Encountering Conflict Study Notes

**Paradise Road** directed by Bruce Beresford  
*The Rugmaker of Mazar-e-Sharif* by Najaf Mazari & Robert Hillman  
*The Quiet American* by Graham Greene  
*The Crucible* by Arthur Miller

Thinking about representations of conflict –

At the basis of all stories is a motivation, a goal and then a conflict. This is a helpful framework for thinking about the texts within the Encountering Conflict Context. All texts and characters have a conflict. Actually, there are normally multiple motivations, goals and conflicts present in any text. Different characters, or groups of characters have different goals and motivations, and these come into conflict with each other. In simple texts we can see these conflicts as being between the hero (or the goodie) and the villain (or the baddie); both of these characters have different goals and these different goals create a conflict. In VCE, the texts are rarely this simple; think about all the motivations present for individuals or groups in the text you are studying. Identify all their goals, and then move on to thinking about as many conflicts as can be identified in a text. Finally - how many of these conflicts are resolved?

Stages of conflict –

There are three stages of conflict explored in each of the texts. Texts can often focus more upon one stage than another -

**• Motivations for conflict –**

Texts which represent this stage of conflict examine the reasons for the conflicts. *The Crucible* and *The Quiet American* are the texts which focus more upon this particular stage. Motivations for conflict are rarely simple and are often a combinations of elements, they occur when our goals differ from the goals of those around. Our motivations may come from any of the following desires:

- Acceptance, the need for approval
- Curiosity, the need to learn
- Eating, the need for food
- Family, the need to raise children
- Honor, the need to be loyal to the traditional values of one's clan/ethnic group
- Idealism, the need for social justice
- Independence, the need for individuality
- Order, the need for organized, stable, predictable environments
- Physical activity, the need for exercise
- Power, the need for influence of will
- Romance, the need for sex
- Saving, the need to collect
- Social contact, the need for friends (peer relationships)
- Status, the need for social standing/importance
• Tranquility, the need to be safe
• Vengeance, the need to strike back/to win

(adapted from Reiss, Steven (2000), Who am I: The 16 basic desires that motivate our actions and define our personalities)

Key terminology: motivations, cultural motivations, economic motivations, emotional motivations, underlying causes, root causes, failure to recognise problem, arrogance, stubbornness, inability to cooperate, past mistakes, sense of dignity, personal pride, strong beliefs, weakness

Key Questions:

I. Is conflict caused because two or more individuals or groups have different goals or because they have different ways of achieving the same goals?
II. Is there only one motivation for conflict or multiple motivations?

• Operations of conflict –

Many texts that deal with conflict emphasize the operation of conflict. These texts show us what conflict looks like and feels like and what are the consequences of conflict. All of the texts on the VCE list are concerned with this particular stage. They show us the brutal physical consequences of battle, deal with relationships and show us the emotional fallout from the struggles between groups or individuals. Often the aim of showing the operation of conflict is to confront the audience with what happens (many times to innocent characters) when conflicts reach their critical points. Many conflicts within texts occur because different characters have different ways of dealing with (operating under) conflict. Although characters may have similar goals, they can work to achieve their aims in different ways. This can result in conflict.

Here are some of the different ways in which characters can operate within conflict:
• challenging, fighting
• avoiding, running away
• supporting one side or another/facilitating
• leading
• standing by (being a bystander)
• witnessing
• be victimised/traumatised

Key terminology: horrific, brutal, painful, psychological torment, blind anger, relationship breakdown, communication breakdown, hopelessness, tragic, wounded, emotionally scarred, emotionally withdrawn, changed, altered, loss, fatal choices, confusion, victim, hero, leader, villain, demonised, bystander, facilitator, witness, collusion, avoidance, fleeing, callous, pathetic, indifferent, inspiring, kind, helpful, supportive, following
Key Questions:

I. How does conflict happen?
II. What does it look like and feel like?
III. What are the personal, physical, emotional and other consequences of conflict?
IV. How do we react to the depiction of conflict as an audience?
V. Do characters choose their roles in conflict?

