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# Introduction

An American Literature course should be documented on every high school student's transcript. Understanding the value of writing offered by great Americans provides a wonderful introductory step for college literature courses. As well, integrating writing, verbal skills, higher level thinking and project organization provides further training for more intense academic studies. All students should complete the Train up a Child Publishing *Essays Styles* course (visit [trainupachildpub.com](http://trainupachildpub.com) for more information) or a comparable course as a prerequisite for American Literature. It is possible to do the *Essay Styles* curriculum concurrently with this course, as American Literature assignments are assigned parallel to the essays in *Essay Styles*. If a student attempts this course without previous essay writing instruction, he may find the essay assignments overly challenging.

This curriculum was designed to distinctively reveal the qualities of American authors and poets. With this in mind, we sought out writers who would demonstrate American character and even some history, although the focus of this course is on writing and literature. The books were carefully selected bearing in mind such components as literary elements, writing styles, quality of writing, story content and character value. As with all Train up a Child Publishing courses and curricula, we have personally read and evaluated each of the books.

For example, with *The Crucible*, there are unlimited opportunities to discuss issues such as legalism, lying and sacrifice. With that same material, you can benefit from examining such literary elements as allegory and time period dialogue. *The Last of the Mohicans* offers incredible character quality comparisons, a detailed writing style and the connection between art and literature.

Our goals for the students who utilize Train up a Child Publishing literature-based curricula include:

- A greater love for reading
- The capacity to identify valuable literature
- Enhanced knowledge of literary elements and the written word
- Increased skills related to researching, organizing, writing and editing
- Improved oral narration abilities
- Overall confidence in language arts proficiency.

## Sample of American Literature: a Study of American Authors

As with all Train up a Child Publishing high school curricula, we have included distinctive and helpful components for both the student and the teacher. Some valuable highlights of this particular curriculum include:

- An introduction with information about the writing process and how to fully use the curriculum.
- Assignment units including reading levels, goals and objectives, literature summaries and step by step instructions for writing and evaluating each assignment.
- Step by step instructions offering a wide variety of activities and writing assignments directly related to the selected literature.
- Evaluation directions, rubric usage and recommendations for the teacher.
- The opportunity to utilize the course for Honors credit.
- A glossary of terms.
- Appendices containing helpful tools such as:
  - Grading Suggestions
  - Editing Checklist
  - Characterization Graphic Organizer
  - Point of View notes
  - Resources (books and websites related to various assignments)
  - Plot Map
  - Vocabulary Suggestions and Lists.
- Grading rubrics predesigned for all major assignments as well as instructions on how to calculate rubric grades.

As well as lessons and reading assignments, we have included literature summaries and evaluation guidelines designed to assist teachers with content and grading without adding the burden of you having to read each book thoroughly. However, you may certainly desire to go even deeper into the content and meaning of the literature by reading it in full. If you should choose to further explore the materials using the Internet, we strongly warn you against assuming that web material is accurate. With literature in particular, we have found that distortions have occurred which have little or no basis in the actual writing. For example, with William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, two of the main male characters are close friends. Despite the fact that Shakespeare has both of these men in love with women, some analysts want students to evaluate whether the two men could have

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been homosexuals. In examining the material, we've found little evidence of that situation, but there are quite a few websites on the Internet that imply such a relationship and suggest that students examine that possibility.

The selections for this course are as follows and the appropriate edition of each may be ordered at [trainupachildpub.com](http://trainupachildpub.com) on the *Books!* page:

- *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller (play)
- *The Last of the Mohicans* by James Fenimore Cooper (novel)
- *To My Husband and Other Poems* by Anne Bradstreet (poetry)
- *The Gift of the Magi* and *The Ransom of Red Chief* by O. Henry (short stories)
- *Up From Slavery* by Booker T. Washington (novel)
- *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway (novella)
- *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee (novel)
- *How to Read a Book* by Mortimer J. Adler (reference)

**Important note: Your student will need time to read portions of *How to Read a Book* prior to beginning the first unit. See the Pre-reading section for *The Crucible* for the specific assignment.**

As of publication, both of the short stories listed above were available online and may be accessed through the websites noted in *Resources* - Appendix D.

