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Sample pages
How to use

The Pearson English VCE Comparing guides have been written to the new Victorian Certificate of Education English and English as an Additional Language Study Design for 2016–2020 and cover Units 2–4 Area of Study 1 Reading and comparing texts.

The Comparing guides are divided into four sections:
1: Knowing: The Crucible
2: Knowing: Year of Wonders
3: Comparing: The Crucible and Year of Wonders
4: Writing the essay.

Knowing the texts
These sections provide a deep insight into the texts, covering context and author, structural elements, textual elements and ideas, issues and themes. At the end of each section is a set of learning activities.

Comparing texts
This section outlines how to compare and contrast the two texts. The two texts are compared and contrasted in regards to themes, cultural context and genre. This section also provides practical tips and ideas on how to compare texts as well as practice topics.
Writing the essay

This section provides a step-by-step guide on how to plan and write a comparing essay. Four different essay styles have been included as well as an essay sample with annotations.

SHAPING INFORMATION AND PLANNING
Once you have read or viewed your texts, deconstructed for meaning and prepared your notes, it is time to start to write essays.

- Select a topic
- Brainstorm an argument
- Create an essay plan
- Write different types of essays.

High-scoring responses should include the following:
- Consistent engagement with the topic throughout
- A well-sustained argument, supported by strong arguments and excellent use of evidence
- Complex but well-controlled sentences that use punctuation accurately and purposefully
- Formal language of critical analysis used effectively
- Accurate and specific details supported by judiciously used quotations and examples
- Weaving of the two texts throughout the analysis
- Complex links that recognise similarities and differences but also go further to establish subtle distinctions.

Before you start
- BRAINSTORMING THE TOPIC
  - This diagram illustrates how to ask yourself questions about the topic so that you can start to address the essay question. Consider the evidence you would use to support your ideas.

Writer’s toolbox
- When you brainstorm, ask questions about the topic. A good way to do this is to make sure you answer or include the Who? What? Where? Why? When? Which? and How? of the topic.

Sample pages
- Mind map: Love
- Paragraph/Argument 1
- Paragraph/Argument 2
- Paragraph/Argument 3
- The contention=

Introduction

Body paragraph 1: looks at the first text

Body paragraph 2: looks at the second text and makes comparisons with the first

Body paragraph 3: contrasts the points discussed in paragraphs 1 and 2

Conclusion

eBook and online resources

Online resources support the comparing of texts and include:

- essay templates
- graphic organiser templates
- worksheets.
Knowing: The Crucible

ARTHUR MILLER

The Crucible famously uses the Salem witch trials as an extended analogy for the McCarthy Trials of the late 1940s and early 1950s. For Arthur Miller, both events were government witch-hunts. The play has remained relevant because each generation must wrestle with its own version of ‘witchcraft’ and what constitutes a ‘witch-hunt’. As a study of human nature and motivations, The Crucible looks at the effect of extremism, deception, greed, religion and the quest for power.

Writer’s toolbox

Witch-hunt (noun): A campaign or targeted attack directed against a person or group holding views considered unorthodox or a threat to society.
### CONTEXT AND AUTHOR

**Historical context: The Salem Witch Trials**

The play is set in the spring of 1692 and takes place in the town of Salem, Massachusetts, which was one of the British colonies in New England, America. The area was settled by Puritans who had left England to follow the Puritan religion more strictly. The Puritans were a strict offshoot of Protestantism, whose adherents believed in ‘purity’ in worship, morality and daily living.

#### Timeline of the Salem Witch-hunt and Trials

- **January 1692**
  - Betty Parris and Abigail Williams, daughter and niece respectively of the Salem Village Puritan Minister, begin babbling wildly and exhibiting unusual behaviour, including having fits.

- **February 1692**
  - Several village girls begin exhibiting similar symptoms. The first accusations of witchcraft are made.

- **March 1692**
  - The first trial and convictions are recorded. Tituba, the Parris family’s slave, confesses. Further accusations are made against women as diverse as 71-year-old Rebecca Nurse and four-year-old Dorcas Good, who are both in prison by the end of the month.

- **April and May 1692**
  - Another 60 people are accused, imprisoned and examined including John and Elizabeth Proctor. The Governor and Deputy-Governor of Massachusetts become involved in the administration of the trials.

