

An Educator's Guide to Arthur Miller

Exploring Plays as Authors,
Activists, and Artists

By Elizabeth Dunn-Ruiz

An Enemy of the People

Penguin | Paperback | 9780140481402 | 128 Pages | \$16.00

A View from the Bridge

Penguin | Paperback | 9780140481358 | 96 Pages | \$15.00

All My Sons

Penguin | Paperback | 9780143115816 | 112 Pages | \$16.00

Death of a Salesman

Penguin | Paperback | 9780140481341 | 144 Pages | \$14.00

The Crucible

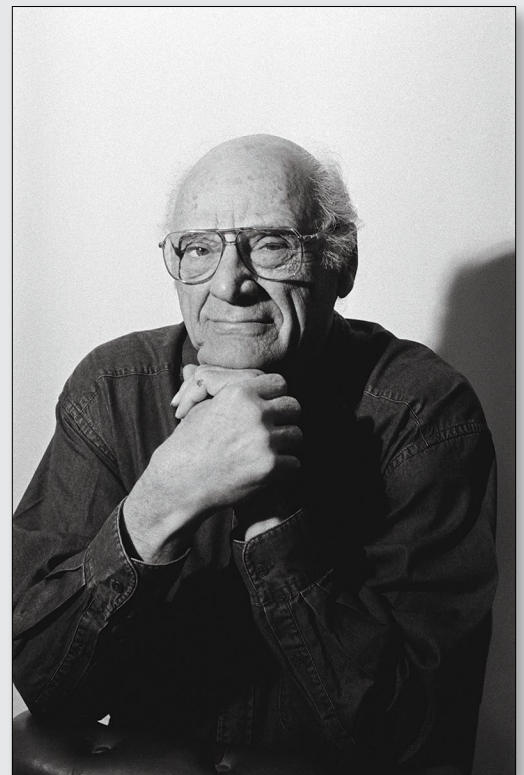
Penguin | Paperback | 9780143129479 | 160 Pages | \$16.00

Also available in e-book format

Dear Colleague,

When you go to a museum do you look at the art first or the explanatory placard on the side? Maybe, like me, you intend to look at the art, but your eyes steal away, a quick glance that seems impossible to control—a title, a name, a year, a definitive explanation—anything to help make sense of it, to provide certainty. Now imagine encountering a work of art outside of a museum in a setting with no placards, no authoritative voice declaring what it means or how you should think or feel. Imagine being in that space where you are free to *experience* the art, to be *moved*. Imagine stepping into that uncertainty and becoming comfortable there.

The gift of introducing “classic” plays to young students is that the texts are not (yet) classics to them. Their fresh eyes, open hearts, and brilliant minds can inspire us to see, feel, and think about these works in new and powerful ways.



Arthur Miller, 1995. © Inge Morath / Magnum Photos

“I found his plays to be like soul music, fusing the bitter truth of history with the urgency and incendiary spirit of a generation eager to be heard. He wrote from a place of passion and conviction, never passive about his belief that drama should have social impact. He used the small rebellions and conflicts of the common man in order to stage a larger conversation with history.”

— Lynn Nottage

DEAR COLLEAGUE
(CONTINUED)

In his classic poem “[Introduction to Poetry](#),” Billy Collins reminds us what can happen when art is not experienced and is instead approached as if there is one correct answer, a single meaning.

Most of us don't want to walk into a movie theater already knowing the film's big reveal and how everything wraps up at the end, and we wouldn't want a summary of every moment leading up to it. We want to sit down and let the drama unfold so we can be surprised, amazed, scared, comforted, or any of the myriad feelings a story might make us feel along the way.

This guide offers some big picture questions that will inspire interesting conversations before and after engaging with Arthur Miller's work. It also includes a list of topics that appear throughout his plays, which can support a deeper exploration of themes.

“How does this text support or challenge issues of representation, fairness, or justice? How does this text perpetuate or subvert dominant power dynamics and ideologies?” —[#DisruptTexts](#)

Plays are meant to be experienced. At the very least they need to be heard. So, I encourage you, whenever possible, to create time and space in your classroom for a play to be read aloud straight through until the end. Trust the structure of the play to reveal its truths when and how it is necessary, and trust that the students [will listen](#). Remember, there is always an opportunity to go back and look more closely at the text, but something can only be experienced once for the first time.

The projects suggested in this guide are designed to leave space for discovery. Depending on the needs of your students, you will know best how long each one will take and what sort of scaffolding is required to set them up for success. You might need to provide additional historical context, vocabulary, and research materials, but to help them enter the world of the play, not determine how they walk through, interpret, or make meaning of the time spent there.

The suggested projects and companion texts are organized by play and invite students to experience Arthur Miller's plays and respond through three different types of activities as: Authors, Activists, and Artists.

