

The Crucible, Act I by Arthur Miller
Vocabulary Warm-up Word Lists

Study these words from the selection. Then, complete the activities.

Word List A

autocratic [ahw toh KRA tik] *adj.* dictatorial

In an autocratic system of government, the people have little or no power.

faction [FAK shuhn] *n.* party or interest group

A faction on the student council is unhappy with the class president.

homage [HAWH muhj] *n.* respectful attention

The flag flew at half mast in homage to a local firefighter who died recently.

hypocrisy [hi POK ruh see] *n.* pretense

If you say one thing and do another, you may be guilty of hypocrisy.

paradox [PAR uh doks] *n.* apparent contradiction

Philosophers think that every paradox is an illusion.

somber [SAHM buhr] *adj.* serious; solemn

Joe's somber expression as he entered was a clue that he had bad news.

villainous [VIL uh nuhs] *adj.* evil

The court punished the criminal's villainous behavior.

vindictive [vin DIK tiv] *adj.* vengeful

Glenda felt vindictive and decided to get revenge on her tattletale brother.

Name _____ Date _____

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Vocabulary Warm-up Exercises

Exercise A *Fill in the blanks, using each word from Word List A only once.*

Throughout history and all across the world, a long series of [1] _____ leaders have tried to seize absolute power. This collection of dictators has included some of the most [2] _____ evildoers known to humanity. There can be few people unaware of the [3] _____, even frightening, details of the dictatorships of Adolf Hitler in Germany and Josef Stalin in Russia. It is a(n) [4] _____ that, even as these rulers thoroughly oppressed their people, they insisted on total [5] _____ and praise from their subjects. When faced by any resistance group or opposing [6] _____, these dictators invariably became [7] _____ and took revenge on their opponents. For many who lived under such dictatorships, the necessity to survive led to a type of [8] _____, in which they said one thing publicly and believed another in private.

The Crucible, Act I by Arthur Miller**Reading Warm-up A**

Read the following passage. Pay special attention to the underlined words. Then, read it again, and complete the activities. Use a separate sheet of paper for your written answers.

To appreciate Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible*, it is helpful to understand the historical background of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, which included Salem. In the seventeenth century, Massachusetts had a special kind of autocratic, dictatorial government, called a *theocracy*. In this government, there was no separation of church and state. Only church members in good standing could vote. The Puritan authorities demanded citizens' complete loyalty and also their homage. They met any party or faction that opposed or criticized them with vindictive, even ruthless, opposition.

In England, the Puritans had been victims of persecution. This sad, even somber, part of their history was an important reason for their decision to emigrate. They first traveled to Holland and then to America in search of religious freedom. Once in America, however, the Puritans' unwillingness to tolerate dissent presents us with a paradox, or apparent contradiction.

Consider the case of Anne Hutchinson, who was hounded out of Massachusetts in 1637 as a villainous threat to society. Hutchinson was a religious liberal. She founded a woman's group in Boston to discuss religious views and recent sermons by ministers. She criticized the Puritan clergy, saying they were guilty of hypocrisy. The clergy, Hutchinson said, emphasized narrowly legalistic concepts of morality but ignored the individual's ability to choose ethical behavior.

Hutchinson's opposition to the Puritan establishment soon led to the powerful opposition of John Winthrop, the most influential clergyman in Massachusetts. She was tried on the charge of "betraying the ministers" and then sentenced to banishment. With some of her followers, she then established a settlement in what is now Rhode Island.

1. Underline the word that gives a clue to the meaning of autocratic. Use a word meaning the opposite of *autocratic* in a sentence of your own.
2. Circle the words in this sentence that give a clue to the meaning of homage. What is a synonym for *homage*?
3. Underline the words in this sentence that give a clue to the meaning of faction. Use the word *faction* in an original sentence.
4. What is a synonym for vindictive? What is an antonym for *vindictive*?
5. Circle the words in this and the previous sentence that offer a clue to the meaning of somber. Write a sentence about something or someone that you feel is *somber*.
6. Underline the words in this sentence that give a clue to the meaning of paradox. In your own words, restate the *paradox* identified in this and the preceding sentences.
7. What is a synonym for villainous? What is an antonym for the word *villainous*?
8. Underline the words in the next sentence that give a clue to the meaning of hypocrisy. What is a synonym for *hypocrisy*?