TABLE OF CONTENTS

Common Core Standards 3
Massachusetts Standards in Theatre 4
Artists 5
Themes for Writing & Discussion 7
Guided Comprehension Questions 11
Adventures in S.T.E.A.M. 13
Further Exploration 14
Suggested Activities 16

WITCH
by Jen Silverman
Directed by Rebecca Bradshaw
OCT 15 – NOV 14, 2021
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COMMON CORE STANDARDS IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

STANDARDS: Student Matinee performances and pre-show workshops provide unique opportunities for experiential learning and support various combinations of the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts. They may also support standards in other subject areas such as Social Studies and History, depending on the individual play’s subject matter.

Activities are also included in this Curriculum Guide and in our pre-show workshops that support several of the Massachusetts state standards in Theatre. Other arts areas may also be addressed depending on the individual play’s subject matter.

Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details 1
- **Grades 9-10:** Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.
- **Grades 11-12:** 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.

Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details 2
- **Grades 9-10:** Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.
- **Grades 11-12:** Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

Reading Literature: Key Ideas & Details 3
- **Grades 9-10:** Analyze how complex characters (e.g. those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the themes.
- **Grades 11-12:** Analyze the impact of the author’s choices regarding how to develop related elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

Reading Literature: Craft & Structure 5
- **Grades 9-10:** Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks), create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.
- **Grades 11-12:** Analyze how an author’s choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

Reading Literature: Craft & Structure 6
- **Grades 9-10:** Analyze a particular point of view or cultural experience reflected in a work of literature from outside the United States, drawing on a wide reading of world literature.
- **Grades 11-12:** Analyze a case in which grasping point of view required distinguishing what is directly stated in a text from what is really meant (e.g., satire, sarcasm, irony, or understatement).

Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas 7
- **Grades 9-12:** Analyze multiple interpretations of a story, drama, or poem (e.g. recorded or live production of a play or recorded novel or poetry), evaluating how each version interprets the source text (Include at least one play by Shakespeare and one play by an American dramatist).

Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge & Ideas 9
- **Grades 9-12:** Analyze how an author draws on and transforms source material in a specific work (e.g., how Shakespeare treats a theme or topic from Ovid or the Bible or how a later author draws on a play by Shakespeare).
ACTING

1.7: Create and sustain a believable character throughout a scripted or improvised scene (By the end of Grade 8).

1.12: Describe and analyze, in written and oral form, characters’ wants, needs, objectives, and personality characteristics (By the end of Grade 8).

1.13: In rehearsal and performance situations, perform as a productive and responsible member of an acting ensemble (i.e., demonstrate personal responsibility and commitment to a collaborative process) (By the end of Grade 8).

1.14: Create complex and believable characters through the integration of physical, vocal, and emotional choices (Grades 9-12).

1.15: Demonstrate an understanding of a dramatic work by developing a character analysis (Grades 9-12).

1.17: Demonstrate increased ability to work effectively alone and collaboratively with a partner or in an ensemble (Grades 9-12).

READING & WRITING SCRIPTS

2.7: Read plays and stories from a variety of cultures and historical periods and identify the characters, setting, plot, theme, and conflict (By the end of Grade 8).

2.8: Improvise characters, dialogue, and actions that focus on the development and resolution of dramatic conflicts (By the end of Grade 8).

2.11: Read plays from a variety of genres and styles; compare and contrast the structure of plays to the structures of other forms of literature (Grades 9-12).

TECHNICAL THEATRE

4.6: Draw renderings, floor plans, and/or build models of sets for a dramatic work and explain choices in using visual elements (line, shape/form, texture, color, space) and visual principals (unity, variety, harmony, balance, rhythm) (By the end of Grade 8).

4.13: Conduct research to inform the design of sets, costumes, sound, and lighting for a dramatic production (Grades 9-12).

CONNECTIONS

Strand 6: Purposes and Meanings in the Arts — Students will describe the purposes for which works of dance, music, theatre, visual arts, and architecture were and are created, and, when appropriate, interpret their meanings (Grades PreK-12).

Strand 10: Interdisciplinary Connections — Students will apply their knowledge of the arts to the study of English language arts, foreign languages, health, history and social science, mathematics, and science and technology/engineering (Grades PreK-12).

COMMUNITY CODE OF RESPECT

Attending live theatre is a unique experience with many valuable educational and social benefits. To ensure that all audience members can enjoy the performance, please take a few minutes to discuss the following topics with your students before you come to The Huntington.

• How is attending the theatre similar to and different from going to the movies? What behaviors are and are not appropriate when seeing a play? Why?

• Remind students that because the performance is live, the audience's behavior and reactions will affect the actors' performances. No two audiences are the same, and therefore no two performances are the same—this is part of what makes theatre so special! Students’ behavior should reflect the level of performance they wish to see.

