

## Mass Hysteria: Argument Writing and Close Reading Task

**Text grade band placement:**

11-12

**Note to Teachers:** These two texts explore the theme of mass hysteria. They can provide a non-fiction to fiction or fiction to non-fiction bridge for a study of *The Crucible* or other texts that deal with mass hysteria.

**Texts**

**Text Complexity Analysis**

**Title:** “17 teen girls hit in epidemic of twitching . . . but doctors say it’s all in their heads”

**Author:** Maureen Callahan

**Link:**

On Tennessee Electronic Library:

["17 Teen Girls Hit in Epidemic of Twitching . . . But Doctors Say It's All in Their Heads What Makes Them Tic." \*New York Post\* 12 Feb. 2012: 018. \*Infotrac Newsstand\*. Web. 25 July 2013.](#)

Gale Document Number: GALE|A285357461

OR

[Click here for a link to the original source.](#)

**Quantitative for “17 Teen Girls...”**  
Lexile 1230

**Quantitative for “Contagious Laughter”**

N/A (audio recording)

Time: 20’13” Listening Time

**Qualitative:** See TN [Text Complexity Measurement Rubric](#) for a complete rubric.

Qualitative	Very Complex			Slightly Complex
Purpose / Meaning			x	
Text Structure			x	
Language Features			x	
Knowledge Demands			x	

**Title:** “Contagious Laughter”

**Citation:**

“Contagious Laughter.” *RadioLab*. 25 February 2008. Web.

**Link:**

<http://www.radiolab.org/2008/feb/25/contagious-laughter/>

**Reader and Task:**

Students are expected to read the article and listen to the *RadioLab* episode. Listening provides different parameters for analyzing a text. It is more difficult to directly cite text and recall specific events.

A longer listening text that could be utilized with this unit is:

“War of the Worlds.” *RadioLab*. 25 March 2008.

Web. <http://www.radiolab.org/search/?q=war+of+the+worlds#q=war%20of%20the%20worlds>

Time: 58’55”

**ELA Common Core Standards addressed by task**

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

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.3 Analyze a complex set of ideas or sequence of events and explain how specific individuals, ideas, or events interact and develop over the course of the text.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RI.11-12.7 Integrate and evaluate multiple sources of information presented in different media or formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively) as well as in words in order to address a question or solve a problem.

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

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.W.11-12.1 Write arguments to support claims in an analysis of substantive topics or texts, using valid reasoning and relevant and sufficient evidence.

CCSS.ELA-Literacy.SL.11-12.3 Evaluate a speaker’s point of view, reasoning, and use of evidence and rhetoric, assessing the stance, premises, links among ideas, word choice, points of emphasis, and tone used.

**What key insights should students take from this text?**

- Students should compare and contrast two texts of different media.
- Students should consider how events can spread.
- Students should explore the idea of mass hysteria

**Text-Dependent Questions**

Responses to the questions should enrich the conversation with clear and articulate responses that mine the text for support to show clear understanding or legitimate search for meaning. Responses should drive the conversation forward by providing insight or depth to the discussion by introducing topics that have not already been discussed, providing a different or more complete perspective to the topic, or respectfully challenging other responses.

1. Discuss how the experience of listening to “Contagious Laughter” from RadioLab is different from reading the text from the *New York Post*.
2. What quotes or moments from both texts strike you as the most significant?
3. Identify and discuss the theories leading to the “outbreaks” in each text. What are the similarities between the two?
4. Each text expresses doubt as to the leading theories of the causes of the outbreaks. Using examples from the text, discuss if this doubt is well founded.
5. Step-Back: Some research suggests that social networks promote moments of mass hysteria. Using examples from the text and your own knowledge of social networks, argue for or against this theory.

**Writing Mode**

**Writing Prompt**

Argumentative Bridge to Fiction	<p>Bridge to Fiction: Using information from the texts “Contagious Laughter” and “17 Girls...,” craft an argument in which you examine whether or not the girls in Arthur Miller’s <i>The Crucible</i> were truly afflicted with a form of uncontrollable mass hysteria. Be sure to support your argument with strong textual citation from all three texts.</p> <p>Your essay will be <b>evaluated</b> using the <u>TN 9-12 Argument Rubric</u>.</p>
Argumentative	<p>Imagine that a mass hysteria outbreak similar to the ones mentioned in the articles has occurred in your community. Using information from the two texts and, if needed, supplemented with additional research, craft an argument in which you argue that social media should or should not be temporarily banned in the community until the outbreak has passed.</p> <p>Your essay will be <b>evaluated</b> using the <u>TN 9-12 Argument Rubric</u>.</p>