

# Contemporary Conflicts

**LEARNING STRATEGIES:**

Brainstorming, Close Reading, Marking the Text, Graphic Organizer, Drafting, Revising, Rehearsal, Discussion Groups

My Notes

**Learning Targets**

- Brainstorm a variety of contemporary concerns.
- Generate social commentary within a dramatic script.

**Preparing for a Dramatic Scene**

1. As a small group, individually and silently jot ideas on sticky notes for the following question. Then, say them out loud as you place each sticky note on a table for all in the group to see and hear. Generate as many ideas as you can, with the goal of filling the space.

What issues concern you and your friends? Consider campus, local, national, and global issues. You may think in terms of health, families, technology, the environment, and any other area that comes to mind.

2. Review all your group’s ideas, and come to a consensus about two possible concerns. If you have a hard time agreeing, conduct a silent vote using numbers (3 points for your 1st choice, 2 points for your 2nd choice, 1 point for your 3rd choice).
3. In preparing to create and perform the dramatic scene for Embedded Assessment 2, reread this passage from “Why I Wrote *The Crucible*” by Arthur Miller. Mark the text for the universal, underlying issues that Miller’s play exposed to help you connect personal concerns with universal issues.

I am not sure what *The Crucible* is telling people now, but I know that its paranoid center is still pumping out the same darkly attractive warning that it did in the fifties. For some, the play seems to be about the dilemma of relying on the testimony of small children accusing adults of sexual abuse, something I’d not have dreamed of forty years ago. For others, it may simply be a fascination with the outbreak of paranoia that suffuses the play—the blind panic that, in our age, often seems to sit at the dim edges of consciousness. Certainly its political implications are the central issue for many people; the Salem interrogations turn out to be eerily exact models of those yet to come in Stalin’s Russia, Pinochet’s Chile, Mao’s China, and other regimes. (Nien Cheng, the author of *Life and Death in Shanghai*, has told me that she could hardly believe that a non-Chinese—someone who had not experienced the Cultural Revolution—had written the play.) But below its concerns with justice the play evokes a lethal brew of illicit sexuality, fear of the supernatural, and political manipulation, a combination not unfamiliar these days. The film, by reaching a broad American audience as no play ever can, may well unearth still other connections to those buried public terrors that Salem first announced on this continent.

4. Use the graphic organizer to help you organize your thoughts about the scene you will write. The examples provide a model for the three areas you need to identify prior to writing your script.

Contemporary Societal Concern	Underlying, Universal Issues	Parallel Setting
Example A: McCarthy trials/political injustice due to paranoia	Political manipulation	Salem witch trials
Example B: The fastest-growing homeless group is families	People have the attitude “It’s their own fault”; there is a large stigma attached to receiving charitable help	The Great Depression
Example C: Environmental issues surrounding fuel	Global economic issues; global environmental issues	The time of the invention of the automobile.

- Review the Planning steps in the Embedded Assessment 1 instructions. Use separate paper to plan your characters, conflicts, plot lines, stage directions, and dialogue.
- Draft your scene on a separate paper, using *The Crucible* as the model text. Be sure to use the script-writing checklist that you created earlier in the unit.