- **June 1692**
  - The first hanging of a convicted witch – Bridget Bishop – takes place.

- **July 1692**
  - Five women are hanged.

- **August 1692**
  - Five men including John Proctor are hanged. One woman is hanged. Elizabeth Proctor is granted a reprieve.

- **September 1692**
  - Five are spared because they confess. Giles Corey is pressed to death because he refuses to stand trial. The last eight hangings take place.

- **October 1692**
  - Doubt about the supernatural nature of the accusations and events begins to grow. A minister states: ‘It were better that ten suspected witches should escape, than that one innocent person should be condemned.’ (Mather) The Court in Salem Village is dissolved.

- **January 1693**
  - The final cases are heard in a new court, and those found guilty are reprieved. All accused witches are released from prison.

- **1697**
  - Samuel Parris is forced to resign as Minister of Salem Village.

- **1706**
  - Anne Putnam, one of the chief accusers, apologises, claiming that what happened was caused by a ‘great delusion of Satan’.

#### Timeline of the Salem Witch-hunt and Trials
The Salem Witch Saga took place between January 1692 and May 1693. During that time, a cycle of bizarre behaviour, protestations of satanic possession and curses, accusations of witchcraft, arrests, trials and punishments – including the imposition of the death penalty – were established. The hysteria and accusations spread beyond Salem Village and into surrounding towns, where others were jailed.

It is important to remember that, according to Miller, ‘[t]he play is not history’ and that he changed certain key elements. He has, for example, changed Abigail’s age from 11 years to 17 years, and he invents the affair between her and John Proctor as a way of explaining some of her actions.

**PURITANISM**

Puritanism was an offshoot of the Protestant movement and was particularly strong in England. Puritans wanted to ‘purify’ England and the Anglican Church. In the sixteenth century, Puritan leaders and troops were instrumental in removing King Charles I and executing him. During the Interregnum, England was a Puritan theocracy led by Oliver Cromwell; however, this fell after the restoration of the crown to Charles II.

**Author: Arthur Miller**

Arthur Asher Miller (1915–2005) was a New York born Jewish playwright, who also wrote movie screenplays and essays. He became interested in playwriting at the University of Michigan, and after graduation, Miller worked on the docks for a while to support his wife and family while he continued to work on his plays.

Miller’s closest professional relationship was with fellow playwright and director Elia Kazan. This relationship flourished during the 1940s and early 1950s, was severed after Kazan’s testimony to the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC), but was repaired during the writing and staging of Miller’s 1964 play, *After the Fall*, which documented his marriage to Marilyn Monroe.

**House Un-American Activities Committee**

Commonly referred to as The McCarthy Trials because of Senator Joseph McCarthy who chaired the Committee, the HUAC were the proceedings of the House Un-American Activities Committee, which sat from 1938 until 1975.

Originally established to conduct investigations into American Nazi sympathisers, the HUAC was used by Senator McCarthy to whip up hysteria about the presence of Communists and Communist sympathisers in the United States. While it was never illegal to be a member of the Communist Party, the atmosphere of suspicion and uncertainty of the post-World War II Cold War society meant that the party was viewed as a serious threat to America. As such, from 1947, many influential members of the artistic and academic communities were brought before the Committee and forced to confront the question: ‘Are you now or have you ever been a member of the Communist Party?’ Anyone who was suspected or convicted was blacklisted, fined or jailed.

**Writer’s toolbox**

A blacklist is literally a list of people who are under suspicion or censure or who are in some way banned from participating in the society in which they live or work.
Witnesses faced a battle with their personal morality as they were asked to name friends and relatives to the Committee in return for the possibility that they might, themselves, be treated more leniently. A large number of Miller’s friends was dragged before the HUAC. In 1952, Elia Kazan, Miller’s great friend and collaborator, gave names to the Committee, and these people were duly prosecuted. It was after speaking to Kazan that Miller conceived and began to write The Crucible.

... what the two eras had in common ... [was] the menace of concealed plots... similarities in the rituals of defence, the investigative routines; 300 years apart, both persecutions alleged membership of a secret, disloyal group. Should the accused confess, his honesty could only be proved by naming former confederates. The informer became the axle of the plot’s existence and the investigation’s necessity... Salem village, that pious, devout settlement at the edge of the white civilisation, had displayed ...[an] unprecedented outbreak of distrust, alarm, suspicion and murder. And for people wherever the play is performed on any of the five continents, there is a certain amazement that the same terror is happening to them or that is threatening them, has happened before to others ...

