being unique in the annals of the persecution of women. In my view, you have exploited that incident primarily for its sensationalist value. And in your concern for the victims of the witch-hunt, have loaded the dice against the initiator of it.

Let me explain. Your key characters ('They may be taken as creations of my own,' you write in an introductory note, so I hold you to your word) are, firstly, Abigail Williams who has had a brief affair with John Proctor and now seeks her revenge on the man who has turned his back on her. How do you describe her when she first appears? 'a strikingly beautiful girl, an orphan, with an endless capacity for dissembling.' That's it. She never develops. Face being fortune, this one's a bad 'un. What do you understand about her? In your introduction you express bewilderment at the fact that the trial evidence showed Abigail accusing Elizabeth Proctor but not John, 'despite the urgings of the prosecutors.' Mr Miller, I can only repeat Hamlet's cynical question to Polonius: 'Have you a daughter? Friend look to't.' Abigail Williams was, as an orphan, a minor and a servant in the Proctor household, in the position of a daughter and therefore the responsibility of her 'father.' John Proctor abused the power that lay in that trust.

After Reading



Elsewhere you say you have never proceeded psychoanalytically in your thought, but I would urge you to read what Freud says about women like Abigail, 'wrecked' by their success in the Oedipal struggle. You, however, have damned her from the start, and have no compassion for her. When the saintly Proctor cries 'whore!' upon the young girl in the court, I sense no revulsion in you the author, no rage at his terrible duplicity, no desire to let her speak her truth. For you, she has none.

Her epitaph - 'legend has it that Abigail turned up later as a prostitute in Boston' - is revealing. Whose legend, Mr Miller? And what do you imagine were the career prospects for a girl who would have been, in the eyes of society at that time, merely 'soiled goods' - Pulitzer Playwright? East Coast Academic? Listen to Verdi and Puccini, Mr Miller. At least they felt for their victims!

Next, *The Wife*. Plain. Homely. (Melody: solo cello.) Who can blame a man for turning from her? (Many a judge on our esteemed benches shares your view.) When Proctor salts the soup Elizabeth has cooked at the beginning of Act Two the message is clear: 'This woman is not tasty enough.' Thus is woman reduced to her essence. Nevertheless, he is forgiven by her, by you, by posterity. Who needs his canonisation? Clearly you do. Because it takes no genius to see that he is a thinly veiled version of yourself, familiar from several of your plays, and from our knowledge of your role at the time, standing up nobly for Right and Good by refusing to publicly confess and incriminate his fellows. Your Brotherhood of Man is just that, Mr Miller. Ain't no room for sisters in it.

I'm being unfair, you reply. What about Rebecca Nurse? Here, I must say, you do have a splendid character - unbelievable, intuitive, wise. But hers is a mere bit part. Had you made her the centre-piece, you would undoubtedly have had a better play.

With the guilt firmly established before we've even begun, who needs a trial? You do. To sweep us off our feet, and chill our spines with horror. Roll up, roll up! Come and see girls going bananas and birds materialising in front of their eyes! Come to the circus of female insanity! Male fascination with female psychosis is certainly not new.

After Reading



In her iconography of Ophelia (*Ophelia: The Responsibilities of Feminist Criticism*), Elaine Showalter describes the popular Victorian taste for lithographs of madwomen ‘posed in prayer or decked with Ophelia-like garlands.’ She tells us that ‘The clinic of Jean-Martin Charcot in the 1870s became a ‘living theatre’ of female pathology: his women patients were coached in their performances for the camera, and, under hypnosis, were sometimes instructed to play heroines from Shakespeare.’ You are not the first, nor, I suspect, will you be the last to milk La Grand Hysterie for all it’s worth.

But whose ‘hysterie’ is it anyway? These jibbering men, setting up a mock trial, are *projecting* their terror of unbridled female sexuality on to the girls, who, at puberty, are highly susceptible and vulnerable. When Reverend Parris surprises the girls dancing, it is *he* who undresses them mentally, he who conjures up an image of the kind of exclusive female orgy which goes back to ancient Greece. You say that ‘sex, sin and the devil were early linked, and so they continued to be in Salem, and are today,’ but you don’t examine that link. If you had, Mr Miller, would you have written, ‘several hundred thousand people had been executed in Europe for witchcraft?’ You might have turned for enlightenment to your countrywoman, the 19th century historian Matilda Joslyn Gage who wrote in *Woman Church and State*: ‘It is computed from historical records that nine million persons were put to death for witchcraft after 1484, or during a period of three hundred years...The greater number of this incredible multitude were women,’ a fact which led that contemporary witch Andrea Dworkin to coin the term ‘gynocide.’

The battle in Salem was about a petrified male theocracy which felt threatened by women. Like the authors of the *Malleus Maleficarum* (*The Hammer Of Witches*) published in 1486, these men were extremely agitated at the prospect that ‘Witches may work some Prestidigitatory Illusion so that the Male Organ appears to be entirely removed and separate from the Body.’ Now if you can do that, you can do anything.

Betty Caplan, *The Guardian*.

Writing

1. Write a letter to Betty Caplan in response to her 'review'. At which points in her reading of the play do you find yourself in agreement and at which points do you disagree?
2. Write an account of your group discussion about Caplan's 'review'. Use the points on page 39 to structure your writing. Can you come to any conclusions about Miller's view of women? Is the play sexist? How much does gender affect a person's reading of a play?



5. What is *The Crucible* About?

Below are some people's ideas about the play. Photocopy this page, cut up the statements and arrange them into three lists - Agree/Disagree/Not Sure. Try to come up with one or two more statements of your own.

All our actions involve a conscious decision.

Societies should be on their guard against the
tyranny of teenagers.

Each of us has a responsibility to ourselves and to
society.

You have to live with the consequences of the
decisions that you make.

Everyone needs to wrestle with their conscience
when trying to decide what is the right thing to do.

Telling the truth is important.

It's a bad thing for society when reputation is valued
above personal integrity.

You cannot be true to others if you are not true to
yourself.

The secret guilt of individuals can destroy a society.

Law should not rule over common sense.

People should be quicker to find blame in
themselves rather than finding blame in others.

There are some things that are worth dying for.

The older generation always fears and suspects the
younger generation.

After Reading



Many cultures have a fear of the power of adolescent girls and find ways of repressing this group.

Societies ill at ease with themselves are easily tipped over into tyranny.

Tyranny that has happened in the past must be attended to so that we may recognise tyranny that might happen in the future.

When the state is given too much power things can go badly wrong.

The right balance between order and freedom is a delicate thing.

The mental state of individuals affects the whole society.

Ignorance and superstition are dangerous things.

Arguing your Position

Allocate three places in the room to be Agree/Disagree/Not sure. Pick a statement at random, read it out and ask everyone in the class to go to whichever position is relevant to what they think about that statement. The task is for people from each position to begin to justify their stance to the others verbally. It may be that this process will allow some of the Not Sure people to take up a different position. Do the same thing with several statements.

Writing

1. Pick the three statements that you consider to be the most interesting and important. Use the statements and the ideas raised in your discussions to write an essay on what you think the play is about.
Try to show how the statements you chose are explored in the play. Think about the different possible interpretations of the play and why people might view it differently, drawing on the 'Arguing Your Position' activity.
2. This play appears on the Set Texts list of several of the GCSE/KS4 Exam Boards. Why do you think this might be? How suitable or relevant is this play to your class? What are the moral, political and social issues that it raises?



1. Timechart of America in the 1600s

The action of the play takes place in Massachusetts in 1692. Here are some of the newsworthy events from that time:

- 1618 Smallpox Epidemic Wipes out Indian Population**
In New England it is reported that 90% of the local Indians have died from smallpox brought over here by settlers.
- 1620 Mayflower Arrives at New Plymouth**
Weary and diseased, passengers land at a suitable site for settlement. Their welfare is threatened by the harsh winter weather and they fear that the Indians who cultivated corn and cleared land here will return.
- 1621 Indians Help Settlers with Farming Practices**
Local Indians have come to the rescue of the newly arrived settlers, most of whom are hopelessly unprepared for a life of self-sufficiency.
- 1622 Indians Massacre 350 Settlers in Jamestown, Virginia.**
An eight year peace treaty has been broken. Pressure on local Indians to supply corn on unfair terms which the settlers have been too inept to grow, provoked the massacre.
- 1627 Kidnapped London Children Imported to Virginia as Servants.**
Criminals in London are making money through kidnapping children and selling them in the colonies where there is a need for them as servants. This year 1,500 were sold to the settlers desperate for cheap labour.
- 1628 Salem Founded**
Salem is a small farming and fishing port on the coast of New England, 15 miles from Boston. The name Salem was chosen because these deeply religious people see part of their holy quest there as being to build the new Jerusalem.
- 1645 Slavery Becomes Thriving Industry in New World**
The trade of slaving is becoming an American industry with ships frequently leaving Boston harbour for raids along the West African coast. Those captured are taken to Barbados where they are traded for tobacco and sugar which are then sold in Boston for a huge profit.
- 1648 Woman Guilty of Witchcraft to Hang**
In Plymouth, Massachusetts, a woman found guilty of causing pain in those she approaches is to be hanged. Fear of witchcraft is becoming widespread in the colonies.
- 1659 Quakers Hanged for Resisting Banishment**
Three Quakers who have repeatedly ignored a banishment order in Boston because the authorities regard them as a disruptive influence are to be hanged.
- 1692 20 Executed in Salem for Witchcraft**
Civil unrest threatens in the strictly Puritan town of Salem in Massachusetts where the court has recently executed 20 people accused of witchcraft. 500 others, due to be tried, are to be released.
- 1697 Colony Repents**
Citizens of Massachusetts have spent a day fasting and repenting their part in the 1692 witch trials in Salem. The judge who presided over the trials has attended church and offered a bill of confession admitting blame and shame. Some former jurors have signed a document that reads 'we fear we have been instrumental with others, though ignorantly and unwillingly, to bring upon ourselves the guilt of innocent blood.' The community begged forgiveness of the families of the 20 who died.



2. Witches and Witchcraft

Some Definitions and Quotations

Witch-hunt

‘a rigorous campaign to round up or expose dissenters on the pretext of safeguarding the public welfare.’ (*Collins English Dictionary*)

Witchcraft and Witches

‘many of the village folk would come to heaven were it not for their witchcrafts....The woman has spells for getting a husband, spells for marriage...spells before the child is born, before the christening...Ye men, it is much marvel that ye lose not your wits for the monstrous witchcrafts that women practice on you!’ (The sermon of Berthold of Regensburg 1250.)

‘Those who let the witches escape, or who do not punish them with the utmost rigour, may rest assured that they will be abandoned by God to the mercy of the witches. And the country which shall tolerate this will be scourged with pestilences, famines and wars.’ (*Bodin’s Demonology* 1580)

Satan

‘The subtlest of all Satan’s stratagems is to pretend his own non-existence in general and in particular the non-existence of witches.’ (Thomas Browne in Basil Wille’s *17th Century Background*.)

Puritan

‘late 16th and 17th century extreme English Protestants who wished to purify the Church of England of its ceremony. Believed luxury and pleasure a sin’. (*Collins English Dictionary*.)

Salem

‘In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion.’ (*The Bible*, Psalms 76:2.)

‘Crucible’

- A melting pot.
- A severe trial or test.
- A vessel in which substances are heated to high temperatures.

Background and Wider Reading



When did Witch-hunts Happen?

Between 1300 and 1700 there was a steady rise in the numbers of witchcraft trials in all parts of Europe and European colonies. Hundreds of thousands of people were strangled, burned, drowned and beheaded having been accused, tortured and tried as witches. The majority of these people were women.

Why did they Happen?

This is still uncertain. What is known is that from the 1500s onwards was a time of great change, uncertainty, upheaval and fear in Europe. Religions were being questioned and changed. The authority of religion was under attack and those in power - local politicians, royal families and churchmen looked for ways to create a visible enemy. Leaders of different sects competed against one another in their display of religious zeal and in their attempts to establish themselves as the one 'true' faith.

One reason for witch-hunting to continue and grow during this period was that it became a lucrative business for some. Victims were charged for every stage of their trial including the ropes that bound them and the wood used to burn them. After their execution their property was seized. Local nobles, bishops, royalty, judges, magistrates and others all received a share of the loot.

Christian Beliefs

One of the basic beliefs of Christianity was that the devil was engaged in a constant battle to overthrow the Christian community. It was believed that he did this by recruiting humans to compact with him and tempt others to work with him. Pretending that he didn't exist was thought to be one of the craftiest of the devil's ways of working; therefore to even deny his existence was to prove you were working for him.

Why Women?

References to wise and evil women are scattered throughout all traditional European tales. The traditional role of women in significant and mysterious areas of life such as attending births (midwives), healing (in the 1500s herbs, spells and charms were virtually the only medicine available) or laying out the dead may have been one reason for this.

The idea of women armed with magical powers which were used against men was always around but not considered dangerous until the 1400s when Catholics and Protestants, because of their own infighting, became convinced that the devil was about to overturn Christianity. It was then that women, and their particular knowledge and experience of life, became thought of as being in league with the devil to overturn the established order of things - an order that, as trade and industry grew, was becoming increasingly male-dominated.



3. Witch-hunts: Salem and McCarthyism

Miller said of *The Crucible*, ‘I believe that the reader will discover here the essential nature of one of the strangest and most awful chapters in human history.’

But it was not just Salem he was talking about. He himself had lived through a witch-hunt of a different kind. Some people feel that the play is just as much about modern American society and the witch-hunt known as the McCarthy era, as it is about seventeenth century Salem.

The McCarthy Era

In the 1940s and 1950s, when Arthur Miller was a young writer, America became obsessed with the fear of communism. The government wanted to defeat communism in Russia and stop it spreading to other countries. Even within America, there was a fear that communists were secretly trying to destroy the American way of life and were plotting to introduce communism.

As this fear and obsession grew, the American Senate, or parliament, started to pass laws to restrict the activities of communists. Senator Joe McCarthy was the main figure leading the anti-communist movement.

These are some of the things that happened when McCarthy was at his most powerful:

- a Committee on UnAmerican Activities was set up. People were ‘put on trial’ by the committee and had to answer questions about their personal lives, friends, work and political beliefs. They were asked to name other people. They were ‘black-listed’ (prevented from getting jobs) if they refused to appear or if it was decided that they were communists. You could be labelled a communist if you had friends who were communists.
- 3 million names were passed on. This shows how fearful people must have been, to hand over the names of people they knew. It also shows how large the witch-hunt against communists was and how it gripped the whole nation.
- Between May 1953 and October 1954 6926 people working in government civil service jobs were fired because they were thought to be ‘security risks’.



Arthur Miller and McCarthyism

Many writers, actors and film people were called before HUAC, including Arthur Miller, and many of his friends.

This is an extract from what he said, when he appeared before the Committee:

MR ARENS: Tell us, if you please, sir, about those meetings with Communist Party writers which you said you attended in New York City. Can you tell us who was there when you walked into the room?

MR MILLER: Mr. Chairman, I understand the philosophy behind this question and I want you to understand mine. When I say this, I want you to understand that I am not protecting the Communists or the Communist Party. I am trying to, and I will, protect my sense of myself. I could not use the name of another person and bring trouble on him. I take the responsibility for everything I have ever done, but I cannot take responsibility for another human being.'

Miller wrote, in the Introduction to *Collected Plays*:

'It was as though the whole country had been born anew, without a memory even of certain elemental decencies which a year or two earlier no-one would have imagined could be altered, let alone forgotten. Astounded, I watched men pass me by without a nod whom I had known rather well for years; and again, the astonishment was produced by my knowledge which I could not give up, that the terror in these people was knowingly planned and consciously engineered, and yet all they knew was terror.'

'I knew of one man who had been summoned to the office of a network executive and, on explaining that he had had no Left connections at all, despite the then current attacks upon him, was told that this was precisely the trouble: 'You have nothing to give them, he was told, meaning he had no confession to make, and so he was fired from his job'.

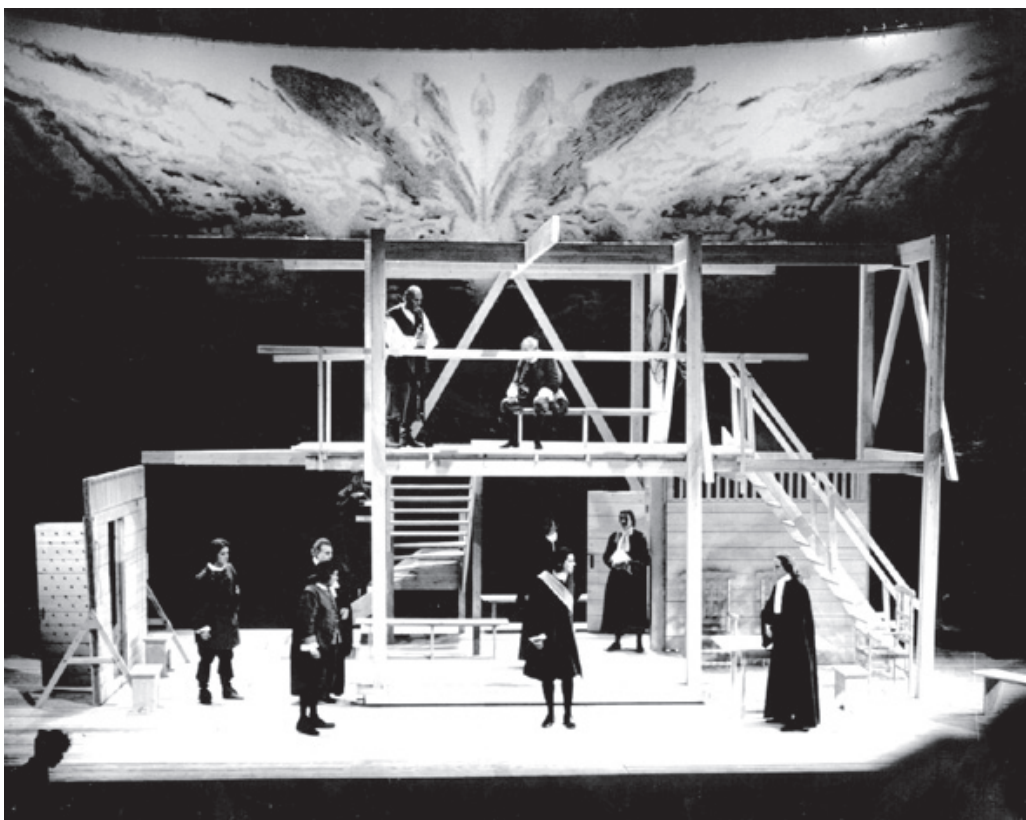
Background and Wider Reading



The Parallels between Salem and McCarthyism

What parallels have you noticed? Talk about this in small groups, using this chart as a way of recording your views.

Salem	The McCarthy witch-hunts
	<i>People accused of being a threat to the society</i> <i>Atmosphere of fear</i> <i>The judges have complete power</i>



Courtroom Scene, National Theatre, 1990.

The Crucible

Background and Wider Reading



Arthur Miller's Trial

In pairs read the following quotations from Arthur Miller and match them with the extracts from the play on the opposite page.

A MR ARENS: Tell us, if you please, sir, about those meetings with Communist Party writers which you said you attended in New York City ... Can you tell us who was there when you walked into the room?

MR MILLER: Mr. Chairman, I understand the philosophy behind this question and I want you to understand mine. When I say this, I want you to understand that I am not protecting the Communists or the Communist Party. I am trying to, and I will, protect my sense of myself. I could not use the name of another person and bring trouble on him ... I take the responsibility for everything I have ever done, but I cannot take responsibility for another human being. (Bigsby, page 191)

B The central impulse for writing at all was not the social but the interior psychological question, which was the question of that guilt residing in Salem which the hysteria merely unleashed, but did not create. (*Collected Plays*, page 42)

C It was as though the whole country had been born anew, without a memory even of certain elemental decencies which a year or two earlier no-one would have imagined could be altered, let alone forgotten. Astounded, I watched men pass me by without a nod whom I had known rather well for years; and again, the astonishment was produced by my knowledge, which I could not give up, that the terror in these people was being knowingly planned and consciously engineered, and yet all they knew was terror. (*Collected Plays*, page 39-40)

D 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 inhuman overlay which then justifies the abrogation of all normally-applied customs of civilized intercourse. A political policy is equated with moral right, and opposition to it with diabolical malevolence. (Bigsby, page 191)

E Some critics have taken exception, for instance, to the unrelieved badness of the prosecution in my play. I understand how this is possible, and I plead no mitigation, but I was up against historical facts which were immutable. I do not think that either the record itself or the numerous commentaries upon it reveal any mitigation of the unrelieved, straightforward and absolute dedication to evil displayed by the judges of these trials and the prosecutors. (*Collected Plays*, page 42-43)

F New sins were being created monthly. It was very odd how quickly these were accepted into the new orthodoxy, quite as though they had been there since the beginning of time. Above all, above all horrors, I saw accepted the notion that conscience was no longer a private matter but one of state administration. I saw men handing conscience to other men and thanking other men for the opportunity of doing so. (*Collected Plays*, page 40)

G I noticed hanging on a wall several framed etchings of the witchcraft trials, apparently made at the time by an artist who must have witnessed them. In one of them a shaft of sepulchral light shoots down from a window high up in a vaulted room, falling upon the head of a judge whose face is blanched white, his long, white beard hanging to his waist, arms raised in defensive horror as beneath him the covey of afflicted girls screams and claws at invisible tormentors. Dark and almost indistinguishable figures huddle on the periphery of the picture, but a few men can be made out, bearded like the judge, and shrinking back in pious outrage. (*Timebends*, page 338)

Background and Wider Reading



-
- 1 As the curtain rises, the room is empty, but for sunlight pouring through two high windows in the back wall. The room is solemn, even forbidding. Heavy beams jut out, boards of random widths make up the walls. (Page 77)
-
- 2 HALE: Excellency, there are orphans wandering from house to house; abandoned cattle bellow on the highroads, the stink of rotting crops hangs everywhere, and no man knows when the harlots' cry will end his life - (Page 114)
-
- 3 PROCTOR: Now Hell and Heaven grapple on our backs, and all our old pretense is ripped away - make your peace! [*He throws her to the floor, where she sobs, 'I cannot, I cannot ...' And now, half to himself, staring, and turning to the open door*] Peace. It is a providence, and no great change; we are only what we always were, but naked now. (Page 74-5)
-
- 4 PROCTOR: Is the accuser always holy now? Were they born this morning as clean as God's fingers? I'll tell you what's walking Salem - vengeance is walking Salem. Now the little crazy children are jangling the keys of the kingdom, and common vengeance writes the law! (Page 72)
-
- 5 DANFORTH: But you must understand, sir, that a person is either with this court or he must be counted against it, there be no road between. This is a sharp time, now, a precise time - we live no longer in the dusky afternoon when evil mixed itself with good and befuddled the world. Now, by God's grace, the shining sun is up, and them that fear not light will surely praise it. I hope you will be one of those. (Page 85)
-
- 6 ELIZABETH [*handing it to him, asks HALE*]: Has the court discovered a text in poppets now?
CHEEVER [*carefully holding the poppet*]: Do you keep any others in this house?
PROCTOR: No, nor this one either till tonight. What signifies a poppet?
Cheever: Why, a poppet - [*he gingerly turns the poppet over*] - it is a needle! Herrick, it is a needle! [*HERRICK comes toward him.*]
PROCTOR [*angrily, bewildered*]: And what signifies a needle?
CHEEVER [*his hands shaking*]: Why, this go hard with her, Proctor, this - I had my doubts, Proctor, I had my doubts, but here's calamity. [*To HALE, showing the needle*] You see it, sir, it is a needle!
HALE: Why? What meanin' has it?
HATHORNE: But a poppet will keep fifteen years, will it not?
PROCTOR: It will keep if it is kept, but Mary Warren swears she never saw no poppets in my house, nor anyone else.
PARRIS: Why could there not have been poppets hid where no one ever saw them?
PROCTOR [*furious*]: There might also be a dragon with five legs in my house, but no one has ever seen it.
PARRIS: We are here, your honour, precisely to discover what no one has ever seen. (Page 93)
-
- 7 PROCTOR: I speak my own sins; I cannot judge another. I have no tongue for it ... You will not use me! I am not Sarah Good or Tituba. I am John Proctor! ... I have three children - how may I teach them to walk like men in the world, and I sold my friends Tell them I confessed myself; say Proctor broke his knees and wept like a woman; say what you will but my name cannot -
DANFORTH [*with suspicion*]: It is the same, is it not? If I report it or you sign it?
PROCTOR [*he knows it is insane*]: No, it is not the same! What others say and what I sign to is not the same! ... Because it is my name! Because it is my name! Because I cannot have another in my life! (Page 123-124)
-



4. Heroes and Heroines - A Matter of Conscience

Miller wrote about the play:

‘I suppose I had been searching a long time for a tragic hero, and now I had him; the Salem story was not going to be abandoned. The longer I worked the more certain I felt that as improbable as it might seem, there were moments when an individual conscience was all that could keep a world from falling. By midsummer I had found the moment when Proctor, able at last to set aside his guilty feelings of unworthiness to ‘mount the gibbet like a saint’, as I had him say, defies the court by tearing up his confession and brings on his own execution.’