• Theatre should be an enjoyable experience for the audience. It is absolutely all right to applaud when appropriate and laugh at the funny moments. Sideline conversations with your friends during the performance, however, are not allowed. Why might this be? Be sure to mention that not only would the people seated around them be able to hear their conversation, but the actors on stage could hear them, too. Theatres are constructed to carry sound efficiently in both directions!

• Any noise or light can be a distraction, so please remind students to make sure their cell phones are turned off (or better yet, left at home or at school!). Texting, photography, and video recording are strictly prohibited.

• Food, gum, and drinks are not allowed in the theatre. This includes our lobby spaces before, during, and after the performance.

• Students should sit with their group as seated by the Front of House staff and should not leave their seats once the performance has begun.

Please review The Huntington’s COVID protocols with your group before attending your Student Matinee performance.
MEET THE ARTISTS

PLAYWRIGHT

JEN SILVERMAN, (she/her) is a New York-based writer. Jen's plays include: Witch (Writer's Theatre, The Geffen in LA); The Roommate (Humana Festival, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Steppenwolf, South Coast Rep, Long Wharf, etc); Collective Rage: A Play In 5 Betties (Woolly Mammoth, Southwark Playhouse in London, MCC Theater); and The Moors (Yale Rep, The Playwrights Realm).

Jen is a member of New Dramatists, a two-time MacDowell fellow, recipient of the Yale Drama Series Award, the Helen Merrill, a Lilly Award, and the 2016-2017 Playwrights of New York Fellowship. Random House published her first book, The Island Dwellers, a collection of interlinked stories; her first novel is coming out with them in 2021. Jen also writes for TV and film.

Education: Brown, Iowa Playwrights Workshop, Juilliard. To learn more about Jen Silverman, visit her website: jensilverman.com.

DIRECTOR

REBECCA BRADSHAW, (she/her) is a theatre director, casting director, and producer. In the Boston area, she has directed full productions for SpeakEasy Stage, The Nora Theatre Company, Greater Boston Stage Company, A.R.T. Institute, Emerson College, Brandeis University, Bridge Rep of Boston, The Umbrella Center for the Arts, Hub Theatre of Boston, Weston Drama Workshop, Fresh Ink Theatre, Can't Wait Productions, and Brown Box Theatre Project.

She has directed workshops and small projects for the Huntington Theatre Company, New Repertory Theater, Gloucester Stage, Boston Playwrights Theater, Central Square Theater/MIT, and New England Conservatory. Rebecca has also taught audition seminars at Harvard University, Emerson College, Suffolk University, Boston University, Lesley University, and Boston Conservatory.

Until recently, she was the Associate Producer at the Huntington Theatre Company, handling line producing, local Boston casting, and developing new works. In the summer of 2021, she was announced as the new Producing Artistic Director for the Kitchen Theatre in Ithaca, NY.

When not running from work to rehearsal, Rebecca enjoys mandatory no-phone weekends, sharing a whiskey with other artists, and watching anything BBC with her partner and cats. To learn more about Rebecca, visit her website: rebeccalynnbradshaw.com.

THE WITCH OF EDMONTON (1621) – THE PLAYWRIGHTS

THOMAS DEKKER was an English Elizabethan dramatist, born in 1572. Possibly of Dutch origin, very little is known of Dekker's early life and education. His career in the theatre began in the mid-1590s [with] various London theatre companies, including both the Admiral's Men and its rivals the Lord Chamberlain's Men; he probably joined the large team of playwrights, including Shakespeare, who penned the controversial drama Sir Thomas More around this time.

Dekker struggled to make ends meet, however, and in 1598 he was imprisoned for debt. 1599 was, by contrast, an annus mirabilis for Dekker. The theatrical entrepreneur and impresario of the Admiral's Men, Philip Henslowe, lists payments to Dekker that year for contributions to no fewer than eleven plays; two of these, Old Fortunatus and The Shoemaker's Holiday, were selected to be performed at Court during the Queen's Christmas festivals. Dekker received royal favour again after the death of Elizabeth and the accession of King James I in 1603 when he was contracted with Ben Jonson to write the ceremonial entertainments for James's coronation procession through London.

Like The Shoemaker's Holiday, Dekker's plays in the years of James's reign tend to dramatize the stories of citizens displaying a sympathetic fascination with socially marginal characters, often women. Dekker's financial woes continued through the years, and he was once more imprisoned for debt between 1612 and 1619, a harrowing experience that he later claimed turned his hair white. Upon his release, he continued to write plays, citizen pageants, and prose pamphlets, but he never enjoyed the success of his earlier years. He died, leaving his widow no estate except his writings, in 1632.