# Teacher's Notes

## Group Activities

You may want to consider working on this curriculum with a small group of other high school families. It is ideal for weekly discussion groups. Having other students and parents with whom you and your student can discuss and share the assignments may enhance the overall course experience. As well, certain assignments, such as the *Crucible* newspaper, can be completed by individuals or in groups.

## Choosing Assignments

One decision that you will need to make is how many and which assignments you'll want your student to complete. Although you may work through the assignments as written, especially those

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books with multiple assignments, you may want to limit your choice somewhat. You may also adapt an assignment to better meet the needs of your student. For example, you might want to make an assignment shorter. For a college prep course, the student should complete approximately 8-10 assignments for the year, which would average into 1-2 of the regular assignments for each book selection. This should not include a few of the quicker, oral assignments.

### Honors Credit

As you examine this course, you will note that certain assignments are required for Honors credit. Before beginning, you will want to decide whether to work through the Honors course load or the College Prep course load. An Honors curriculum is more challenging and time consuming, typically requiring higher level thinking skills and more effort. However, it is an asset to any student's transcript when seeking college admission and scholarships, particularly in a state with a weighted grade point average. For Honors credit, the student will need to complete the previously mentioned number of assignments plus at least four of the Honors assignments for the entire year. This means that the student will not need to complete an Honors assignment for every book selection. Obviously, if the teacher feels that the student should complete more than recommended, that is entirely up to the discretion of the teacher. Another option for Honors is that the student can complete a research paper for the year. There is any number of topics presented within the curricula that would support a research paper.

### Concerning Writing

As there are many writing assignments associated with this curriculum, we've included the following information to assist you and your student as needed.

### The Process of Writing

Understanding the process of writing is essential for completing the writing assignments in this course. With each style of essay, students will be required to minimally do the following:

- Take sufficient notes to complete the essay
- Write a thesis statement
- Create an outline
- Use the outline to write an essay 4-8 paragraphs in length
- Use a checklist to self-edit writing

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- Write multiple drafts that improve with each effort
- Complete a final draft that demonstrates knowledge of the essay style, content and writing skills.

It is imperative that students complete every step of the writing process. The process of writing is covered in more detail in the *Train up a Child Publishing Teacher's Manual*, available for purchase on our website. Even if a student is talented enough to write an essay without an outline (not many demonstrate such ability), it is essential to develop this skill for more challenging work in the future. Initially, the teacher should evaluate each step of the process to make sure that the student is completing it thoroughly and correctly.

### Essay Styles

The five styles of essays required to complete the written assignments in this curriculum include the following:

- **Narrative** – tells a story, most often written in first person using “I.”
- **Descriptive** – as it implies, this style is used to describe someone or something.
- **Expository** – known as the “teaching” essay, this style often imparts how to do something or provides information.
- **Persuasive** – a style that is used to argue a specific point with strong support.
- **Comparison/Contrast** – an essay that explains the similarities and differences of two or more ideas, people or things.

### Essay Presentation

It is assumed that by this point, students are able to use the computer and type essays rather than write them. Hand writing multiple drafts of an essay is time consuming and frustrating. As students save their work, require them to number and save each draft.


We recommend that the following computer formatting style be implemented for consistency and general practice of all written assignments:

1. Fonts should be 12 point and readable rather than decorative. Recommended fonts include Times New Roman, Arial, or Tahoma.
2. Titles for essays should be in a 14 point font and bolded. The titles are typically centered on the first page of the essay with the student's name and the date of the assignment in 12 point, not bolded, below the title.

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3. Paragraphs should be indented and double spaced.
4. Titles (book, magazine, etc.) should be bolded or italicized, but not both, rather than underlined. Quotes should contain quotation marks or be italicized, but not both.
5. Spelling and grammar checks are optional and their usage should be determined by the teacher. By high school, we suggest that students use spell check and grammar check on their computers because in college and as adults, they will most likely do so.

### Understanding the Units




Each of the American Literature units is similarly designed and follows in chronological order as it is to be completed. The assignments may be chosen by the teacher and student, but note the abbreviations listed before each numbered assignment to determine when an assignment is best completed. The abbreviation key is: **PR** – Prior to Reading, **AR** – As you Read and **FR** – Following Reading. Pay particular attention to who is to read each section, as some sections are written to the teacher, some are to be read by both the teacher and the student, and some are written directly to the student. For clarity, the sections written directly to the student will be indicated throughout the curriculum by a light bulb  at the beginning of the section.