Introduction, *Collected Plays*

Talk about why Proctor is the hero of the play. Why not Rebecca Nurse? Why not Elizabeth Proctor? Have these women also made a principled stand?

Antigone and St Joan

Jean Anouilh and George Bernard Shaw both wrote plays in which women are shown dying for a principle.



**Elizabeth Proctor and Rebecca Nurse,
National Theatre, 1990.**

Background and Wider Reading



Antigone

Antigone is the daughter of Oedipus, niece of Creon. Her brothers Eteocles and Polynices have killed each other in a battle over who should rule their kingdom after the death of Oedipus. Creon becomes King and decides that Polynices was to blame and should not be given a proper burial. Antigone is determined to bury him properly for the sake of his soul and secretly buries him herself, knowing that Creon will be forced to kill her for disobeying him.

When Anouilh's play was produced in Paris in 1942, France was occupied by Hitler. Antigone's 'No!' to Creon was seen by the French audiences as a stand against dictators and they related it to their own resistance to Hitler.

Extract from *Antigone*

CREON [*after a pause*]: What sort of game are you playing?

ANTIGONE: I am not playing games.

CREON: Antigone, do you realize that if, apart from those three guards, a single soul finds out what you have tried to do, it will be impossible for me to avoid putting you to death? There is still a chance that I can save you; but only if you keep this to yourself and give up your crazy purpose. Five minutes more, and it will be too late. You understand that?

ANTIGONE: I must go and bury my brother. Those men uncovered him.

CREON: What good will it do? You know that there are other men standing guard over Polynices. And even if you did cover him over with earth again, the earth would again be removed.

ANTIGONE: I know all that. I know it. But that much, at least, I can do. And what a person can do, a person ought to do.

Pause

CREON: Tell me, Antigone, do you believe all that flummery about religious burial? Do you really believe that a so-called shade of your brother is condemned to wander for ever homeless if a little earth is not flung on his corpse to the accompaniment of some priestly abracadabra? Have you ever listened to the priests of Thebes when they were mumbling their formula? Have you ever watched those dreary bureaucrats while they were preparing the dead for burial - skipping half the gestures required by the ritual, swallowing half their words, hustling the dead into their graves out of fear that they might be late for lunch?

ANTIGONE: Yes, I have seen all that.

CREON: And did you never say to yourself as you watched them, that if someone you really loved lay dead under the shuffling, mumbling ministrations of the priests, you would scream aloud and beg the priests to leave the dead in peace?

ANTIGONE: Yes, I've thought all that.

CREON: And you still insist upon being put to death - merely because I refuse to

Background and Wider Reading



let your brother go out with that grotesque passport; because I refuse his body the wretched consolation of that mass-production jibber-jabber, which you would have been the first to be embarrassed by if I had allowed it. The whole thing is absurd!

ANTIGONE: Yes, it's absurd.

CREON: Then, why, Antigone, why? For whose sake? For the sake of them that believe in it? To raise them against me?

ANTIGONE: No.

CREON: For whom then if not for them and not for Polynices either?

ANTIGONE: For nobody. For myself.

St. Joan

Joan of Arc was a French peasant girl who heard voices from God telling her to restore the rightful king, Charles VII to the throne of France. She led the French army to victory against the English at Orleans but in 1430 was caught by the Burgundians, a powerful group of French people, who sold her to the English. She was imprisoned, tried as a heretic, a person who doesn't believe in the teachings of the Church, and burnt at the stake.

George Bernard Shaw's play about her emphasises the fact that she was burnt to death for being different, for not behaving how people thought a woman should behave and for rebelling against those in authority.

Extract from *St Joan*

JOAN [*despairing*]: Oh, it is true: it is true: my voices have deceived me. I have been mocked by Devils: my faith is broken. I have dared and dared; but only a fool will walk into a fire: God, who gave me my common sense, cannot will me to do that.

LADVENU: Now God be praised that He has saved you at the eleventh hour! [*He hurries to the vacant seat at the scribes' table, and snatches a sheet of paper, on which he sets to work writing eagerly*].

Joan's spirit weakens when she realises that she is to be burnt at the stake and she agrees to sign a paper confessing heresy.

LADVENU [*rising with the paper in his hand*]: My lord: here is the form of recantation for The Maid to sign.

CAUCHON: Read it to her.

JOAN: Do not trouble. I will sign it.

THE INQUISITOR: Woman: you must know what you are putting your hand to. Read it to her, Brother Martin. And let all be silent.

LADVENU [*reading quietly*]: 'I, Joan, commonly called The Maid, a miserable

Background and Wider Reading



sinner, do confess that I have most grievously sinned in the following articles. I have pretended to have revelations from God and the blessed saints, and perversely rejected the Church's warnings that these were temptations by demons. I have blasphemed abominably by wearing an immodest dress, contrary to the Holy Scripture and the canons of the Church. Also, I have clipped my hair in the style of a man, and, against all the duties which have made my sex specially acceptable in heaven, have taken up the sword, even to the shedding of human blood, inciting men to slay each other, invoking evil spirits to delude them, and stubbornly and most blasphemously imputing these sins to Almighty God. I confess to the sin of sedition, to the sin of pride, and to the sin of heresy. All of which sins I now renounce and abjure and depart from, humbly thanking you Doctors and Masters who have brought me back to the truth and into the grace of our Lord. And I will never return to my errors, but will remain in communion with our Holy Church and in obedience to our Holy Father the Pope of Rome. All this I swear by God Almighty and the Holy Gospels, in witness whereto I sign my name to this recantation.'

THE INQUISITOR: You understand this, Joan?

JOAN [*listless*]: It is plain enough sir.

THE INQUISITOR: And is it true?

JOAN: It may be true. If it were not true, the fire would not be ready for me in the market-place.

LADVENU [*taking up his pen and a book, and going to her quickly lest she should compromise herself again*]: Come, child: let me guide your hand. Take the pen. [*She does so; and they begin to write, using the book as a desk*]:

J.E.H.A.N.E. So. Now make your mark by yourself.

JOAN [*makes her mark, and gives him back the pen, tormented by the rebellion of her soul against her mind and body*]: There!

LADVENU [*replacing the pen on the table, and handing the recantation to Cauchon with a reverence*]: Praise be to God, my brothers, the lamb has returned to the flock; and the shepherd rejoices in her more than in ninety and nine just persons. [*He returns to his seat*].

THE INQUISITOR [*taking the paper from Cauchon*]: We declare thee by this act set free from the danger of excommunication in which thou stoodest. [*He throws the paper down on the table*].

JOAN: I thank you.

THE INQUISITOR: But because thou has sinned most presumptuously against God and the Holy Church, and that thou mayst repent thy errors in solitary contemplation, and be shielded from all temptation to return to them, we, for the food of thy soul, and for a penance that may wipe out thy sins and bring thee finally unspotted to the throne of grace, do condemn thee to eat the bread of sorrow and drink the water of affliction to the end of thy earthly days in perpetual imprisonment.

JOAN [*rising in consternation and terrible anger*]: Perpetual imprisonment! Am I not then to be set free?

Background and Wider Reading



LADVENU [*Mildly shocked*]: Set free, child, after such wickedness as yours!
What are you dreaming of?

JOAN: Give me that writing. [*She rushes to the table; snatches up the paper; and tears it into fragments.*] Light your fire: do you think I dread it as much as the life of a rat in a hole? My voices were right.

LADVENU: Joan! Joan!

JOAN: Yes: they told me you were fools [*the word gives great offence*], and that I was not to listen to your fine words nor trust to your charity. You promised me my life; but you lied [*indignant exclamations*]. You think that life is nothing but not being stone dead. It is not the bread and water I fear: I can live on bread: when have I asked for more? It is no hardship to drink water if the water be clean. Bread has no sorrow for me, and water no affliction. But to shut me from the light of the sky and the sight of the fields and flowers; to chain my feet so that I can never again ride with the soldiers nor climb the hills; to make me breathe foul damp darkness, and keep from me everything that brings me back to the love of God when your wickedness and foolishness tempt me to hate Him: all this is worse than the furnace in the Bible that was heated seven times. I could do without my warhorse; I could drag about in a skirt; I could let the banners and the trumpets and the knights and soldiers pass me and leave me behind as they leave the other women, if only I could still hear the wind in the trees, the larks in the sunshine, the young lambs crying through the healthy frost, and the blessed church bells that send my angel voices floating to me on the wind. But without these things I cannot live; and by your wanting to take them away from me, or from any human creature, I know that your counsel is of the devil, and that mine is of God.

THE ASSESSORS [*in great commotion*]: Blasphemy! Blasphemy! She is possessed. She said our counsel was of the devil. And hers of God. Monstrous! The devil is in our midst, etc, etc.

D'ESTIVET [*shouting above the din*]: She is a relapsed heretic, obstinate, incorrigible, and altogether unworthy of the mercy we have shewn her. I call for her excommunication.

THE CHAPLAIN [*to the Executioner*]: Light your fire, man. To the stake with her.

The Executioner and his assistants hurry out through the courtyard.

LADVENU: You wicked girl: if your counsel were of God would He not deliver you?

JOAN: His ways are not your ways. He wills that I go through the fire to His bosom; for I am His child, and you are not fit that I should live among you. That is my last word to you.

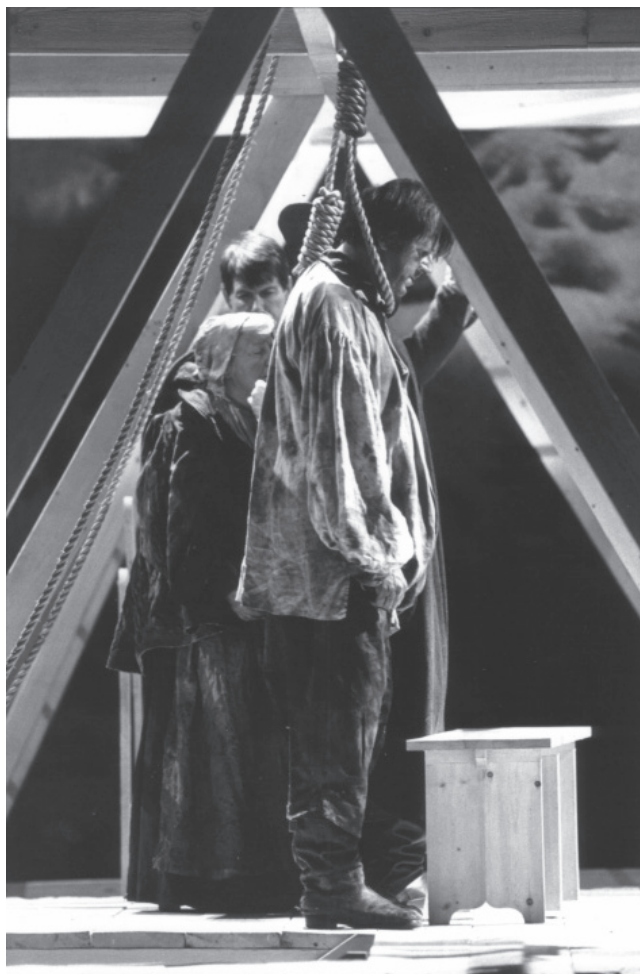
The soldiers seize her.

Background and Wider Reading



Fill in this chart to help you identify similarities and differences between the dilemma facing Proctor, Antigone and St. Joan:

Proctor	Antigone	St. Joan
<i>changes his mind</i>		
	<i>is very determined</i>	
		<i>fears dying</i>



Final scene, National Theatre, 1990.

The Crucible



5. Making a Stand in Our World

John Proctor makes a stand against a society based on fear and repression. Antigone makes a personal stand for what she believes to be right and stands up to an authoritarian ruler. St Joan is an historical figure caught up in political and historical events which force her to make a stand.

Plays about people who have made a stand have often had powerful reactions from audiences in countries where there has been oppression and individuals have had to struggle for freedom. *Antigone* was seen as a play with a message about resisting Hitler in France. *The Crucible* had obvious messages about 1950s America but when it was viewed in China in 1980, the Chinese audiences saw its relevance to their experiences under Mao Tse Tung, when there were mass trials, imprisonment, torture and persecution of people for supposedly holding the wrong political views.

Miller has written about this, saying: 'The writer Nien Cheng, who spent six and a half years in solitary confinement and whose daughter was murdered by the Red Guards, told me that after her release she saw the Shanghai production and could not believe that a non-Chinese had written the play. "Some of the interrogations", she said, "were precisely the same ones used on us in the Cultural Revolution." It was chilling to realize what had never occurred to me until she mentioned it - that the tyranny of teenagers was almost identical in both instances.'

What principles are people prepared to die for in today's world?

- the right to vote?
- freedom of speech?
- freedom from religious persecution?
- freedom from other persecution?
- freedom to hold political beliefs different to that of their government?
- the right to work?

Find out more

- write to Amnesty International to find out about prisoners of conscience in different parts of the world.
- read about people who have made a stand for their beliefs e.g. *The Jail Diary of Albe Sachs*, by David Edgar, is a play about a man who was imprisoned in South Africa for his political views and tortured to make him name other political activists.
- *Talking in Whispers* is a novel by James Watson about what happened in Chile to people who made a stand for freedom.

Background and Wider Reading

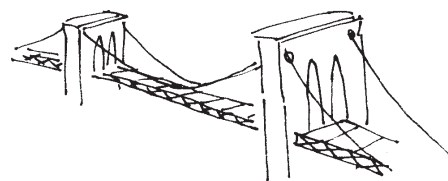


Writing

1. Write a playscript based on the idea of someone in your experience and your world taking a stand for a principle.

For example:

- Another pupil is being bullied. Your main character feels torn between knowing that it is wrong and that he/she should stand out against it and risk becoming the target of the bullies.
 - Someone you know is in trouble. S/he lies in order to avoid being found out. She/he calls on you to support these lies and you are torn about whether to stand by your friend or be truthful about what really happened.
 - Your character disagrees strongly with something that is being done in the school, by a senior member of the staff. He/she is afraid of what will happen if he/she argues against it but feels that it is an issue worth fighting for.
2. Using *Antigone* and *St Joan* to give you ideas about how to present a tragic heroine, write Rebecca Nurse's speech to the court, in which she is the tragic heroine whose 'individual conscience was all that could keep a world from falling'.
 3. Write Elizabeth Proctor's internal monologue in her cell in Salem jail, in which she makes the decision not to influence or persuade John to sign the paper and stay alive.



A View from the Bridge

Before Reading

- | | |
|---|----|
| 1. A Close Reading of the Opening Scene | 62 |
| 2. Daddy's Girl? Three Poems | 66 |
| 3. The Reality of the American Dream | 70 |
| 4. Alfieri's Speech | 73 |

During Reading

- | | |
|----------------------------------|----|
| 1. Charting the Play's Structure | 75 |
| 2. Character Hot-Seating | 76 |

After Reading

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| 1. Going to America | 77 |
| 2. Marco's Trial | 79 |
| 3. Eddie | 81 |
| 4. Relationships | 85 |
| 5. Beatrice and Catherine | 87 |
| 6. Directing a Scene | 91 |
| 7. Moments of Dramatic Tension | 94 |
| 8. Endings | 95 |
| 9. Miller's Drafts - Verse or Prose? | 97 |
| 10. The Story of Pete Panto | 100 |
| 11. Video Cover Design | 103 |
| 12. The Role Played by Alfieri | 105 |



A Close Reading of the Opening Scene

At the beginning of the play, a character called Alfieri sets the scene and introduces two of the main characters. First entrances on stage are always important in a play. This activity gives you a chance to look closely at this opening scene.

In groups, read this short extract carefully and then answer the following questions, annotating the extracts as you go:

Extract 1

ALFIERI: This one's name was Eddie Carbone, a longshoreman working the docks from Brooklyn Bridge to the breakwater where the open sea begins.

[ALFIERI *walks into darkness.*]

EDDIE: [*moving up steps into doorway*]: Well, I'll see ya, fellas. [CATHERINE *enters from kitchen, crosses down to window, looks out.*]

LOUIS: You workin' tomorrow?

EDDIE: Yeah, there's another day yet on that ship. See ya, Louis.

[EDDIE *goes into the house, as light rises in the apartment. CATHERINE is waving to LOUIS from the window and turns to him.*]

CATHERINE: Hi, Eddie!

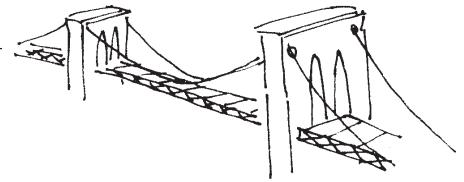
[EDDIE *is pleased and therefore shy about it; he hangs up his cap and jacket.*]

1. What are your first impressions of the character of Eddie? What can you say about him from this opening scene where the audience are introduced to him for the very first time?
2. What are your first impressions of the character of Catherine? Why?
3. What do you think is the relationship between Catherine and Eddie?

The opening scene continues...

Now read Extract 2 to find out how the opening scene continues. Note down your comments about it before moving on to the Extract 3.

Before Reading



Extract 2

EDDIE: Where you goin' all dressed up?

CATHERINE [*running her hands over her skirt*]: I just got it. You like it?

EDDIE: Yeah, it's nice. And what happened to your hair?

CATHERINE: You like it? I fixed it different. [*Calling to kitchen*] He's here, B.!

EDDIE: Beautiful. Turn around, lemme see in the back. [*She turns for him.*]

1. What do you now think is the relationship between Catherine and Eddie? Have your first impressions changed? Why?

Extract 3

EDDIE: Oh, if your mother was alive to see you now! She wouldn't believe it.

CATHERINE: You like it, huh?

EDDIE: You look like one of them girls that went to college. Where you goin'?

CATHERINE: [*taking his arm*]: Wait'll B. comes in, I'll tell you something.

Here, sit down. [*She is walking him to the armchair. Calling offstage.*] Hurry up, will you, B.?

EDDIE: [*sitting*]: What's goin' on?

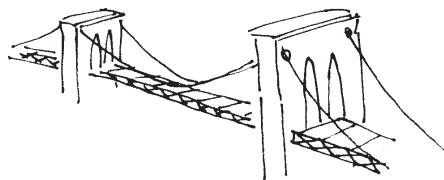
CATHERINE: I'll get you a beer, all right?

EDDIE: Well, tell me what happened. Come over here, talk to me.

CATHERINE: I want to wait till B. comes in. [*She sits on her heels beside him.*]

1. Have your first impressions of the relationship between Catherine and Eddie changed by reading this third piece of the opening scene?
2. What do you now think is the relationship between Catherine and Eddie?
3. What, if anything, has changed your first impressions of the characters and their relationship to each other?
4. Who do you think B. might be?

Before Reading



Extract 4

CATHERINE: I want to wait till B. comes in. [*She sits on her heels beside him.*]

Guess how much we paid for the skirt.

EDDIE: I think it's too short, ain't it?

CATHERINE [*standing*]: No! not when I stand up.

EDDIE: Yeah, but you gotta sit down sometimes.

CATHERINE: Eddie, it's the style now. [*She walks to show him.*] I mean, if you see me walkin' down the street -

EDDIE: Listen, you been givin' me the willies the way you walk down the street, I mean it.

CATHERINE: Why?

EDDIE: Catherine, I don't want to be a pest, but I'm tellin' you you're walkin' wavy.

CATHERINE: I'm walkin' wavy?

EDDIE: Now don't aggravate me, Katie, you are walkin' wavy! I don't like the looks they're givin' you in the candy store. And with them new high heels on the sidewalk - clack, clack, clack. The heads are turnin' like windmills.

CATHERINE: But those guys look at all the girls, you know that.

EDDIE: You ain't 'all the girls'.

CATHERINE [*almost in tears because he disapproves*]: What do you want me to do? You want me to -

EDDIE: Now don't get mad, kid.

CATHERINE: Well, I don't know what you want from me.

EDDIE: Katie, I promised your mother on her deathbed. I'm responsible for you. You're a baby, you don't understand these things. I mean like when you stand here by the window, wavin' outside.

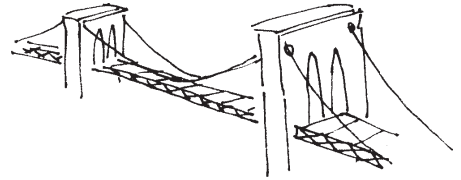
CATHERINE: I was wavin' to Louis!

EDDIE: Listen, I could tell you things about Louis which you wouldn't wave to him no more.

CATHERINE [*trying to joke him out of his warning*]: Eddie, I wish there was one guy you couldn't tell me things about!

EDDIE: Catherine, do me a favour, will you? You're getting to be a big girl now, you gotta keep yourself more, you can't be so friendly, kid.

1. Note down on the text any areas of tension or strong feelings. What do you think are the causes?
2. Based on the close study you have done here can you make any predictions about the relationships between the three characters?
3. Can you make any predictions about themes and issues that might be raised in the play you are about to read?



Role Plays

1. Eddie and Catherine confide in friends.

In pairs work out a conversation in which either Eddie is talking to a friend about Catherine or Catherine is talking to a friend about Eddie.

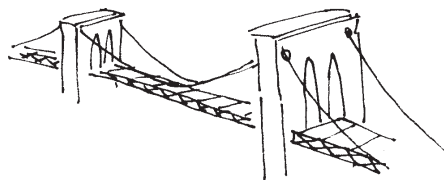
The friend should ask searching questions, to find out about Eddie's or Catherine's feelings and what he/she intends to do to try to resolve the conflict.

