

Topic/Title: Early American Gravestone Project and Fieldtrip Options

Grade Range (suggested): 11th grade, American Literature and/or American Studies

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Overview: Students read *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller and learned about the Puritan lifestyle of the first settlers. The play is set approximately 70 years after the first settlers came to America looking for religious freedom. Their attitudes as well as their beliefs were portrayed in the symbols, motifs, and carvings of early American gravestones. Students also researched and studied the history of early American gravestones as well as the history of the Salem Witch Trials. As an assignment, students created their own gravestones for a person who died during the time of the Salem Witch Trials. They also produced essays explaining their rationale for their selected character's gravestone motif, tablet information, and overall design. To further student understanding, the class visited an early American burying ground. My students visited Sleepy Hollow Cemetery and the Old Dutch Burying Ground, in Sleepy Hollow, New York. Students participated in a guided tour of the cemetery, seeing many early American and later gravestones including Washington Irving's gravestone, the Irving family plot, and two headstones which served as inspiration for Irving's Katrina Van Tassel character in "The Legend of Sleepy Hollow" (Catriena Ecker Van Tassel and her niece, Eleanor Van Tassel Brush). Students also visited other notable gravestones. I selected Sleepy Hollow Cemetery and the Old Dutch Burying Ground for the gravestone analysis because our study of the Colonial period precedes our study of the Revolutionary War period (which includes the readings of Washington Irving), but this activity can also be done by touring The Old Burying Point Cemetery, when visiting Salem, Massachusetts.

Common Core State Standards:

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.1: Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.11-12.10: By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.8: Delineate and evaluate the reasoning in seminal U.S.

texts, including the application of constitutional principles and use of legal reasoning (e.g., in U.S. Supreme Court majority opinions and dissents) and the premises, purposes, and arguments in works of public advocacy (e.g., *The Federalist*, presidential addresses).

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.10: By the end of grade 11, read and comprehend literary nonfiction in the grades 11-CCR text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.4: Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.7: Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.9: Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Essential Questions:

The American experience- Who is an American?

The American experience- How have American writers used various means to challenge social norms?

Goals/Objectives:

- Students will interpret, analyze and evaluate text in order to extend understanding and appreciation.
- Students will communicate with others to create interpretations of written, oral and visual texts.
- Students will prepare, publish and/or present work appropriate to audience, purpose and task.

Assessment:

Students will complete a gravestone project, including an essay, connected to readings and trip experiences, to assess understanding as well as new learning.

Lesson Sequence:

- 1). Students will read Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*.
- 2). Students will research and study early American gravestones.
- 3). Students will design their gravestones emulating early American styles, while incorporating information gleaned through research about their selected individuals.
- 4). Students will compose well-written essays on gravestone rationale, as it applies to

their selected individuals.

Materials Needed:

- Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*
- Gravestone cut-outs
- PowerPoint presentation on the history of early American gravestones
- Rubric on gravestone design and essay criteria
- Student access to the Internet for research purposes

Other Resources:

(websites, videos, books, etc.)

Salem, Massachusetts Sites and Attractions:

<http://www.salemweb.com/guide/tour/attract3.shtml#OBP>

The Salem Witchcraft Papers (Verbatim Transcriptions of the Court Records):

<http://salem.lib.virginia.edu/texts/tei/swp>

***Early American Gravestones: Introduction to the Farber Gravestone Collection* by
Jessie Lie Farber:**

<http://www.davidrumsey.com/farber/Early%20American%20Gravestones.pdf>

Sleepy Hollow Cemetery:

<http://www.sleepyhollowcemetery.org/sleepy-hollow-country/the-old-dutch-church/>

Friends of the Old Dutch Burying Ground:

<http://www.odcfriends.org/index.php/genealogy/the-old-dutch-burying-ground>