Particularly in the evaluation sections, directions are often repeated, but they may vary by a few significant words and therefore, should still be read carefully. In fact, we strongly suggest that teachers adequately prepare to teach each unit by first reading it through several times.

The unit sections are as follows:

- *Reading Level* – this curriculum uses books with a variety of reading levels and we noted the levels as we perceived them. Included in parentheses are the reasons for our noted level indication. It shouldn't be assumed that a short book is naturally easier than a long book. For example, *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway is labeled as a more challenging read than *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Lee Harper even though Hemingway's book is shorter. This is primarily due to the fact that it contains long, drawn out descriptive details typical of Hemingway's writing style. It's a reflective book with lots of symbolism, whereas Harper's book tells a pretty straight forward story. If you find that a book is too challenging for your student, there are several ways to overcome this issue:
  - Give him more time to read the material so he can read less in each sitting.
  - Let him listen to the book on CD.

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- Read the book aloud with him. When doing so, plan extra time because reading aloud takes longer than reading silently. Discuss the book in small segments with your student as he reads to insure comprehension.
- *Timeframe for Completion* – this is an estimate for the average student. Your student may need more or less time with either the reading or the written assignments, which is fine as long as the work is properly completed. Honors students should be given additional time to complete their extra assignments, as needed. This is an excellent opportunity for high school students to learn to set and meet deadlines. You may want to have consequences for late deadlines to reinforce this important life skill.
- *Objectives* – While *written to the teacher*, these two types of goals should be read and understood by the student, as well. They provide direction for what the student should accomplish with this unit and also focus on what will be evaluated in the end.
-  *Literature Summary* – *Directed to both the student and the teacher*, this overview provides an introduction to and preview of the written work.
-  *Preparatory Reading* – *Written to the student*, these assignments taken from *How to Read a Book* offer instructions for the student on how to properly read the type of literature to follow. As these assignments do not cover the entire book, teachers may want to set aside time in the future for the student to continue reading it. This book offers excellent information about how to read history and other non-fiction material not covered in this particular course. Especially if your student is on the younger end of high school, you may find it effective to read and discuss smaller sections of this book together with your student.
-  *Assignments* – *Written for the student* to follow, they provide detailed instructions on how to complete the various literature assignments and activities. The order of most of the assignments is not relevant and the teacher, along with student, may select the most desired or appropriate assignments.
- *Evaluation* – *Written to assist the teacher*, this procedure was designed to make the evaluation process easier and more understandable for both the teacher and the student.

### Special Features

- *Bolded words* – The bolded words found throughout the units are defined in the glossary section at the back of the curriculum.



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- *Appendices* – Throughout the curriculum there are references to the Appendices as previously listed. You'll want to review this section to have an overview of the tools and helpful notes available to you and your student.

### Evaluation Methods

There is more than one way to grade assignments. While we make suggestions, feel free to use the evaluation method with which you're most comfortable. Some of the evaluation methods referred to in this curriculum include:

- *Pass/fail* – this evaluation type is most often used with smaller projects in which the student completes the assignment competently or not. It shouldn't be used too often, but works well when the assignment grade isn't vital, but you still want the student to have the assignment experience.
- *Oral presentations* – almost any of the assignments can be changed to or include an oral presentation component. A percentage grading key may be found in the evaluation section, but typically looks like this on a 100 point scale:

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### First Book Selection with Assignment Choices

# The Crucible

by Arthur Miller

**Setting Time Period:** Colonial America

**Reading level:** Challenging (content, play format, high interest)

**Time Frame for Completion:** 4-6 weeks reading one act per week with extra time for writing assignments, as needed

### Objectives

Literary:

1. Understand how to read a play
2. Learn about time period writing
3. Recognize the role of the **setting** in drama
4. Discover the use of **characterization** as a literary tool
5. Recognize the **theme** in a play
6. Define **allegory** and recognize its use in literature

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### Language/Other Subject Connections:

1. Write a narrative essay about feeling persecuted or being tempted to do something wrong.
2. Learn about the historical significance of the Salem Witch Trials and McCarthy Era.
3. View this play from a Biblical **worldview** examining the ramifications of lying, self-preservation and **legalism**.