– from bloomsbury.com/us/author/thomas-dekker

WILLIAM ROWLEY was born around 1585. His first recorded acting is in 1607, the same year his first two plays—Fortune by Land and Sea with Thomas Heywood and The Travels of the Three English Brothers with John Day and George Wilkins—were produced. From 1609 to 1621 he was a member of the Duke of York's Men (later Prince Charles's Men), usually taking the part of the clown. He began collaborating with Thomas Middleton on several important plays in 1617, writing the subplot of A Fair Quarrel; two years later he played the clown in Middleton's The Inner Temple Mosque. That same year—1619—he wrote his only extant play without collaboration, All's Lost by Lust, a tragic melodrama which establishes the same tone as The Witch of Edmonton, a play he...
cowrote with Thomas Dekker and Thomas Middleton. In 1622 he again returned to comedy, but this time tinged with madness when writing the subplot of *The Changeling*, once more in collaboration with Middleton. In 1623 he joined the King’s Men, offending the Spanish ambassador while playing the part of the fat bishop in Middleton’s *A Game at Chess* (1624) and probably collaborating once more with Middleton on *The Spanish Gipsy*. In 1625 he worked with John Webster on the comedy *A Cure for a Cuckold* with the well known clown Compass and wrote his own city comedy *A Woman Never Vexed*. Rowley died in February 1626; only 16 plays have survived of more than 50 on which he worked during his lifetime.

– from bloomsbury.com/uk/author/william-rowley

**JOHN FORD** (1586-1639) was an English playwright whose works have often been cited as examples of the ‘decadence’ of Caroline Drama. In the 19th century he was admired by Charles Lamb but attacked by William Hazlitt and others, who accused him of lacking a sense of morality. However, many 20th-century critics have praised his insight into character and his skill in writing dialogue His best known play is the bloody tragedy *‘Tis Pity She’s a Whore* (1627). Other works include *Love’s Sacrifice* (1627), the tragicomedy *The Lover’s Melancholy* (1628), and *Perkin Warbeck* (1634), described by T. S. Eliot as “one of the very best historical plays in the whole of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama”.

– from bloomsbury.com/uk/author/john-ford

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**FIND US ONLINE!**

Did you know The Huntington’s website provides students and teachers opportunities to more deeply explore the season’s offerings and learn about upcoming events in the Education department? Utilizing the website at huntingtontheatre.org find the answers to the following questions:

1. Has The Huntington presented other plays featuring witches or people accused of being witches? How many are there? Who wrote these play(s)? Are they comedies or dramas?
2. Who is the Managing Director? How long has he been in his position? What are the primary responsibilities of his job?
3. Your friend broke her foot and needs to use a wheelchair. What accessibility services does The Huntington provide for patrons like her?
4. Did you know The Huntington is on Facebook? Like us at Facebook.com/HuntingtonTheatre and Facebook.com/EducationAtHuntington.
THEMES FOR WRITING & DISCUSSION

Would YOU Sell Your Soul?

In Jen Silverman’s Witch, set in a “semi-rural small town”, a charismatic man named Scratch makes a tempting offer to a few select residents: Your soul for anything you want, anything in the world.

For some, riches, fame, and power are a fair exchange for their soul; for others, they’d happily trade for a simple, quiet life. For a few—a very happy few—nothing is worth the loss of their soul. It all seems fairly straight forward, an even (or not) exchange; however, in Witch, this simple proposition has potential world-altering consequences. This is the point. Stories about temptation are a study of morals and ethics, an exploration of how an individual may measure the value of their personal happiness against that of the larger society. It is a story as old as myth and religion.

In Greek mythology, the Trojan War is the result of temptation. Paris, a young Trojan prince, is dazzled by the beauty of Helen, wife to the Spartan King, Menelaus. He falls in love with her and, with the help of Aphrodite, goddess of love, he is able to win her heart. Why does Aphrodite help Paris? Well, it was time to fulfill her end of a bargain. During a wedding banquet on Mount Olympus, Paris was asked to settle a dispute: who was the most beautiful of all the goddesses? He was to choose between Hera, queen of the gods and heaven; Athena, goddess of war and reason; and Aphrodite. The prize was a coveted golden apple, and each goddess offered Paris a bribe to induce him to her side. More than power or riches, Paris wanted love; in particular, he wanted the love of the most beautiful woman in the world, Helen of Sparta—which is exactly what the goddess of love promised him. It did not matter that she was already married to one of the most powerful of the Greek rulers; when offered the hand of the beauty of the world, Paris eloped with her, causing the launch of a thousand ships, ten years of war and death, and the complete destruction of an empire.