Arthur Miller, ‘Are You Now Or Were You Ever?’, The Guardian/The Observer (online), Saturday, 17 June 2000

**STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS**

**Style and genre**

Arthur Miller has been called both a political playwright and a psychological playwright, and there are strong elements of politics and psychology in The Crucible. The story centres on John Proctor. We see his political struggles against the power and hypocrisy of the state in which he lives, and we also see his psychological struggle to regain his ‘name’ and, therefore, himself after he has betrayed his own principles and morality.

The four-act play is written in didactic American realist style; that is, the characters seem like real people to us, but they exist only to teach us the lessons that Miller wants us to learn. This accounts, too, for the mini-essays and background information that are scattered throughout Act One of the play and the short epilogue. These exist only in the written version of the play and provide information that Miller thinks is important for his readers/actors/directors to know.

The characters speak in language drawn from the court records that Miller studied as he wrote the play. His stage directions emphasise the reality of their environment: houses are ‘low and dark’ and beams are still ‘raw’ in the buildings.

**Writer’s toolbox**

An epilogue is a speech at the end of a play that comments on or provides a conclusion to what has happened.
Comparing: *The Crucible* and *Year of Wonders*

There are different kinds of comparative questions and different ways to approach them. This section will help you to develop an understanding of how to use a range of strategies when planning your essays about *The Crucible* and *Year of Wonders*. These strategies, or graphic organisers, such as Venn diagrams, scales and data charts are especially useful tools in assisting you to explore the similarities and differences between the texts.

**TYPES OF QUESTIONS**

There are three types of questions:

- the themes, issues and ideas
- cultural context
- the genre and style.

Common words used in essay questions include:

- **Discuss**: Debate the arguments for and against the topic backing up these ideas with selected evidence from the text. Provide a conclusion.
- **To what extent**: Assess the evidence in your text that would support an argument. Also look at alternative explanations.
- **Do you agree?**: An opinion is being sought as to the extent to which the statement or quote is accurate. Evidence should be provided to support or contend the point of view.
- **Quotations**: Essay questions that use quotations are a way to delve into the issues embedded in a text. You should make reference to the quote and the ideas that it raises.

**Theme questions**

A theme is a prominent, recurring idea that pervades a literary work. Theme questions ask us to consider any ideas common to both texts.

We have examined the following themes for each text:

- Social authority and individual conscience
- Use and abuse of power
- Witchcraft
- Hysteria
- Hypocrisy
- Nature of closed communities
- Freedom and repression
- Love.
However, don’t limit your scope of ideas to those in a textbook or those discussed by your teacher. The table below shows how you can break open each of these thematic ideas to consider a broader scope of ideas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common themes in both texts</th>
<th>Broader concepts to examine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social authority and individual conscience</td>
<td>The morality of the individual; betrayal of principles; the individual vs the state; the individual vs the community; martyrdom; opportunism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use and abuse of power</td>
<td>Leaders; opportunism; moral justice vs legal justice; homogeneity vs pluralism; tyranny; conformity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Witchcraft</td>
<td>Fear; stereotypes (particularly for women); scapegoating of innocents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hysteria</td>
<td>Mob behaviour; homogeneity vs pluralism; fear; manipulation; the innocent; the guilty; repression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypocrisy</td>
<td>Morality of the individual; opportunism; social class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nature of closed communities</td>
<td>Mob behaviour; homogeneity vs pluralism; fear; double standards; patriarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom and repression</td>
<td>Homogeneity vs pluralism; patriarchy; the individual vs the community; conformity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Love vs passion; friendship; sacrifice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Thematic ideas and broader concepts**

  Note the way that the themes can cross over. Knowing the texts well and understanding how the ideas in them weave in and out is the first step to being able to write well about them.