**Literature Summary:** Based on the Salem Witch Trials of 1692, Miller wrote this play as an allegory of his time period, which was the McCarthy era when Senator Joseph McCarthy accused many people of un-American behavior by exposing their supposed communist connections and activities. The play is about a 12-year-old girl, Anne Putnam, giving false accusations and supposed sightings of Salem's citizens holding black Sabbaths and following Satan. A pastor, Samuel Parris, leads in the supposed exposing of the Salem residents which eventually concluded with nineteen people being hung and one person being pressed to death.



**Preparatory Reading Assignment:** Chapters 1-5 and pages 223-226 in *How to Read a Book*. These chapters and pages should be read thoroughly and discussed for comprehension prior to reading the play. The first five chapters may be summer reading or read a few weeks prior to beginning the course because they do contain a great deal of important information about reading in general.



### **Literature Assignments**

Prior to reading *The Crucible*, discuss “theme” with your student. As he reads, have him look for the main theme in the play. See the glossary for a definition of theme.

**PR, AR 1.** Research the Salem Witch Trials and McCarthyism. Write a  $\frac{3}{4}$  - 1 page overview of each. Your points can be bulleted or written in paragraph form. Be prepared to present your overviews orally.

**PR, AR 2.** Research Arthur Miller, the playwright, and discover the following: the decade in which he wrote *The Crucible*, why he wrote the play and any other plays he has written. This may be presented as a written assignment or as an oral narration assignment.

**AR, FR 3.** Note how Arthur Miller sets the stage in this act through description and dialogue. Write down three direct quotes from the play demonstrating his creative use of both to reveal the setting to the reader.

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**AR, FR 4.** Discuss lying, legalism and self preservation from a Biblical perspective. Was a Biblical perspective utilized by the characters in the play, even the clergy? Research to find Scripture that reveals what the Bible says about these topics. Find at least two verses related to each. Could you have used specific verses to protect yourself from being convicted of witchcraft?

**PR, AR, FR 5.** Write a narrative essay, 5-8 paragraphs long, about one of the following:

- A time when you were tempted to lie or be disobedient in order to avoid getting into trouble, but chose not to. What caused you not to lie or disobey? How do you think others might have been affected if you had lied or disobeyed?
- A situation where someone else lied and you were negatively impacted by that person lying.
- A time when you were wrongly accused and had difficulty defending yourself.
- A time when you stood up for someone or something because of what you believed, even when others weren't supportive.

**FR 6.** Visit the following National Geographic website and follow along with the interactive model to become one of the accused on trial. Be sure to read all of the detailed information at the end.

Check out what happens if you confess and if you tell the truth.

[www3.nationalgeographic.com/salem/](http://www3.nationalgeographic.com/salem/)



### Honors Assignments

**FR 1.** Read about the real historical events as compared to the play's presentation at [www.17thc.us/docs/fact-fiction.shtml](http://www.17thc.us/docs/fact-fiction.shtml). Select one of the written assignments at the bottom to explore in essay form.

**FR 2.** Create a Crucible newspaper that covers the Salem Witch Trials as they happen. Remember, you are just reporting the news and you shouldn't show bias in either direction. Also note that this was a frightening, serious time for Salem residents, many of whom were Puritans. The material should be handled with the proper respect and dignity. Include at least 5 articles of 250-300 words each. Add in graphics and other important information such as weather forecasts, births and deaths, map of the area showing where significant events supposedly occurred, etc. Some interesting article ideas might include:

- How to avoid looking like a witch or someone involved in black magic
- Report on court proceedings
- Interviews from both sides, those who believe that witchcraft is occurring and those who don't
- Interviews with family members of those on trial
- How to protect yourself and your family from witchcraft
- Summary of the most recent church sermon.