- Resolutions to conflict –

The third phase in depictions of conflict in texts is the examination of resolutions to conflict. How do we as humans move on from conflict? In real life the answer is rarely simple or fair. However, many texts choose to show resolutions to conflict as being just that - simple and fair. As humans we enjoy seeing such resolutions represented in texts because they provide us hope that such resolutions can happen in real life and provide us escape from the messy conflicts all around us that seem to have no fair or simple solution. On the other hand, some texts choose to represents endings to conflicts that aren't complete resolutions - problems still persist - or show us resolutions that are unfair or without any feeling of triumph or happiness. The Quiet American is a clear example of this. In doing so these texts aim to show us the difficulties that face humans in solving the complex cultural, emotional, economic, religious, environmental and other conflicts that face us.

The resolution that an author/director gives to different characters can have a message for the audience; how the character has dealt with conflict means that they will have a happy or a tragic ending. Many of the characters who are bystanders, for example, are punished by their authors - this gives us, as an audience a clear message about how the author/director believes we should deal with conflict. However, in all of the VCE texts, the messages are rarely quite this simple or clear-cut.

Key terminology: hopeful conclusion, tragic ending, inconclusive, realistic, unjust, unfair, triumph, cooperation, lessons, understanding, recognition, change, renewal, status quo, unchanged, outcome, destroyed, hopeless, doomed, inevitable

Key Questions:

I. How is conflict solved?
II. Is it always fair?
III. How do characters cope with conflict and move on?
IV. Are characters rewarded or punished?

Representations of Conflict in Paradise Road

Text type and features –
Paradise Road, directed by Bruce Beresford and released in 1997, tells the story of a group of Australian, British, Dutch and American women held captive in prisoner-of-war camps by the Japanese on the island of Sumatra during the Second World War. The emphasis of the film is not so much on the harrowing action - depictions of the physical war (such as the opening of Saving Private Ryan or Gallipoli), though there are a number of depictions of the physical consequences of war (especially one scene in which a woman is doused in fuel then set alight), but on the drama of human relationships amidst the pressure of war. The genre of this text is drama. The features of this text type are the text's strong focus on relationships and choices that individuals have and make in the film. While characters are certainly faced with physical dangers throughout the film - they overcome the hopelessness surrounding them not by violence, but through the force of their psychological, emotional and spiritual wills. Significantly, the purpose of Beresford's film is not to show us the unmitigated misery and tragedy of war - the film does not linger on the innocent deaths of people - but the hope and triumph that can come from the peaceful ways brave people can use to resolve conflicts.

Representations of stages of conflict –

Paradise Road focuses most clearly on the second two phases of conflict - operations of conflict and resolutions to conflict. The characters in this text - the women and Japanese soldiers alike - are caught up in a bigger conflict not of their making. Consequently, the film is interested in exploring how this bigger conflict affects characters on an individual level and how they attempt to cope with it. In order to cope with the conflict the women in the film make a series of different choices. All the women have the same goal - to survive - but the means by which they believe they can achieve this are different.

A critical part of the story line is Adrienne Pargiter's push to create a vocal orchestra as a means of helping the women survive life in the prison. This plan creates conflict with characters such as Mrs Tippler who believe it is not in the interests of the women to do anything that may antagonise the Japanese. Dr Verstak, in reality a doctor of philosophy, claims she is a medical doctor in order to provide both help for the women and security for herself. Other women choose to become courtesans of the Japanese in order to survive, a decision Sister Wilhelminia is careful not to condemn them for, despite the judgements of some women. Part of the process of coping with conflict is to show empathy for the needs and decisions of others - to recognise that not everyone can cope in the same way. The character of Margaret is particularly empathetic to others, even to the Japanese, saying that she cannot “hate” others.