- **Cultural context questions**

  Cultural context questions ask you to consider the similarities and differences of the societies presented in each text. You will also have to examine the attitudes of the authors, which is referred to as examining the view and values in the text. So, for example, what might be similar in Salem and Eyam, two Christian communities in crisis, may be very obvious, but there may be major differences. You may also be asked to consider the attitudes of each author about the roles of women and men, the fear of the unknown or the different, or even the ways in which people’s faith is shaped in times of crisis.
Genre questions

Genre questions consider the similarities or differences in the structure of each text, and how and why the authors conveyed their ideas in certain ways. Although we are comparing a novel to a play, each text still has settings, style and the use of characterisation and symbols to explore their big ideas. Questions about genre may ask you to explore the use of:

- characterisation
- symbols and motifs
- choice of words, language and dialogue
- voice or perspective
- tone and mood
- figurative language
- mise en scene
- structure.

THE COMPARISON

How to compare

The following section shows you a number of ways to compare the two texts. A variety of methods have been used, such as tables that allow you to chart and track data and graphic organisers that let you see quickly the links and variations.

In a comparison essay, you must critically analyse any two texts pointing out their similarities and/or differences. It could also be called a compare and contrast essay. Your tasks could be comparative only (looking only at similarities), contrasting only (pointing out the differences) or both comparative and contrasting.

Theme

■ SOCIAL AUTHORITY AND INDIVIDUAL CONSCIENCE

Both authors examine the ways in which individuals respond to the pressures of conformity within their respective villages. The necessity of obeying one’s conscience despite looming pressures is a central tenet of the texts.

CONFORMITY: In order for small communities to survive and thrive, individuals must make compromises. Both texts look at what happens when these choices conflict with deeply held personal beliefs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Crucible</th>
<th>Year of Wonders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John Proctor has the opportunity to add a lie to his name by confessing to his crime. He learns to summon the strength of character to stay true to his principles and to demand punishment. He cannot live with the compromise. Conversely, Rebecca Nurse remains steadfastly committed to the truth and is prepared to die for her beliefs.</td>
<td>The lives of the women in the village follow rigid and well-defined expectations and roles. While there is no challenge, Anys and Mem Gowdie are marginalised but tolerated. In times of turmoil, however, Anys’ unorthodox lifestyle and Mem’s arcane wisdom stand out as threats to the social order.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

■ Comparing conformity in the texts
Writing the essay

There are many ways to write compare and contrast essays. Selecting an essay framework for comparative writing can be challenging because essays need to be more than lists of ideas. Rather they should aim to be thoughtful, in-depth analyses of the two texts, *The Crucible* and *Years of Wonders*. Compare and contrast essays encourage critical thinking, and the more complex comparative models provide more scope to demonstrate these skills.

**SHAPING INFORMATION AND PLANNING**

Once you have read or viewed your texts, deconstructed for meaning and prepared your notes, it is time to start to write essays.

This section will model how to:

- work through a topic
- brainstorm a topic
- develop a contention
- create an essay plan
- write different types of essays.

**High-scoring responses**

High-scoring responses should include the following:

- consistent engagement with the topic throughout
- a well-sustained contention, supported by strong arguments and excellent use of evidence
- complex but well-controlled sentences that use punctuation accurately and purposefully
- formal language of critical analysis used effectively
- accurate and specific details supported by judiciously used quotations and examples
- weaving of the two texts throughout the analysis
- complex links that recognise similarities and differences but also go further to establish subtle distinctions.

**Before you start**

**BRAINSTORMING THE TOPIC**

This diagram illustrates how to ask yourself questions about the topic so that you can start to address the essay question. Consider the evidence you would use to support your ideas.

**Writer’s toolbox**

When you brainstorm, ask questions about the topic. A good way to do this is to make sure you answer or include the Who? What? Where? Why? When? Which? and How? of the topic.
Mind map: Love

CREATING THE ESSAY PLAN
Your essay plan helps you to organise your ideas and shape them into an appropriate response. It provides clarity of thought around your argument.

Writer’s toolbox
Make sure you are developing an argument and not falling into the habit of storytelling. If you find yourself writing about what happens for the majority of your paragraph, then you are probably storytelling. Try arguing a case by asking why and how in each paragraph.

DEVELOPING A CONTENTION
A contention is the central argument that runs through your entire essay. In many ways, it is the invisible spine that holds up your essay. Many students find that the best way to develop their contention is to work out what their supporting arguments/paragraphs will be. Once they know what the paragraphs will be, they can sum up the overall belief in a sentence or two. That then is the contention!

Developing a contention