

# Arthur miller's "the crucible" essay sample



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

John Proctor of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*, is a highly respected man in Salem. " In Proctor's presence a fool felt his foolishness instantly.... Proctor respected and even feared in Salem", the narrator adds (Miller 20). He was a powerful man who disliked hypocrites and the presence of sin. Before the play begins, John Proctor has an affair with Abigail Williams, a previous house servant of his, these actions contradicted his very own beliefs. The narrator comments, " He is a sinner.. against his own vision of decent conduct" (Miller 20). Like John Proctor, Arthur Dimmesdale of Nathaniel Hawthorne's *Scarlet Letter* is also respected by his peers and followers. He is described by the narrator like so,

" Reverend Mr. Dimmesdale young clergyman, who had come from one of the great English universities, bringing all the learning of the age into our wild forest land. His eloquence and religious fervour had already given the earnest of high eminence in his profession. He was a person of very striking aspect, with a white, lofty, and impending brow; large, brown, melancholy eyes, and a mouth which, unless when he forcibly compressed it, was apt to be tremulous, expressing both nervous sensibility and a vast power of self restraint. Notwithstanding his high native gifts and scholar-like attainments, there was an air about this young minister an apprehensive, a startled, a half-frightened look as of a being who felt himself quite astray, and at a loss in the pathway of human existence, and could only be at ease in some seclusion of his own. Therefore, so far as his duties would permit, he trod in the shadowy by-paths, and thus kept himself simple and childlike, coming forth, when occasion was, with a freshness, and fragrance, and dewy purity

of thought which, as many people said, affected them like the speech of an angel. (Hawthorne 46)

This passage shows the admiration the townspeople have for him. He is portrayed as a humble, God-fearing man, "The magistrates are God-fearing gentlemen", commented the third autumnal matron (Hawthorne 36), that would never do anything to displease those around him. Unfortunately, he has also played parts in adultery, as well as leaving Hester Prynne, his partner in this sin, with his illegitimate child. In Salem, during this time period, adultery was viewed as extreme, with punishments resulting in being branded, serving prison time, or ultimately death." What do we talk of marks and brands, whether on the bodice of her gown or the flesh of her forehead?.. This woman has brought shame upon us all, and ought to die.." Cried a townswoman. (Hawthorne 36) Contrary to the townspeople's beliefs throughout each work, their strong Puritan men whom they felt so fondly of, have become part of actions that are displeasing in the eyes of God.

Although Hester Prynne of *The Crucible* did not commit adultery alone, she did have to face the harsh treatments of her society alone. Not only did she have to wear the sin on her chest but, Hester spent many scenes on the scaffold, being publicly condemned, while listening to the women below criticize her for her scarlet letter A, which marks her as a sinner who committed adultery.

"She hath good skill at her needle, that's certain," remarked one of her female spectators; "but did ever a woman, before this brazen hussy, contrive such a way of showing it? Why, gossips, what is it but to laugh in the

faces of our godly magistrates, and make a pride out of what they, worthy gentlemen, meant for a punishment?"

"It were well," muttered the most iron-visaged of the old dames, "if we stripped Madame Hester's rich gown off her dainty shoulders; and as for the red letter which she hath stitched so curiously, I'll bestow a rag of mine own rheumatic flannel to make a fitter one!"

"Oh, peace, neighbours-peace!" whispered their youngest companion; "do not let her hear you! Not a stitch in that embroidered letter but she has felt it in her heart." (Hawthorne 37-38)

Abigail Williams of *The Scarlet Letter* is not pointed out for adultery, yet of acting in witchcraft. Many had believed that Abigail was leading the other girls to participate in witchcraft. Parris comments, "Why, Sir-I discovered her - indicating Abigail-and my niece and ten or twelve of the other girls, dancing in the forest last night." (Miller 38) People began to separate themselves from Abigail because they believed she was evil and at times out to harm them.

"Abigail, I have heard it said, and I tell you as I heard it, that she comes so rarely to the church this year for she will not sit so close to something spoiled" Said Parris of Goody Proctor (Miller 12)

The pressure added by the puritan society only drove these women to revise themselves into a more Christ and or saint-like character for personal gain. Abigail took the more negative approach. After sending the town into an uproar over the idea of her taking part in witchcraft, she used this attention

as her attempt to replace Goody Proctor with herself in the arms of John Proctor. She first manipulates the towns views of her as an evil person and adds a more christ-like character.

" I want to open myself! They turn to her, startled. She is enraptured, as though in a pearly light. I want the light of God, I want the sweet love of Jesus! I danced for the devil; I saw him; I wrote in his book; I go back to Jesus; I kiss his hand, I saw Sarah Good with the Devil! I saw Goody Osburn with the Devil! I saw Bridget Bishop with the Devil! (Miller 48)

After gaining the trust of the people and revising their image of her. Abigail begins working on getting Goddy Proctor out of the picture, so that she could live with the one she loves. While listing the names of those she sees with the devil she is sure to name Goody Proctor, whom she is extremely envious of.