The film does not only focus on how the women cope with conflict. It also gives us an insight into the Japanese soldiers guarding them. We can see that the interpreter empathises with the plight of the women but is powerless to do anything about it. Colonel Hirota is also a sympathetic character, but is bound by the rules and protocols of the Japanese army, as well as the power dynamic between himself and Captain Tanaka. In one telling scene, Sergeant Tomiaishi (the “Snake”), who has been a figure of menace for most of the film, takes Adrienne aside and into the jungle. We assume he will shoot her. Instead, he sings to her, showing us his emotional side, his longing for something other than war, and that some understanding exists between the two sides. The final scene of the film, in which the women's vocal orchestra performs after being liberated, is filled not with sadness about what has happened, but a dignified joy in the courage and character these women showed in surviving this conflict.
When studying this text, it is important not to focus upon the Second World War itself, but on the more general idea of the ways in which people act when under pressure and surrounded by conflict. All of the decisions of the characters are compromised by the circumstances they are in - none of them can act in the manner they would like.

Compare this text to –

Sisters of War: Shown in 2010 on the ABC this telemovie, like Paradise Road, is based upon real experiences on women in prisoner-of-war camps during World War II. This text focuses on a nurse and a Catholic nun who work together in an army hospital in Papua New Guinea during the World War II and are captured and held in a prisoner-of-war camp as the Japanese army closes in on Australia. Like Paradise Road, this text looks at different choices women make in order to cope with conflict. It also shows how the Japanese soldiers themselves were affected by conflict. Unlike Paradise Road, this text shows more of the physical hardships faced by women. For more information on this text see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sisters_of_War

The Bridge on The River Kwai: This film also looks at prisoners-of-war held captive by the Japanese in South East Asia during World War II. However, unlike Paradise Road this text focuses on male prisoners of war. In contrast to the women in Paradise Road, the men in Bridge on The River Kwai seek to physically conquer their captors. They devise a plot which goes horribly wrong. This text provides an interesting gender contrast to Paradise Road. For more information on this text see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Bridge_on_the_River_Kwai

Representations of Conflict in The Rug Maker of Mazar-e-Sharif

Text type and features –

This text, co written by Najaf Mazari and Robert Hillman, is a first hand account of Mazari's experience of conflict in Afghanistan, his journey to Australia as a refugee, his experiences in the Woomera detention centre and his final success in becoming an Australia citizen. First-hand accounts are very effective ways of telling stories of conflict. An audience is naturally interested in genuine examples of conflict and how these were or weren't resolved. It is significant that all of the texts on this Encountering Conflict text-list are based on real, historical examples of conflict.

There are several important features to Mazari's recount of his experiences. Firstly, the text employs a back-and-forth chronological structure, switching between accounts of Mazari's experiences on his arrival in Australia and his experiences in conflict-ridden Afghanistan. The purpose of this technique is to provide a comparison and contrast between the two experiences - how his experiences in Australia are like and unlike the experiences of conflict he had in his homeland. Mazari is keen to show us that many things in Australia are an improvement upon his experiences in Afghanistan. Early in the text he recounts seeing his daughter happily educated in an Australian classroom. He then switches back to recounting his own, much more basic education in Afghanistan. At other times, the order of Australian suburban life is contrasted with the chaos and terror of life under the Taliban. However, not all contrasts are favourable to Australia. The dehumanising experiences of Woomera are compared at points to the dehumanising experiences of conflict in Afghanistan.
A second important feature of Mazari’s book is the tone he uses. Mazari is careful not to alienate his Australian audience. This book has not been written as an angry and bitter condemnation of detention centres or judgement of the Australian government and public. Mazari's tone is always optimistic and mostly praising of Australia as can be seen in this quote: “If we Woomerians had to make a new Australia, we would do a good job - not a better job than the real Australians have done, but almost as good, and maybe a bit different” (P. 142). As an audience we are more likely to listen to and be interested in people whose message is positive rather than negative. Mazari is both positive in the way he continued to battle against the obstacles and apparently remain cheerful and can give praise to a nation that initially subjected him to the harsh conditions of a detention centre.

Representations of stages of conflict -

The Rug Maker of Mazar-e-Sharif provides insights into all three stages of representations of conflict. In terms of portraying motivations for conflict, this text provides an historical overview of conflict in Afghanistan:

- Mazari rights about how Afghanistan was controlled by the Soviet Government in the 1970s and early 1980s. The Mujahedin were a coalition of Afghani tribes who were ‘freedom fighters’ and fought against the Soviets - eventually forcing them out of Afghanistan.
- After the Soviets withdrew from Afghanistan Mazari writes about how the Afghani tribes fought amongst themselves to control Afghanistan.
- The Taliban came to be the ruling force in Afghanistan

Mazari goes on to give us more detail on what he believes are the motivations for the Taliban subjugation of Afghanistan describing them as ‘fanatics’ interested only in ‘fighting and worship.’