2. Eddie and Catherine talk honestly.

Role-play a conversation between Eddie and Catherine the next day, after the opening scene you have just read when both try to be honest with each other about what they are feeling.



Eddie and Catherine, The National Theatre, 1987.



2. Daddy's Girl? Three Poems

Read these poems to each other a few times. Try using more than one voice and reading them in different ways.

Do a Dance for Daddy

Do a dance for Daddy, make your Daddy smile
Be his little angel
Remember you're on trial
Mummy's competition, Mummy brings you down
When you're up there shining
She always wears a frown

Do a dance for Daddy. Bend and dip and whirl
You've got all that talent
'Cause you're Daddy's girl
Daddy is your hero, witty and superb
With a sign upon his door
That reads 'DO NOT DISTURB'

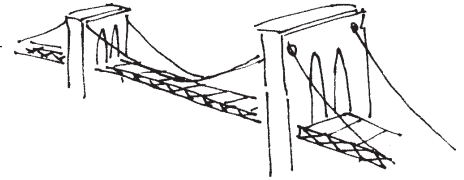
Look your best for Daddy
Pass your test for Daddy
Stand up tall for Daddy
Do it all for Daddy

Some day when you're older you will find romance
Someone just like Daddy
Will whistle and you'll dance
You'll recall that music when you're on the shelf
You danced for all the Daddies
But you never found yourself

Paint your eyes for Daddy
Win a prize for Daddy
Swim to France for Daddy
Do your dance for Daddy

Fran Landesman

Before Reading



Dance to your Daddy

Dance to your daddy,
My little laddy.
Dance to your daddy,
My little man.
Thou shalt have a fish,
Thou shalt have a fin,
Thou shalt have a haddock
When the boat comes in.

Thou shalt have a codling,
Boiled in a pan,
Dance to your daddy
My little man.
When thou art a man,
And fit to take to wife,
Thou shalt wed a maid
And love her all your life.
She shall be your lassie-
Thou shalt be her man.
Dance to your daddy
My little man.

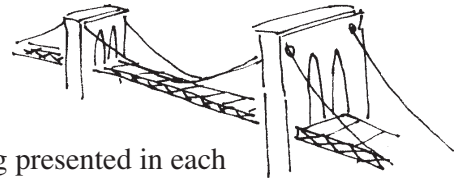
Anonymous

Talk about the poems. Annotate them with underlinings, circles, question marks and comments as you discuss your ideas. Use the suggestions below.

- Who is speaking in each poem? Think about how each line is being said, e.g. sarcastically, tearfully, lovingly, playfully.
- Who is being asked to dance in each poem? What picture do you get of them - their age, personality, relationships with others in the family, gender?
- What kind of future is s/he being prepared to expect by the voice in the poem?
- What can you say about the way different members of the family view one another?

daddy/child	child/daddy
mummy/child	child/mummy
daddy/mummy	mummy/daddy

Before Reading



You should have got an idea about the type of family being presented in each poem. Compare them. What is the same and what is different about these families? What is the writer's attitude to the family s/he is describing. Give reasons for your answers.

Writing

Write a poem in response to one of the poems, either from the point of view of the child or from the point of view of 'Mummy'.

Now read and talk about this poem.

Girls Can We Educate We Dads?

Listn the male chauvinist in mi dad -
a girl walkin night street mus be bad.
He dohn sey, the world's a free place
for a girl to keep her unmolested space.
Instead he sey - a girl is a girl.

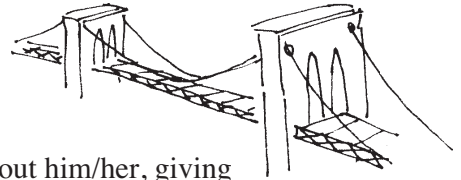
He sey a girl walkin swingin hips about
call boys to look and shout.
He dohn sey, if a girl have style
she wahn to sey, look
I okay from top to foot.
Instead he sey - a girl is a girl.

Listn the male chauvinist in mi dad -
a girl too laughy-laughy look too glad-glad
jus like a girl too looky-looky roun
will get a pretty satan at her side.
He dohn sey - a girl full of go
dohn wahn stifle talent comin on show.
Instead he sey - a girl is a girl.

James Berry

A View from the Bridge

Before Reading



1. Who is the speaker in the poem? What can you say about him/her, giving evidence from the poem?
2. Look carefully at the two viewpoints expressed in the poem. Write them down.
3. Compare the two views.
Why do you think they disagree with each other?

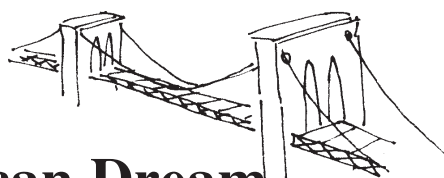
Writing

Write two short imaginative pieces about the views of the two people in the poem. Let them say what they really think about each other. You could start like this:

‘The trouble with my Dad is that he doesn’t understand...’

and

‘The trouble with my daughter is that she doesn’t understand...’



3. The Reality of the American Dream

The Statue of Liberty has stood in New York harbour since 1886. It used to be seen as the symbol of America's welcome to the millions who crossed the Atlantic in search of a better life. A poem, 'The New Colossus', inscribed on the base of the statue, tries to sum up that welcome and the American Dream. Read this poem and talk about your responses to the questions that have been added to it.

The New Colossus

What do you need to know about the old one?

So why mention it?

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame
With conquering limbs astride from land to land,
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand

Whose?

A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning and her name

What is America saying here?

Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.

What kind of people is she talking about?

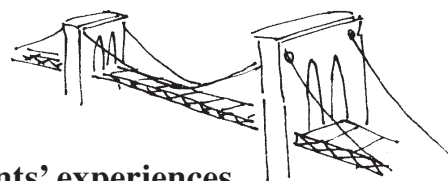
'Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!' cries she
With silent lips. 'Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!'

Who is she talking to?

What promise is being offered here?

Migration to the USA in the 19th and 20th centuries has been the largest movement of people in human history. Italians have been one of the most important groups in this migration. Between 1820 and 1920 more than 4 million Italians crossed the Atlantic to America. Most of them came from the south of Italy and Sicily, where the land was arid and unproductive, and the exploited peasants lived in conditions of near-starvation. Their main reason for migrating was that America offered opportunities, through work, for them to gain prosperity which they would never achieve in their native land. This dream was not always fulfilled.

Italians - like other migrant groups - lived in the cheapest and worst housing in the cities, and did low-paid work. For instance, they laboured on building the railways, in the clothing trade, mending roads, and on the docks. They were doing jobs which America needed doing if it was to increase its wealth and power. They were often cheated and exploited. Many Americans were suspicious of Italians, and thought they were all violent and dangerous.



Here are some first-hand accounts of immigrants' experiences.

'For one thing, here was congestion the like of which I had never seen before. Within the narrow limits of one-half square mile were crowded together thirty-five thousand people, living tier upon tier, huddled together until the very heavens seemed to be shut out. These narrow alley-like streets of old Boston were one mass of litter. The air was laden with soot and dirt. Ill odors arose from every direction. Here were no trees; no parks worthy of the name; no playgrounds other than the dirty streets for the children to play on; no birds to sing their songs; no flowers to waft their perfume; and only small strips of sky to be seen; while around the entire neighborhood like a mighty cordon, a thousand wheels of commercial activity whirled incessantly day and night, making noises which would rack the sturdiest of nerves.'

'We had a sink in the hall with nothing else, and four families to share it. And one bathroom in the yard where garbage was also thrown. How could a body wash and have a bit of privacy that way? I died a little every time I went there.'

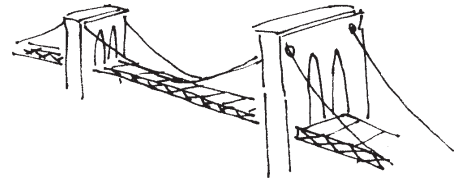
'On one occasion my father had bought a candy bar and was clutching it in his pocket. He was stopped by the police, and since he couldn't speak English and they couldn't speak Italian they assumed it was a gun or a knife of some sort because he was Italian, and they arrested him because he had a candy bar and couldn't explain where he got it.'

Restrictions

In 1921 and 1924 the American government passed laws which severely restricted immigration, and which made it particularly difficult for people from the south and east of Europe to enter the country. British, Irish or Scandinavian people, for instance, were preferred to Italian, Jewish or Polish people.

Italian immigration was almost halted; only 3,845 Italians were legally allowed to enter America each year. Italian-Americans began to move into a wider variety of jobs, and pay and conditions in working-class occupations improved. The Depression of the 1930s and then the Second World War brought hardships, but the difference in the standard of living between America and the south of Italy meant that many Italians still wanted to migrate. It was inevitable that some illegal immigration would happen. Marco and Rodolpho in *A View From The Bridge* are two examples of the people who decided to take the risk. They expected to be supported and protected, at least for a time, by their relations in New York. There are strong traditions of family loyalty in Italian communities in Italy and America. In spite of the hardships they suffered, most Italians did feel that they were better off in America than they would be back in Italy. For some, the dream *was* fulfilled - but not without a struggle.

Before Reading



Arrival

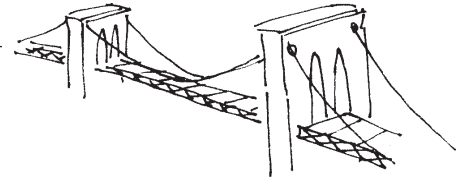
Unlike Rodolpho and Marco, the vast majority of immigrants to America entered the country legally. For 16 million of them, the first experience of America was the receiving station on Ellis Island in New York harbour. Here they were given a medical examination, had their papers checked, and were asked questions like: what is your name? What nationality? Where are you going? What occupation? Who paid your fare? Can you read and write? How much money do you have with you? Have you ever been in prison or an almshouse?

Those who did not satisfy the authorities were detained on Ellis Island, until a relative in America sent money for them to complete their journey, or until they were cleared of infectious disease. Some people, including those whom the authorities suspected of being criminals, anarchists, prostitutes or mentally defective, got no further than Ellis Island, and were put on ships going back to their country of origin.

Now re-read the poem 'The New Colossus'. How ironic do you find it in the light of what you have just read and what you know life in America to be like?



A View from the Bridge



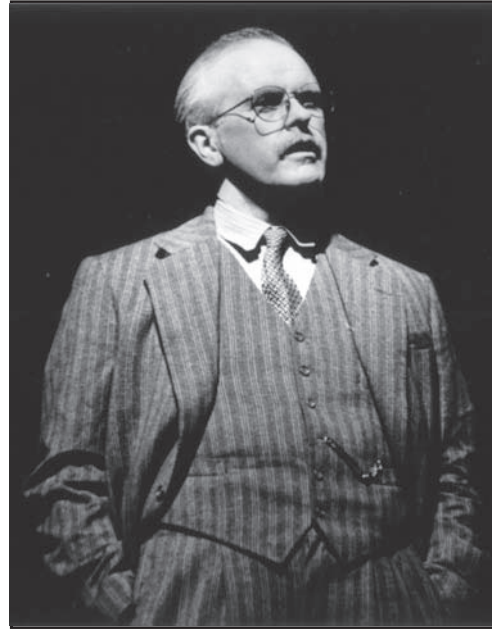
4. Alfieri's Speech

This speech is at the beginning of the play but Alfieri already knows what has happened and he is about to tell us all about it.

He is like a narrator or a chorus but he also appears as a character in the play who interacts with the other characters.

In small groups, read the speech and make notes in response to the questions written on it for you. You will probably be able to ask further questions of the speech.

As a whole group, report back on your responses to the questions.



Alfieri, The National Theatre, 1987.

What's going on?

[Enter ALFIERI, a lawyer in his fifties turning grey; he is portly, good-humoured, and thoughtful. The two pitchers nod to him as he passes. He crosses the stage to his desk, removes his hat, runs his fingers through his hair, and grinning, speaks to the audience.]

Can you predict the point of all this back-ground?

ALFIERI: You wouldn't have known it, but something amusing has just happened. You see how uneasily they nod to me? That's because I am a lawyer. In this neighbourhood to meet a lawyer or a priest on the street is unlucky. We're only thought of in connexion with disasters, and they'd rather not get too close.

What clues are we getting about this place?

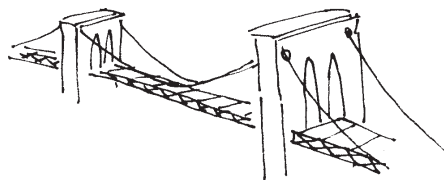
I often think that behind that suspicious little nod of theirs lie three thousand years of distrust. A lawyer means the law, and in Sicily, from where their fathers came, the law has not been a friendly idea since the Greeks were beaten.

Why this word do you think?

I am inclined to notice the ruins in things, perhaps because I was born in Italy... I only came here when I was twenty-five. In those days, Al Capone, the greatest

What do you know about him?

Before Reading?



What kind of history do his people have?

Carthaginian of all, was learning his trade on these pavements, and Frankie Yale himself was cut precisely in half by a machine-gun on the corner of Union Street, two blocks away. Oh, there were many here who were justly shot by unjust men. Justice is very important here.

What is he saying?

But this is Red Hook, not Sicily. This is the slum that faces the bay on the seaward side of Brooklyn Bridge. This is the gullet of New York swallowing the tonnage of the world. And now we are quite civilized, quite American. Now we settle for half, and I like it better. I no longer keep a pistol in my filing cabinet.

And my practice is entirely unromantic.

Why tell us this?

My wife has warned me, so have my friends; they tell me the people in this neighbourhood lack elegance, glamour. After all, who have I dealt with in my life? Longshoremen and their wives, and fathers, and grandfathers, compensation cases, evictions, family squabbles - the petty troubles of the poor - and yet....every few years there is still a case, and as the parties tell me what the trouble is, the flat air in my office suddenly washes in with the green scent of the sea, the dust in this air is blown away and the thought comes that in some Caesar's year, in Calabria perhaps or on the cliff at Syracuse, another lawyer, quite differently dressed, heard the same complaint and sat there as powerless as I, and watched it run its bloody course.

What is Alfieri saying about being a Sicilian American?

What are we being prepared for?

[*Eddie has appeared and has been pitching coins with the men and is highlighted among them. He is forty- a husky, slightly overweight longshoreman.*]

A change of tone?

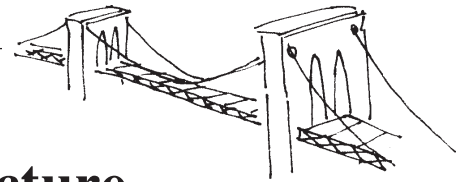
Can you predict anything about his story?

This one's name was Eddie Carbone, a longshoreman working the docks from Brooklyn Bridge to the breakwater where the open sea begins.

(ALFIERI walks into darkness.)

What's the effect of this?

A View from the Bridge



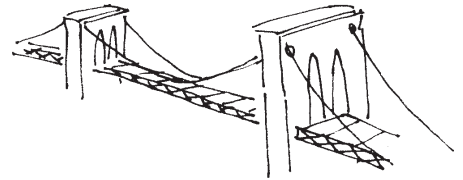
1. Charting the Play's Structure

A View from the Bridge is written in two Acts with interspersed commentary from Alfieri. He introduces and concludes the play and appears four times in each Act. His appearances provide one of the structures of the play.

One way of reading the play in class would be to use these 'scenic units' as points to stop reading and explore what has been happening.

After reading a scenic unit, talk about what has happened, what you have learned about the characters and the main issues or themes raised and fill in a chart like the one below. This chart will be useful for you when you come to write about the play.

	Page refs	What Happens?	What is added to our knowledge of characters?	Issues or themes raised?
Act One	11 - 25			
	26 - 33			
	34 - 44			
	45 - 50			
	50 - 58			
	59 - 65			
Act Two	65 - 67			
	67 - 77			
	77 - 80			
	80 - 85			



2. Character Hot - Seating

Brainstorming in Role. After you have read a scenic unit (see previous activity), divide yourselves up into As, Bs and Cs to cover the number of characters in that unit. All the As are Eddie, the Bs Catherine and so on.

In your character groups discuss what has happened to your character and how they are likely to be feeling at this point. You may want to use some of the following prompts to help you think in role:

- Could you describe how you feel at this point?
- Did you feel at the centre of what has just gone on or on the edges?
- Were you generally leading and directing the dialogue and action or were you mainly reacting to it?
- Were there things you wanted to do during that scene that you didn't?
- Were there things you wanted to say but didn't?
- What is making you behave as you are right now?
- What is important to you at this moment?
- Make a note of any questions you would like to ask the other characters at this point?

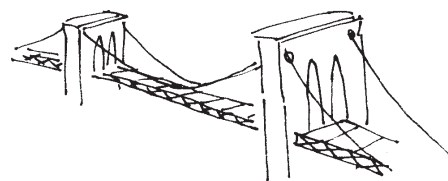
Hot Seating. Now all the characters get the opportunity to ask a question of another character or to say something that they feel needs saying. Everyone needs to remain in role for this hot-seating exercise so it is useful to have a non-participant to chair the questioning and answering - perhaps your teacher would do this. Stay in your character groups. Each group will be asked if they have anything they want to say to another character; anyone from the group can do it. The other character group then has a chance to respond either as one voice or several. Try to get at the truth.

For example, Scenic Unit 1 (pages 11 - 25):

Catherine to Eddie: I don't know what's the matter with you these days. You make me feel uncomfortable with you, I'm a bit afraid to be alone with you because you look at me so funny now. Why have you changed? Why are you spoiling everything? I can't bear it when you look so hurt and sad. It makes me feel guilty and confused.

Eddie's Response: You're too young to understand what men are like. And I know I'm going to lose you and I can't bear to think about it. You're my child but you're not my child. You're not a child, you're a sexy woman. I can't bear to be edged to one side by time. I've got the power in this house so I won't let it happen. I love it when I can flirt with you like this. It makes me feel like a young man again.

Debriefing. After the activity, talk about the things said and the responses. Are there other views or observations about the scenic unit that people still want to explore?



1. Going to America

Read 'The Reality of the American Dream' on page 70 if you haven't already done so.

Writing

1. Breaking the News

Imagine the scene in Sicily before the action of the play starts, where Rodolpho and Marco tell their family that they are going to America. Write it down, either in play or story form.

2. 'Making It'

Here is an account by an Italian who emigrated to America in 1903 and who became a successful lawyer:

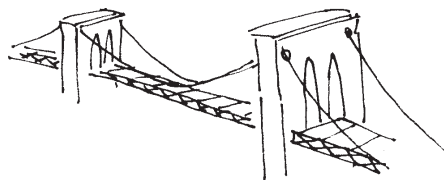
'If I am to be frank, then I shall say that I left Italy and came to America for the sole purpose of making money. Neither the laws of Italy, nor the laws of America, neither the government of the one nor the government of the other, influenced me in any way. I suffered no political oppression in Italy. I was not seeking political ideals: as a matter of fact, I was quite satisfied with those of my native land. If I could have worked my way up in my chosen profession in Italy, I would have stayed in Italy. But repeated efforts showed me that I could not.

America was the land of opportunity, and so I came, intending to make money and then return to Italy. That is true of most Italian emigrants to America.'

If Eddie, Catherine, Rodolpho and Marco were asked to write down their thoughts about America, what would they say? Try writing a statement for each character.



On the ferry from Ellis Island, a family gaze at New York for the first time.



3. Rodolpho's Letters Home

Imagine that Rodolpho writes five letters home during the course of the play, starting from his voyage to America until the end of Act Two. His hopes, worries and feelings would vary at different stages. Try writing four different letters, each written at a particular point in his journey, by looking back at the play and putting yourself in Rodolpho's shoes.

Letter One (page 26)

On the ship just before arriving in America. What do you know of who you're going to stay with? What are your plans for work? What are your hopes and fears and expectations of life in America?

Letter Two (page 33)

After your first evening in Eddie's and Beatrice's home. What are your first impressions of the family, of Catherine, of your chances of work?

Letter Three (page 58)

This is written after the tense encounter between you, Eddie and Marco at the end of Act One. How much do you understand of what has gone on here? What are your feelings and intentions towards Catherine? How does this episode alter your idea of the future? How dependent are you on Marco?

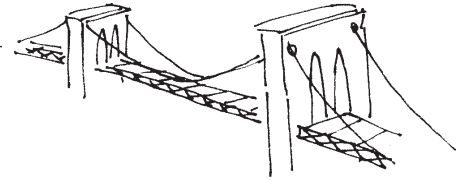
Letter Four (page 65)

This is written after the show-down with Eddie when he comes home unexpectedly when you and Catherine were alone. What are you going to do now? Do you understand Eddie's behaviour? What about Catherine's wish to go and live in Italy?

Letter Five (the end of the play)

How are you going to explain what has happened? Do you understand it yourself? What about Marco - what do you think is going to happen to him? What is going to happen to you and Catherine?

Before you start writing, decide who you are writing to as this will affect the tone and content of your letters. For example, you might be writing to a parent, a brother or sister, or a friend who hopes to join you.



2. Marco's Trial

Sicilian Codes of Conduct

The community in *A View From the Bridge* has a set of rules or laws - a kind of code of conduct which isn't written down. Many of them come from the Sicilian way of life. For example:

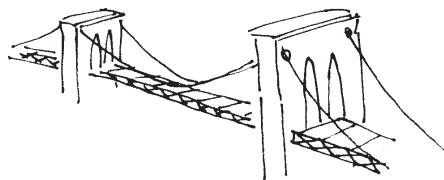
- Work traditions from country life in Sicily.
- Laws of hospitality.
- Family laws.
- Marriage and courtship laws.
- Laws of honour.
- Laws of revenge.
- Laws of sexuality.
- Masculine laws.
- Feminine laws.

In pairs write down short quotations from the play which refer to the Italian code of conduct. Write them as a chart like the one below.

The following page references may help you: 11-12, 45, 47, 48, 66, 78-79.

Laws/Codes	Quotations
Italian Code	
Sicilian work traditions	
Laws of hospitality	
Family laws	
Marriage laws	
Honour	
Revenge	
Sexuality	
Masculinity	
Femininity	

After Reading



Compare them with those selected by other pairs.

Discuss what these quotations suggest about different aspects of the law and justice dealt with in the play.

Guilty or Innocent?

You are going to look at whether Marco is guilty or innocent and how this differs depending on whose law is applied.

Look carefully at the end of the play where Eddie dies while fighting Marco and talk about it:

Eddie lunges with the knife. Marco grabs his arm, turning the blade inward and pressing it home as the women and Louis and Mike rush in and separate them .

- What will happen next?
- Will Marco be arrested and tried for murder?
- What will different characters feel about his actions?
- Who will condemn and who will support him?

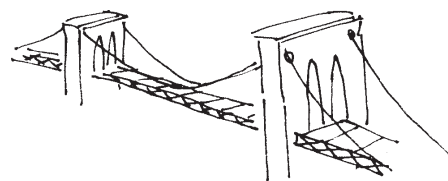
When he is tried he will have someone to defend him, a defence lawyer, and there will be someone, a prosecuting lawyer, trying to prove his guilt. He will be tried in an American court of law but his community may refer to their own laws or codes of conduct in order to defend him.

In fours, work out the arguments for and against Marco's actions by thinking about the points listed below.