In another story featuring a desirable apple, temptation isn’t the same transactional exchange; however, the world still hangs in the balance. The Garden of Eden is all the world Eve and Adam know; their ignorance of other things is literally bliss—they exist in paradise! But the urge to know, to “be as gods, knowing good and evil” proves irresistible. Persuaded by a former heavenly being, the devil in snake’s skin, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil “was good for food...was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise” (Genesis 3:5-6); its fruit promised personal contentment and a world much larger than Eden. All that was required was one bite. Of course, that one bite had some big consequences for Eve, Adam, and the people they would bring into the world.

Both these stories feature elements present in Witch, whether it’s a personal choice with world changing effects or a convincing supernatural character. These same
elements are present in Silverman’s source material, *The Witch of Edmonton*, written in 1621 by John Ford, Thomas Dekker, and William Rowley. Like *Witch*, the play follows a small group of village residents who end up interacting with the devil. Stories about witches, devils, magic, and endangered souls are a bit of a genre in the Jacobean period. King James I of England (and VI of Scotland) was known to be interested in the subject of witches; not only did he write a book about demons and dark magic (1597’s *Daemonologie*), he presided over the North Berwick witch trials in 1590 in Scotland. The defendants, an alleged coven of witches, were accused of attempted regicide; convinced the coven had conjured a storm to kill him and his new wife at sea, James is even said to have personally conducted some of the interrogations. His personal interest in what he viewed as the insidious presence of witches and demons in society would have been known when he ascended the English throne in 1603; indeed, the presence of the Weird Sisters in *Macbeth* (first produced in 1606) is believed to be a nod to King James’ obsessive fascination.

*The Witch of Edmonton* and *Macbeth* are Jacobean plays in good company. Other titles written in this period of King James’ reign include Thomas Middleton’s *The Witch* (c. 1613-1616), Ben Jonson’s *The Masque of Queens* (1609), James Marston’s *The Wonder of Women, or Sophonisba* (1605), Barnabe Barnes’ *The Devil’s Charter* (1606), and Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (1611), among others. While this cohort of plays (sometimes referred to as “witch plays”) may have proliferated in the reign of King James, they had always been present. Though he died in 1593, Christopher Marlowe’s work proved popular well into the 1600s; his most famous titles were continuously produced and received several publications, not least among them *Doctor Faustus*. First produced c. 1592-1593, the play was a consummate bestseller and regular feature in the repertoire of Shakespeare’s acting company, The Lord Chamberlain’s Men (later known as The King’s Men under James I). The plot? A man willing to sell his soul to a charming devil in exchange for all the world. Marlowe’s play deftly portrays the elements of the trope; it even features a dinner scene in the Vatican and a moment with the most beautiful woman in all history, Helen of Troy. Marlowe’s stamp on the genre is seen in the work of his successors, Shakespeare first among them.

With *Witch*, Silverman continues a long tradition, but with a new, contemporary spin. In the plays of her predecessors, it never ends well for characters who sell their soul. But Silverman’s Elizabeth is a different kind of protagonist with her own set persuasive skills. Her morals and sense of ethics confound and impress Scratch, so much so, the play’s ending moments hold vast potential for something utterly different, maybe even hopeful. After spending some time with Silverman’s small-town residents and the devilish Scratch, one may find themselves asking a familiar question: Would YOU sell your soul?

**QUESTIONS:**

1. Can you think of other stories that feature a character selling their soul (or a different aspect of themselves) for something they want?

2. Why do you think storytellers like Jen Silverman and Christopher Marlowe tell stories about witches, magicians, and regular people making pacts with the devil? What sorts of ideas are they trying to explore? Do you think there are lessons we can learn?

3. Do you think there is ever a reason to give up something as important as your soul in exchange for something else? What could that reason be?

**Sources consulted:**

- [http://deep.sas.upenn.edu/](http://deep.sas.upenn.edu/)
- [http://hensloweasablog.blogspot.com/p/about-this-site_18.html](http://hensloweasablog.blogspot.com/p/about-this-site_18.html)
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- [https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+3&version=KJV](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis+3&version=KJV)
- [https://www.worldhistory.org/Helen_of_Troy/](https://www.worldhistory.org/Helen_of_Troy/)
A 400 YEAR OLD *WITCH* FROM EDMONTON AT THE HUNTINGTON

Jen Silverman’s *Witch* is “a riff” on a Jacobean play, *The Witch of Edmonton*. It was first performed by the Prince’s Men at the Cock-pit in Drury Lane. The play is a collaboration written in 1621 by Thomas Dekker, William Rowley, and John Ford. Collaborative playwrighting was not unusual in the period; even William Shakespeare had a partner (or more) on a number of his plays. Each playwright likely focused on an element of the plot or a group of scenes which played to his strength: “scholars assume that Dekker, known for his realistic depictions of lower class life, probably wrote most of the Mother Sawyer scenes; Rowley, an actor-playwright who specialized in clown roles, likely contributed most of the Young Cuddy Banks storyline, while it is most likely that Ford was responsible for the Thorney plot.”