This approach, taking inspiration from Dr. Ghodly Muhammad's equity framework, engages students around four learning pursuits: Identity, Skill, Intellect, and Criticality. In [Cultivating Genius: An Equity Framework for Culturally and Historically Responsive Literacy](#), Muhammad asks educators to consider:

- **Identity:** How does the curriculum help students to learn something about themselves and/or about others?
- **Skills:** How does the curriculum respond to or build students' skills and standards?
- **Intellect:** How does the curriculum respond to or build upon students' knowledge and mental powers? What are they becoming smarter about?
- **Criticality:** How does the curriculum engage students' thinking about power and equity and the disruption of oppression?

DEAR COLLEAGUE
(CONTINUED)

Spending time with these texts allows us to be in conversation with ourselves and with those who have come before, those we are in community with now, and those we have yet to meet. I hope you, your students, and your communities have wonderful, moving, meaningful learning experiences with Arthur Miller and his timeless work.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Dunn-Ruiz

Lecturer, [Graduate Educational Theatre Program of The City College of New York](#)

Mentor, [Arthur Miller Foundation](#)

“We believe that arts education is a right, not a privilege.”

—[Arthur Miller Foundation](#)

Arthur Miller on writing *Timebends: A Life*, his autobiography:

“I became aware of at least one important motive behind it: the desire to share the past with younger people.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why theater? Why now? Why Arthur Miller? Why now?
2. What does it mean to live a life of integrity? What obstacles can get in the way? How can an individual persevere?
3. How does grief inform a person's choices? How can we best show up for ourselves and others who have experienced profound loss?

“I am not the only writer, Jew or Gentile, who does not want his plays or novels to end in utter despair, even when objective events seem to demand precisely that conclusion—a Holocaust story, for example. But my resistance to despair seems to have something Jewish about it, some vagrant cell floating through my blood seems to demand that however remote and unlikely ever to be found, a ray of light has to remain after darkness has closed in, a glow of redemption must appear up there at the rim of the pit or the tale is something less than true.”

—Arthur Miller

4. How can one live a life with hope even, or especially, when circumstances seem bleak?
5. How can an individual's family structure protect them? How can it prevent them from thriving? How can individuals and families function in the best interest of all?
6. When the needs of an individual conflict with what their community expects of them, what are the possible paths forward? How can individuals and social groups move forward with the least possible harm done?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS (CONTINUED)

“Why can’t I give myself the pleasure of having people around me? It’s a necessity for me to see young, lively, happy people, free people burning with a desire to do something.” —Dr. Stockmann in *An Enemy of the People*, Arthur Miller

7. What are the challenges of being a social species? What are the benefits? How do you/can you work to strengthen your community and connection with others?

“Great drama is great questions or it is nothing but technique.” —Arthur Miller

8. What questions does the play pose? Are they answered? If not, why do you think the author left them unanswered? If so, how? And what do you make of those answers?

“I had made no bones about being a rather impatient moralist, not even in interviews, where I was naive enough to confess that to me amoral art was a contradiction and that an artist was obliged to point a way out if he thought he knew what it was.” —Arthur Miller

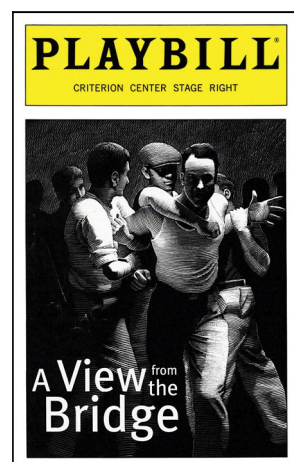
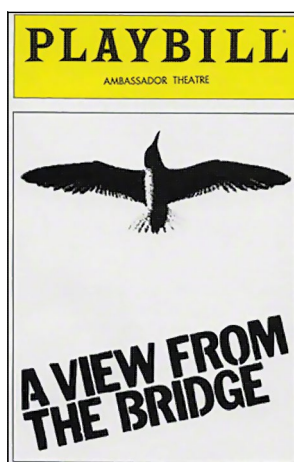
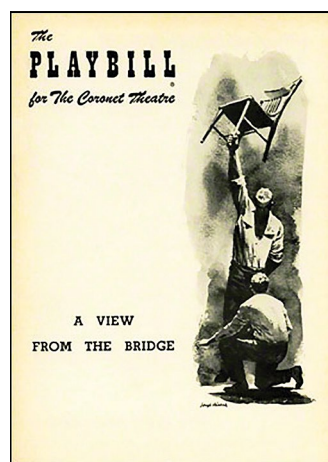
TOPICS AND THEMES

Some topics that appear throughout Arthur Miller’s work are:

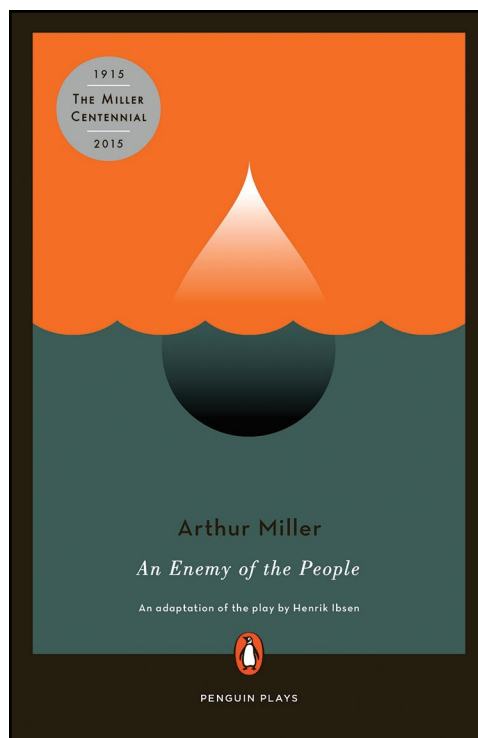
- Power
- Violence
- Family Dynamics
- Integrity
- Grief
- Societal Expectations

Invite students to look for evidence in a single text (or multiple texts) that reveals what is being said about one (or more) of these topics. Once they have completed their analysis of the evidence and arrived at a theme, have them make a Playbill cover that uses visual imagery and text to communicate their interpretation of that play’s theme (or a marketing poster for multiple Arthur Miller plays performed in repertory).

Host a gallery walk (artwork and artist statement posted) or living museum (artwork posted while the artist stands beside it offering a verbal explanation) wherein each artist shares their work and why they made the artistic choices they made based on the evidence they found within the script.



Playbills from 1955, 1983, and 1998



An Enemy of the People

“Let me listen to me and not to them.” —Gertrude Stein

“I hear the rumble of revolution in this.” —Arthur Miller

POSSIBLE COMPANION TEXTS

- Play: *Incident at Vichy* by Arthur Miller
- Poem: “*Once the World Was Perfect*” by Joy Harjo
- Song: “*Fight the Power*” by Public Enemy

AUTHOR

Using evidence from the text, explain what Dr. Stockmann gains and what he loses by speaking truth to power. Provide an analysis of whether you think it was worth it or not and how you imagine you would have behaved in his situation or are currently behaving in a situation wherein you hold an unpopular yet evidence-based and logical position.

Do you agree with the final line of the play? What examples from history, current events, or your life support this claim? What examples refute it or offer up a different/more nuanced claim?

ACTIVIST

In Act One, Scene One, Billings urges Horster to vote. Do you believe in the power of the vote to create positive change? Why or why not? What evidence do you have to support your claims?

Educate yourself on the statistics for registered voters and voter turnout in your area. Research local community-based organizations working for change through the political process. Work to engage other young adults in your community in the democratic process (consider local volunteer opportunities, postcard or letter writing parties, food and water donations for poll workers or voters waiting in line, or collaborate with peers to develop other ideas.)

ARTIST**Direct and Perform:**

Act One, Scene Two, starting with Peter Stockmann's throat clearing that prompts Mrs. Stockmann to usher Petra out through to the end of the scene when the curtain falls, is an excellent excerpt to stage.

In this section of the scene, each character makes clear their perspective on the play's conflicts. This makes it an exemplary text to help students understand how an actor might approach a text by determining their character's objective (what the character wants) and the tactics (strategies) they will employ to achieve that objective. For example, if a character's objective is to feel powerful, the actor might try to belittle, berate, flatter, or manipulate another character in the scene. If their objective is to feel loved, the actor might also try to flatter or manipulate but, because the objective is different, those tactics might be played differently.

Tactics inform the vocal and physical choices an actor makes. In a collaborative process, the director might also take the actor's choice of tactics into account when determining the scene's blocking (movement on stage), proximity (how close or far they are to another character), and levels (placement on stage of chairs, and set pieces in relation to other characters). This scene is also an excellent opportunity to explore props (the objects the actors use on stage) and stage business (what the actors are doing, besides talking, while on stage) and how the actors who are on stage but not speaking need to be listening and truthfully reacting to what is being said.

Cast groups of six with one student as:

- Mrs. Stockmann
- Peter Stockmann
- Dr. Thomas Stockmann
- Petra Stockmann
- Morton Kiil (they can also serve as set, prop, costume, and/or lighting designer if you want to introduce one or more of these elements in some form)
- Ejlif Stockmann (director)

Ensure there is ample time for actors to warm up their bodies and voices, participate in activities and rehearse with a focus on the physical and vocal choices needed to make the scene believable. Then perform for each other and analyze the scenes in terms of what choices were consistent throughout the groups, as well as where the artists made different choices and why they did so.