- Marco is an illegal immigrant.
- It was a question of honour.
- Marco broke his promise to Alfieri.
- Marco did it for his family.
- Eddie deserved to die.
- It was self-defence.
- Marco planned to kill Eddie.
- Marco is a 'good' man.
- It was a crime of passion not malice.
- Marco was provoked by Eddie.
- Marco did it for Rodolpho.
- Marco had to take revenge against Eddie.
- Marco did what a man had to do.

Writing

In your four, decide whether you want to work on the defence of Marco, or his prosecution. Sort out your arguments. Pick quotes from the play to be used as evidence for your case. Draft the summing up speech that the prosecution or defence lawyer would make, before the jury reach their verdict.



3. Eddie

What do you think Eddie is like?

Eddie is the main character in the play. He is impossible to sum up easily. As Alfieri says at the end of the play,

‘... even as I know how wrong he was, and his death useless, I tremble, for I confess that something perversely pure calls to me from his memory—not purely good, but himself purely, for he allowed himself to be wholly known and for that I think I will love him more than all my sensible clients.’

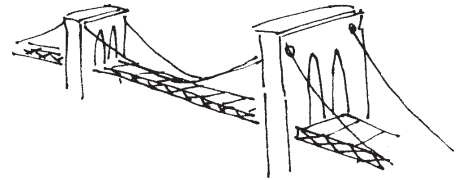
Here are two different representations of Eddie from different productions



Michael Gambon as Eddie, National Theatre, 1987. Raf Vallone as Eddie, film adaptation, 1961.

- What interpretation of Eddie is suggested by these two photographs?

After Reading



Here is a list of words which might describe Eddie:

kind	mean	generous
decent	thoughtful	cruel
considerate	unromantic	selfish
demanding	shy	uncompromising
cowardly	stubborn	responsible
joyful	law abiding	brooding
friendly	carefree	hospitable
forgiving	loving	intense
overprotective	heartless	scheming
pessimistic	family man	casual
loyal	passionate	

Draw a chart like the one below. Put all the words from the list above into the appropriate columns. If you think that important aspects of Eddie's character have been left out, add some words of your own.

Doesn't apply to Eddie at all	Applies to Eddie in Act One	Applies to Eddie in Act Two	Applies to Eddie in both Acts

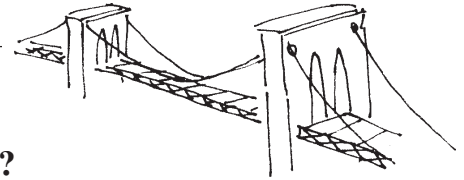
How do the other characters in the play see Eddie?

Many of them change their opinion of him as the play progresses. To simplify the changes, consider the following four basic stages:

- Stage 1: The beginning.
- Stage 2: After Act One.
- Stage 3: After Eddie has betrayed Rodolpho and Marco.
- Stage 4: The end.

In pairs, discuss how the main characters feel about Eddie at these stages and then fill in a chart like the one on the next page. Marco has been done for you. Check to see that you agree with the statements about Marco's feelings.

After Reading



What do the other characters feel about Eddie?

	Beginning	After Act One	After Betrayal	End
Marco	<i>Grateful to Eddie, a little in awe of him</i>	<i>Wary - senses trouble</i>	<i>Considers him a murderer</i>	<i>Feels he deserved to die - justice has been done</i>
Rodolpho				

Are there things you want to add to what's been written about Marco? Make notes for the other characters.

What is Miller's view of Eddie?

Read this in pairs. Circle anything you think you understand and can back up with evidence from the play. Make notes alongside anything you disagree with. Underline anything you're not sure of and talk about it as a whole class.

Miller has said of Eddie:

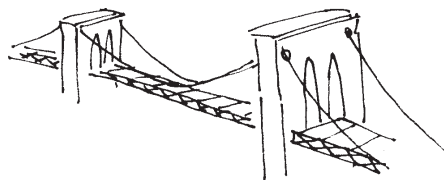
'I had originally conceived Eddie as a phenomenon, a rather awesome fact of existence, and I had kept a certain distance from involvement in his self-justification. Consequently, he had appeared as a kind of illogical sport, and to a degree a repelling figure not quite admissable into the human family. In revising the play it became possible to accept for myself....that however one might dislike this man, who does all sorts of frightful things, he possesses or exemplifies the wondrous and human fact that he too can be driven to what in the last analysis is a sacrifice of himself for his conception, however misguided of right, dignity and justice.'

He felt that:

'It was finally possible to mourn this man, that in the end one feels pity for him and the kind of wonder which it had been my aim to create in the first place.'

Introduction, *Collected Plays*

After Reading



- Do you agree with Miller?
- Do you pity Eddie, in spite of everything he does?
- Do you agree that he deserves respect for standing up for his own sense of justice and dignity, even though he is in the wrong?

All the pairs who agree with Miller go to one end of the room and all those who disagree go to the other.

Join up with another pair who share your view.

Make a list of all the arguments to support your view.

Now in your original pairs, join up with a pair from the other end of the room so that your new group consists of some who agree and some who disagree. Argue out the issue of whether Eddie is a hero or not, trying to persuade the other pair of your view.

Writing

Use the work you have done in this section to write about the character of Eddie from a variety of viewpoints:

- that of other characters in the play;
- Miller's attitude to Eddie;
- that of other people in your class;
- your own feelings about him.

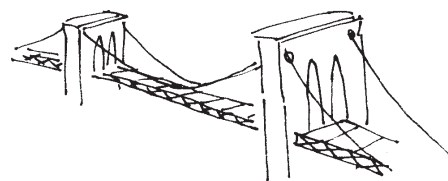
Before you begin it might help to return to thinking about how you feel about Eddie. You could use these sentence openings as prompts to help you begin:

- I pity/ do not pity Eddie because...
- I respect/have no respect for Eddie because...
- I agree/ disagree with Miller's view that Eddie...



Marco, Catherine and Rodolpho, National Theatre, 1987.

A View from the Bridge



4. Relationships

A View From the Bridge deals with various relationships. It is possible to look at pairs:

- Catherine and Eddie;
- Eddie and Beatrice;
- Marco and Eddie;
- Rodolpho and Catherine.

Over the page are ten short extracts from the play which show the relationship between Eddie and Catherine. The extracts are not in the order they appear in the play. You must sort them into the order you think is right. When you have done this stick them onto paper and show by comments and diagrams what the extracts reveal about how Eddie's and Catherine's relationship changes and develops during the play. Then ask your teacher to show you the order in which they actually appear in the play. This can be found on the last page of *A View from the Bridge* activities.

There are five other pairs to consider:

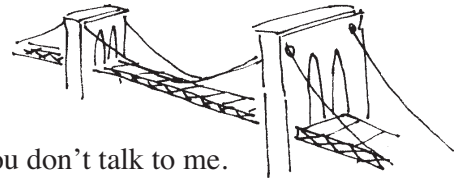
- Eddie/Beatrice;
- Marco/Eddie;
- Beatrice/Catherine;
- Catherine/Rodolpho;
- Eddie/Rodolpho.

In small groups pick one relationship and prepare the same activity as the one you've just done. Swap with another group so you have the chance to work on another relationship's development in the play.



Beatrice, Catherine and Eddie, National Theatre, 1987.

After Reading



1. EDDIE: [*enveloping her with his eyes*] I bless you and you don't talk to me.
[*He tries to smile*]
CATHERINE: I don't talk to you? [*She hits his arm.*] What do you mean?
EDDIE: I don't see you no more. I come home you're runnin' around someplace

2. CATHERINE: Oh, Eddie, don't be like that!
EDDIE: You ain't goin' nowheres.
CATHERINE: Eddie, I'm not gonna be a baby any more!

3. CATHERINE: Eddie, I never meant to do nothing bad to you.
EDDIE: Then why - Oh, B.!

4. CATHERINE: I'm gonna get married, Eddie. So if you wanna come, the wedding be on Saturday.
EDDIE: [*Pause*] Okay. I only wanted the best for you, Katie. I hope you know that.

5. EDDIE: Now don't aggravate me, Katie, you are walkin' wavy! I don't like the looks they're givin' you in the candy store. And with them new high heels on the sidewalk—clack, clack, clack. The heads are turnin' like windmills.
CATHERINE: But those guys look at all the girls, you know that.
EDDIE: You ain't 'all the girls'.

6. CATHERINE [*weeping*]: He bites people when they sleep. He comes when nobody's lookin' and poisons decent people. In the garbage he belongs!

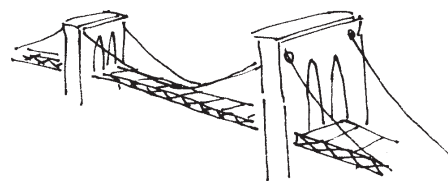
7. CATHERINE [*rising, trying to laugh*]: You sound like I'm going a million miles!
EDDIE: I know. I guess I just never figured on one thing.
CATHERINE [*smiling*]: What?
EDDIE: That you would ever grow up.

8. CATHERINE: It's only that I — He was good to me, Rodolpho. You don't know him; he was always the sweetest guy to me. Good. He razzes me all the time but he don't mean it. I know. I would — just feel ashamed if I made him sad.

9. EDDIE: The neighbourhood is full of rooms. Can't you stand to live a couple of blocks away from him? Get them out of the house !
CATHERINE: Well maybe tomorrow night I'll -
EDDIE: Not tomorrow, do it now. Catherine, you never mix yourself with somebody else's family! These guys get picked up ...

10. EDDIE: Katie, he's only bowin' to his passport.
CATHERINE: His passport!
EDDIE: That's right. He marries you he's got the right to be an American citizen.

A View from the Bridge



5. Beatrice and Catherine

Beatrice's Dilemma

Beatrice is in a very difficult position throughout the play. She loves Eddie, and wants to remain loyal to him. But she also understands that Catherine is growing up, and that Eddie is wrong to continue being so protective towards Catherine. As the play goes on, Beatrice is more and more certain that Eddie is heading for disaster. Frequently, she tries to reason with him to get him to see that he is being obstinate or unfair or selfish. At various times she:

- tells Eddie he doesn't love or want her any more;
- accuses Eddie of shaming Rodolpho and upsetting Catherine;
- is disgusted with Eddie for betraying Rodolpho and Marco to the Immigration Bureau;
- tries to make Eddie see that Catherine is growing up;
- pleads desperately with Eddie to make it up with Rodolpho and Marco;
- angrily tells Eddie to leave Catherine alone;
- makes Eddie face his sexual desire for Catherine;
- tries to defend Rodolpho from Eddie's criticisms.

You can find the passages where Beatrice does these things on pages:
20; 68-69; 34-35; 74; 35-36; 81-82; 42; 83.

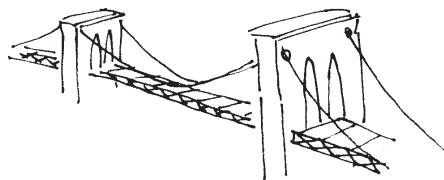
Try to match up the passages with the list of Beatrice's changing attitudes.

Thought-tracking a key scene

1. Two people should read the scene (Act One, page 42-44) aloud in front of the whole group. It starts over the page.
Half the class should concentrate on Beatrice, the other half on Catherine.
There are four points in the text, marked 1, 2, 3, 4, where the readers should pause for a while before continuing. This is to allow the rest of the group to note down individually the inner thoughts and feelings of the character they are tracking, at that moment in the scene.

Eddie has been trying to persuade Catherine that Rodolpho is no good and is only interested in her as a way of becoming an American citizen. Eddie turns to Beatrice, telling her to 'straighten her out'. Beatrice, frightened and angry at his obsession with Catherine, turns on him, saying, 'When are you going to leave her alone?' and Eddie turns and leaves.

After Reading



[CATHERINE starts into a bedroom.]

BEATRICE: Listen, Catherine. [CATHERINE halts, turns to her sheepishly.] What are you going to do with yourself?

CATHERINE: I don't know.

1 BEATRICE: Don't tell me you don't know; you're not a baby any more, what are you going to do with yourself?

CATHERINE: He won't listen to me.

BEATRICE: I don't understand this. He's not your father, Catherine. I don't understand what's going on here.

CATHERINE [as one who herself is trying to rationalize a buried impulse]: What am I going to do, just kick him in the face with it?

BEATRICE: Look, honey, you wanna get married, or don't you wanna get married? What are you worried about Katie?

CATHERINE [quietly trembling]: I don't know B. It just seems wrong if he's against it so much.

BEATRICE [never losing her aroused alarm]: Sit down, honey, I want to tell you something. Here, sit down. Was there ever any fella he liked for you? There wasn't, was there?

CATHERINE: But he says Rodolpho's just after his papers.

2 BEATRICE: Look, he'll say anything. What does he care what he says? If it was a prince came here for you it would be no different. You know that, don't you?

CATHERINE: Yeah, I guess.

BEATRICE: So what does that mean?

CATHERINE [slowly turns her head to BEATRICE]: What?

BEATRICE: It means you gotta be your own self more. You still think you're a little girl, honey. But nobody else can make up your mind for you any more, you understand? You gotta give him to understand that he can't give you orders no more.

CATHERINE: Yeah, but how am I going to do that? He thinks I'm a baby.

BEATRICE: Because *you* think you're a baby. I told you fifty times already, you can't act the way you act. You still walk around in front of him in your slip -

3 CATHERINE: Well I forgot.

BEATRICE: Well you can't do it. Or like you sit on the edge of the bathtub talkin' to him when he's shavin' in his underwear.

CATHERINE: When'd I do that?

BEATRICE: I seen you in there this morning.

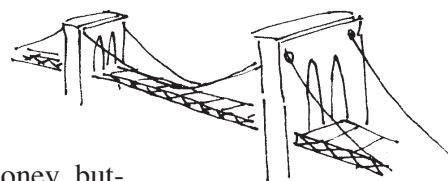
CATHERINE: Oh...well, I wanted to tell him something and I -

BEATRICE: I know, honey. But if you act like a baby and he be treatin' you like a baby. Like when he comes home sometimes you throw yourself at him like when you was twelve years old.

CATHERINE: Well I like to see him and I'm happy so I -

A View from the Bridge

After Reading



BEATRICE: Look, I'm not tellin' you what to do honey, but-

CATHERINE: No, you could tell me, B.! Gee, I'm all mixed up. See, I - He looks so sad now and it hurts me.

BEATRICE: Well look, Katie, if it's goin' to hurt you so much you're gonna end up an old maid here.

CATHERINE: No!

BEATRICE: I'm tellin' you, I'm not makin' a joke. I tried to tell you a couple of times in the last year or so. That's why I was so happy you were going to go out and get work, you wouldn't be here so much, you'd be a little more independent. I mean it. It's wonderful for a whole family to love each other, but you're a grown woman and you're in the same house with a grown man. So you'll act different now, heh?

CATHERINE: Yeah, I will. I'll remember.

BEATRICE: Because it ain't only up to him, Katie, you understand? I told him the same thing already.

CATHERINE [*quickly*]: What?

BEATRICE: That he should let you go. But, you see, if only I tell him, he thinks I'm just bawlin' him out, or maybe I'm jealous or somethin', you know?

CATHERINE [*astonished*]: He said you was jealous?

BEATRICE: No, I'm just sayin' maybe that's what he thinks. [*She reaches over to CATHERINE's hand; with a strained smile*] You think I'm jealous of you, honey?

CATHERINE: No! It's the first I thought of it.

BEATRICE [*with a quiet sad laugh*]: Well you should have thought of it before....but I'm not. We'll be all right. Just give him to understand; you don't have to fight, you're just - You're a woman, that's all, and you got a nice boy, and now the time came when you said good-bye. All right?

CATHERINE [*strangely moved at the prospect*]: All right.....If I can.

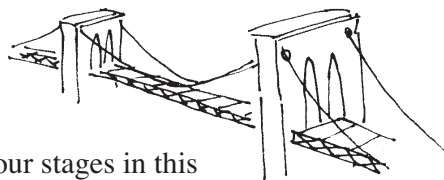
BEATRICE: Honey....you gotta.

[*CATHERINE, sensing now an imperious demand, turns with some fear, with a discovery, to BEATRICE. She is at the edge of tears, as though a familiar world had shattered.*]

CATHERINE: Okay.

4

After Reading



As a whole group, share the thought-tracks at each of the four stages in this scene, talking through why this is a key scene for these two characters.

Role Play - Catherine and Beatrice 10 Years On.

In pairs, act out a conversation between Catherine and Beatrice ten years later, in which they try to talk honestly about what happened during the events of the play. Before you start you will need to make some decisions:

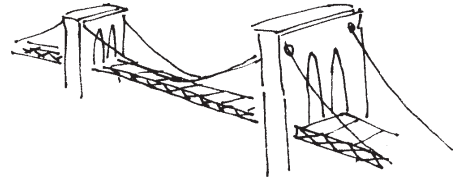
- whether Catherine's marriage to Rodolpho has been a happy one;
- whether Beatrice and Catherine have remained close or whether they are meeting again for the first time in ten years;
- whether Marco is in prison/ back in Italy/ still living in America.

Writing

Using the thought-tracking exercise on the key scene, write a close reading of this scene. What does it reveal about Beatrice's dilemma and Catherine's character.



Beatrice and Catherine, Film Adaptation 1961



6. Directing a Scene

You are the director of a production of *A View from the Bridge*. You and the actors have been rehearsing for some weeks, and there are several scenes you are still unhappy with. In particular, the scene at the end of Act One where Rodolpho boxes with Eddie, Rodolpho dances with Catherine and Marco lifts up the chair is proving very difficult.

The first performance is only a fortnight away, and you decide to have an emergency meeting with the actors in this scene. What will you say to each actor? What should be the overall effect of the scene? Prepare some detailed notes to be handed out at the meeting. Work with a partner and write your notes in the margin.



Marco, Rodolpho, Catherine, Beatrice and Eddie, National Theatre, 1987.

CATHERINE [*Goes to EDDIE; nervously happy now*]:

I'll make some coffee, all right?

EDDIE: Go ahead, make some! Make it nice and strong.

[*Mystified, she smiles and exits to kitchen. He is weirdly elated, rubbing his fists into his palms. He strides to MARCO.*] You wait, Marco, you see some real fights here. You ever do any boxing?

MARCO: No, I never.

EDDIE [*To RODOLPHO*]: Betcha you have done some, heh?

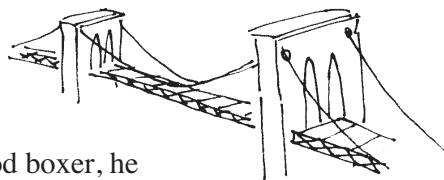
RODOLPHO: No.

EDDIE: Well, come on, I'll teach you.

BEATRICE: What's he got to learn that for?

EDDIE: Ya can't tell, one a these days somebody's liable to step on his foot or sump'm. Come on, Rodolpho, I show you a coupla passes. [*He stands below table.*]

After Reading



BEATRICE: Go ahead, Rodolpho. He's a good boxer, he could teach you.

RODOLPHO [*Embarrassed*]: Well, I don't know how to - [*He moves down to EDDIE.*]

EDDIE: Just keep your hands up. Like this, see? That's right. That's right. That's very good, keep your left up, because you lead with left, see, like this. [*He gently moves his left into RODOLPHO's face.*] See? Now what you gotta do is you gotta block me, so when I come in like that you - [*RODOLPHO parries his left.*] Hey, that's very good! [*RODOLPHO laughs.*] All right, now come into me, come on.

RODOLPHO: I don't want to hit you, Eddie.

EDDIE: Don't pity me, come on. Throw it, I'll show you how to block it. [*RODOLPHO jabs at him, laughing. The others join in.*] 'at's it. Come on again. For the jaw right here. [*RODOLPHO jabs with more assurance.*] Very good!

BEATRICE [*To MARCO*]: He's very good!

[*EDDIE crosses upstage of RODOLPHO.*]

EDDIE: Sure, he's great! Come on, kid, put sump'm behind it, you can't hurt me. [*RODOLPHO, more seriously, jabs at EDDIE's jaw and grazes it.*] Attaboy. [*CATHERINE comes from the kitchen, watches.*]

Now I'm gonna hit you, so block me, see?

CATHERINE [*With beginning alarm*]: What are they doin'?

[*They are lightly boxing now*]

BEATRICE [*- She senses only the comradeship in it now*]:

He's teaching' him; he's very good!

EDDIE: Sure, he's terrific! Look at him go!

[*RODOLPHO lands a blow*] 'at's it! Now, watch out, here I come, Danish! [*He feints with his left hand and lands with his right. It mildly staggers RODOLPHO. MARCO rises.*]

CATHERINE [*Rushing to RODOLPHO*]: Eddie!

EDDIE: Why? I didn't hurt him. Did I hurt you, kid? [*He rubs the back of his hand across his mouth.*]

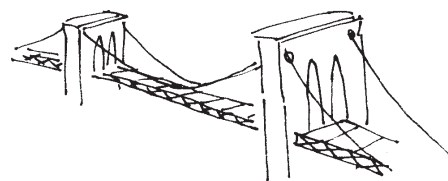
RODOLPHO: No, no, he didn't hurt me. [*To EDDIE with a certain gleam and a smile*] I was only surprised.

BEATRICE [*pulling EDDIE down into the rocker.*]: That's enough Eddie; he did pretty good, though.

EDDIE: Yeah. [*Rubbing his fists together.*] He could be very good, Marco. I'll teach him again. [*MARCO nods at him dubiously.*]

A View from the Bridge

After Reading



RODOLPHO: Dance, Catherine. Come.

[He takes her hand; they go to the phonograph and start it. It plays Paper Doll. RODOLPHO takes her in his arms. They dance. EDDIE in thought sits in his chair, and MARCO takes a chair, places it in front of EDDIE, and looks down at it.

BEATRICE and EDDIE watch him.]

MARCO: Can you lift this chair?

EDDIE: What do you mean?

MARCO: From here. *[He gets on one knee with one hand behind his back, and grasps the bottom of one of the chair legs but does not raise it.]*

EDDIE: Sure, why not? *[He comes to the chair, kneels, grasps the leg, raises the chair one inch, but it leans over to the floor.]*

Gee, that's hard, I never knew that. *[He tries again, and again fails.]* It's on an angle, that's why, heh?

MARCO: Here.

[He kneels, grasps, and with strain slowly raises the chair higher, getting to his feet now. RODOLPHO and CATHERINE have stopped dancing as Marco raises the chair over his head.

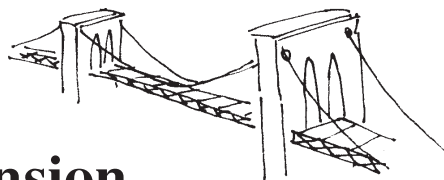
MARCO is face to face with EDDIE, a strained tension gripping his eyes and jaw, his neck stiff, the chair raised like a weapon over EDDIE's head - and he transforms what might appear like a glare of warning into a smile of triumph, and EDDIE's grin vanishes as he absorbs his look.]

Curtain.



Final scene of Act One, National Theatre, 1987.

A View from the Bridge



7. Moments of Dramatic Tension

On a number of occasions in this play Miller shows his characters in close physical contact. He uses this closeness to heighten the intensity of feeling characters have towards one another and to allow us to see these inner feelings being presented visually.

Acting it Out

In groups of 5, choose one of the scenes listed below and try acting it out, thinking about how the action expresses the feelings behind the words the characters speak:

- End of Act One (Pages 56-58).
- Eddie interrupts Rodolpho's and Catherine's love scene (Pages 63-65).
- The immigration officers' raid on the house (Pages 74-77).
- End of Act Two (Pages 83- 84).