" Spoke or silent, a promise is surely made. And she may dote on it now-I am sure she does-and thinks to kill me, then take my place...It is her dearest hope, John, I know it. There be a thousand names; why does she call mine? There be a certain danger in calling such a name-I am no Goody Good that sleeps in ditches, nor Osburn, drunk and half-witted. SHE'd dare not call out such a farmer's wife but there be monstrous profit in it. She thinks to take my place John." Says Goody Proctor of Abigail ( Miller 61)

Hester, unlike Abigail decides to show her true character which is hidden under the scarlet letter. The scarlet A that Hester wore on her chest controlled her life. When she was looked at, the townspeople only saw her scarlet letter. Even Hester herself sometimes noticed the sscarlet letter

before the women who bared it. Although many realized the women underneath many failed to acknowledge her.

" The young woman was tall, with a figure of perfect elegance on a large scale. She had dark and abundant hair, so glossy that it threw off the sunshine with a gleam; and a face which, besides being beautiful from regularity of feature and richness of complexion, had the impressiveness belonging to a marked brow and deep black eyes. She was ladylike, too, after the manner of the feminine gentility of those days; characterised by a certain state and dignity, rather than by the delicate, evanescent, and indescribable grace which is now recognised as its indication. And never had Hester Prynne appeared more ladylike, in the antique interpretation of the term, than as she issued from the prison. Those who had before known her, and had expected to behold her dimmed and obscured by a disastrous cloud, were astonished, and even startled, to perceive how her beauty shone out, and made a halo of the misfortune and ignominy in which she was enveloped.

It may be true that, to a sensitive observer, there was some thing exquisitely painful in it. Her attire, which indeed, she had wrought for the occasion in prison, and had modelled much after her own fancy, seemed to express the attitude of her spirit, the desperate recklessness of her mood, by its wild and picturesque peculiarity. But the point which drew all eyes, and, as it were, transfigured the wearer-so that both men and women who had been familiarly acquainted with Hester Prynne were now impressed as if they beheld her for the first time-was that SCARLET LETTER, so fantastically embroidered and illuminated upon her bosom. It had the effect of a spell,

taking her out of the ordinary relations with humanity, and enclosing her in a sphere by herself." Narrator's Description, (Hawthorne 37)

Once released from prison Hester could have left this cruel town who demanded she wear the scarlet letter and live as a free women with her sinful past behind her. Instead, Hester continues to try to purify her name, an overpower the presence of the scarlet letter.

" Here, She said to herself , had been the scene of ehr guilt, and here should be the scene of her earthly punishment; and so, perchance, the torture of her daily shame would at length purge her soul, and work out another purity than that which she had lost; more saint-like, because the result martyrdom.

Although both women changed themsel

Although playing major parts in the destruction of townspeople or perhaps entire towns Arthur Dimmesdale and John Proctor remain silent until the very end of each work.. John Proctor was near losing all he had through Abigail's love for him and envy of his wife. He watched the town and it's churches began to crumble with after Abigail makes accusations of nearly everyone taking part in witchcraft. Most importantly the idea that Elizabeth Proctor was a witch. When his wife is nearly taken away from him for good, he finally considers confessing to having an affair with Abigail. He finally confesses while in a battle with Abigail to end the play, never really taking part in the stir of the town that he had helped caused. His final confession was only as if to finally win a battle with Abigail and lose her control." If you will have it so, so I will tell it!...You will tell the court you are blind to spirits; you cannot see

them anymore, and you will never cry witchery again, or I will make you famous for the whore you are!" (Miller 152)

Arthur Dimmesdale also waits until the end of the work to confess to his sins in the attempt to protect himself. Yet, unlike Proctor, Dimmesdale suffered internally along with Hester. In the end, Dimmesdale confesses to his sin as he has wanted to do all along and this alone mitigated all those things that worried his heart.

" I, whom you behold in these black garments of the priesthood-I, who ascend the sacred desk, and turn my pale face heavenward, taking upon myself to hold communion in your behalf with the Most High Omniscience-I, in whose daily life you discern the sanctity of Enoch-I, whose footsteps, as you suppose, leave a gleam along my earthly track, whereby the Pilgrims that shall come after me may be guided to the regions of the blest-I, who have laid the hand of baptism upon your children-I, who have breathed the parting prayer over your dying friends, to whom the Amen sounded faintly from a world which they had quitted-I, your pastor, whom you so reverence and trust, am utterly a pollution and a lie!"