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### Sample of Teacher's Evaluation Tips for *The Crucible*

#### Evaluation Tips for *The Crucible*

##### Literature Assignments

##### 1. *Research on Salem Witch Trials and McCarthyism*

- This assignment should be the student's original writing, although it is research based.
- The writing should be grammatically correct and clearly articulated. Points should be deducted for spelling, punctuation and grammar errors.
- The assignment should be within the page length requirements and neatly presented, as discussed in the *Teacher's Notes* on page 7 under *The Process of Writing*.
- In weighing the grade for this assignment, we recommend the following percentages or points based on a 100 point scale:
  - Content of subject matter 50%
  - Grammar, punctuation, and spelling 20%
  - Clarity of written communication 20%
  - Presentation (typed, titled, etc.) 10%

##### 2. *Research on Arthur Miller*

##### For written assignments:

- This assignment should be the student's original writing, although it is research based.
- The writing should be grammatically correct and clearly articulated. Points should be deducted for spelling, punctuation and grammar errors.
- The assignment should be within the page length requirements and neatly presented, as discussed in the *Teacher's Notes* on page 7 under *The Process of Writing*.
- In weighing the grade for this assignment, we recommend the following percentages or points based on a 100 point scale:
  - Content of subject matter 50%
  - Grammar, punctuation, and spelling 20%
  - Clarity of written communication 20%
  - Presentation (typed, titled, etc.) 10%

##### For oral presentations:

As this is an oral presentation, the focus for a grade needs to be on that aspect of the assignment. In weighing the grade for this presentation, we recommend the following percentages or points based on a 100 point scale:

- Preparedness of material to be presented. 25%

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- Presentation of material including eye contact, smooth speech patterns and organized speaking. 25%
- Clear articulation. 15%
- Topic is well represented by content of material. 35%

### 3. *Setting Established Through Description and Dialogue*

This assignment should be graded based on the following criteria:

- At least three excerpts from the play revealing the setting through description and/or dialogue are included.
- The assignment is neatly presented.

Point deductions should be made for punctuation, grammar and other writing errors.

### 4. *Lying, Legalism and Self-Preservation*

This assignment has two different aspects to grade: the discussion and the research aspect. For the discussion, the student may be graded on participation level. The student's second grade should be given for finding at least two appropriate Scripture verses for each concept. This assignment may be graded as a pass/fail, with the student either doing enough to get a passing grade or having to do more in order to pass. For more information about this type of grading, see page 12 of the *Teacher's Notes*.

### 5. *Narrative Essay*

- Remember to look back at the *Teacher's Notes* on page 7-9 as a reminder of the general areas you should be considering with this written assignment.
- The primary goal with this essay style is to tell a story. Therefore your most significant evaluation question is, "Does this written work tell a story based on the selected topic in a clear and chronological manner?"
- In weighing the grade for this essay, we recommend the following percentages or points based on a 100 point scale:
  - Narrative style maintained 25%
  - General essay rules (introduction, thesis statement, paragraph transition, well-formed paragraphs, conclusion) 20%
  - Grammar, punctuation, and spelling 15%
  - Clarity of written communication 15%
  - Deadlines maintained and all components included (thesis statement, outline, notes, drafts and final essay) 15%
  - Presentation (typed, titled, etc.) 10%

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### 6. *Interactive Salem Witch Trial*

As this assignment mainly requires the student to read and complete the interactive game, the grade is simply based on completion of the project. An informal oral narration would also be appropriate to check comprehension of the activity. This assignment may be graded as pass/fail, with a passing grade for completing the interactive game.

### Honors Assignments

#### 1. *Essay options*

This essay evaluation depends on which topic is selected by the student. In general, follow these guidelines for grading the essay:

- Clear presentation of selected topic with valid and supported points 25%
- General essay rules (introduction, thesis statement, paragraph transition, well-formed paragraphs, conclusion) 20%
- Grammar, punctuation, and spelling 15%
- Clarity of written communication 15%
- Deadlines maintained and all components included (thesis statement, outline, notes, drafts and final essay) 15%
- Presentation (typed, titled, etc.) 10%

#### 2. *Crucible Newspaper*

There are various aspects of this assignment that need to be considered when grading. We recommend the following percentages or points based on a 100 point scale:

- Five or more articles of appropriate length 25%
- Other creative components such as graphics, headlines, weather forecasts, etc. 20%
- Grammar, punctuation, and spelling 10%
- Clarity of written communication 10%
- Overall presentation in newspaper format 10%

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**This is the end of our American Literature sample! If you have any questions about this or any of our other courses, we would love to hear from you at the email address below.**