Still Pictures

Choose a key moment from your scene to represent as a still picture to the others in the group.

Think about :

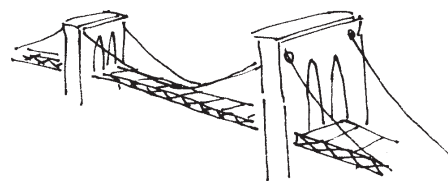
- spaces between characters;
- height;
- eyes/gaze/looks;
- gestures and body language;
- facial expressions.

Look at each other's and talk about how the themes and issues of the play are represented visually.

Writing

Choose two scenes which you consider to be particularly interesting moments of dramatic tension. Write about why they are especially dramatic and why they are important in the play. Use these prompts to help you:

- What happens in the scene?
- What does this reveal about the characters?
- What tensions are being explored?
- What themes or issues is the scene trying to present visually?
- How does Miller make it a moment of dramatic tension ? (e.g. stage directions, actions, what is said etc.).



8. Endings

Arthur Miller wrote three different endings to *A View from the Bridge*. The one you have read is the second ending.

First Ending - Eddie begs Catherine to choose him.

In the final scene of the first version Eddie knows that Marco is out on bail and is coming to see him. He refuses to hide from this meeting. He tries once more to prevent Catherine from marrying Rodolpho. Beatrice begs him to let Catherine go but when she and Rodolpho start to leave, Eddie grabs hold of her and kisses her on the lips passionately, and asks her to choose him rather than Rodolpho. When Marco arrives Eddie pulls a knife on him but Marco turns it on Eddie. He is fatally wounded and falls to the ground. With his dying breath he says, 'Catherine - why?'

Second Ending - Marco kills Eddie.

This is the ending that Miller finally chose, the one that appears in the published text.

Third Ending - Eddie kills himself.

When the play was being performed in Paris, Miller changed the ending for a third time. In this production Marco refuses to kill Eddie. Eddie is then shunned by his neighbours who make him realise that he himself is responsible for the loss of his good name, and he kills himself.

A Fourth Ending? - Catherine kills Eddie.

Miller also refers to another possible ending in his autobiography. When the play was being performed in 1965 in the form you have read, the cast noticed that:

'a man kept showing up night after night in one of the front rows a few feet from the stage. He was always deeply moved and among the last to leave. One night an actor came down and talked to him. 'I know that family', he said wiping his eyes. 'They lived in the Bronx. The whole story is true, except the ending was changed ... The girl came in when Eddie was having a nap and stabbed him in the heart.'

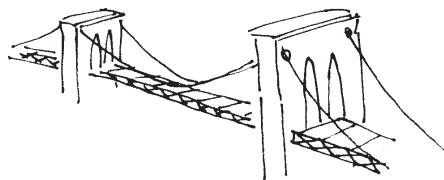
When he came to select the plays to go in his *Collected Plays*, published in 1985, Miller settled on the second version.

In small groups choose one of these three alternative endings to work on.

Staging it

Talk it through and prepare a performance of it for the others. After each performance discuss as a whole group the different dramatic effects of each and the messages they give to the audience.

After Reading



Still Pictures

Freeze the action at the very end so that the audience can study the look and dramatic impact of the scene by questioning, discussing and making notes. Pay particular attention to:

- the distances between people;
- the effect of points of contact; action/inaction;
- the hold of a head;
- expressions, hands, eyes;
- the arrangement of the whole scene and how the space has been used.

Question the characters in the freeze frame about their feelings and their actions. The characters must answer in role.

Writing

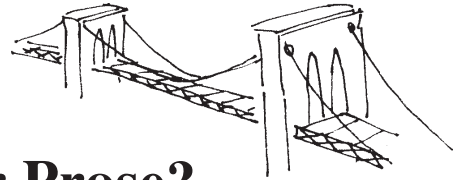
Write about which ending you prefer and why. Think about:

- which ending is most dramatic;
- what effect each ending has on the way we think of the characters;
- which characters each ending highlights as being most important;
- what difference each ending makes to the message behind the play.



Eddie telephones Immigration, National Theatre, 1987

A View from the Bridge



9. Miller's Drafts - Verse or Prose?

A View From the Bridge was originally written mainly in verse.

On the next page are Alfieri's opening and closing speeches in their first and final versions. They have been printed so that they can be photocopied and annotated.

In groups, work on the different versions:

The Opening

- Look at the verse version and read it aloud.
- Put a question mark beside any words or phrases that you don't understand or that you find interesting but confusing. Talk about them and pool your ideas.
- Underline any repetitions in the language that you notice.
- Circle any images or phrases that stand out for you. Note down any comments about them along the side.
- Pause to talk about your observations as a whole class.

Look at the two versions together

Make two lists headed Similarities and Differences and use it to discuss and make notes on what you notice about the verse and the prose.

The Ending

Follow exactly the same process as you did for the opening. You should end up with an annotated verse version, with question marks, underlining, circles and comments and a list of similarities and differences. What difference do you think the verse ending makes to the whole play? Does it change our view of the tragedy? Does it change our view of Eddie? If so, in what ways and how is this done?

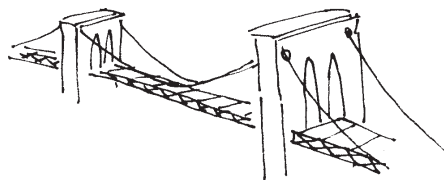
Why Choose Poetry or Prose?

Having looked at the verse versions of the opening and the ending, which did you prefer? What do you think Miller has gained and/or lost by writing the final version in prose?

Writing

As a way of helping you to think about this and to help start a piece of writing, see if you agree or disagree with this list of statements when it's applied to either the prose or the poetry versions:

- makes more of Sicilian history;
- is more difficult to follow;
- makes the message more explicit;
- makes you feel more involved;
- allows more room for doubts and uncertainties;
- sounds better;
- is a better way of allowing the character of Alfieri to come across;
- expresses the themes of the play powerfully;
- would work better in a theatre.

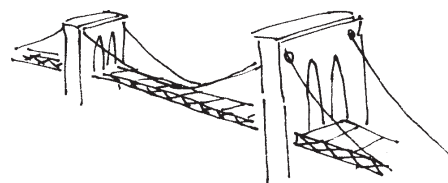


First Version of Alfieri's Opening Speech

When the tide is right
And the wind blows the sea air against these houses,
I sit here in my office,
Thinking it is all so timeless here.
I think of Sicily, from where these people came,
The Roman rocks of Calabria,
Siracusa on the cliff, where Carthaginian and Greek
Fought such bloody fights. I think of Hannibal,
Who slew the fathers of these people; Caesar
Whipping them on in Latin.
Which is all, of course, ridiculous.
Al Capone learned his trade on these pavements...
And yet, when the tide is right,
And the green smell of the sea
Floats through my window,
I must look up at the circling pigeons of the poor,
And I see falcons there,
The hunting eagles of the olden time,
Fierce above Italian forests...
And as the parties tell me what the trouble is
I see cobwebs tearing, Adriatic ruins rebuilding themselves;
Calabria;
The eyes of the plaintiff seem suddenly carved,
His voice booming toward me over many fallen stones.

Final Version of Alfieri's Opening Speech

and yet ... every few years there is still a case, and as the parties tell me what the trouble is, the flat air in my office suddenly washes in with the green scent of the sea, the dust in this air is blown away and the thought comes that in some Caesar's year, in Calabria perhaps or on the cliff at Syracuse, another lawyer, quite differently dressed, heard the same complaint and sat there as powerless as I, and watched it run its bloody course.

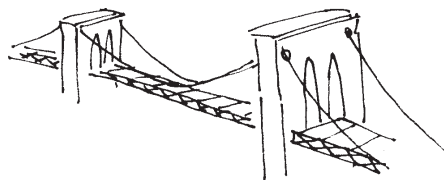


First Version of Alfieri's Closing Speech

Most of the time we settle for half,
And I like it better.
And yet, when the tide is right
And the green smell of the sea
Floats in through my window,
The waves of this bay
Are the waves against Siracusa.
And I see a face that suddenly seems carved;
The eyes look like tunnels
Leading back toward some ancestral beach
Where all of us once lived.
And I wonder at those times
How much of all of us
Really lives there yet,
And when we will truly have moved on,
On and away from that dark place,
That world that has fallen to stones?
This is the end of the story. Good night.

Final Version of Alfieri's Closing Speech

Most of the time now we settle for half and I like it better. But the truth is holy, and even as I know how wrong he was, and his death useless, I tremble, for I confess that something perversely pure calls to me from his memory - not purely good, but himself purely, for he allowed himself to be wholly known and for that I think I will love him more than all my sensible clients. And yet, it is better to settle for half, it must be! And so I mourn him - I admit it - with a certain ... alarm.



10. The Story of Pete Panto

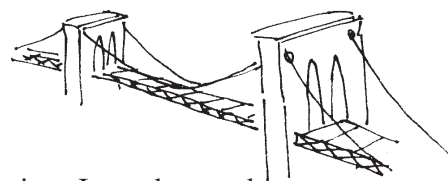
Arthur Miller took many years to write *A View from the Bridge*. These extracts from his autobiography *Timebends* trace its development. They begin in 1947.

I walked endlessly trying to find my way into the city and into myself. One day it registered on my mind that for weeks now I had been passing graffiti on walls and sidewalks saying, 'Dove Pete Panto?' without ever bothering to try to figure out that it meant 'Where is Peter Panto?' It was down near the piers that this mysterious question covered every surface, and it was not hard to guess that it was still more evidence of the other world that existed at the foot of peaceful, old-fashioned Brooklyn Heights, the sinister waterfront world of gangster-ridden unions, assassination, beatings, bodies thrown into the lovely bay at night. Now the sentence began showing up in subway stations and chalked on Court Street office buildings. Finally the liberal press took up my cry, with *PM*, the progressive daily that lasted for a few years after its birth during World War II, explaining that Pete Panto was a young longshoreman who had attempted to lead a rank-and-file revolt against the leadership of President Joseph Ryan and his colleagues, many of them allegedly mafiosi, who ran the International Longshoremen's Association. Panto, one evening during dinner, had been lured from his home by a phone call from an unknown caller and was never seen again. The movement he had led vanished from the scene.

I took to wandering the bars on the waterfront to pick up whatever I could about Panto. It was a time when the heroic had all but disappeared from the theatre along with any interest in the tragic tradition itself. The idea of a young man defying evil and ending in a cement block at the bottom of the river drew me on.

It took only a couple of days on the piers to discover that men were afraid to so much as talk about Panto. Most of them were of Italian descent, many of them born in the old country and completely dependent on the favor of their leaders for jobs. As I realized after a trip to southern Italy and Sicily the next year, the hiring system on the Brooklyn and Manhattan waterfronts had been imported from the Sicilian countryside. A foreman representing the land owners would appear in the town square on his horse; a crowd of job-seeking peasants would humbly form up around his spurs, and he would deign to point from favored face to favored face with his riding crop and trot away with the wordless self-assurance of a god, once he had lifted from hunger by these barely perceptible gestures the number of laborers he required for that day...

After Reading



In Red Hook, Brooklyn, at four-thirty on winter mornings I stood around with longshoremen huddling in doorways in rain and snow on Columbia Street facing the piers, waiting for the hiring boss, on whose arrival they surged forward and formed up in semicircle to attract his pointing finger and numbered brass checks that guaranteed a job for the day. After distributing the checks to his favorites, who had quietly paid him off, the boss often found a couple left over and in his generosity tossed them into the air over the little crowd. In a frantic scramble, the men would tear at each other's hands, sometimes getting into bad fights. Their cattle-like acceptance of this humiliating procedure struck me as an outrage, even more humiliating than the procedure itself. It was as though they had lost the mere awareness of hope.

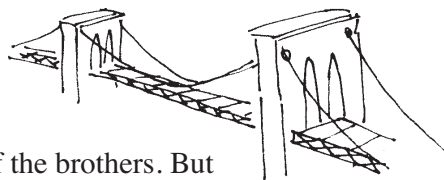
The idea of a longshoreman standing up to the arrogance of such power chilled me with awe, ... I would love to find some way of writing about this sealed-off area of the city. ... They were eager to show me around, and I had my entry at last into what had become for me a dangerous, mad, mysterious world at the water's edge that drama and literature had never touched.

Now looking back, I see how volcanic this decision was for me. Out of it would come a movie script (never to be produced); a play, *A View from the Bridge*, and a trip to Hollywood, where I would meet an unknown young actress, Marilyn Monroe, and at the same time come into direct collision with the subterranean machine that enforced political blacklisting and ideological disciplining of film writers, actors, and directors.

It did not take me long to learn that the waterfront was the Wild West, a desert beyond the law. An electrical generator big enough to light a city in Africa, where it was bound, standing two stories high on flatcar and worth millions, simply vanished one night from a Brooklyn pier. The exploitation of labor was probably a minor matter compared to the Mob's skimming of commerce moving through the world's greatest port, a form of taxation, in effect.

I was moving in and out of longshoremen's houses and making some friends and tuning my ear to their fruity, mingled Sicilian-English bravura, with its secretive, marvellously-modulated hints and untrammelled emotions. In the course of time Longhi mentioned a story he'd recently heard of a longshoreman who had ratted to the Immigration Bureau on two brothers, his own relatives, who were living illegally in his very home, in order to break an engagement between one of them and his niece. The squealer was disgraced, and no one knew where he had gone off to, and

After Reading



some whispered that he had been murdered by one of the brothers. But the story went past me.

I began sketching what I called *An Italian Tragedy*, which after several months I laid aside. It was some five years before it resurfaced as *A View from the Bridge* in its original one-act form. And it was more than a decade before I finally glimpsed something of myself in this play. I suddenly saw my father's adoration of my sister, and through his emotion, my own. When I wrote the play, I was moving through psychological country strange to me, ugly and forbidding. Yet something in me kept to the challenge to push on until a part of the truth of my nature unfolded itself in a scene, a word, a thought dropping onto my paper.

Writing

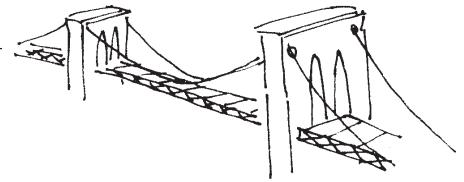
1. The story of Pete Panto sparked off the idea for *A View from the Bridge* but Miller could have chosen to write about it in a very different way. He could have written a poem or a short story instead, either about Pete Panto himself or a different set of characters. He could have concentrated on different aspects of the story. If you had heard about Pete Panto and the lives of the Italian longshoremen, how might you have used it to write a play, a poem or a story?

You could try one of these:

- a poem about the lives of the Italian longshoremen;
- a story about what really did happen to Pete Panto, drawing on what was known about him and his life;
- the Ballad of Pete Panto, as a poem or song;
- a story about another character or group of characters, to say something different about the lives of the Italian immigrants (e.g. he could have concentrated on the way the men had to fight for a day's work or on 'the sinister waterfront world' he describes.);
- a thriller story or film script.

Look back over Miller's account and note down anything that you find particularly interesting, that you could use to develop into a piece of writing.

2. Elia Kazan directed a film called *On the Waterfront* (1954) which bears some striking similarities to *A View from the Bridge* and to the story of Pete Panto. Write about how the Pete Panto narrative is treated in the two texts and the different representation of Eddie in each.



11. Video Cover Design

Task

Imagine that a film adaptation of *A View from the Bridge* has been made that is now available on video. Your job is to package the video in a way that will make people want to see it.

Have a look at this video cover of *On the Waterfront*, and try to identify all the things you'll need to think about when designing your own cover.

In pairs, annotate it to show the ways in which it works to draw its audience.

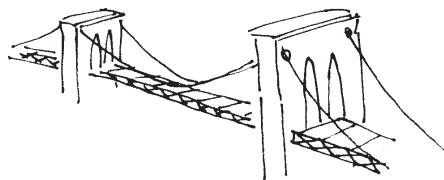


The Cast

This adaptation uses the same cast as the National Theatre production:

Eddie	Michael Gambon
Beatrice	Elizabeth Bell
Catherine	Suzan Sylvester
Alfieri	James Hayes
Marco	Michael Simkins
Rodolpho	Adrian Rawlins

After Reading



Your cover design must include the following:

- **Audience.** Who are you aiming this video at? Which elements of the story are you going to emphasise? Think about the issues the play raises and the kind of appeal it is likely to have.
- **Stills from the film.** Use the stills printed in this booklet. Experiment with ways of using them - crop them, enlarge them, colour them or paste them up as montage.
- **A spine design.** Think about typography carefully. For example, what do these different font styles suggest?

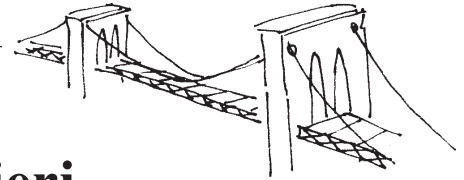
A View from the Bridge

A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

A VIEW FROM THE BRIDGE

- **Film synopsis.** You must include a summary of the film on the back of the cover, (left hand side). You will need to identify elements in the narrative to attract your potential audience.
- **Star Quality.** Which names involved in this production will you want to foreground in your design and in what way? Will Arthur Miller's name be a big pull? Writers don't usually get a mention in film. Think about the ones that do. Which actors, if any? What about the director? Will mentioning other film, theatre or television work that these people have been involved in help sell the video?
- **Certificate.** In deciding on the certificate you are going to give this adaptation you will have to think about how the sex and violence in the script are going to be handled. Look back through the play and make some decisions about the ending and the scene between Rodolpho and Catherine in Act Two when Eddie comes back unexpectedly.
- **Other Language.** Decide what is going to be written on the front of the cover other than the title. You could include a quote from the play, or a slogan to hook the audience in.

A View from the Bridge



12. The Role Played by Alfieri

Why does Miller include Alfieri?

It is unusual for a play to have a character like Alfieri in it. When *The Crucible* was performed, Miller was very disappointed by what the reviewers wrote about it. He felt that not a single one had captured ‘the real and inner theme of the play’. When he came to write *A View From a Bridge* he decided that he needed to find a way of making the themes of the play more explicit and clear. This is why he decided to include the character of Alfieri in *A View from the Bridge*, whom he calls ‘the engaged narrator’. Alfieri comments on and explains the action of the play as it is happening. At times, he is part of the drama itself.

The action of the play is Alfieri’s story of a case he dealt with as a lawyer.

The chart below lists all of Alfieri’s appearances. Flick back through the play to remind yourself of them and talk about the way that Miller is using Alfieri:

- to explain the themes;
- to expand on the characters;
- to give background information about the time and the place;
- to make sure the audience is clear about Miller’s message;
- to participate as a character in the action.

Choose one appearance to look at more closely. Talk about why Alfieri appears here. Is there something Miller wants to get across? Did you find his appearance helpful?

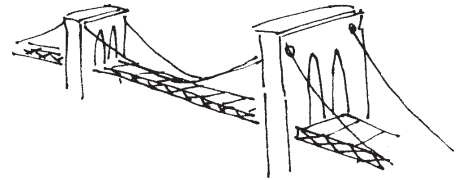
Writing

Re-write one of Alfieri’s appearances replacing Alfieri with a narrator who takes a different view of the action and characters of the play.

For example:

- a female narrator who identifies strongly with Catherine;
- Louis, who works on the waterfront with Eddie.

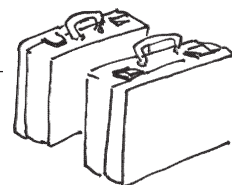
Alfieri's Appearances		
Act One	Pages 11-13	Introduces the play.
	Page 26	Narrates, showing short lapse of time.
	Pages 33-34	Comments briefly.
	Pages 45-50	Narrates, giving background information and comments, followed by a scene in which he participates in the action.
	Pages 49-50	Comments in more detail.
Act Two	Page 59	Introduces Act Two, showing passing of time.
	Pages 65-67	Comments in more detail, then is shown participating in the action.
	Pages 77-80	Participates in the action.
	Page 85	Concludes the play.



Relationships (page 85)

The correct order of the extracts showing Eddie and Catherine's relationship:

- 5 (Page 14)
- 7 (Page 25)
- 1 (Page 39)
- 10 (Page 41)
- 8 (Page 62)
- 2 (Page 64)
- 4 (Page 71)
- 9 (Page 73)
- 6 (Page 81)
- 3 (Page 84)



Death of a Salesman

Before Reading

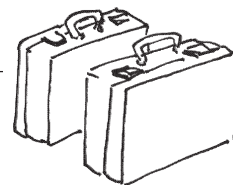
- | | |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| 1. Tensions in a Family | 108 |
| 2. The American Dream | 109 |
| 3. Selling Yourself | 110 |
| 4. What was Happening Then? | 111 |

During Reading

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. The Set | 112 |
| 2. Miller's Stage Directions | 113 |
| 3. The Structure of the Play | 114 |
| 4. Symbols and Motifs | 118 |
| 5. First Impressions of Happy and Biff | 120 |
| 6. The Card Game Scene | 121 |

After Reading

- | | |
|--|-----|
| 1. Using Your Flowcharts | 123 |
| 2. Willy, Biff and Happy | 124 |
| 3. Willy, Biff and Happy - Real Life Models | 126 |
| 4. Fathers and Sons | 129 |
| 5. Linda | 131 |
| 6. A Question of Values | 134 |
| 7. Buying and Selling | 136 |
| 8. What's in a Name? | 138 |
| 9. The Ending | 139 |
| 10. The Restaurant Scene on Stage and Screen | 141 |
| 11. Writing a Film Review | 148 |



1. Tensions in a Family

Look at these extracts from the play, in which two characters talk to each other. The characters have had their names removed. They are labelled A and B. Read the dialogues and talk about what is revealed about the characters and their relationship with each other.

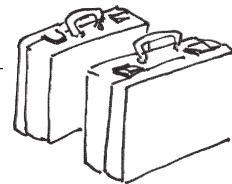
Work through this list of oppositions and decide whether any of them are helpful in describing A and B. Which define A? Which define B?

- male female
- secure insecure
- aggressive gentle
- vulnerable tough
- domineering dominated
- patient impatient
- confused clear thinking

Make some suggestions about who A and B are and what their relationship is to Biff Loman.

1 B: Not finding yourself at the age of thirty-four is a disgrace!
A: Shh!
B: The trouble is he's lazy, goddammit!
A: B, please!
B: Biff is a lazy bum!
A: They're sleeping. Get something to eat. Go on down.
B: Why did he come home? I would like to know what brought him home.
A: I don't know. I think he's still lost, B. I think he's very lost.
B: Biff Loman is lost. In the greatest country in the world a young man with such- personal attractiveness, gets lost. And such a hard worker. There's one thing about Biff- he's not lazy.
A: Never.

2 A: [*trying to bring B out of it*]: B, dear, I got a new kind of American-type cheese today. It's whipped.
B: Why do you get American when I like Swiss?
A: I just thought you'd like a change -
B: I don't want a change! I want Swiss cheese. Why am I always being contradicted?
A: [*with a covering laugh*]: I thought it would be a surprise.



2. The American Dream

America has often been presented as 'the land of opportunity', a country where anyone who is prepared to work can succeed. Americans have been proud of this view of their country and have valued hard work, determination and the ability to be successful and make money. This view of America has been called 'the American Dream'. 'Dream' is a good name for it, because it suggests something wonderful that people can dream of and hope for but it also suggests something that may only be a dream, something unreal and impossible to achieve.