What happens if we replace judgment with curiosity?

ARTIST (CONTINUED)**Write:**

Imagine these characters eight months or eight years later. What has changed for them? What has stayed the same? How do they think and feel looking back upon the choices they made during the events of the play? How do they think and feel about the future?

Write a scene or ten-minute play that explores these questions. Include a prop rock, a dramatic offstage sound effect, the stage directions “opening the newspaper,” and the phrases “my good name,” “enemy of the people,” and “that was the poison.”

Interview, Write, and Perform:

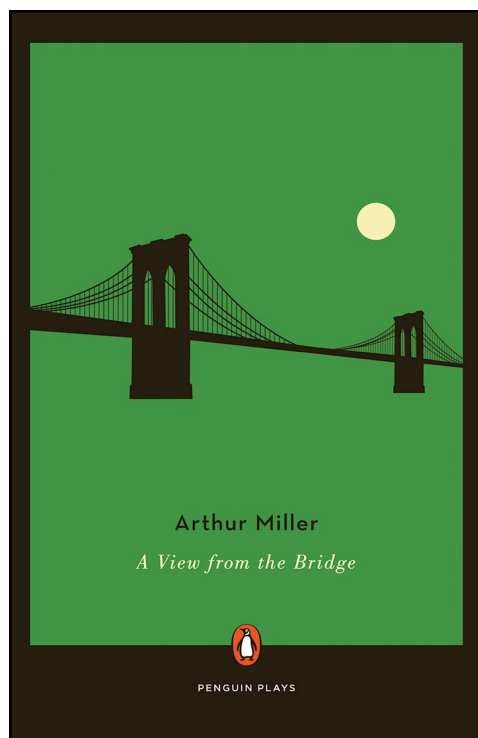
Interview a peer or elder who holds a belief that differs from one that you hold and is interested in talking with you about it. Engage in radical listening. [Rita Charon, M.D., Ph.D.](#), [defines](#) this as “the generous and humble listening possible when listeners choose to free themselves, even temporarily, of their prejudices, biases, assumptions, and opinions about the matter being discussed. Radical listening is the kind of listening that allows listeners to accept what tellers tell as having credibility—even if the tale is alien, foreign, or rubs against the listeners’ own positions.” Listening in this way is an important skill and being listened to in this way can be a transformative experience.

After the interview, use the transcript of this interview as source material to write a monologue from the other person’s perspective.

Ask yourself if you were surprised by anything you heard? Were you upset? Comforted? Inspired? Did you feel empathy? Were you left wondering or questioning anything? Then write a monologue from your own perspective.

Perform these monologues and facilitate a post-show conversation or host a listening circle in which the audience shares their own beliefs on the subject as well as their responses to the perspectives shared in the performances.

“I think it’s easy to assume we know ourselves, but once you peel back the layers it’s amazing how much there is to still discover.” —Kevin Love



A View from the Bridge

“Awareness of our situation must come before inner changes, which in turn come before changes in society. Nothing happens in the ‘real’ world unless it first happens in the images in our heads.” —Gloria E. Anzaldúa

“If I didn’t define myself, I would be crunched into other people’s fantasies for me and eaten alive.” —Audre Lorde

POSSIBLE COMPANION TEXTS

- Play: *Trifles* by Susan Glaspell
- Play: *72 Miles To Go . . .* by Hilary Bettis
- Novel: *We Are Not from Here* by Jenny Torres Sanchez
- Poem: “*Duty*” by Natasha Trethewey

AUTHOR

“I became interested in pursuing stories of women who invent lives in order to survive.” —Lynn Nottage

“It is not quite enough to know how to escape restrictions; sooner or later one also has to think of arriving somewhere.” —Arthur Miller, “Notes on Realism”

According to the text, what two paths are laid out for Catherine as an adult? How might the events of the plot have played out differently if she and the people around her had been able to imagine more options for what was possible for a woman? How does your identity inform the options you see as available to you? What do you imagine for your own future?

ACTIVIST

“Both imagination and dissatisfaction are preconditions for positive change. If we cannot imagine things differently, we will not be able to bring about any alteration in our circumstances.” —Cecily O’Neill

Facilitate a [process drama](#). In process drama, the whole class identifies stakeholders, conducts research, and engages in unscripted, imaginative performance time in which a task needs to be completed, a question answered, a decision made, or a particular setting explored. Connecting to *A View from the Bridge*, the focus could be exploring a single [tenement building in New York City](#) at a certain time in American history, a question about immigration law, or engaging with issues surrounding deportation, homophobia, or gender equity. [The Kennedy Center](#) explains that in process drama “the focus is not for the students to create a performance for others, but to create an experience for themselves by working through an issue or challenge, making important discoveries about themselves and others along the way.”