Another interesting fact about the play is that it is likely based on actual events. In 1621, Elizabeth Sawyer was tried and executed for the crime of witchcraft in the village of Edmonton. At the time, the story was printed in a pamphlet, *The Wonderful Discovery of Elizabeth Sawyer*, written by Henry Goodcole, a minister who claimed to have “attended Sawyer…and supposedly elicited a confession from her”. Such sensational occurrences were often retold and circulated through pamphlets; that a trio of writers assembled to compose a play about the event for production (in the same year it happened) indicates the pamphlet circulated widely and held particularly high interest, especially in London. It was prime source material then, and still is today.

Though Silverman’s *Witch* maintains the basic plot of the 1621 source play, as well as a touch of the cultural sensibilities of the Jacobean period, it is still a piece very much of the 21st century. Indeed, adaptations of past material usually say more about the time in which they are written, and less about the moment of the original piece. *Witch* is meant to speak to us, today. Furthermore, Silverman’s text is a plot stripped down to the essentials; consequently, any sense of the “sensational” in *Witch* (which is present in a variety of ways throughout *The Witch of Edmonton*, particularly in a talking dog—called Dog—the devil wreaking havoc in Edmonton), results from her reworking the original elements to speak more precisely—and, perhaps, more *frankly*—to the themes of both plays, among them “a concern with the pressures faced by people not protected by money or rank from the effects of poverty, isolation, and the whims of the powerful.” Just as Dekker, Rowley, and Ford’s play was borne of events pressing in 1621, Silverman’s *Witch* resonates with the concerns and issues of our time. Elizabeth Sawyer has come forward in time 400 years, and she is still speaking her truth to power.

QUESTIONS:

1. Have you ever read a book or a play that was written by more than one person? If so, do you think the story was clearer to understand or more difficult? Why do you think that is?

2. Adapting an old story for the time you live in now is one way writers try to understand history and current events. What is an old story you would adapt to help you understand the times we are living in today? What changes would you make to the story?

Sources consulted:
- https://www.rsc.org.uk/the-witch-of-edmonton
- http://deep.sas.upenn.edu/
THE WITCH OF EDMONTON, A SYNOPIS:

“The Witch of Edmonton is based on supposedly real-life events that took place in the village of Edmonton, when an old woman who is shunned by her neighbours wreaks revenge on them.

In the village of Edmonton, Elizabeth Sawyer is derided by her neighbours. A poor and lonely old woman, she is ostracised, harassed and accused of being a witch.

Frank Thorney risks being disinherited for having married Winnifred, who is pregnant; what he doesn’t know is that his master, Sir Arthur, is the father of the child.

Meanwhile, the Thorney family is in financial difficulties: Frank must marry Susan Carter for her marriage portion, which will save the Thorney estate from having to be sold. He denies having married Winnifred, producing a letter of verification from Sir Arthur, and marries Susan bigamously.

Meanwhile, the old woman Elizabeth Sawyer (‘Mother Sawyer’) is beaten and abused by her neighbour Old Banks as she gathers firewood, and abused by Cuddy Banks and his morris-dancing friends. She longs for magical power to take her revenge. The devil appears to her in the form of a black dog and induces her to give away her soul in return for his services. Cuddy seeks her help in his amorous pursuit of Kate Carter, and she arranges a meeting for him with Kate. Cuddy’s misfortunes will be a way of getting at his father.

Cuddy keeps his appointment, but the dog leads him not to Kate but to a spirit in her shape. He gets a ducking, but makes friends with the dog and asks him to appear in the Morris dance. The dog obliges, and bewitches the fiddler’s instrument, so there is no music for the dance until Cuddy gets the dog to play it himself.

The melancholy Frank tries to abscond with the cross-dressed Winnifred, but he has difficulty getting rid of Susan. When Winnifred goes ahead, they meet the dog, which induces murderous thoughts in him. He stabs Susan, then wounds himself and ties himself to a tree with the dog’s unseen assistance. When found, he accuses Warbeck and Somerton of the assault, and they are arrested.

Mother Sawyer is blamed for an outbreak of cattle blight, and for widespread sexual misconduct by the local women. She protests her innocence when questioned by a justice, and calls attention to abuses committed by courtiers and citizens; but once alone she suckles the dog with her blood and makes mischief. Anne Ratcliffe, with whom she has a minor quarrel, is driven mad and kills herself. Mother Sawyer is arrested.

Frank is visited in his sick-bed first by Susan’s ghost, then by Winnifred. He confesses the murder to Winnifred. When Katherine finds a bloody knife in Frank’s pocket, Winnifred confirms the accusation and he is arrested.

