

The crucible analysis



Arthur Miller chose to place his story, *The Crucible*, in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692 primarily due to the historic Salem Witch Trials that occurred at that particular time and place.

The Salem Witch Trials are a prime example of mass hysteria, an influenza that tore communities apart throughout both the time of the witch trials, and Miller's adulthood. Miller hoped to enlighten his audience during the time of the 'Communist Witch Hunt' (also known as The Red Scare) which prosecuted alleged Communists with or without proof. My basic need was to respond to a phenomenon which, with only small exaggeration, one could say paralyzed a whole generation and in a short time dried up the habits of trust and toleration in public discourse," says Miller. During the time of the Salem Witch Trials, the puritan community practiced theocracy, an ideology that named God the sole leader of the people. If you did not accept this lifestyle, you were looked down upon by the community and likely to be accused of witchery. After John Proctor commits adultery, a sin in the Christian belief, he is deemed a witch and is soon after shunned by the town.

Although *The Crucible* is an over dramatized historical fiction, the events that occurred during the Salem Witch Trials bear a remarkable resemblance to the hearings that superseded the Red Scare. Out of all the characters, Abigail is the most transparent. Abigail is characterized throughout the play as an evil, lustful teenager with a temper. Abigail lies and manipulates the town on multiple occasions and even manipulates her peers into joining her escapade. Throughout the hysteria, Abigail is driven by her jealousy and desire for revenge on Goodie Proctor.

Due to her immaturity and selfishness, Abigail costs nineteen members of the community their life. Abigail's sexual desire for John Proctor and a lust for power mold her into one of the most malevolent characters of *The Crucible*. Literary terms - A major form of irony in this play was when Abigail claimed to be so innocent and pure but really she was just accusing a bunch of innocent people of witchcraft and send them to their deaths. She also had an affair with John Proctor, a married man. She did all of this just to be with him and it's also ironic that he ended up dead.

Another literary term was conflict and that was where Reverend Parris saw his Niece dancing in the Forest with the group of girls and didn't say anything because he didn't want to jeopardize his name or reputation. Also between John and Abigail; Abigail was accusing everyone while John Proctor was trying to save everyone. A third example is foreshadowing and a main example for this one is where Mary Warren warns John Proctor that his wife's name was mentioned in court. This leads to the arrest of Elizabeth later in the play.

There are several conflicts taking place in *The Crucible*, but the major conflict is between the reason of the human mind and the irrational fear of hysteria. Other conflicts in the story include the conflict within the Proctor household because of John's unfaithfulness to Elizabeth as well as the conflict between Abigail Williams and the Proctors. Themes - the 3 themes I thought were most important in *The Crucible* were hysteria, reputation, and intolerance. They all played important parts in this play and these three were probably the most important themes. A critical theme in *The Crucible* is hysteria, the

role it played was having everyone believe witchcraft was real and tearing apart the city.

Hysteria supplants logic and enables people to turn against their friends and neighbors that they have trusted and been friendly with for years. It can make them believe that they have done unbelievable crimes like communing with the devil, killing babies, killing people, stealing, etc. In the crucible the hysteria is everyone believing in witchcraft and it lets the towns people blame innocent people to relieve the long lasting grudges they have on other people. An example of a grudge with Abigail excusing Elizabeth of witchcraft to get her sent to jail and then Abigail can have John.

Some people can use hysterias to increase there power like reverend Paris used the witch trials to his advantage. Reputation is extremely in theocratic Salem, where public and private mortalities are one and the same. In a place where reputation plays such a big role, being guilty by just association is a very big thing to try to keep people from knowing. In this play and time period, reputation played a huge role and the smallest sin could make people who saw you good, change their whole opinions on you. When John proctor had the affair he does whatever he can to try and keep that a secret because if people were to figure that out then instead of having a good reputation in the town, no one would like him. The crucible is set in a theocratic society, in which the church and state are one, and the religion is really strict.

Because of the theocratic nature of the society, moral laws and state laws are the same. Sining and breaking the law are pretty much the same thing, they are both very bad, and also they are both public concern. There is no

reason for deviation from social norms, since any individual's private life doesn't conform to the established moral laws threatens not only the public good but the rule of God and the thought of true religion. In this time era, the people of Salem either are people of God or people of the devil, there is no grey area. Intolerance is a very important theme in this play. As mentioned in the play, you're either with the court or you're considered counted against the court.

The witch trials are the ultimate expression of intolerance; the trials brand all social deviants with the taint of devil worship and the reason for the killing/hanging of the "witches" The quote I've chosen shows the romance between John proctor and Abigail. Basically their two fling sort of started this whole mess. In the play Abigail wanted to get rid of Elizabeth and she wanted John proctor. She is a type of girl to do anything she can to get what she wants and she did. She accused Elizabeth of witch craft and got the whole town on to the idea that witch craft was a real thing. I have a sense for heat, John and yours has drawn me to my window, and I have seen you looking up, burning in your loneliness.

Do you tell me you've never looked up at my window? " (Abigail page 15).

This quote shows some of the romance between John and Abigail, two of the biggest/major characters. Their affair provokes the climax for the whole play. There were many different situations through out this play and one was the sin of cheating. John proctor committed this sin in the start of the play. Another situation that happened was just because Abigail wanted John, she started the whole hysteria of witch craft in the town of Salem.

She started it because of three reasons; they were boredom, her thirst for sex and power. Another situation is where proctor cuts off Abigail and pretty much says that he's done with her. " Abby, I may think of you softly from time to time. But I will cut off my hand before I'll ever reach for you again. Wipe it out of mind.

We never touched, Abby. " (John proctor, page 15). This just shows when John ended things then it set Abigail off. This is when everything started going to crap.

Once again all of this started because Abigail wanted John and it shows that the saying " you want what you can't have" is true.