In *Death of a Salesman*, some of the characters, at different times in the play, seem to believe strongly in the American Dream. At other times, characters say things which suggest that they are disillusioned with it and no longer believe that 'success' is either possible or a good thing.

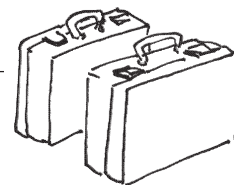
Willy, the main character in *Death of a Salesman*, spends his whole life striving for his own idea of 'success' for himself and his boys. Do you feel a similar pressure to succeed in your life?

What does success mean for a teenager in our society? Look at the list below. Which of them do you think would be a sign of 'success' for you? Put them in order of priority.

- owning a fast car;
- being happily married with children;
- having a lot of money;
- doing a job that you enjoy;
- passing your exams and doing well at school;
- being independent and free to do what you want;
- being admired by other people;
- becoming famous;
- your parents being proud of you;
- your friends being jealous of you;
- having good friends whom you can rely on;
- doing 'better' than your brothers or sisters.

Compare your priorities with other people in your class. Discuss whether there is any pressure on you to succeed and, if so, where it comes from - family? friends? the media? yourself?

Put your ideas on display paper, so that they can be put up on the wall. While you are reading the play, look back at your displays and compare your ideas of what it would mean to be successful with those of the characters in the play.



3. Selling Yourself

The main character in *Death of a Salesman* makes his living by persuading other people to buy his products. We do not know what he sells, but it appears to be a vitally important part of his self identity that he is seen by others as a successful salesman. A salesman can only count himself successful if he constantly increases his turnover. The routine of selling is very repetitious and draining, so the salesman has to cultivate personal qualities that will help to generate enthusiasm and optimism in himself even though the person to whom he is selling might appear uninterested.

At the time this play was written, many Americans were reading a best selling book called '*How to Win Friends and Influence People*' by Dale Carnegie. Basically the thrust of this book was to demonstrate how human relations could be exploited for practical gain. This is why Willie believes it is so important to be not just 'liked' but 'well liked'. Because if you are 'well liked' people will be prepared to trust you and therefore buy what you have to sell.

'Selling is the only job in the world in which a man is paid exactly what he is worth, and not what someone else thinks he is worth. He should love selling for this reason, and this reason only. He has accepted a man's job, and it will be entirely due to his own efforts. If he fails, it will be entirely due to his own weaknesses.'

Alfred Tack, *Sell Better - Live Better* (1958)

What might it be like to sell yourself over and over again?

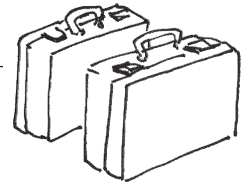
Get into groups of four and each select an object, say a watch or a piece of jewellery or a book. List three main points of interest in the object that you are going to try and sell and think of a price. Now try to sell your object to one of the four people in your group; the other two should observe the process and be prepared to comment afterwards.

Work out the kind of person that your prospective customer would trust.

Think about:

- your initial approach/introductions;
- what you would say about your would-be customer;
- what you would say about your product;
- how you would answer any questions.

When everyone has had a turn, discuss what you think might be the effect of constantly trying to sell your personality.



4. What was Happening Then?

In 1880s and 1890s when Willy was growing up:

- the first machine, the graphophone, was invented to record and play back your own voice in 1885;
- Geronimo, the Apache Indian Chief surrendered in 1886;
- there was a Goldrush in Alaska in 1896;
- the Battle of Wounded Knee was fought in 1890 - the last major battle between the American Indians and the white soldiers.

In 1913, when Willy joined the Wagner firm:

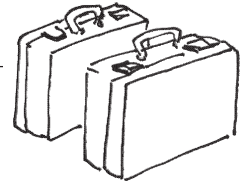
- it was just before the First World War;
- the first Ford Motor Company moving assembly line was opened, to begin mass production of the Model T car. Henry Ford talked of 'democratizing the automobile';
- American society was small, stable and relatively secure economically - it was the period before the great Depression of the twenties;
- Arthur Miller was born in 1915.

In 1932, when Biff would have been at high school, captain of the football team and about to take his State Board of Regents examinations to qualify for the University of Virginia:

- America was in the middle of the Depression;
- about 15 million people were unemployed;
- factories were closing and shops were empty of customers and going out of business, or partly closed for inventory, having overstocked products - being a salesman was not an easy job in this climate;
- few people could afford to drive a car, except for business.



Schlöndorff's film adaptation, 1985.

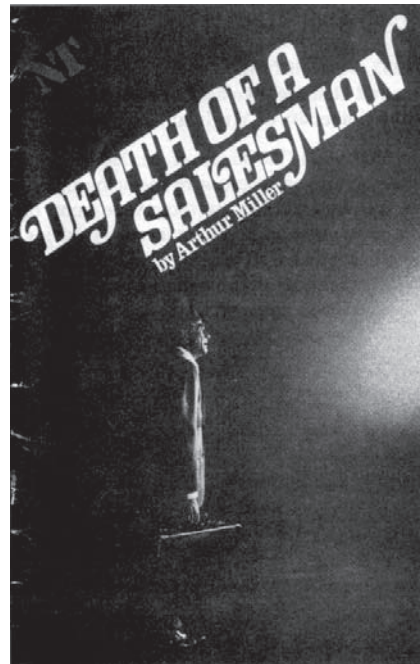


1. The Set

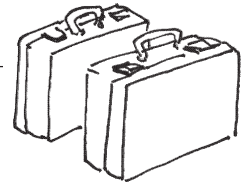
When the play was first staged in 1949, Miller had not included in the text a detailed description of the set. When Jo Mielziner designed the set for the first performance, Miller thought it was so well thought out and imaginative that he included a description of it in the published text. Most productions use a set based on this description.

Look closely at the set description at the beginning of the play. Try to draw a diagram of the set described by Miller. Make sure that you include all of the features he mentions. Compare your diagram with that of someone else in your group. Go back to the text to check any areas of difference and to see whether you have followed Miller's instructions accurately.

Try plotting the movements of Willy and Linda on your diagram, in the first few minutes of the play. You can do this using arrows, to show where Willy enters, where he pauses and so on.



National Theatre Programme 1979



2. Miller's Stage Directions

Miller is a playwright who makes particularly full use of stage directions to set out his intentions for the production of his plays.

His stage directions serve many purposes:

- to suggest movements and actions by characters;
- to indicate set and staging requirements;
- to make use of sound devices to suggest changing moods or changes between past and present;
- to express what a character is thinking or feeling at that moment;
- to express what he feels is the essence of a particular character, as explanatory material for actors and producer.

1. In pairs, read closely the stage directions at the top of Page 8. Continue annotating the stage directions to explore Miller's different purposes, as shown below.

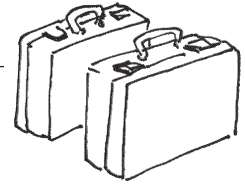
Movement onto the stage

What's happening in Willie's head at this moment? — [From the right, WILLY LOMAN, the Salesman, enters, carrying two large sample cases. The flute plays on. He hears but is not aware of it. He is past sixty years of age, dressed quietly. Even as he crosses the stage to the doorway of the house, his exhaustion is apparent. He unlocks the door, comes into the kitchen, and thankfully lets his burden down, feeling the soreness of his palms. A word-sigh escapes his lips- it might be 'Oh, boy, oh, boy.' He closes the door, then carries his cases out into the living-room, through the draped kitchen doorway. LINDA, his wife, has stirred in her bed at the right. She gets out and puts on a robe, listening. Most often jovial, she has developed an iron repression of her exceptions to WILLY'S behaviour- she more than loves him, she admires him, as though his mercurial nature, his temper, his massive dreams and little cruelties, served her only as sharp reminders of the turbulent longings within him, longings which she shares but lacks the temperament to utter and follow to their end.]

Flute acting as a sound device to suggest a happier past. NB Willie's father played the flute

2. Use Miller's stage directions on Page 8 to act out the first few moments of the play, before the actors begin following the script. Try to incorporate all the ideas and instructions given by Miller.

3. During your reading of the play, use your analysis of this early stage direction as a reminder to look closely at the additional information provided by the stage directions.



3. The Structure of the Play

Past and Present

Arthur Miller said of *Death of a Salesman* that it ‘explodes the watch and the calendar’. The past lives of Willy and his family are mixed in with what is happening to them in the present and this can be quite confusing when you read the play for the first time. It is less confusing if you see the play performed.

When the action shifts into the past it is not just as flashbacks to past events, to let the audience know what happened in the past. All of the characters, and especially Willy, are deeply affected now by what happened in the past.

What we see of the past is a mixture of the events and conversations that happened and the characters’ view of the past as it affects them now.

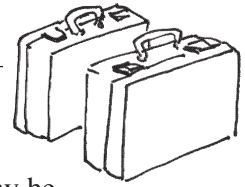
Arthur Miller wrote about the play that he wanted to show that ‘nothing in life comes ‘next’ but that everything exists together and at the same time within us; that there is no past to be ‘brought forward’ in a human being, but that he is his past at every moment and that the present is merely that which his past is capable of noticing and smelling and reacting to. I wished to create a form which, in itself as a form, would literally be the process of Willy Loman’s way of mind.’

Miller helps the audience to be aware of scenes from the past in three ways:

- When the action is in the present, the actors stay inside the imaginary walls of the house on the stage. When they enter into the past, they step through the imaginary walls onto the front of the stage and scenes from the past are shown at the front of the stage.
- The lighting changes to allow the house to look as if it is covered in the shadows of leaves.
- A flute plays to suggest happier times in the past. Miller says it suggests ‘grass and trees and the horizon’.

1. Look closely at this extract from Act One, which shows shifts between past and present in the minds of the characters. Annotate the extract, underlining the moments when there is a shift from present to past and back again. What devices does Miller use to highlight that the characters are moving into the past in their heads?

During Reading



Earlier in the scene, Willy has told Linda that whilst driving the car that day he opened the windshield to let the warm air in.

LINDA: And Willy - if it's warm Sunday we'll drive in the country. And we'll open the windshield, and take lunch.

WILLY: No, the windshields don't open on the new cars.

LINDA: But you opened it today.

WILLY: Me? I didn't. [*He stops.*] Now isn't that peculiar! Isn't that a remarkable - [*He breaks off in amazement and fright as the flute is heard distantly.*]

LINDA: What, darling?

WILLY: That is the most remarkable thing.

LINDA: What, dear?

WILLY: I was thinking of the Chevy. [*Slight pause.*] Nineteen twenty-eightwhen I had that red Chevy - [*Breaks off.*] That funny? I coulda sworn I was driving that Chevy today.

LINDA: Well, that's nothing. Something must've reminded you.

WILLY: Remarkable. Ts. Remember those days? The way Biff used to simonize that car? The dealer refused to believe there was eighty thousand miles on it. [*He shakes his head.*] Heh! [*To LINDA*] Close your eyes, I'll be right up. [*He walks out of the bedroom.*]

HAPPY [*to BIFF*]: Jesus, maybe he smashed up the car again!

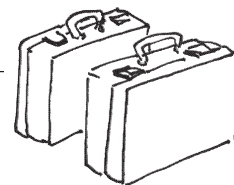
LINDA [*calling after WILLY*]: Be careful on the stairs, dear! The cheese is on the middle shelf! [*She turns, goes over to the bed, takes his jacket, and goes out of the bedroom.*]

2. Flick through the play to find more examples of each of these devices being used to indicate a shift from the present into the past.

The Title of the Play

Miller said that his first title for *Death of a Salesman* was *The Inside of His Head*.

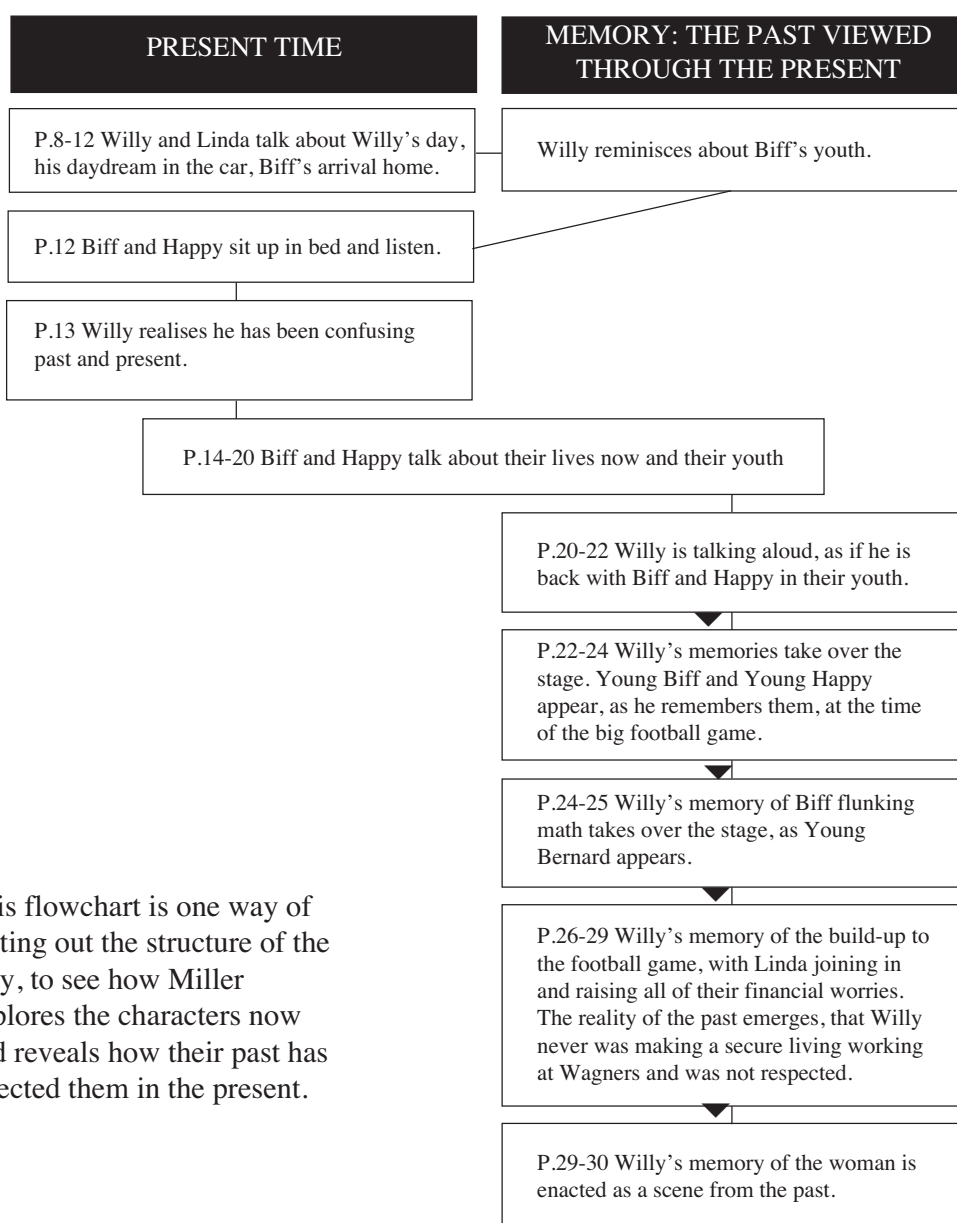
- Why did Miller consider using it?
- What aspects of the play does it emphasise?
- How does it relate to the structure of the play?
- Find three quotes from what you have read so far that would justify the idea that the play is about 'the inside' of Willy Loman's head.



Plotting the Structure of the Play

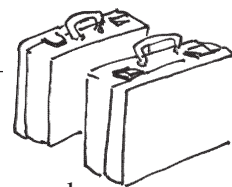
Most plays can be divided up fairly neatly into 'scenic units'. The plot unfolds by characters meeting in different groups, saying and doing things that create new events which change the story. Each new episode, or development of the story forms a scene. In *Death of a Salesman* most of the important events took place in the past and so the question in the audience's mind isn't so much, 'What's going to happen next?' as 'What happened to make this family like it is?' The mixing of past and present means that you can't really break down the play into clear scenes. Explaining the plot of the play is a complicated business.

A Flowchart for Act One



This flowchart is one way of sorting out the structure of the play, to see how Miller explores the characters now and reveals how their past has affected them in the present.

During Reading



1. Work in pairs. Continue the flowchart for Act One. You may need to stop and talk as a whole group about moments when it is hard to be sure whether the action is in the past or the present.
2. When you have finished reading the play, work in pairs to make a similar flowchart for Act Two.

A Flowchart for Act Two

This summary of the events of Act Two might be useful for you to work on as an alternative to going back over the text and listing the events for yourself. Find a way of highlighting the time shifts and noting any patterns you observe. One or two have been marked in for you, as examples of the kinds of things to look for.

The Loman House

Linda and Willy together for morning coffee. Hope in the air. Biff will ask Bill Oliver for a loan. Willy will ask to come off the road. Willy and Linda talk about their finances, their consumer goods and how close they are to paying everything off. The arrangement for the boys to take Willy to a restaurant is discussed. Biff phones Linda.

Howard's Office

Willy goes to see Howard to ask to come off the road. Howard is playing with his tape recorder, listening to his family's voices. Willy tells the story of Dave Singleman. He accidentally starts the recorder. Howard and Willy talk about Willy's performance as a salesman. Willy is fired.

Ben appears. He offers Willy a job, working on his timberland in Alaska. Linda objects, drawing on the Singleman story. Biff is preparing to go to the Ebbets Field game.^{*2} Bernard and Happy both want to carry his gear. Charley teases Willy about not being interested in the game. Willy insults Charley.^{*1}

Charley's Office

Willy banter with Charley's secretary. Talks to Bernard, who is a successful lawyer, about to go to Washington, carrying tennis rackets.^{*2} Willy is puzzled by his success, Biff's failure. Bernard talks about the day Biff flunked math. Questions Willy about what happened in Boston. Bernard leaves for Washington. Charley and Willy talk about salesmen. Charley offers Willy a job. Willy is insulted.^{*1}

**1 Willy's relationship with Charley always seems to end in offence - perhaps because of Willy's competitiveness*

Frank's Chop House

Happy boasts to the waiter about work, family, flirts with girl. Biff tells Happy the truth about the meeting with Bill Oliver. Willy enters in good spirits. Biff desperate to tell him the truth.

Young Bernard tells Mrs. Loman the news about Biff flunking math.

Biff tells Willy he stole the pen of the operator in the hotel in Boston. Biff, frightened by Willy's reaction, tries to backtrack.

The voices of the operator and the woman in the Hotel room intrude. Willy is introduced to Letta and Miss Forsyth. The woman's voice keeps returning. Willy goes to the cloakroom. Biff shows Happy the hose from the cellar. Biff and Happy leave with the girls.

The Hotel Bedroom

The scene in the Hotel Bedroom is enacted, with Willy and the woman being interrupted by the young Biff.

The waiter finds Willy in the cloakroom.

The Loman House

Biff and Happy return home. Linda attacks them for their treatment of Willy. Willy is planting seeds.

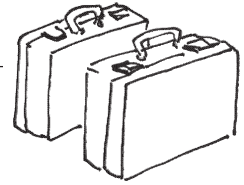
Willy talks to Ben about his insurance policy.

Biff's last effort to tell the truth. Willy goes off in the car.

The Requiem

**2 Irony that Biff used to excel at sport, not Bernard. Now the tennis racket is sign of Bernard's success*

Death of a Salesman



Symbols and Motifs

In *Death of a Salesman* consumer objects keep cropping up in the play, as symbols of what is wrong in the society and in the characters' lives.

Working in small groups, trace the references to consumer goods, using the page numbers listed below. Decide whether the characters' attitudes to them were different in the past compared to the present and what that suggests about their changing views. Why do you think that they are included in the play?

Remember that in the late 1940s when the play was written, far fewer people would have owned cars. A refrigerator would also have been a very big purchase and many families would not have had one. Buying a fridge then might have been like buying a satellite disc now.

Cars: pages 13, 20-21, 26-28, 56-57.

Refrigerator: pages 27, 56.

Stockings: pages 31, 58, 95.

The Shower: pages 52.

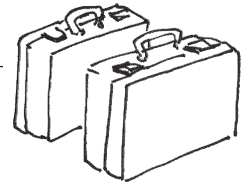
Tape-recorder: pages 59 -61.

Tennis Rackets: pages 71, 72, 74.

Fountain Pen: pages 82, 87.



During Reading



Other Symbols and Motifs

Alongside consumer goods there are other symbols and motifs running through the play.

Working in pairs, divide up the list of symbols and motifs listed below between the pairs in the class. Each pair should take responsibility for collecting the references to that symbol or motif during the reading of the play. You should note down page references and any thoughts about the meaning of the symbol and the way it is being used.

When you have finished reading the play, look back at all the references and notes you have collected. See if you can trace a pattern or development in the use of the symbol or motif. Talk about what the symbol or motif contributes to the development of the themes of the play or to other aspects of the drama. Consider what would be lost without it.

Prepare a ten minute presentation to the rest of the group, about the importance of the symbol or motif you have focused on and tracing its development through the play. You could use an overhead projector, a photocopied handout summarising your main points or a diagram or chart on sugar paper, to help you explain your ideas.

Trees and Leaves

Seeds, Flowers & Vegetables

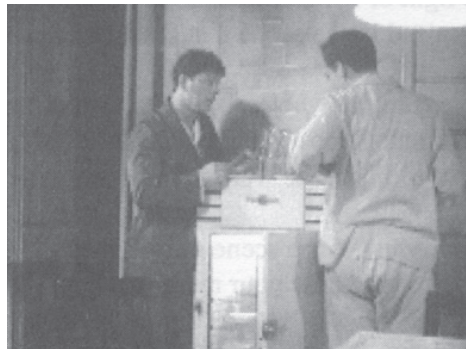
Tools

The Flute

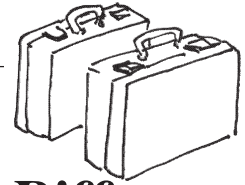
Diamonds

The House

The Great Outdoors



Death of a Salesman



5. First Impressions of Happy and Biff

Read the scene in which you meet Happy and Biff for the first time. The scene starts on page 14 [*Light has risen on the boys' room....*] and ends with the stage directions at the top of page 21 [*Their light is out....*]

1. In pairs, talk about your first impressions of Happy and Biff and their relationship with each other.

These are some issues to discuss:

- What kind of person does Biff seem?
- What kind of person does Happy seem?
- What do they feel about their lives now?
- What do they feel about their lives in the past?
- What are their feelings about their father, Willy?
- What kind of relationship do they have with each other?
- What tensions and conflicts are raised at this point in the play?
- What themes does Miller seem to be introducing through this dialogue between Biff and Happy ?

As you are talking, go back through the scene to look for evidence in support of your views. Pull out short quotes and note them down.

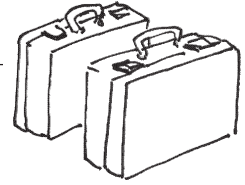
Writing

a. Write an account of your first impressions of Happy and Biff in this scene, using evidence and ideas collected in your paired discussion.

b. Keep this account. When you have finished reading the whole play, go back to the scene in Biff and Happy's bedroom. Re-read it and re-read your account of your first impressions of the characters. Think about how differently you read this scene in the light of having read the whole play. For example:

- Does anything seem important that you previously hardly noticed?
- Are there any clues about characters and relationships that seem particularly interesting in the light of the additional knowledge shed by Act Two?
- What themes are raised in the scene that become important in the rest of the play?
- Now that you have read the whole play, what do you think of the way Miller has introduced Biff and Happy in the bedroom scene?
- What would be lost if this scene were omitted from the play?