Justice is done | The dog appears to Mother Sawyer in prison, now with white fur rather than black, and makes it clear that he has no intention of helping her further: she is already damned, so he has got what he wants. He also takes his leave of Cuddy Banks, who is spiritual small fry and not worth bothering with; corruption in high places will be more rewarding.

Somerton and Warbeck are released. The penitent Frank and the impenitent Mother Sawyer are hanged. Sir Arthur is ordered by the court to pay Winnifred a thousand marks.”

QUESTIONS:

1. Does this synopsis make you want to read The Witch of Edmonton? Are you at least a little curious?

2. If you had to plan a production of The Witch of Edmonton, how would you cast Dog? Would you use a dog costume? A puppet? A real dog? Or something else entirely?
GUIDED COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

Scene One
1. Describe how Elizabeth Sawyer feels about the world she lives in as expressed through her opening aria.
2. How do others view Elizabeth? How does she view herself?

Scene Two
3. Who is Scratch and what deal does he wish Cuddy would make?
4. Why is Cuddy surprised Scratch hasn’t visited his father?
5. Who are the two people Cuddy believes Scratch has visited besides him?
6. Explain the “rumor” Scratch brings to Cuddy’s attention. Who is Frank Thorney and why is he important to Cuddy’s father?

Scene Three
7. What does Scratch have to do for Cuddy to surrender his soul?

Scene Four
8. What does Scratch say that catches Frank’s attention? How does Scratch suggest they know each other?
9. How does Scratch introduce himself?
10. How does Frank view himself? Why does he immediately say NO to Scratch?
11. How does Scratch describe Frank?
12. For what will Frank surrender his soul?

Scene Five
13. How does Scratch describe a “pot-luck”?
14. If Elizabeth refuses Scratch’s offer, what does he say will happen?

Scene Six
15. Who is the server in the banquet hall?
16. How does Sir Arthur view the “free market” and how does Frank stand to benefit from it?
17. Why does Cuddy reject the notion that Frank is not privileged?
18. How does Sir Arthur describe his deceased wife?
19. Why does Winnifred glare at Frank when Sir Arthur talk about love and marriage?
20. Why does Frank suggest Cuddy is “complacent”?

Scene Seven
21. For what reason does Scratch think Elizabeth will be unable to refuse his offer?
22. Why does Elizabeth view Scratch’s offer as “trivial”? Who typically gets the “wholesale slaughter” option?
23. Why did Scratch decide not to make his offer to Sir Arthur? How does Scratch view Sir Arthur?
24. Take a guess as to why Elizabeth is “thinking” about what Scratch can offer her?

Scene Seven
25. Who is married? Who knows about the marriage?
26. What is Frank’s “plan”? Why is he not ready to tell the world about Winnifred?
27. What news of a life-changing event does Winnifred share with Frank?
Scene Eight
28. Why does Scratch like the idea that he is a “merchant of hope”?
29. Why does Scratch prefer the physicality of a man’s body? Why did he stop appearing to humans as a woman?
30. When Sir Arthur’s father was alive, how did Elizabeth serve the castle? What does Elizabeth reveal about her past which explains why she is now an outcast?

Scene Nine
31. To whom does Sir Arthur introduce Frank?
32. What is Cuddy’s response to his father’s request for him to meet some ladies?
33. How does Sir Arthur describe his love story?
34. What secret of Winnifred’s does Cuddy reveal he knows?
35. What is Cuddy’s idea for him and Winnifred? Why is Winnifred concerned about the trade-offs in accepting Cuddy’s proposal—what will she gain and what will she lose?

Scene Ten
36. Why does Scratch think it’s good to be a dog?
37. Why is it confusing to Scratch that Elizabeth won’t give up her soul? What does she do (or not do) which leads him to believe her soul isn’t valuable to her?
38. Why do you think Scratch continues to visit Elizabeth?

Scene Eleven
39. Who does Sir Arthur speak to at the opening of Scene Eleven?
40. How does Sir Arthur describe his relationships with both Frank and Cuddy?

Scene Twelve
41. Sir Arthur holds a “family meeting.” What is his announcement?
42. When Sir Arthur asks Frank about Winnifred, what is his reply?
43. Cuddy is most disappointed about losing what part of his inheritance?
44. Frank offers to fight Cuddy. How does their fight end?

Scene Thirteen
45. Where does Winnifred head after being denied at the castle?
46. How does Winnifred differ from Elizabeth, despite the similarities in their lives?
47. Why does Elizabeth think Winnifred needs to make a better deal with Scratch?
48. What does Elizabeth want for her soul? Does Scratch agree to it? What does Scratch want from Elizabeth if not her soul?

Scene Fourteen
49. Describe Cuddy’s aria.