Mazari sees the Taliban movement as being rooted in Deobandi schools for the poor in Pakistan, where Sunni (there are two main types of Islam - Sunni and Shi'a) mullahs taught a “simple set of rules, very harsh ones” which evolved, with the support of Saudi money, into the teaching of Wahhabi - “the most fundamentalist form of Islam.” Converts of the Deobandi schools, according to Mazari, moved into Afghanistan where they began to spread their fundamentalist message. In Afghanistan the Taliban drew its support from the Pashtun - the largest ethnic group in the country who are also Sunni muslims. The Taliban began to particularly persecute the Hazara (of which Mazari is a member), a smaller ethnic group in Afghanistan. One reason for this persecution was because the Hazara people were mainly Shi'a muslims - not Sunni muslims like the Taliban (for more information on the differences between Shi'a and Sunni Islam see: http://islam.about.com/cs/divisions/f/shia_sunn.htm). It's because of this that the majority of Afghani boat people to Australia have been Hazara.

Mazari's exploration of the reasons for Taliban fundamentalism leads of course to his account of his own motivations for his boat trip to Australia. This leads to looking at the next phase of representations of conflict - the operation of conflict. Mazari is challenged by conflict at all stages on his life: he is someone who chooses to avoid situations of conflict at all times. This is clear when he takes it upon himself to change his occupation as a teenager (but avoids conflict by not telling his family), and later, when he makes the decision to leave Afghanistan. He tells of his family selling all their possessions so he alone can make the dangerous trip to Australia to be able to carry on his life free from persecution. It's this motivation which brings him into conflict with the Australian Government, whose goal it is to keep out illegal refugees. Incarcerated in a detention centre, Mazari describes Woomera as a place without hope where you feel you have “no power”, where the days “drag on and on” and where you feel you have “lost something that used to be part of me.” The
conflict here is with a system without compassion. Here, Mazari sees that the opportunities for choice are taken away - although he experiences conflict with the system, he has no alternative actions he can take, and this leads to depression and lethargy.

Like *Paradise Road*, the resolutions to the conflicts in *The Rugmaker of Mazar-e-Sharif* ultimately come in the form of the human spirit - the ability for hope to overcome adversity. In a flashback to Afghanistan, Mazari tells a story about the failure of his wounds to heal after his house was hit by a rocket. He turns to the help of a psychologist who gives him some pills to take. He does so and his wounds heal. The message of the story is not that the pills were miracle medical cures, but that they were placebos - nothing but sugar and water. The healing came from the belief - the hope, that it could happen. Mazari survives, too, because of his constant optimism.

**Compare this text to –**

*Lucky Miles* - Released in 2007 *Lucky Miles* is an Australian feature film that portrays the perils of being an illegal refugee arriving by boat in Australia. The film follows a group of refugees who travel onboard a leaky boat that lands on the harsh coast of Western Australia, near remote Pilbara - thousands of miles away from what the refugees believed would be their destination - Perth. The unprincipled owners of the boat, however, tell the refugees that they can catch a bus to Perth just over the dunes, then leave them. Like Najaf in the *Rugmaker of Mazar-e-Sharif*, the refugees believe they are coming to a freer, more liberal country. Like Najaf they face difficulties, and like Najaf they also find it difficult to get along with their fellow refugees as they are put under intense pressure in trying to obtain what they believe should be a right - freedom. For more information about the film see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucky_Miles](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucky_Miles)

*The Arrival* - Illustrated by Shaun Tan this is an award winning picture book (no writing) that depicts the journey of a migrant who leaves behind a wife and a child to find a better place for them all to live far away. This is not just his story, but the story of many migrants. In Tan's own words: “He is helped along the way by sympathetic strangers, each carrying their own unspoken history: stories of struggle and survival in a world of incomprehensible violence, upheaval and hope.” For more information on this text, visit Shaun Tan's website at: [http://www.shauntan.net/books.html](http://www.shauntan.net/books.html)