Write an account of your view of the scene having read the play, to put alongside your first impressions, showing how your reading of it has changed and developed.



6. The Card Game Scene

There are some scenes in the play which are particularly important moments of dramatic tension, or turning points in the action, or moments when something new is revealed either to the characters or to the audience.

It is worth looking closely at what Miller is doing with one of these scenes, the Card Game Scene, and how it contributes to the play as a whole.

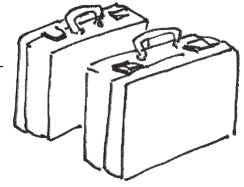
Work in groups of 6. (If there are less than 6 in the group, you will need to double up on character roles, with one person acting Charley **and** either Linda, Biff or Happy. If there are more than 6, one person should act as observer/ helper.)

1. Re-read the scene, from page 32 [*CHARLEY has appeared in the doorway...*] to page 41 [*LINDA:Come to bed, heh?*], sharing out the parts between you.

2. In your group, prepare a performance of the scene. You should make notes of your production ideas on a copy of the scene. Your production ideas should include:

- Decisions on the positions characters will take up and their movements/ the spatial relationships between the characters, such as distance between them, height/ where the audience's attention will be focused and how.
- Decisions on how the characters are feeling at different stages in the scene and how this can be revealed by tone of voice/ facial gestures/ body language/ movements. After a first reading, you could read the scene again, stopping three or four times to note down the thoughts in each character's head at different points in the scene.
- Decisions on how you are going to help the audience grasp the difficulties of the scene, such as shifts from present to past in Willy's mind, the confusions arising from Willy's growing instability and the appearance on stage of characters from the past, who are not really there but can be seen by the audience (e.g. Ben, the young Biff and Happy).
- A decision on one moment in the scene that you are going to **freeze-frame**, so that other groups can walk round you, look closely at the composition of the scene and question the characters in role by touching each character on the shoulder and asking their thoughts and feelings.

During Reading



3. Act out the scene in front of the other groups. Stop the action at the moment you have decided to freeze-frame. Pause to allow the other groups to wander round you, take notes on your positioning and question you about your feelings. When they have finished doing so, continue your performance to the end of the scene.

4. When each of the groups has performed the scene, with a freeze-framed moment, de-brief the activity by talking about how differently each group approached the scene and what you learned about the situation and the characters from looking at different performances of it.

Writing

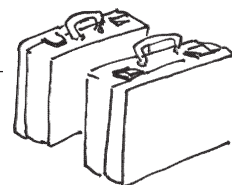
1. Write a detailed commentary to go with your annotated copy of the scene, explaining the decisions you took, discussing the difficulties of producing the scene and evaluating your production and performance of the scene.

2. Write about why you think this is an important scene in the play. You might want to write about:

- what is happening to Willy in this scene;
- what the scene reveals to the audience about the characters;
- why Charley's involvement in the scene is important;
- why Miller includes the on-stage presence of Ben, young Biff, young Happy and Linda as a younger woman;
- how the scene relates to what comes before and after it in the play.



Death of a Salesman



1. Using Your Flowcharts

1. Work with the person you worked with on the flowcharts.

Look back at the flowcharts you produced for each Act.

2. Make a copy of the two charts and paste them each onto A3 paper, to leave space around the edges for annotations.

3. Annotate the charts in this way:

- Draw lines and arrows to show patterns and relationships between parts of the play e.g. a line linking Willy's glorified account of Dave Singleman (page 63) with Ben's scorn for the idea of Singleman (page 67). Comment on the links you have made.
- Highlight any moments that you think are turning-points or climaxes in the drama. Look at where they appear, in which Act? At what moment? Prepared for in what ways? Paralleled by any other similar or contrasting scenes?
- Mark on the text any points at which a symbol or motif seems to take on a particular importance e.g. the planting of seeds at the end of Act Two.

Writing

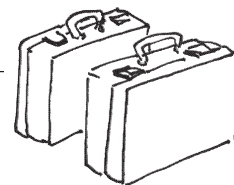
Look back at all the work you have done on the use of past and present in the play, the significance of the title, *The Inside of His Head*, plotting and analysing the structure of the play.

1. Write about what you think of *The Inside of his Head* as a way of describing the way *Death of a Salesman* is structured and what it is about.

2. Pick one scene from Act One that seems to you to show particularly well Miller's way of structuring the drama of Willy Loman.

You might want to write about:

- the way he uses past and present;
- the way he uses symbols and motifs in the scene;
- the way he uses parallels and contrasts;
- the way he builds up tension;
- the way he creates dramatic climaxes.



2. Willy, Biff and Happy

In *Death of a Salesman* the characters change, not only because of the events that occur in the the present, but also because of events that have taken place in the past. Charting their development is complicated further because the characters are not always honest with themselves or each other about what their lives are really like. Some of Willy's talk about the past is shown to be unrealistic and false, just as his dreams for the future are unreal fantasies. Biff and Happy also slip into fantasies about the past and future, as well as sometimes trying to be more honest with themselves.

Work in pairs or small groups. Each group should work on one character. Prepare a presentation of your ideas to the rest of your class, going back to the text to find evidence and quotes.

Look at this list of statements about these characters. Decide which you agree with.

Biff in the Present

Biff hates Willy and has no respect for him.

Biff is a drifter who has become a failure because of the way Willy brought him up. He should try to settle down and lead a decent life.

Biff's rootless life is a sign that he is searching for something important: his own identity.

Biff's love for Willy is stronger than that of Happy, even though he is bitter and angry with him.

Biff looks back on his past as a wonderful time, when he had a happy family and led the life of a hero.

Biff understands the past and realises that Willy's view of it is a fantasy.

Biff in the Past

Biff was a football hero and had a glorious youth, full of promise.

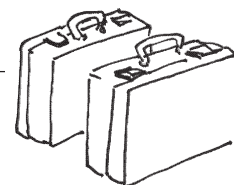
Biff was full of hot air. He stole and cheated but got away with it because he was 'well liked'.

Biff's discovery of Willy's affair with the buyer is the cause of all his later problems.

Biff's discovery of the affair forces him to face reality for the first time in his life. It is really the beginning of him 'finding himself.'

Biff's values as a boy were instilled in him by Willy.

After Reading



Willy in the Present

Willy is no longer successful as a salesman and is not earning enough to pay all his debts.

Willy is disappointed in Biff and feels that he should be more successful.

For Willy, success is being happy and doing what you want to do.

Willy relies very heavily on Linda but he shows no respect for her.

Willy looks back on the past as a golden time, full of promise.

Willy is not always honest with himself. He fantasises about the past and the future.

Willy is jealous of Charlie and Bernard.

Willy in the Past

Willy brought up his sons in a good and honest way.

Willy is to blame for Biff's failure and Happy's lifestyle.

Willy's affair was just another example of the lies beneath the surface of his life.

The fact that Willy lost his father so early in his own life accounts for some of his insecurity and difficulties in bringing up his own sons.

Willy was not influenced by his brother Ben.

Willy was scornful of Charlie and Bernard, because of their approach to life and their personal qualities.

Happy in the Present

Happy is happy.

Happy has totally accepted Willy's values and ideas about what it means to be successful.

Happy has a realistic view of the past.

Happy's love for his father is rather shallow.

Happy has turned out to be a 'good' person.

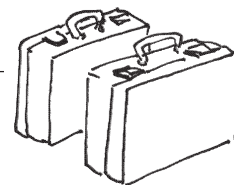
Happy in the Past

Happy was in the shadow of Biff.

Happy worshipped Willy.

While Biff had a growing awareness that they were living in a fantasy world, Happy was completely taken in by the myth.

Death of a Salesman



3. Willy, Biff and Happy - Real Life Models

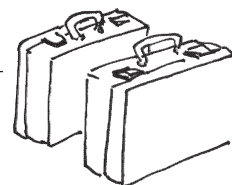
In his autobiography, *Timebends* Arthur Miller describes some of the background to his creation of the characters of Willy, Biff and Happy. His uncle Manny and cousins Buddy and Abby bear some similarities to the fictional characters of the play.

Manny

Manny Newman was cute and ugly, a Pan risen out of the earth, a bantam with a lisp, sunken brown eyes, a lumpy, pendulous nose, dark brown skin, and gnarled arms. When I walked into the house, he would look at me - usually standing there in his one-piece BVD's, carrying a hammer or a screwdriver or perhaps a shoe box filled with his collection of pornographic postcards - as though he had never seen me before or, if he had, would just as soon not see me again. He was a competitor, at all times, in all things, and at every moment. My brother and I he saw running neck and neck with his two sons in some race that never stopped in his mind.....

It was a house without irony, trembling with resolutions and shouts of victories that had not yet taken place but surely would tomorrow. Both boys could be Eagle Scouts and win all the badges and make their beds and clean up after themselves and speak often and gravely of the family's honor and then, with Bernie Crystal and Louis Fleishman, go into Rubin's candy store and distract him long enough to make off with his three-foot-high globular glass display vase filled with penny candy. Or spend weeks preparing a camping trip to the South Pole, and once up there, having followed every honourable rule of scouting, find an old whore in a local tavern and spend the night taking turns with her in the pup tent and in the morning cut her reward by half, figuring that as brothers they should only be charged one fee. Everybody envied them, especially Buddy, the eldest, who played baseball and basketball and football and got mentioned in the Brooklyn *Eagle* two or three times and took two hours to get himself dressed for a date, oiling his black hair and talcing his face and punching himself in the stomach and snarling into the mirror to peruse his teeth.....

(Page 122-3)



It was the unpredictability of his life that wove romance around it. He was not in some dull salaried job where you could never hope to make a killing. Hope was his food and drink, and the need to project hopeful culminations for a selling trip helped, I suppose, to make life unreal. Fifty years later, in my Chinese production of *Death of a Salesman*, Ying Ruo Cheng, the actor playing Willy, was trying to imagine an equivalent to this romance of hope in some Chinese occupation, selling having always been a disreputable pursuit for Chinese, and certainly not something to be romanticized. He finally seized on the outriders who in the old times had accompanied caravans across China, protecting them from bandits. These hired guns had all kinds of adventures and formed a kind of bragging brotherhood, meeting in faraway places from time to time to trade tales of victories and defeats. With the coming of the railroads the need for their services vanished, and they ended up in local fairs firing at targets, swallowing swords, and drinking to forget (rather like our Buffalo Bill).

Much more than a single model would ultimately go into Willy Loman. Indeed, since I saw so little of Manny he was already, in my youth, as much myth as fact. But there are images of such defined power and density that without offering concrete information to the writer they are nevertheless the sources of his art.

(Page 126)

Buddy and Abby

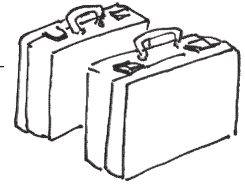
Manny had managed to make his boys into a pair of strong, self-assured young men, musketeers bound to one another's honor and proud of their family. Neither was patient enough or perhaps capable enough to sit alone and study, and they both missed going to college.

(Page 127)

Abby

The last I saw of Abby was a number of years before he died, in his early forties, like his mother of hypertension. He had invited me to his bachelor apartment in Manhattan after I phoned him. I had not seen him since before the war. Wearing blue silk pajamas and slippers, he ushered me into his small living room overlooking lower Lexington Avenue. It was a late Saturday afternoon. *All My Sons* was running on Broadway. *Focus* had been published a year or two earlier, and I had a wife and two children. What he had come out of his bedroom on two pairs of spike heels, two startlingly beautiful young women who dashed over to him where he sat and kissed him on each cheek, pausing only long enough to nod to me as he introduced me with a display of pasha-like satisfaction. Buttoning up blouses and straightening stockings, they hurried out of the apartment. They were late, they said, for work. 'I love it with two,' he chuckled as the door slammed shut.

(Page 128)



Manny and Abby

‘What did your pop want?’ I asked him. This was what I had come for. I was obsessed these days by vague but exciting images of what can only be called a trajectory, an arched flow of storytelling with neither transitional dialogue nor a single fixed locale, a mode that would open a man’s head for a play to take place inside it, evolving through concurrent rather than consecutive actions. By this time I had known three suicides, two of them salesmen. I knew only that Manny had died with none of the ordinary reasons given. I had also totally forgotten that ten years earlier I had begun a play in college about a salesman and his family but had abandoned it. I would only discover the notebook in which I had written it some nine years hence - long after the first production of *Death of a Salesman* - when my marriage broke up and I had to move my papers out of my Brooklyn house.

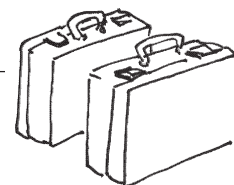
‘I mean if you had to say the one thing he wanted most, the one thing that occurred to him most often, what would it be?’

My cousin Abby, big, dark, filled with the roiling paradoxes of love for me and competitive resentment, of contempt for his late failed father and at the same time a pitying love and even amused admiration for the man’s outrageousness - my cousin sitting there had also entered my dreams not long before, and possibly it was the dream that had caused me to ring him up after so many years.

A vast purple plain blends on the horizon into an orange sunset sky. My bare white foot is lowering into a shallow hole at the bottom of which is a little pool of crystal clear water beneath whose surface are stretched five silvery strings, thick as harp strings. My foot descends and touches them, and the air fills with a bloom of music that even ripples the water. Now in the near distance appears a white concrete wall on the purple plain, and as I approach I see two goat-like fawns walking on their hind legs. They are playing handball against the wall. They are my cousins, Abby and Buddy. The smack of the hard black ball against their forehooves is tremendous, thrilling.

(Page 129)





4. Fathers and Sons

Arthur Miller said of *Death of a Salesman* that it is 'really a love story between a man and his son, and in a crazy way between both of them and America'. The relationships between fathers and sons are at the heart of the play. For Miller, people are created by their past and in particular by their early family relationships. Willy's insecurities, his relationship with his sons and his final breakdown had their seeds in his relationship with his own family and the insecurity of his early childhood.

Look at this list of all the father/son and brother relationships that are found in the play.

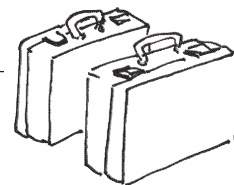
Willy and Biff;
 Willy and Happy;
 Biff and Happy
 Willy and his own father;
 Willy and Ben;
 Charley and Bernard.

Try presenting each of the relationships in diagrammatic form. For each relationship, look at this list of words and decide which ones are true of the relationship. It may be that different words are more or less true at different times in the play. Your chart should try to show changes across the play.

loving	resentful	rejecting
angry	scornful	forgiving
admiring	confused	like-minded
honest	hostile	friendly
dishonest	disappointed	argumentative
respectful	distant	

Different stages in the play:

1. **Act One** • Biff's return home
2. **Act One** • the past, when Biff was a football hero
3. **Act One** • Willy's memories of his own father and brother
4. **Act Two** • in the chop house after Willy is sacked and Biff goes to see Bill Oliver
5. **Act Two** • the past, after Biff went to Boston to see Willy
6. **Act Two** • after the show-down between Willy and Biff.



Writing

1. A psychoanalytic view of the play might focus on the relationships between fathers and sons and explain the characters in terms of their childhood experiences. Write about the way in which Willy was formed by his own childhood experience of his father and about the way in which this influenced his approach to his own sons. Try to include something about his relationship with his brother Ben and how that compares with Biff and Happy's relationship as brothers.

2. Charley and Bernard have a very different father/son relationship to that of Willy and his sons. Try writing a scene from the past, when Bernard was a boy, with Charley and Bernard talking about the events of the play. They could be talking about:

- Biff and Happy;
- school work;
- the future and what Bernard should be aiming for in life;
- Bernard's feelings about himself, as compared with Biff.

Try to show the differences between Charley's relationship with Bernard and Willy's relationship with his sons. You could look back at pages 22-26 to remind yourself of the way Willy talked to his 'boys'.

For example:

BERNARD: Did you hear about Biff becoming captain of the football team? Isn't that great?

CHARLEY: Sure, but I hope it leaves him time to study.

BERNARD: I'm worried about Biff, Dad. He's a big football hero but he don't seem happy.

3. Look closely at Miller's statement that *Death of a Salesman* is:

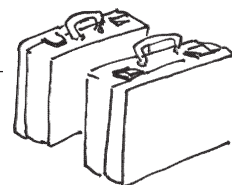
'really a love story between a man and his son, and in a crazy way between both of them and America.'

Look at both parts of the statement.

What do you think he means?

Do you agree with this reading of the play or are there other views of what is going on in the play that you would foreground?

Write about whether you agree with Miller, going back to the text to give evidence and examples to justify your view of the play.



5. Linda

Sub-texting Linda's thoughts

Linda is shown in two contexts: in dialogue with Willy and her sons, and in scenes where Willy is absent.

The end of Act One is one example of Linda in dialogue with her family.

Work in small groups and look back at the end of Act One, starting at the bottom of page 50, where Biff says, 'I'll see Oliver tomorrow....'

Re-read the scene, out loud, sharing out the parts but with an extra Linda (5 parts in all). Each time Linda speaks, the extra Linda should express what is going on at that moment in her head, as if she is Linda's inner voice.

Part of the way through the scene, change parts, so that more than one person has the chance to be Linda's inner voice.

For example:

LINDA: Maybe things are beginning to -

[Inner Voice: Thank God for something hopeful. Willy has to have something to dream about ...]

Linda without Willy

There are three key scenes in which Linda appears without Willy:

- Act One, bottom of page 41, where she talks to Biff and Happy.
- Act Two, page 97, when Biff and Happy return home from their night out.
- Requiem, page 110, at Willy's graveside.

Re-read these scenes in turn.

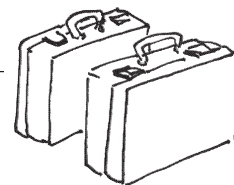
For each scene, talk about what the scene adds to your awareness and understanding of Linda. What would be lost if the scene had been omitted?

One critic, Bernard F. Dukore, describes these three scenes by saying that:

- in one scene Linda pleads Willy's case as a father;
- in one scene Linda pleads Willy's case as a man;
- in one scene Linda pleads Willy's case as a husband.

Try to match Dukore's statements to the scenes.

Talk about whether you agree with Dukore's view of what Linda is doing in these scenes.



Talking about Linda

Drawing on what you have done so far on Linda's character, talk about the statements below, deciding whether you agree or disagree with them and why.

- Linda is a victim of Willy's bullying and emotional blackmail.
- It is Linda who holds the family together.
- Linda understands what is going on in the family very well but doesn't have the power to make use of that knowledge to change the course of events.
- The whole of Linda's life is devoted to supporting Willy.
- Linda is taken in by Willy's dreams and believes them herself.
- 'She is neither stupid nor overly passive, as some assert. Were she to nag Willy to face reality, he might emulate his father and abandon the family.' (Bernard Dukore)
- Linda behaves as she does, not because of her personal inadequacies but because of the way she is positioned within the nuclear family and the kind of society she lives in.

Add any statements of your own.

Linda's Role in the Play

Christopher Bigsby, in an interview with Arthur Miller asked him whether he in any way regretted 'not giving Linda more resources to make the battle a bit more equal'.

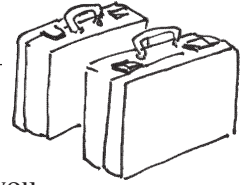
Miller replied:

' I regretted it at the time but I couldn't honestly give her what I didn't think she would ever have. You see, if that woman were more articulate in terms of her ability to handle it, probably they would have broken apart earlier on; she couldn't have stood it. You know, he's a cruel son of a bitch that guy; everybody is charmed by him but if you objectively face some of those scenes in the bedroom, he just wipes the floor with her from time to time. You see a woman who was thinking of herself more would simply not have been there one morning, or else she would have put up such a fight as to crush him because he would never be able to accept any independence around him. This is part of the disease.'

Writing

1. Re-write the scene that you sub-texted at the end of Act One , following your own ideas for how Linda might behave differently in the scene. Use this as a chance to explore how different the play might be if Miller had given Linda a different role. Write a commentary to go with the scene, explaining what you felt was going on in the original scene and how and why you have adapted it.

After Reading

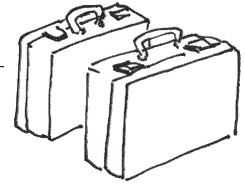


2. Write about Linda's role in the play, using these suggestions for issues you might consider:

- What role has Miller given to Linda in the play?
- Why is she represented as she is?
- Does the play encourage us to think about her in her own right, or does she just exist in the play to demonstrate Willy to us?
- What difference would it make if Linda were not there: to our view of Willy, to our view of Biff, to our view of Happy, to the messages we take away with us from the play?



Biff, Linda and Happy, Schlondorff, 1985.



6. A Question of Values

‘On the play’s opening night a woman who shall not be named was outraged, calling it ‘a time bomb under American capitalism’; I hoped it was, or at least under the bullshit of capitalism, this pseudo life that thought to touch the clouds by standing on top of a refrigerator, waving a paid-up mortgage at the moon, victorious at last.’

(Timebends)

Look at these quotations from the play. What do they suggest about each of the characters’ views of success and the American Dream at the stage in the play when they say it?

BIFF: And whenever spring comes to where I am, I suddenly get the feeling, my God, I’m not gettin’ anywhere. What the hell am I doing, playing around with horses, twenty-eight dollars a week! I’m thirty-four years old, I oughta be makin’ my future. That’s when I come running home. And now, I get here, and I don’t know what to do with myself. (Page 16.)

HAPPY: But then it’s what I always wanted. My own apartment, a car, and plenty of women. And still, goddammit, I’m lonely. (Page 17.)

HAPPY: I gotta show some of those pompous, self-important executives over there that Hap Loman can make the grade. (Page 18.)

WILLY: America is full of beautiful towns and fine, upstanding people. And they know me, boys, they know me up and down New England. The finest people. And when I bring you fellas up, there’ll be open sesame for all of us, cause one thing, boys: I have friends. (Page 24.)

WILLY: ... the man who makes an appearance in the business world, the man who creates personal interest, is the man who gets ahead. Be liked and you will never want. (Page 25.)

BEN: Why boys, when I was seventeen I walked into the jungle, and when I was twenty-one I walked out. *(He laughs)*. And by God I was rich. (Page 37.)

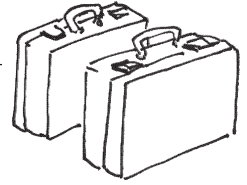
WILLY: You can’t eat the orange and throw the peel away- a man is not a piece of fruit! (Page 64.)

LINDA: Why must everybody conquer the world? (Page 67.)

WILLY: And that’s the wonder, the wonder of this country, that a man can endwith diamonds here on the basis of being liked! (Page 68.)

BIFF: Pop! I’m a dime a dozen, and so are you! (Page 105.)

HAPPY: He had a good dream. It’s the only dream you can have - to come out number-one man. (Page 111.)



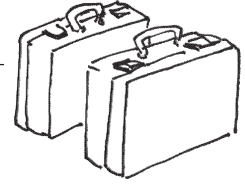
Writing

1. What do you think Arthur Miller is trying to say about ‘success’ and the American Dream in *Death of a Salesman*? Is he using the story of Willy to put across a message?