Scene Fifteen
50. At the play’s end, why does Scratch feel he must step away from his job responsibilities? How does he view the future?
CREATE A WITCH’S CAULDRON

Elizabeth is not a witch. However, the townspeople in effort to push her to the fringes of society have labeled her as one and they are “cruel.” Scratch offers to make her a “real” witch if she agrees to relinquish her soul to him. List the activities witches engage in and what do they look like, according to fairytales? What magical powers does Scratch suggest Elizabeth would have if she became a real witch? If you were setting up a play with an actual witch character, describe the important design elements to include on stage.

In this activity, you will create a “witch’s cauldron” using dry ice to create the magic of the prop. As described by the STEM website, Tinkerlab, “the Science behind Dry Ice Dry Ice is frozen carbon dioxide, which dissipates into carbon dioxide gas when it melts. It’s called Dry Ice because it turns directly into a gas from its solid state, without ever becoming a liquid, and therefore there’s no puddle of water in its melted state. This process is called sublimation.” Among other properties, dry ice is great for preserving food, medical procedures (you may have seen it in action in your pediatrician’s office) and design uses in theatre.

You can buy a black cauldron at any craft store at almost any time of year (although there are many more options as you approach Halloween.) You will need to also buy a block of dry ice. Some major retailers, such as Walmart or Costco, carry this product but it can also be purchased online. This activity will require the help of an adult who can help with the steps below and obtain the supplies necessary for this activity.

PREPARATION & ACTIVITY STEPS

1. Wearing heavy duty gloves or using tongs, place the block of dry ice in the bottom of the cauldron. (Dry ice will burn skin, so handle it with gloves and tongs and keep it away from pets. No touching!)
2. Use an ice pick to break the block into smaller chunks, if necessary.
3. Fill the cauldron with just enough water to cover the dry ice. It will begin to “steam”.
4. Invite family and friends for a witch’s brew by the bubbling cauldron. If you are feeling particularly adventurous you may place a punch bowl with your personal concoction over the ice for magical effect.

*For more great ideas & recipes, visit foodnetwork.com.
WITCH CURRICULUM GUIDE

IS WITCH A FEMINIST PLAY?

Elizabeth is a feminist who strives throughout the play to enlighten Scratch and Winnifred about the inequity she sees in the world. Why does Scratch offer men “wholesale slaughter” but she is given “insects” as a trade for her soul? Scratch argues that the requests come from the clients and not the other way around, but “it generally works out like that. Unconsciously. (p.33)” Elizabeth believes that this small mindset is indicative of a larger societal issue.

Feminism, the belief in the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes, has undergone constant evolution, most notably in the United States, since the women’s rights movement brought national attention to the issue of women’s lack of voting rights in 1848. After more than 80 years of protest, the 19th Amendment to the US Constitution granted women the right to vote in 1920. This key victory gave women greater influence over national politics and enabled the feminist movement to set its sights on new goals, including making changes to the law and social policy that would promote equality for women in their educational opportunities, careers, and personal lives. While much has been achieved over the last century, the push for greater gender equality continues today. Rebecca Walker (daughter of the famous novelist Alice Walker) coined the phrase “third wave feminist” in a 1992 article, “Becoming the Third Wave.” Walker used the term Third Wave to describe the transition and divide between the feminists of her

MORRIS DANCING

Cuddy, who is in love with Frank but also angered by him, displeases his father, Sir Arthur Banks. Sir Arthur is genuinely interested in seeing Frank succeed but has little hope his son will. Cuddy does not fit the profile of a young, ambitious man of the Jacobean period. He is most interested in his life as an artist and performer and is particularly excited about Morris dancing.

Morris dancing is believed to have originated in England as early as the 1400s; the first known record of payment to a dance troupe was issued by Goldsmith’s Company in London. Today Morris dancers exist around the globe. Most troupes utilize elaborate costuming and props, often handkerchiefs or swords, as part of the choreography. The English folk dance involves rhythmic patterned stepping sometimes enhanced by bells attached to the dancers’ shin pads. Morris dancing is an artistic form of entertainment experienced worldwide over the last 600 years.

1. Find a video of Morris dancers and notice the music, costuming and choreography. Continue your research of this specialized artistic form. What was the purpose of Morris dancers during the Jacobean era?

   If you have difficulty locating a video, see the link to a suggested news report here: [youtube.com/watch?v=gmw4BK07aLE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gmw4BK07aLE)

2. In groups of 4 or larger, organize with your classmates to create your own Morris dance. Will you use sticks or handkerchiefs? What costumes will you put together to coordinate with your dance team members?