ARTIST

Write:

Award-winning playwright [Karen Zacarias](#) was born in Mexico and has said, “Immigrating here in fifth grade and feeling like an outsider prompted me to start writing plays by myself at age ten. Writing became a tool to help me navigate a new world; it gave me a voice. It helped me find my place in this new universe of the United States.” She said she is driven to create work as a “communal commitment to change and connection.”

Imagine the events in *A View from the Bridge* as seen through Marco or Rodolpho’s point of view, instead of Alfieri the lawyer’s. How would that shift the story? The audience’s experience of the story?

Research immigrant stories from that [time period](#) and compare with those of [today](#). Consider what has changed, what has not, and why. Write a monologue or scene that centers Marco or Rodolpho and is set outside of the home. Perhaps Marco is writing to or speaking to his wife or children in Italy. Or Rodolpho and Catherine are out on a date. Or Marco is sharing his feelings or thought process about what to do to someone in his cell just before he is released. Or Marco and Rodolpho are talking to another character mentioned in the script about how they made the decision to come to America, their journey across the ocean, or the experience of being undocumented.

Documentary:

Rebecca Miller made a documentary film about her father entitled [Arthur Miller: Writer](#). Find an elder in your family or community who would like to be the subject of your documentary. Choose a central question to guide your work, perhaps one of the following:

- What does the American Dream mean to you?
- How has your nationality or gender identity informed the trajectory of your life?
- What does the word “sacrifice” mean to you?

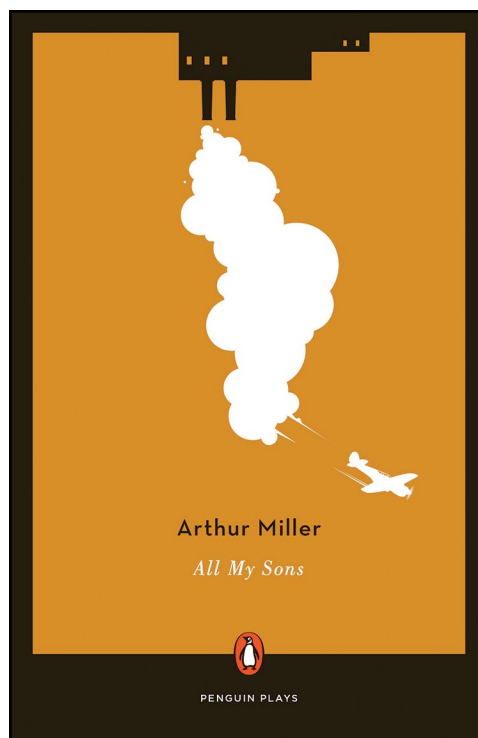
ARTIST (CONTINUED)

- How has love shaped your life?
- Who or what helped you become the person you are today?
- Of all the decisions you have made, which one has most impacted your life?

With their permission, capture candid footage, record prepared interviews, ask for photographs, and choose music they love that fits the tone of your film. As an homage to the Miller family, you might title your film using a similar structure to one of their titles:

Rebecca Miller: *Arthur Miller: Writer - [Elder's Full Name]: [A Noun]*

Arthur Miller: *A View from the Bridge - A View from [Meaningful Place]*



All My Sons

“Freedom means choosing your burden.” —Hephzibah Menuhin

“True heroism is remarkably sober, very undramatic. It is not the urge to surpass all others at whatever cost, but the urge to serve others at whatever cost.”

—Arthur Ashe

“There are losses that rearrange the world. Deaths that change the way you see everything, grief that tears everything down. Pain that transports you to an entirely different universe, even while everyone else thinks nothing has really changed.” —Megan Devine, *It's OK That You're Not OK: Meeting Grief and Loss in a Culture That Doesn't Understand*

POSSIBLE COMPANION TEXTS

- Play: *The Price* by Arthur Miller
- Play: *On the Exhale* by Martín Zimmerman
- Musical: George Takei's *Allegiance*
- Short Stories: *The Things They Carried* by Tim O'Brien
- Article: “*They Were Sons*” by Rita Omokha for *Vanity Fair*

AUTHOR

What responsibility do we have to each other? To the truth? How do secrets function in *All My Sons*, structurally and thematically? Have you ever kept a secret to protect yourself from punishment? To protect someone else from something or someone? How can secrets cause harm?

