

# Modern Witch Hunt

## Short Story

### Creative Writing Assignment



**Assignment:** Choose one of the story seeds on the following page and use it as inspiration for a short story in which you show how the characters in the scenario are swept away by mass hysteria in a modern-day witch hunt. Your story must have a compelling introduction and follow the story-telling arc format explained in class.

**Your story must:**

- demonstrate your understanding of how modern witch hunts begin and are fueled (fear ≠ logic/reason)
- be believable
- follow the story-telling arc pattern (exposition, conflict introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution)
- be at least 1,000 typed words
- show good command of mechanics, word usage, and grammar

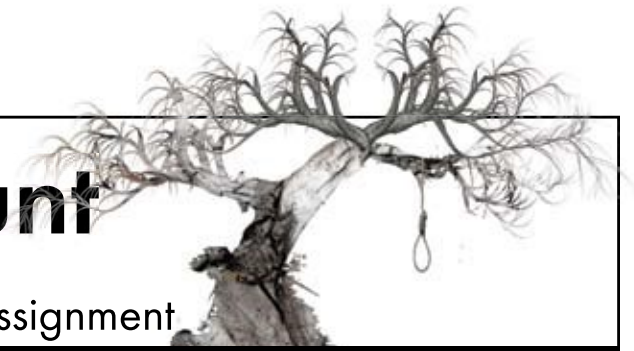
You will be given several days in class to work on your short story, but extra time outside of class will be needed. Plan accordingly.

Final draft due:

# Modern Witch Hunt

## Short Story

### Creative Writing Assignment



**Assignment:** Choose one of the story seeds on the following page and use it as inspiration for a short story in which you show how the characters in the scenario are swept away by mass hysteria in a modern-day witch hunt. Your story must have a compelling introduction and follow the story-telling arc format explained in class.

**Your story must:**

- demonstrate your understanding of how modern witch hunts begin and are fueled (fear ≠ logic/reason)
- be believable
- follow the story-telling arc pattern (exposition, conflict introduction, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution)
- be at least 1,000 typed words
- show good command of mechanics, word usage, and grammar

You will be given several days in class to work on your short story, but extra time outside of class will be needed. Plan accordingly.

Final draft due:

## Modern Witch Hunt Story Seeds

**Seed #1:** It's the first week of your junior year in high school. Rumors are swirling on campus that a new sophomore has transferred to your school because he's HIV-positive and was being harrassed at his old school. No one knows if this is true, but people are talking and texting, as suspicions abound. Someone told you that she thinks the new kid in your Spanish class is the kid with HIV. You mention this to your parents, who flip out and call all of their friends. Tell the story.

**Seed #2:** You are a junior at a private high school that is known for its high academic standards and moral code of conduct. One of the conditions of attending the school is promising to uphold high moral standards. There is a zero tolerance policy for cheating at this expensive private school, where you attend on an academic scholarship. You love your school, yet your family could never afford to send you there without the school's financial assistance. In your history class, the teacher received an anonymous email yesterday stating that four of your classmates cheated on the most-recent exam. The teacher brings this information to your class and says that everyone will fail the exam if the cheaters do not confess or if witnesses do not come forward to tell what they saw. Your friend Johnny told you that he saw two students checking their phones for answers during the test, but he didn't tell you who they were. Tell the story.

**Seed #3:** Late Saturday night, Sally Student, a member of your school's junior class, was severely injured in a car accident. Police determined that the driver of the car was her boyfriend, Peter Pupil, who had been drinking alcohol at a party that night. The party was filled with juniors and seniors, and lots of people were drinking. The police, apparently, have video clips and photos of the party that Peter took with his cell phone earlier in the evening. Both Sally and Peter's blood alcohol levels were twice the legal limit; Peter was booked into Juvenile Hall, while Sally remains in the intensive care unit at the local hospital. Parents are outraged and have contacted the police and the school's principal to find out the names of all of the kids who were at the party so they can be charged with underaged drinking and punished. You were at the party and know for certain that your picture is in Peter's cell phone. Tell the story.

**Seed #4:** You are a 32-year-old male high school science teacher and you love your job. You arrive early to tutor kids before school and stay late on campus every day because you coach both the girls' waterpolo team in the fall and the boys' lacrosse team in the spring. You even won the district's Teacher of the Year Award last year, even though it was only your third year as a teacher. Last year, a sophomore girl in your chemistry class developed a little crush on you. She would bring you coffee once in a while before school and she often ate lunch with her friends in your classroom. Things turned weird with her one day when she turned up unexpectedly in your classroom after school and was clearly trying to flirt with you, but you mentioned your girlfriend and told her as gently as possible that you were not interested in her romantically. She seemed hurt and left without saying anything. She didn't hang out in your classroom anymore after that encounter and you figured she was probably embarrassed. It's now September and that student is a junior; she's no longer in your class. Yesterday, you were summoned to the principal's office. The girl told the school's counselor that you've been having an affair with her and the police are there to question you. Tell the story.

**Seed #5:** You are a parent of a three-year-old little girl. She's the light of your world and it hurts your heart a bit each day when you have to drop her off at daycare on your way to work. You wish you could be a stay-at-home parent, but you simply can't afford to live without your paycheck. Today, you received a letter in the mail from the local police department. Apparently, the mother of a little boy at your daughter's preschool has reported to police that her son was sexually molested by a teacher at the school. Two of the teachers have been questioned and police are launching an investigation of the charges. The letter requests that you talk to your child about her experiences and report any suspicions that you may have about the school's staff to the police. Your phone rings and you see that it's another parent of a child at the preschool calling you. Tell the story.

**Seed #6:** Choose **ONE** of these real incidents we discussed in class and use a historical fiction treatment to illustrate the idea of a modern witch hunt:

- Holocaust/Search for Jews, homosexuals, disabled people, and dissenters of the Nazi regime
- Treatment of Japanese Americans during WWII/Internment camps
- McCarthyism/Red Scare/Search for Communists in the U.S. during the Cold War
- Treatment of Muslim Americans during post-9/11 climate of fear

**Seed #7:** Have a different or better idea? Come talk to me and we'll see if your story idea will work.

Student or Team Members' Names:

## Modern Witch Hunt Short Story – Rubric

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Story shows the climate/elements that would create a modern witch hunt
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Opening of story grabs the reader's attention
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. All elements of story-telling arc are included and well-developed
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Voice, style, and flow
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Cohesion in the narrative/Story is easy to follow
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Story is believable/Events in the story could happen in our world
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. All of the reader's questions are answered by the end of the story
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Satisfying conclusion
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Grammar, usage, and mechanics
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Team's work ethic during in-class time

Teacher's Comments:

For each of the content items,  
your story was rated with the  
following scale:

**A**  
18-20  
**B**  
16-17  
**C**  
15-14  
**D**  
13-12  
**F**  
11-0

Total:

out of 200 possible points

Student or Team Members' Names:

## Modern Witch Hunt Short Story – Rubric

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Story shows the climate/elements that would create a modern witch hunt
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Opening of story grabs the reader's attention
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. All elements of story-telling arc are included and well-developed
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Voice, style, and flow
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Cohesion in the narrative/Story is easy to follow
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Story is believable/Events in the story could happen in our world
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. All of the reader's questions are answered by the end of the story
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Satisfying conclusion
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Grammar, usage, and mechanics
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Team's work ethic during in-class time

Teacher's Comments:

For each of the content items,  
your story was rated with the  
following scale:

**A**  
18-20  
**B**  
16-17  
**C**  
15-14  
**D**  
13-12  
**F**  
11-0

Total:

out of 200 possible points