There are many websites that document the real stories of refugees who have come to Australia. Like Mazari's story, these stories demonstrate the power of first hand accounts in informing ordinary Australians about the plight of refugees and the conditions they live in in mandatory detention centre. These two websites both contain excellent first hand accounts:


**Representations of Conflict In The Crucible**

**Text type and features –**

Like *Paradise Road, The Crucible* is a drama that explores the relationships between people and how they deal with conflict. The key feature of a play is its dialogue. The concentration on dialogue
allows *The Crucible* to explore in detail the underlying feelings and motivations of the characters about the conflicts they find themselves in. The second feature of a play is its division into Acts. There are normally five phases in a play's structure: 1) The Exposition Phase - where we are introduced to the setting, the protagonist, antagonist and the basic conflict; 2) Rising Action Phase - where secondary conflicts are introduced; 3) Climax Phase - a turning point in the play where things begin to go well or badly for the protagonist; 4) Falling Action Phase - these are the moments after the affairs of the protagonist are reversed; 5) Resolution Phase - the resolution phase where the conflict ends (see - [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dramatic_structure](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dramatic_structure) for more information).

Though *The Crucible* is divided into Four Acts we can clearly see the above five phases represented. Act 1 is the exposition phase where we are introduced to the main characters of Proctor, Abigail and Parris, to the setting (the conflicted town of Salem) and the basic problem - the supposed practice of witchcraft. In Act 2 - the rising action phase - we are introduced to the secondary complications involved in Proctor's relationship with his wife Elizabeth. The Third Act is the climax - it marks Proctor's reversal of fortune as he himself is accused of consorting with the devil. Act 4 includes both the falling action and resolution phase.

Importantly, *The Crucible* is not just a drama but a tragic drama. The division of the play into distinct stages allows us as an audience to focus on the choices characters make and the way they represent their feelings that create or resolve the conflicts they face. The element of tragedy in *The Crucible* means that the decisions the protagonist makes moves them to an inevitable end - death. A dramatic tragedy is a tragedy because a character's inevitable misfortune is motivated by the flaws of his character (see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragedy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tragedy) for more information about tragedy). This means that his nature makes him react to conflict in a certain way - a certain wrong way - that in the circumstances of the play can only result in death in the end. For Proctor, it is his pride in himself and his independence that leads to his death - one of principle and pride, where he ignores his family's needs and interests. In this sense *The Crucible* as a tragedy becomes an investigation into how we might avoid conflict.

Unlike many plays, there is a significant amount of commentary upon the characters within the drama - these are crucial to understanding the characters. Miller is giving us insight into how he imagines the characters and their motivations for conflict. He is also providing judgement of the actions, so as readers (not a viewing audience) we must be careful to note Miller's opinions.

**Representations of stages of conflict** –

Of all the texts in the Encountering Conflict Context, *The Crucible* is the one that deals most exclusively with the motivations for conflict. This is the reason Miller has made extensive notes at the beginning of the play giving us background to each character. Every character in *The Crucible* has a different motivation for using (or fearing) the witch-craft trials to further their own ends. However, these motivations or acts are not always conscious. *The Crucible* is a study of flawed character and how conflict can magnify these character flaws and have explosive consequences.

**Abigail** - Abigail is one main catalyst for the conflict in *The Crucible*. She is a 17 year old girl who has had an affair with the much older and married John Proctor while she was a servant girl in his household. When Proctor's wife becomes suspicious of the relationship Abigail is asked to leave and the affair is finished. She begins the conflict in the play by influencing the other girls of the village to participate in rituals to practice witchcraft with the express purpose of casting spells to
kill Goody Proctor. This ritual is discovered by Parris who sees his own daughter, Betty, participating. The following day Betty pretends to be possessed. The pretense of possession is a way of avoiding blame - it becomes an excuse for the girls' behaviour. So avoiding culpability for her behaviour is also a motivation for Abigail. But there are further motivations for her. Cast aside by Proctor, and kicked out in disgrace from her house by his wife, and whispered about by other villagers, Abigail feels young and powerless. By controlling and promoting and becoming the centre of the hysteria around the accusations of witchcraft Abigail can wield a power beyond her years, gender and disgraced reputation. She begins this by first bullying the girls around her (she “smashes” Betty across the face and threatens to bring a “pointy reckoning” to any of the girls who tell the truth about the rituals being their own idea and not a product of possession), then passing the blame for the ritual onto Tituba (“she made me do it”), before, in a pretended fit of possession or divine inspiration naming villagers who she saw with the Devil.