ACTIVIST

War touches all of us. The violence of war infiltrates every aspect of society. *All My Sons*, set in the immediate aftermath of World War II, reveals that whether you are on the frontlines or far from them, war impacts everyone. It is difficult to think about all of those in America who have been and are currently impacted by violent conflict, dating back to the treatment of Native and Indigenous Americans and enslaved peoples to contemporary victims of police brutality and gun violence. *All My Sons* asks us to think about those who have been and are currently impacted by war, such as active-duty military personnel and their families, veterans, and refugees. It is important to listen to their stories, to acknowledge their pain and their humanity.

“There’s a dehumanization that’s happened with Native people because of all these misperceptions about what we are. And it’s convenient to think of us as gone, or drunks, or dumb. It’s convenient to not have to think about a brutal history and a people surviving and still being alive and well today, thriving in various different forms of life, good and bad.” —Tommy Orange

Research ways your class can get involved and decide how you will take action. Perhaps by organizing, publicizing, and hosting a [craft night for veterans](#) in your community, or connecting with a class [pen pal](#). April is the Month of the Military Child and the White House provides a [digital toolkit](#) for ways to acknowledge this in your school. Consider participating in the [Youth with Refugees](#) annual art contest and posting the artwork throughout your school, accompanied by individual artist statements explaining the research they did and artistic choices they made.

ARTIST**Design:**

Analyze the text for information about the time of day and light in each scene. Research how natural light would fall upon a real backyard in Ohio as well as class and period specific lighting fixtures that might have been used in the home. What direction would the natural light be coming from? What kind of shadows would be created? How does the light change over the course of the day? How can you use the three principles of lighting design—direction, intensity, and color—to best serve the mood and themes of the play? Create designs for each scene as drawings, watercolors, digital images, or with flashlights and [colored gels](#). Pitch your designs and text-based rationale for your designs to (someone in the role as) the director of the play.

Write:

The economic and political system known as capitalism prioritizes the production and maintenance of wealth, money, and goods by private or corporate entities rather than by the state. The purpose is profit. Where does money fall on your list of priorities? Make a list of the ideas, things, experiences, and connections you value.

ARTIST (CONTINUED)

Consider whether the choices you make and the way you behave aligns with the values you listed. Choose one value and write a scene in which the protagonist says they hold a particular value but behave in a way that contradicts that value.

Arthur Miller's plays explore loss, death, and grief. In *All My Sons* and *Death of a Salesman*, that exploration includes suicide. This can be a scary topic to think or talk about, but suffering feeds on silence. Keeping secrets keeps us from real connection, and feeling ashamed prevents many folks from seeking out the help they need and deserve.

There are many reasons why someone might consider suicide, but it's important to remember that suicide is a permanent choice about a temporary problem and there are other choices that can be made! The beauty of theater is that it can provide a safe space in which to talk about feelings and the choices people make, not to emulate those choices, but to analyze them and imagine different choices, like reaching out to one of these suicide prevention hotlines for support.

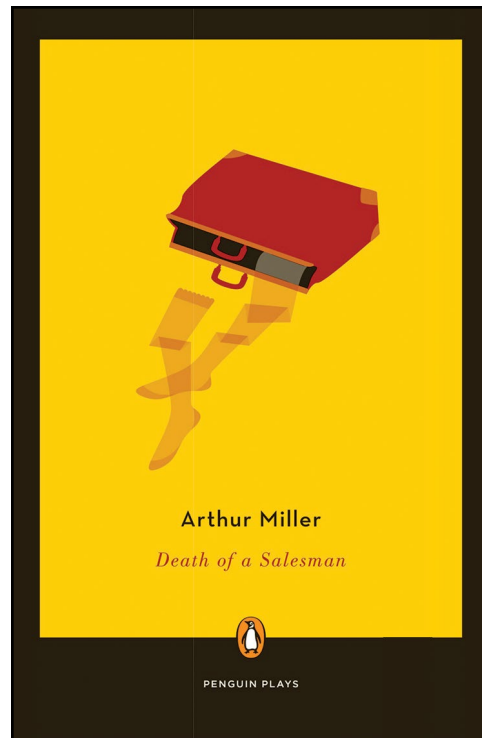
Call [988](#) for the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

[The Trevor Project](#)

**provides 24/7 crisis support services to LGBTQ young people
Text, chat, or call anytime to reach a trained counselor**

Text "HOME" to 741741

to connect with a volunteer Crisis Counselor at the [Crisis Text Line](#)



Death of a Salesman

“Your silence will not protect you.” —Audre Lorde

“You are never strong enough that you don’t need help.” —Cesar Chavez

“The reality of grief is far different from what others see from the outside. There is pain in this world that you can’t be cheered out of. You don’t need solutions. You don’t need to move on from your grief. You need someone to see your grief, to acknowledge it. You need someone to hold your hands while you stand there in blinking horror, staring at the hole that was your life. Some things cannot be fixed. They can only be carried.” —Megan Devine, *It’s OK That You’re Not OK: Meeting Grief and Loss in a Culture That Doesn’t Understand*