Use some of the quotations you looked at earlier to describe what Miller is trying to say. You may be helped by the quote from *Timebends*.



Biff and Willy, Schlöndorff's film adaptation, 1985.



7. Buying and Selling

Willy's job is not just any job. He is a salesman and selling is an important idea that runs through the play.

Business success is part of the American Dream. The play also shows the growth of a consumer society, in which it suddenly became possible to buy lots of consumer goods - fridges, cars, tape-recorders - and people measured their success by what they could afford to buy. It became possible to buy on credit and pay back in instalments, so that expensive objects were within people's grasp. But, as the play shows, these objects that people desired and dreamed of possessing did not necessarily bring happiness.

In small groups talk about these issues:

Do you think we live in a consumer society? Have you felt pressure to buy the right things - clothes, music or other desirable things? Does this ever cause problems for you and your friends? Are you ever tempted to buy things you can't afford?

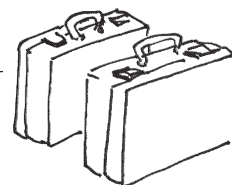
Nowadays, one of the biggest problems associated with the consumer society is debt, particularly amongst young people. Credit cards, so-called 'plastic money', make it very easy for people to buy more than they can afford and run up huge debts.

A critic called Raymond Williams said of Willy Loman that he was 'a man who from selling things has passed to selling himself, and has become, in effect, a commodity which like other commodities will at a certain point be economically discarded.' In the play we never find out what Willy actually sells but Miller responded to this question by saying, 'Himself'.

Look at the quotations from the play that follow. Decide which of these messages they are trying to get across:

1. The society of the play is a society which discards people when they are no longer financially useful.
2. A consumer society produces products which are junk.
3. Consumerism changes people and makes them behave in less 'human' ways.
4. The salesman's life is based on false hopes: he makes his living by encouraging other people's false hopes about the products they buy and he has to be optimistic himself in order to have the confidence to sell, sell, sell.

After Reading



LINDA: Well, the fan belt broke, so it was a dollar eighty.

WILLY: But it's brand new.

LINDA: Well, the man said that's the way it is. Till they work themselves in y'know. (Page 27.)

WILLY: That goddam Chevrolet, they ought to prohibit the manufacture of that car! (Page 28.)

CHARLEY (*talking of Biff*): When a deposit bottle is broken you don't get your nickel back. (Page 34.)

LINDA: He works for a company thirty-six years this March, opens up unheard-of territories to their trademark, and now in his old age they take his salary away. (Page 44.)

WILLY: Once in my life I would like to own something outright before it's broken: I'm always in a race with the junkyard! (Page 57.)

WILLY: You can't eat the orange and throw the peel away - a man is not a piece of fruit! (Page 65.)

CHARLEY: ... man way out there in the blue, riding on a smile and a shoeshine. And when they start not smiling back - that's an earthquake. And then you get yourself a couple of spots on your hat, and you're finished. Nobody dast blame this man. A salesman is got to dream, boy. It comes with the territory. (Page 111.)

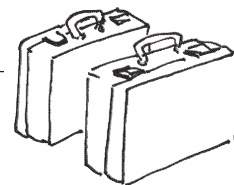
Writing

1. Write about whether you agree with Raymond Williams' view that the play shows Willy trying to sell himself like a commodity and finally being discarded.

Think about the messages the play offers about consumerism and the way consumer symbols and motifs are used to re-inforce this theme.

To what extent do you feel that Willy is a man with personality problems, or is someone whose problems are caused by the kind of society he lives in?

2. Write about the title, 'Death of a Salesman' exploring what it means to you and whether it is a good title for the play. Is it important that the word 'Salesman' should be in the title? What themes and ideas does it suggest that you find represented in the play?



8. What's in a Name?

Sometimes playwrights choose the names of their characters to highlight something important about them.

In pairs look at each of these names in turn. Discuss what they make you think of and how well they suit the character for whom they have been chosen.

Loman

Biff

Dave Singleman

Bernard

Happy

One critic explained Arthur Miller's choice of Willy Loman's name. He said that Loman stood for 'low man on the totem pole', in other words, bottom of the heap. Miller wanted to write a play about an ordinary person, who would be recognised by ordinary people watching the play. He wanted his hero to be a 'common man'. He said of Willy that he is 'a character so complex, so contradictory, so vulnerable, so insensitive, so trusting, so distrustful, so blind, so aware - in short, so human - that he forces man on us by being one.'

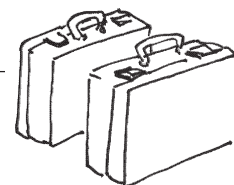
Miller himself said that he was not thinking of these things in choosing the name Loman but that subconsciously he had remembered the name Lohmann from a favourite film of his by Fritz Lang, a thriller called *The Testament of Dr. Mabuse*, in which a terrified young detective tries to call his boss for help. His boss is called Lohmann.

Miller said, 'In later years I found it discouraging to observe the confidence with which some commentators on *Death of a Salesman* smirked at the heavy-handed symbolism of 'Low-man'. What the name really meant to me was a terror-stricken man calling into the void for help that will never come.'

Names are important because they define one's identity as an individual and *Death of a Salesman* is all about the struggle of Willy (and Biff) to find and assert their identity. In the last scenes of the play Biff says to Willy, 'Pop! I'm a dime a dozen, and so are you!' Willy replies, 'I am not a dime a dozen! I am Willy Loman, and you are Biff Loman.'

Find one quotation from the play to back up each of these statements.

1. It doesn't matter how unimportant a person you are in society, you still need to be seen as important and treated with respect.
2. Biff is trying to find out who he is.
3. Biff believes that Willy has never really known himself.
4. Willy feels insecure about his own identity.
5. Happy has adopted an identity that he believes Willy would be proud of.
6. Willy finds himself by the end of the play.



9. The Ending

The Climax of the Play

In pairs re-read the climax of the play, from page 97, where Happy and Biff return home, to page 109.

In pairs or small groups go through the text, picking out five short key quotes, which seem to you to express any of these things:

- a change of attitude in a character by the end of the play;
- a realisation of an important truth by a character;
- a summing up of a key theme in the play;
- a moment of tragedy.

Write down each quote, talk about why it seems to you to be important or interesting and note down key points raised in your discussion.

Join up with another pair or small group. Present to each other the quotes you chose. Using the ideas raised in this activity, try to make a list of agreed statements that you would like to make about the climax of *Death of a Salesman*.

For example:

The ending makes us feel...

By the end of the play...

It is tragic because...

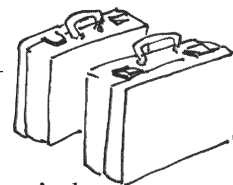
The Requiem

Paste a copy of the Requiem onto a sheet of A3 paper or sugar paper.

Work on the text and make notes on it, using underlining, arrows and comments and other such devices. Use these prompts to help you:

- Brainstorm the title. What is a Requiem? In what sense is this section a Requiem?
- Ask questions of the text, such as why characters say what they do/ behave in the ways that they do in the Requiem? e.g. why can't Linda cry? Why does Charley say, 'Nobody dast blame this man'?
- Trace back through the play the reverberations of what people say in the Requiem e.g. look back through the play to see why it is important that Linda says 'Why didn't anybody come?'
- For each character, think about what is added to our understanding of them by the inclusion of the Requiem.

After Reading



- Talk about why Miller felt that the Requiem was necessary. Why wasn't the climax on pages 108-9 enough of an ending? How does it work as a conclusion to the drama?
- In what ways, if any, are Miller's own comments on the Requiem useful? Discuss and annotate them to see what light they throw on the Requiem.

'But the key is in the requiem at the end, which everybody wanted me to cut out. They said that the audience were never going to stay there because Willy Loman is dead; there's nothing more to say. Of course, they did want to stay there, just as you do want to go to a funeral. And what is the point of a funeral? You want to think over the life of the departed and it's in there, really, that it's nailed down: he won't accept this life.'

Arthur Miller and Company

'I must confess here to a miscalculation, however. I did not realize while writing the play that so many people in the world do not see as clearly, or would not admit, as I thought they must, how futile most lives are; so there could be no hope of consoling the audience for the death of this man. I did not realize either how few would be impressed by the fact that his man is actually a very brave spirit who cannot settle for half but must pursue his dream of himself to the end. Finally, I thought it must be clear, even obvious, that this was no dumb brute heading mindlessly to his catastrophe.'

Introduction, Collected Plays

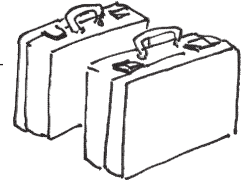
Writing

1. Write a commentary on the Requiem, showing what it adds to the play and discussing what you feel about it as an ending.
2. Choose one character in the Requiem. Write a monologue which explores more fully their attitudes, state of mind and feelings about the events of the play, using what they say in the Requiem as a starting-point. You could incorporate their words from the Requiem in your monologue.

For example:

Linda: **Why didn't anybody come?** He was popular, I know he was. He was a man who was respected for his work as a salesman ...

Death of a Salesman



10. The Restaurant Scene on Stage and Screen

In this section you are going to concentrate on directing and performing one scene from the play, the scene where Willy meets his sons in the restaurant on page 57.

A Stage Production

Preparing for the Rehearsal

In groups of four you are going to rehearse this scene with a view to performing it for the rest of the class. Before you begin to annotate your texts, refresh your memory of what has taken place before this key scene by examining the time plan for Act Two so that you can get a sense of how the previous scenes are linked together. For example, in Act Two Scene One we hear Willy talking about his consumer goods which are falling apart. Then in the following scene, Howard shows him the wire-recorder, (a machine shortly to become obsolete), Willy himself gets the sack and becomes obsolete.

Try to focus on the following things as you pool your ideas on performing the scene:

- What expectations does each character bring to the meeting?
- How do images of selling pervade the relationships?
- What words and actions trigger off certain reactions?
- How does the playwright orchestrate Willy's gradual disintegration?
- In what ways are we being prepared for the next scene?
- Why is the hotel bedroom scene coming next?

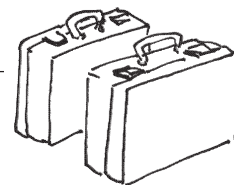
Planning the rehearsal

Now in your groups of four do a read-through of the restaurant scene without actually performing it. Discuss the following points:

- what's going on in the characters' heads and how they are feeling about, and responding to each other;
- the pacing and intonation of the reading;
- facial expression and body stance;
- how the director might organise the physical relationships and the way characters move.

Now that you have had a chance to discuss the scene, make notes on the text to help you give support to the actors in the task of interpreting their parts as if for the very first New York production.

To give you some ideas for this, examine the following rehearsal notes on the tennis rackets scene made by Elia Kazan, the director of the very first American production of *Death of a Salesman*.



The Script

[Noticing the rackets]

WILLY: You going to play tennis there? ¹⁴

BERNARD: I'm staying with a friend who's got a court.

WILLY [*Wondrously*]: Don't say. ¹⁵ His own tennis court. Must be fine ¹⁵ people, I bet.

BERNARD: They are, very nice. ¹⁶ Dad tells me Biff's in town. ¹⁷

WILLY ¹⁸[*Big smile*]: Yeah, Biff's in. Working on a very big deal, Bernard.

BERNARD: ¹⁹ What's Biff doing? ^{20,21}

WILLY: Well, he's been doing very big things in the West. But he decided to establish himself here. Very big. We're having dinner. ²² Did I hear your wife had a boy? ²³

BERNARD: That's right. Our second. ²⁴

WILLY: Two boys! What do you know?

BERNARD: What kind of a deal has Biff got?

WILLY: Well, Bill Oliver - a very big sporting-goods man - he wants Biff very badly. Called him in from the West. Long-distance, carte blanche, special deliveries. ²⁵ Your friends have their own private tennis court?

²⁶ BERNARD: ²⁷ You still with the old firm, Willy?

WILLY: ²⁸ I'm ... overjoyed to see how you made the grade, Bernard - overjoyed. It's an encouraging thing to see a young man really ... really ... looks very good for Biff ... very ... ²⁸

²⁹ [*He breaks off. Then ...*]

Bernard ... ³⁰

[*He is so full of emotion, he breaks off again.*]

BERNARD: ³¹ What is it, Willy?

[*Pause*]

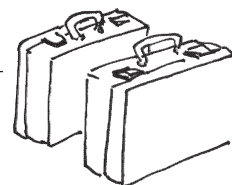
WILLY [*Small and alone*]: ³² What... what's the secret?

BERNARD: ³³ What secret?

WILLY [*With an embarrassed smile*]: ³⁴ How ... how did you ...? Why didn't he ever catch on?

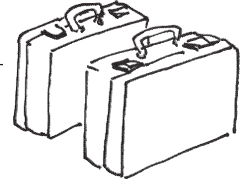
BERNARD: ³⁵ I wouldn't know that, Willy.





Elia Kazan's Rehearsal Notes

- ¹⁴ How did the little schmuck do it?
- ¹⁵ *Willy* invests all these things [a private court] with great drama, mystery, and wonder.
- ¹⁶ *Bernard*: changes subject. Bernard always feels a little uncomfortable squirming under *Willy*'s amazed admiration.
- ¹⁷ *Both* are now figuring out what happened.
- Bernard keeps playing with his Beta Kappa key, his glasses, his watch. They smoke, cigarette case, etc.
- ¹⁸ *Willy*: redemption, make it up.
- ¹⁹ *Bernard*: find facts. Bernard knows *Willy* is lying. Now he begins to ponder the source of it.
- ²⁰ They are *not talking to each other*. They are *examining each other*. Not particular cues - as if speeches are entirely unrelated.
- ²¹ What is he *really* doing?
- ²² Change subject.
- ²³ *Willy* is *not* a grandfather. He wants it desperately.
- ²⁴ Offers cigarette here.
- ²⁵ Change subject.
- ²⁶ Bernard takes cue - goes behind *Willy* to get matches , etc.
- ²⁷ Change subject.
- ²⁸ *Willy* is bleeding inside. Suddenly can't stand it. Bernard conceals that he thinks *Willy* is a pathetic fake. Bernard bows his head and shields his eyes as if he is embarrassed for *Willy*.
- ²⁹ *Willy* tries to speak of it. *Can't*. About to cry. Can't speak! Can't speak!
- ³⁰ *Willy* tenses in his chair and turns out.
- ³¹ *Bernard*: to help - he's full of pity.
- ³² *Willy*: forcing it out.
N.B. He thinks it's some secret. Some magic formula of success! 'Sentences that sell,' some advice he has failed to give.
- ³³ *Bernard*: help. Gently. Bernard really knows. He *can't look at* *Willy*, sits on desk with head bowed.
- ³⁴ *Willy*: just stands there with head bowed ... he can't look at Bernard and ask what he's asking.
- ³⁵ *Bernard*: avoid. You can't tell a man like *Willy* the truth ... it would be too cruel.



A Screen Production

This activity uses a film adaptation of *Death of a Salesman*, directed by Volker Schlöndorff with Dustin Hoffman playing Willy Loman.

On the following two pages are two sequences of shots taken from the restaurant scene:

- the sequence of shots on page 145 occur at the beginning of the restaurant scene just after Willy has arrived. They show Willy's pleasure at being with his sons evaporate as Biff tries to tell him the truth about his failed meeting with Bill Oliver
- the sequence of shots on page 146 show moments in which Willy begins to 'timeswitch' and let scenes from his past merge with the present.

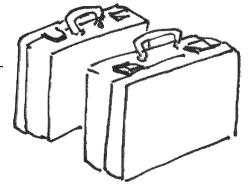
Working on the Sequences of Shots

See if you can match each shot from the two sequences to a particular exchange in the text. Write the dialogue alongside the shot in the column on the left.

Next, annotate each shot in the column on the right as though you were the film director, explaining your decision to shoot the moment in a particular way. Pay particular attention to:

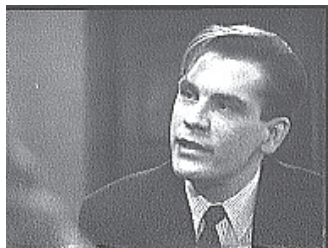
- the body language of the characters;
- facial expression;
- camera angle;
- framing - i.e. relationship of characters and objects within the frame;
- the mise-en-scene i.e. people, objects, background decor also seen within the shot.





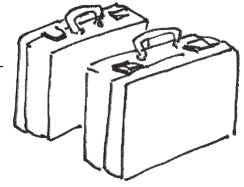
Sequence of shots as Willy enters the restaurant

Dialogue



Director's Notes

After Reading



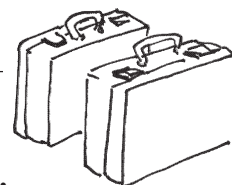
Sequence of shots where Willy begins to 'timeswitch'

Dialogue



Director's Notes

Death of a Salesman



Analysing the Restaurant and Hotel Scenes in the Film Version

This section of the film is extremely complex both in narrative and in filmic terms. The director has had to make important creative decisions about how to deal visually with problems of time and previous incidents in the play. To do this he has used a number of visual motifs or recurrent signs. Some of them are listed below - you may be able to find more. For each one, try and describe where and how it is used, and its function for the narrative of the scene:

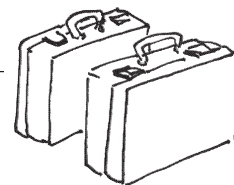
- glasses;
- doorways;
- mirrors;
- red wallpaper;
- the use of slow motion.

In filming this sequence, the director had to make some changes to the original script, and create a series of new audio-visual directions. The following will help you explore what is involved in an adaptation from stage to screen.

1. Make a list of all the moments where he has changed the original script or stage directions. Comment on the reasons for and effects of each change.
2. Make a second list of all the audio-visual ideas not featured in the original script. Try and explain why each one was necessary, and what it adds to the original script.
3. How does the director convey the increasingly disturbed state of Willy's mind?
4. What particular visual details does the director use to capture the intensity of the relationship between Willy and Biff: think particularly of eye contact and physical contact.
5. Consider generally how a performance of this kind adds to your understanding of the characters.

Writing

Write up your analysis of the Restaurant and Hotel scenes, exploring how the text has been adapted for the screen and how effective you found the adaptation.



11. Writing a Film Review

Watch the film of *Death of a Salesman*, directed by Volker Schlöndorff in 1985. Write a review of the whole film and assess whether this version manages to avoid the failure of a previous film adaptation which Arthur Miller describes below:

It may be in place to remark, in this connection, that while the play was sometimes called cinematographic in its structure, it failed as a motion picture. I believe that the basic reason - aside from the gross insensitivity permeating its film production - was that the dramatic tension of Willy's memories was destroyed by transferring him, literally, to the locales he had only imagined in the play. There is an inevitable horror in the spectacle of a man losing consciousness of his immediate surroundings to the point where he engages in conversations with unseen persons. The horror is lost - and drama becomes narrative - when the context actually becomes his imagined world. And the drama evaporates because psychological truth has been amended, a truth which depends not only on what images we recall but in what connections and contexts we recall them. The setting on the stage was never shifted, despite the many changes in locale, for the precise reason that, quite simply, the mere fact that a man forgets where he is does not mean that he has really moved. Indeed, his terror springs from his never-lost awareness of time and place. It did not need this play to teach me that the screen is time-bound and earth-bound compared to the stage, if only because its preponderant emphasis is on the visual image, which, however rapidly it may be changed before our eyes, still displaces its predecessor, while scene-changing with words is instantaneous; and because of the flexibility of language, especially of English, a preceding image can be kept alive through the image that succeeds it. The movie's tendency is always to wipe out what has gone before, and it is thus in constant danger of transforming the dramatic into narrative. There is no swifter method of telling a 'story' but neither is there a more difficult medium in which to keep a pattern of relationships constantly in being. Even in those sequences which retained the real back-grounds for Willy's imaginary confrontations the tension between now and then was lost. I suspect this loss was due to the necessity of shooting the actors close-up - effectively eliminating awareness of their surroundings. The basic failure of the picture was a formal one. It did not solve, nor really attempt to find, a resolution for the problem of keeping the past constantly alive, and that friction, collision, and tension between past and present was the heart of the play's particular construction.

(Introduction to *Collected Plays*)

Work on More than One Play

This section offers some suggestions for ways of thinking about and writing about more than one play, for a long essay or open study, or simply because you have chosen to read more plays by Miller.

1. Miller's Presentation of Women

Read the review letter to Arthur Miller on Page 40 of the material on *The Crucible*.

Think about how the arguments in the letter apply to the plays by Miller that you have read.

Write your own letter to Miller, expressing your view of his plays' stance towards women, drawing evidence from the plays you have read.

You may want to:

- examine the women characters and how they are presented;
- draw parallels and contrasts between the women characters across the plays;
- think about the role of the women in the plays;
- think about what is left out about women's experience that you would want to see;
- consider how the presentation of the male characters contributes to the view of women that the plays encourage us to take away with us.

2. Miller in School

The Head of English at your school is asking for views about which books should be taught on your course for next year's students. S/he wants to include one Miller play but is canvassing opinion on which one s/he should choose.

Of the plays that you have read, which one would you recommend?

You could think about:

- the themes of the plays and how appropriate they are for your age group;
- the dramatic qualities of the plays;
- how interesting you find the characters and the way they are presented;
- what pleasures you had in reading and working on the plays.

3. Miller on TV

You are working as a researcher for *The South Bank Show*, a TV arts programme. The programme team have decided to do a special feature on Arthur Miller, to coincide with the opening of his new play in the West End. The programme will be a compilation of items, including interview material from the archives, a new interview by the programme's presenter, Melvyn Bragg, autobiographical information from his book *Timebends*, sequences from film versions of his plays and short dramatisations of extracts from his plays.

You have been asked to select and prepare the extracts from his plays, to illustrate his main themes, concerns and distinctive qualities as a playwright. Your brief is to do the following:

- select five varied and representative extracts (each one no more than four minutes long);
- write a note to the producer explaining in detail the choice of extracts, so that s/he can make decisions about how to include them in the programme;
- suggest some questions that Miller could be asked in the interview, based on the extracts and other broader questions;
- write a script for the introductory comments which will preface each dramatisation;

4. A New Play by Miller?

Having read more than one play by Miller you should have begun to see patterns across his work, in his themes, the kinds of characters he presents or the kind of drama he creates.

Make a list of all of the patterns you have noticed in the plays you have read. One way of thinking about it is to ask yourself, 'What would I expect from another play by Miller?'

Use this list of your knowledge and expectations of Miller's drama to map out an imaginary new play by Miller.

- Write a brief synopsis of the plot.
- Write an account of the planned characters and their inter-relationships.
- Write about the themes that will be raised by the plot and characters.
- Write the opening scene of the play, drawing on what you know of Miller's dramatic technique.

5. Miller's Themes

Take one that particularly interests you and trace how it is developed differently in two or more of Miller's plays.

Possible themes are:

- the individual and society
- the family
- Miller's ideas about heroism
- fathers and sons.

Bibliography

- Biggsby, Christopher (ed) *Arthur Miller and Company*, Methuen, 1990.
Miller, Arthur. *Timebends - A Life*, Methuen, 1987.
Miller, Arthur. *Salesman in Beijing*, Methuen 1983.
Miller, Arthur. *Plays: One (Collected Plays)*, Methuen, 1988.