**Proctor** - Proctor is a tragic figure in *The Crucible* because of his pride. He is ashamed of the affair he has had with Abigail but his pride makes him defensive on the issue. He intensely dislikes the guilt his wife makes him feel about the affair (“You forget nothin' and forgive nothin’”). His pride also blinds him to the feelings he still has for Abigail which make him prevaricate on what to do about his knowledge that she is lying about the accusations of witchcraft. Contributing to his pride is his ego, his love of his self and his status, which must have been, in the first place, a contributing factor to his relationship with Abigail - he enjoyed the attention of a younger woman. His failure to fully acknowledge his guilt in his relationship with Abigail is at the heart of the play, because it is the absence of any public acknowledgement of his affair with Abigail which means Abigail can trade on her innocence. It is his pride which has separated Proctor from the village itself, making him ripe for accusation; because he feels that he is morally superior to Parris, he has withdrawn from participating at the village church, making him look ‘godless’. If Proctor did not feel morally superior to other villages, they may have trusted him more. When Proctor finally reaches out to other people it is too late: when he confronts Abigail, and turns to his wife to support him in his acknowledgement of the affair, they have already made their own decisions for how to act- Elizabeth thinks she is doing the right think by denying the affair. In a tragic twist of fate, this denial of adultery does not make Proctor seem a moral person (as it would normally do), but in this case a pedlar of false accusations.

**Parris** - Like Proctor, Parris is also a proud character. He values his education and reputation and fears that his daugther's implication in acts of witchcraft will compromise the years of hard work he has put in “to bend these stiff necked people to me.” To preserve his status Parris believes he has no choice other than to go along with the accusations of witchcraft as they free his daughter from blame. His act in inviting Hale - an acknowledged expert on witches - to investigate what is happening in Salem, lends public weight to the accusations of the girls.

**Hale** - Hale is the instrument that unwittingly provides authority to the false accusations of the girls. He too is a tragic figure. Though he promises to provide an investigation at the start free of “superstition” - it is his willingness to unquestioningly believe in Act 1 that Abigail and Tituba are telling the truth that creates an unstoppable momentum for the witchcraft hysteria. In the end he acknowledges his naivety “I came into this village like a bridgroom to his beloved...and what I touched with my bright confidence, it died.”

**The Putnams** - Like Proctor, the Putnams do not want to publicly acknowledge their role in an event. In this case, it is the death at birth of all of their babies except Susanna. The accusations of witchcraft provide the Putnams with an opportunity to find a reason for the reasonless deaths of
their babies (“How may we blame ourselves? I am one of nine sons; the Putnam seed have peopled this province. And yet I have but one child left of eight - and now she shrivels!”). So they turn to their own accusations - “They were murdered, Mr Parris!”

**Mary Warren** - Mary Warren is Proctor's servant. She knows that Abigail has an agenda to use the accusations of witchcraft as cover for her plot against Proctor's wife. However, she is initially caught up in the importance the trial hearings give her (“I am an official of the court” and “I will be gone every day now. I am amazed you do not see what weighty work we do.”). Like so many other characters there is pride and ego at work in these comments. Like other characters, the witchcraft trials for Mary become about protecting herself. When Proctor is eventually able to convince Mary to support him in his confrontation of Abigail before the court, Mary caves in to the pressure of Abigail.