“Attention must be paid.” —Arthur Miller

POSSIBLE COMPANION TEXTS

- Plays: *Sweat and Clyde’s* by [Lynn Nottage](#)
- Memoir: [Dreams from My Father](#) by Barack Obama
- Poem: [“We Wear The Mask”](#) by Paul Laurence Dunbar
- Essay: [“Everyone is Going Through Something”](#) by Kevin Love
- Article: [“How to Ask for Help”](#) by Debbie Sorensen

AUTHOR

While speaking to Howard in Act Two, Willy mentions that his father was “an adventurous man” who “lived many years in Alaska” and that he had thought he would go out with his older brother and “try to locate him.” How do you think the absence of his father impacted Willy growing up? How does it affect the way he parents his two boys?

Think of an adult in your life and something you know about their childhood. How do you think that impacted and continues to impact them? How does it influence the ways that they do or do not show up for you?

How can we break generational cycles that cause harm? How can we uplift traditions and ways of being that help us and those that come after us to thrive?

ACTIVIST

“The first American plays I saw left me wondering where the characters came from. The people I knew were fanatics about surviving, but onstage everyone seemed to have guaranteed incomes . . .” —Arthur Miller

Death of a Salesman centers on work and the characters’ relationships to it. The play explicitly talks about needing to work to make a living. Arthur Miller’s childhood was relatively affluent, but, like many other families, the financial crisis that led to the Great Depression turned his teenage years into a fight for survival. This had a profound effect on his worldview and his writing. He developed a “sense of the invisible world” that has a hand in shaping all of us. Choose an industry (like landscaping, screenwriting, academia, metalworking, or theater) or a specific company (like Amazon, Disney, REI, or the local food co-op) and research its labor history. Write a speech in which you detail that history, its impact on the present, the direction you think the industry or company is headed, and advocate for what you think is necessary for the long-lasting health of the industry or company.

ARTIST

“If you’re suffering silently like I was, then you know how it can feel like nobody really gets it. Partly, I want to [share] for me, but mostly, I want to do it because people don’t talk about mental health enough. And men and boys are probably the farthest behind.” —Kevin Love

Write:

Write a monologue in which Willy Loman plainly tells the truth of his professional and personal struggles to one or more of his family members and asks for help.

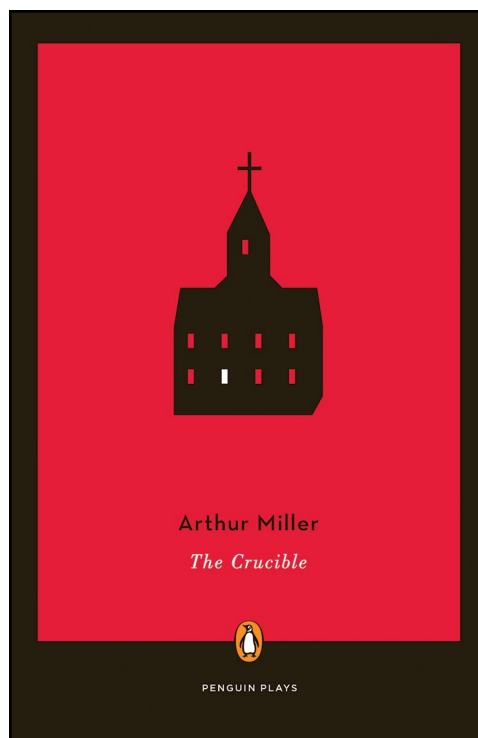
Use that monologue to create a scene, imagining how the characters would feel and respond to his vulnerability. What support or resources, if any, might they offer him?

Actress Sheryl Lee Ralph gave a [TED Talk](#) in which she said, **“Now I know you see me on TV, in magazines, on movie screens, and you might be thinking to yourself, ‘What does she know about struggling to believe in herself?’ Well, let me tell you something. I do not look like my journey.”**

ARTIST (CONTINUED)

Many of us put on a metaphorical mask to hide our real selves. We often hide our pain in particular. Consider also writing a monologue in which you plainly tell someone the truth of your struggles and ask for what you need in that moment. Do you need them to provide suggestions or strategies? Or do you need them to offer support? You might ask that they validate your feelings, offer comfort, sit with you in comfortable silence, give you a hug, or provide practical support like getting you a glass of water, joining you in a deep breathing exercise, going to the library with you so you can work together, or texting you daily reminders that you are loved. Share your monologue with a trusted friend or a family or community member and invite them to speak or write a response.

“Empathy is the antidote to shame.” —[Brené Brown](#)



The Crucible

“I am the master of my fate; I am the captain of my soul.” —William Ernest Henley

“What we say and what we do ultimately comes back to us so let us own our responsibility, place it in our hands, and carry it with dignity and strength.”