For BONUS points, perform your dance for the rest of the class!
own generation and those who came before. Voting and property rights secured, and further opportunities in the workplace, along with the passing of Title IX (the law which states biological sex cannot be used to prohibit participation in activities, education programs, or receipt of benefits from institutions which are supported by federal funds) meant the women from the previous generation had won important victories that would open countless doors of opportunity for women in the future. But Walker and the women around her believed the work was not yet finished. The movement needed to expand outward. To dismantle society’s patriarchal structures, feminist would have to advance causes related not only to sexism but racism and classicism as well. In 2020, debate continues as to the role of feminism in helping the LGBTQ community, immigrants, and other marginalized groups in their fight for equality.

Elizabeth is keen on “burning it all down” especially after her disappointing conversation with Winnifred who desires so little for herself in exchange for her soul. As Winnifred argues, if she went from servant to nobility, would anyone listen to her? Why would sitting in a castle alone be better for her in the end? Dismantling the patriarchy seems nearly impossible as the play ends and Scratch, sitting in his own spectacular “job” failure cries, “I just find it so hard to have hope.” (p.99)

1. Make the case that Witch is a feminist play. Using evidence from the text write a one-paragraph response.

2. Jen Silverman, playwright, says the time period should be “equally of our moment.” What other present-day issues could you argue are explored in this play?
SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

DIRECTOR’S GUIDE

The playwright, Jen Silverman, spends a considerable amount of time outlining her vision as it relates to the production of her play. She acknowledges that *Witch* is a “riff on The Witch of Edmonton” but does not (exactly) demand it be set in the Jacobean era. Plan how you as the director might accommodate the following considerations:

CASTING | Why do you think ethnicity is flexible (even as it relates to a father/son relationship) but gender and age ranges are specified? Do you think there is too little or too much guidance as it relates to selecting who will play each character?

TIME + PLACE | What do you believe it means to say “semi-rural” or “small town” or “lost in the country?” Can you picture a place that is all three of these things? What does Silverman mean by “Then-ish. But equally of our moment.” Does she desire a production to be modern, old-fashioned, or something else? Why do you think she prefers actors to avoid the use of accents?

NOTES | Silverman takes care to indicate how actors can recognize a speech pattern change through symbols in the script. What do each of these symbols, [], (), //, mean? Why do you think it is important that she directs actors to think of their arias not as a moment of stylistic interpretation, but an emotional effect, as she says “an urgency takes hold, spilling out of deeply buried things—a churning engine of truth.”
QUOTABLE MOMENTS

Choose one of the following quotes from Witch. Write an essay analyzing the quote’s meaning. Consider the following:

• Who said the line?
• Does the character mean it literally or is there unspoken subtext?
• What does this statement reveal about the character’s view of the world?
• How do the character’s actions support or contradict the quote?
• How does the quote contribute to the forward progression of the scene and of the plot as a whole?

“I’m not arguing for the end of the world but then again maybe I am. This one, anyway.” (p.2)

“There’s something inside me that’s incredibly rare and incredibly special and it is my job to foster that thing, encourage that thing.” (p.12)

“I guess once you have everything, you just want more.” (p.14)

“Men make it sound like they’re doing you a favor when what they really want is a favor done for them.” (p.16)

“The whole thing about emotional hollowness, emotion lack but I mean, once you put that up against actual lack, Lack of resources, lack of food, lack of shelter, Emotional lack seems … well, lacking.” (p.22)

“Absolute terror.
That’s love.” (p.26)

“Sweetheart, we have to ask for more than what we were born with.” (p.41)

“…this might sound a little overblown to you but the training manual advises us to think of ourselves as sort of “merchants of hope”…” (p.46)

“How easily we jump from tarnished to untouchable.” (p.51)

“Every time your dad looks at me he sees a reflection of the best version of himself. And every time he looks at you, he sees all his failure staring back at him.” (p.58)

“Access is a drug … Once people have it, they don’t usually choose to unhook themselves.” (p.64)

“Look, if you don’t want to sell me your soul, that’s fine. But I don’t really understand why not… I don’t understand why you’d choose a thing you never use, over something you would use, something you actually need.” (p.68)

“Even if nobody called you a witch, would your opinion suddenly matter to the men who make decisions?” (p.92)

“And then at that moment, whenever it comes, we’ll think of this moment, right now. We’ll think: Oh. We had the chance to change all of this. We did have it. We just said No.” (p.96)

“I find it so hard to have hope right now. I just find it so hard to have hope.” (p.99)
THE HUNTINGTON CONNECTS

21/22 STUDENT MATINEE SEASON

WITCH THU, NOV 4, 2021 | 10AM
TEENAGE DICK FRI, DEC 10, 2021 | 10AM
THE BLUEST EYE FRI, FEB 11, 2022 | 10AM
WHAT THE CONSTITUTION MEANS TO ME THU, MAR 10, 2022 | 10AM
OUR DAUGHTERS, LIKE PILLARS FRI, MAY 6, 2022 | 10AM

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