**Danforth & Hathorne** - Danforth and Hathorne are the two judges who hear the witchcraft trials. Like Hale their flaws are the credulity they show towards the claim of the girls. Unlike Hale, this flaw is compounded by their stubbornness in continuing to hold victims of the girls' accusations guilty even when the evidence and the sway of public opinion begins to turn. Like Proctor, they have committed to a course which they must see out to the end - even when Abigail has abceded from Salem having stolen from her uncle, and Proctor refuses to sign a false testimony. Like so many of the other characters in the play, Hathorne and Danforth are example of characters who are unbending and uncompromising in the face of conflict. Without such compromises - without lending an ear to dispassionate sense and reason - this play shows us that our actions in the face on conflict can only lead to tragedy.

**Compare This Text To** -

**McCarthyism** - The term ‘witch hunt' has now entered our language as a metaphorical phrase to describe any campaign to victimise or persecute a group or individuals that is based on false testimony, lies and prejudice (see: [http://www.museumstuff.com/learn/topics/witch_trials::sub::Metaphorical_Use](http://www.museumstuff.com/learn/topics/witch_trials::sub::Metaphorical_Use) for more information about metaphorical witch hunts). The most famous example of a metaphorical witch hunt is the McCarthyism of the 1950s. Joe McCarthy was a American senator who in the 1950s chaired the House Committee of Anti-American Activities which investigated people accused of being Communists. Just as in *The Crucible*, people in America were believed to be Communists on little more than an accusation. These accusations subsequently caused them to be persecuted (see: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McCarthyism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/McCarthyism) for more information). *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller is often see as a metaphorical representation of the McCarthy era.

**Good Night and Good luck** - This 2005 film, directed and starring George Clooney, directly deals with the McCarthy period of American history. The film portrays the conflict between journalist Edward Murrow who voices dissent against the views of Senator McCarthy. The characters have clear parallels with those in *The Crucible*. Read more about the film at: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_Night,_and_Good_Luck](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Good_Night,_and_Good_Luck)

**The search for weapons of mass destruction** - The search for weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) in Iraq after 2003 can be labelled a witch hunt in some ways and likened to the actions of Hathorne and Danforth in the final act of *The Crucible*. Despite little creditable evidence that Iraq possessed WMDs, and against many opposing expert opinions, President Bush launched an attack on Iraq in 2003 based on the belief they had WMDs. In the years that followed it became clear that Iraq in fact
possessed no WMDs, though the Bush administration continued to defend the war in Iraq. For more information see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iraq_and_weapons_of_mass_destruction

*The Green Zone* - The above search for WMDs is dramatised in the 2010 film *The Green Zone* directed by Paul Greengrass. This film follows the story of Chief Warrant Officer Roy Miller who leads a military squad in searching or WMDs. As the film unravels, Miller becomes increasingly convinced that WMDs do not exist and the war has been based on intelligence the army knows to be untrue. His efforts to bring to public attention this lie bring him into conflict with the army. For more information about this film see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_Zone_(film)

*Moral Panic* - Related to witch hunts is the phenomenon of moral panics. A moral panic is when “[a]l condition, episode, person or group of persons emerges to become defined as a threat to societal values and interests.” To read about examples of moral panics other than the Salem witch trials, see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moral_panic

**Representations of Conflict In The Quiet American**

**Text type and features** –
This novel is set during the Indo-Chinese War. While Fowler, the protagonist is ostensibly a journalist covering this conflict, in reality he seems to have little direct experience of the war itself. Fowler lives in Saigon, which is physically separate from the war front, with his Vietnamese mistress, Phuong. Fowler has left England and his wife to come to a country where there is a war between the natives and the French - he defines himself as an outsider and is determined not to become involved with the war at all. With his protagonist Fowler, Greene is exploring the shades of grey that occur in any type of conflict. More than any other text, *The Quiet American* deals with the inner conflict that people have in committing to action. The narrative itself is circular, so as readers we are aware of what happens to the characters before they are. Like *The Crucible*, this narrative of this novel follows a strict dramatic structure:

In Part 1 we are familiarised with the characters of Fowler and Pyle and the complication of their love triangle with Phuong is established. Part 2 explores this complication and Fowler is increasingly afraid of dying, which is a symbol for his fear of losing Phuong. In Part 3, the climax of the novel, Phuong has left Fowler for Pyle and Fowler is forced into action; all his life Fowler has avoided any kind of commitment or action and he tends to be a bystander or an avoider of conflict, a choice he no longer feels he has. Part 4 is the falling action and the resolution - Fowler is aware of how much he has compromised his previous ideas and is uncomfortable with his new sense of self.

