

Mccarthyism, miller, and the crucible assignment

[History](#)



“ Reasonable doubt” was all that was necessary to accuse and sometimes convict someone of UN-American activities in the late 1940s, early 1950s. This period of time was known for McCarthyism a time of extreme anticommunism, led by Senator Joseph McCarthy (McCarthy). The United States pledged to contain the spread of communism globally, as well as locally, and did what it could to keep this promise. Americans began to fear that communism was leaking into the media, government, arts, schools, and other areas. This was called the “ Red Scare” (Brinkley).

One writer that used his era as a basis for his play, *The Crucible*, was Arthur Miller. He was able to capture the panic and mere insanity of many Americans in an allegorical way. The “ crusade against subversion” played a significant role in the following: the actions and tactics of McCarthy, the reasons why Miller and other artists were targets of McCarthy, and the relationship of his play *The Crucible* to the events of the late 1940s to the early 1950s (Brinkley). Senator Joseph McCarthy used many tactics to persuade Americans to oppose communism and indict those who supported it.

Communism had a large shape, and Americans were worried that people in the U. S. would start leaning to the far left like several other countries such as the USSR and China (China). In order to prevent this, the Congressional House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) was founded. The Committee’s purpose was to investigate those organizations and individuals it deemed “ UN-American. ” They first went to Hollywood because the movie industry was considered “ corrupted”. Ten individuals, called the Hollywood Ten, were asked to testify against other Hollywood figures. DOD

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residents who were questionable unionists. Some of the Hollywood Ten refused to answer the Yucca's questions so they were charged with contempt and sent to prison (HUGH). The Federal Loyalty Program was also established at this time in order to question the trustworthiness of federal employees. Many were questioned and fired with the reasoning that they were considered a threat to their employers. State and local governments wanted to rid themselves of all kinds of subversives (Checkers). On February 9, 1950 in Wheeling, West Virginia, the " crusade against subversion" took a significant radical turn.

Wisconsin Senator Joseph McCarthy gave a speech, and in it he stated, " I have here in my hand a list of two hundred and five [people] that were known to the Secretary of State as being members of the Communist Party and who nevertheless are still working and shaping the policy of the State Department"(" Enemies"). This was a very bold move by McCarthy because he was outright accusing over two hundred of his fellow co-workers of communist activity. Over the next few years, McCarthy became very well known for his bold tactics to expose alleged communists.

Most Americans ere too afraid to stand up to him, including President Dwight D. Eisenhower (McCarthy). Eventually, however, people who were being affected by McCarthy began questioning his harsh tactics and his objectives concerning communism. McCarthy affected people of all races, ethnicities, and professions. The American people were terrified of communism, yet the Truman administration did nothing to curb these fears. People lost their jobs, not only because of heavy investigation by the HUGH, but also because private employers felt obligated to follow the Hijack's warnings.

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The “ Hollywood Ten” as not the only group of people that were questioned in Hollywood; they were just the ones who refused to testify in court. Nine others, however, agreed to cooperate with the HUGH (HUGH). Many artists, both in literature and in the movies, incorporated McCarthy in their work. Arthur Miller was one of these individuals. During this time, Miller wrote his play, *The Crucible*. Critics liked it, but they were afraid to admit it due to the controversial plot (Miller). Because of this controversial plot, Miller was asked to appear in court, under the belief that he would not be asked to “ name names.

However, he was asked to reveal names of fellow co-workers and friends. Because he would not reveal any information, he was found guilty of contempt and was given a fine and a sentence of 30 days in prison (a year later, this ruling was overturned). Nevertheless, his famous work, *The Crucible*, was an original piece of innovative intelligence based on the House Un-American Activities Committee’s actions over alleged communism in Hollywood paralleling themes to the Salem witch trials of 1692. *The Crucible* was a very significant allegory of the events of the late 1950s and 1960s.

Those accused in *The Crucible* and those accused during the McCarthy hearings were found guilty with little evidence. One would think that such outrageous accusations, with so little proof, would easily be dismissed. In both times in history, the people that were being affected were scared and could find no other way to cope with the fright than to place blame on one another (Miller). The innocent were accused and put in a “ melting pot” where they had to make a choice whether they would give in and continue placing blame or stand up to the hypocrisy.

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Their careers and lives were unjustly ruined. Hysteria was the central theme of Miller's play. Hysteria disposed logic and allowed people to believe that their neighbors and friends, whom they had always believed to be respectable people, were committing ridiculous crimes. As Reverend Paris, the detested local preacher, used the "witch hunt" to his benefit, Joseph McCarthy used anticommunism to his. Both striver to strengthen their positions in society. The Crucible was Miller's modern day version of the Salem "witch hunts" that he himself participated in (Salem).

The worldwide threat of communism undoubtedly had a great impact upon society in the late 1 sass to the early 1 ass's, including the actions and tactics Of McCarthy, why Miller and Other artists were targets Of Mica rhythms, and the relationship of The Crucible to the events of the era. This threat of communist activity in the U. S. Led to the unjust persecution of many prominent and well-respected individuals. A similar fear existed in Salem in the late sass's. This fear triggered the loss common sense in many high positioned persons. The excuse of "reasonable doubt" led to innocent Americans' destructions]both personally and socially.