—Gloria E. Anzaldúa

“My fear was not of death itself, but a death without meaning.” —Huey P. Newton

POSSIBLE COMPANION TEXTS:

- Novel: [*I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem*](#) by Maryse Condé
- Play: [*Abigail/1702: A Twice Told Tale*](#) by Roberto Aguirre-Sacasa
- Poem: [*“Let America Be America Again”*](#) by Langston Hughes

AUTHOR

What is the significance of a name? How do names function in contemporary society? Describe your relationship to your name. How do names function in the community at the heart of *The Crucible*? Describe the relationship John Proctor has with his name. What conclusions do you draw about names?

ACTIVIST

In *The Crucible*, misinformation spreads quickly. How does misinformation get spread today? Analyze videos of different news organizations and social media influencers discussing the same topic. Discuss the production elements (music, sound effects, images, font, and pacing), as well as [*“rhetorical strategies”*](#) and [*“logical fallacies”*](#). Split

ACTIVIST (CONTINUED)

students into groups. One group will be a legitimate news station presenting an objective story reporting on the trials that take place in *The Crucible*. Two other groups will be news stations with extreme points of view telling the same story in sensational ways. Script and produce these news segments and then show them to the whole class and invited guests. Ask the audience to share their reactions to all of the videos and analyze the persuasive strategies employed in each news segment. Discuss ways that individuals can identify and resist false narratives and focus on facts, logical reasoning, and see the truth about what is happening in Salem.

Using the same production and persuasion skills, have each group create a public service announcement aimed at their peers that teaches a specific media literacy skill and offers resources for where folks can learn more.

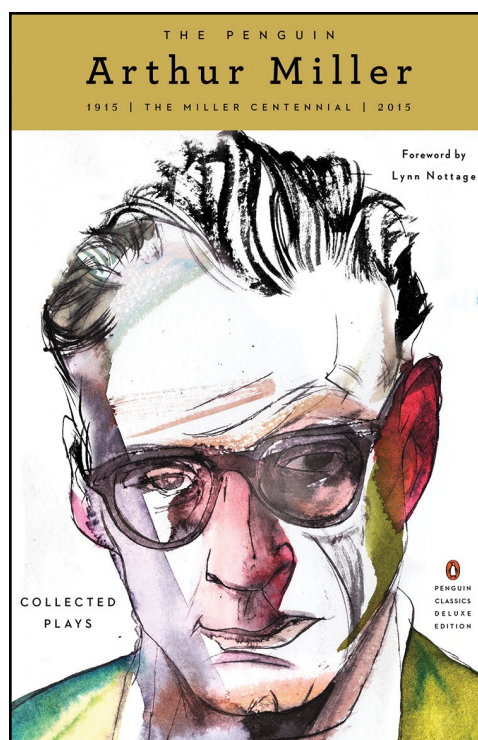
ARTIST**Research, Write, & Produce:**

Researching an author's life can inform and enhance a reader's understanding of a work of fiction. Biographical criticism is the practice of analyzing a literary work through the lens of an author's experience. Much has been written about the ways in which *The Crucible* is a response to Arthur Miller's experience of [U.S. Senator Joseph R. McCarthy](#)'s efforts to rid the country of Communists during [President Eisenhower's term](#). Arthur Miller [has written much on the subject](#), including "[Why I Wrote 'The Crucible'](#)", an essay published in *The New Yorker* in 1996.

Consider current events in your community, city, state, and country. Choose an injustice you believe is being perpetrated by or with the consent of people in positions of power and research the situation thoroughly.

Write a ten-minute play in which you explore that injustice through the lens of another time, place, and group of people. You can craft your piece as a work of historical fiction, like Arthur Miller did, or a work of speculative fiction set in an imagined time and place with characters of your own invention.

Produce a play festival or night of staged readings. Invite local community-based organizations working on addressing these injustices to table in the lobby or participate in a post-show conversation.



“Ultimately, Miller’s plays have transcended time, not simply because they are beautifully crafted, but also because they are important social documents that capture moral conundrums that resonate powerfully for audiences today.”

—[Lynn Nottage](#)

What do **you** think makes a work of literature **a great read**?

“Great theater is about challenging how we think and encouraging us to fantasize about a world we aspire to.” —Willem Dafoe

What do **you** think makes a work of literature worthy of being called **a classic**?

“A classic is a book you think about even when you haven’t read it in a long time —parts of it continue to waft in the air around you always.” —[Jacqueline Woodson](#)

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1745 Broadway, New York, NY 10019

PRHSecondaryEd.com

Queries: K12Education@edu.penguinrandomhouse.com