**Representations of stages of conflict** –
Because Fowler is such an ambivalent character, it is the first two stages of conflict that are mostly explored in *The Quiet American* - motivations and operations - there is little sense of resolution of conflict at the end of the novel, although the action is concluded, the Fowler himself does not feel any sense of satisfaction or completion.

The first two parts of the novel explore Fowler's motivations and reveal the conflict that he has on a personal level with Fowler. This personal conflict, the love triangle with Phuong, is the motivation underpinning all of Fowler's actions in the second half of the novel, although he tries to take a
political stance on his involvement. Although it is less immediate than Fowler's motivations, we also see Pyle's motivations; in everything he feels that his morals and ideas are superior to those of the people around him and therefore he imagines that he can act with impunity. The Quiet American clearly shows us that motivations can be mixed: the actions that characters take may have more than one motivation and can lead to mixed outcomes. While it is easy to be skeptical of Fowler's motivations in letting Pyle be killed, it is nevertheless true that Fowler genuinely believes Pyle to be a danger to people. While Fowler benefits personally from Pyle's death - he gets the girl - the bombing of the marketplace is a pivotal scene from Fowler's viewpoint. Seeing the mutilated infant in his mother's lap is undoubtedly a spur to Fowler's actions.

The other stage of conflict that The Quiet American explores is the Operations of Conflict. Fowler's actions upon encountering conflict are more varied than almost any other character in the texts here. As readers we can clearly see how Fowler is conflicted by his choices and actions. In the beginning of the novel, Fowler defines himself as a skeptical observer. As an Englishman he is not directly involved in the action of the war, moreover as a journalist - or ‘reporter', as he likes to describe himself - Fowler is only required to be a professional bystander to the horror around him. In the letter from Helen, Fowler's wife, we understand that Fowler prefers to be detached even in his personal life - moving from affair to affair and running from feelings of guilt over his infidelity to his wife. However, it is increasingly apparent that Fowler cannot avoid or run away from involvement with Pyle. First because Pyle follows Fowler on a journalistic assignment and then because of Pyle's thoughtless acts of terrorism and murder. Fowler comes to understand that he must act to stop the destruction that Pyle leaves behind him. But taking initiative is difficult for Fowler and ultimately he is confused and conflicted about it.

**Compare This Text To**

*Avatar* - In this science-fiction film humans are mining the moon Pandora for new resources, displacing the native population of the Nav'ai in doing so. Jake Sully, the protagonist, is an army veteran who is enlisted to help with the scientific research the human population is carrying out. During the course of the film, Sully becomes involved with one of the Nav'ai women and finds it difficult to remain impartial to the plunder of her world. Inevitably, Sully must change sides, although to do so comes at an enormous personal cost. Read more about this film at [http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/avatar/](http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/avatar/)

*Hamlet* - Like Romeo & Juliet, this play has been adapted to a modern setting in the 2000 film version starring Ethan Hawke. As a character, Hamlet is obsessed with acting or not acting to avenge his father's death. Like Fowler, Hamlet tends to ignore his loved ones, focussed instead upon his own thoughts and desires. Most of the play (film) is about the operations of conflict as Hamlet vacillates between decisions. For more information about the modern film adaptation go to [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamlet_(2000_film)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hamlet_(2000_film))

*Gran Torino* - This critically acclaimed film, starring Clint Eastwood, is about an embittered and alienated Korean veteran (Walt Kowalski) who inadvertently becomes involved in the life of his young neighbour (Thao). Thao is harassed by a gang whose actions escalate throughout the narrative, culminating in the kidnap and rape of Thao's sister Sue. When Thao wants to exact revenge, Kowalski prevents him, locking him up and telling him that he (Kowalski) is still haunted by the deaths he inflicted at war. Ultimately, Kowalski becomes more directly involved and confronts the murderous gang. To read more about this film, go to [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gran_torino](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gran_torino)